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State and Legitimacy within an Arab-Muslim context:

Understanding the identity criteria in Jordan and Kuwait

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Notes on Transliteration

The chart below[1] has been used to transliterate proper nouns, geographical references and some particular terms in the text while popular names and concepts have not been transliterated.

The letter *hamza* (ء) has been written as a normal apostrophe (') and has not been rendered when it appears in the initial position.

The *alif maqṣūra* (ى) has been rendered *à*.

The *tā' marbūṭa* (ة) has been rendered *a* when it appears isolated and *at* when in *iḍāfa* constructions.

The *nisba* ending has been rendered *-iyya* (e.g., *sūriyya*)

The scientific transcription of the names of the intellectuals of the "1967 generation" has been given in brackets only in their first occurrence and in the section titles, while for the other occurrences a more common and recognizable transcription is used; for example, Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Ǧābirī is found as al-Jabri after the first mention.

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[1] The translation and transliteration system codified and used in IJMES, the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, https://ijmes.chass.ncsu.edu/IJMES_Translation_and_Transliteration_Guide.htm

IJMES TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM FOR ARABIC, PERSIAN, AND TURKISH

CONSONANTS

A = Arabic, P = Persian, OT = Ottoman Turkish, MT = Modern Turkish

	A	P	OT	MT
ء	ʾ	ʾ	ʾ	—
ب	b	b	b	b or p
پ	—	p	p	p
ت	t	t	t	t
ث	th	s̱	s̱	s
ج	j	j	c	c
چ	—	ch	ç	ç
ح	ḥ	ḥ	ḥ	h
خ	kh	kh	h	h
د	d	d	d	d
ذ	dh	ẕ	ẕ	z
ر	r	r	r	r

	A	P	OT	MT
ز	z	z	z	z
ژ	—	zh	j	j
س	s	s	s	s
ش	sh	sh	ş	ş
ص	ṣ	ṣ	ṣ	s
ض	ḍ	ż	ż	z
ط	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	t
ظ	ẓ	ẓ	ẓ	z
ع	ʿ	ʿ	ʿ	—
غ	gh	gh	g or ğ	g or ğ
ف	f	f	f	f
ق	q	q	ḳ	k

	A	P	OT	MT
ك	k	k or g	k or ñ	k or n
		or y	or y	or y
		or ğ	or ğ	or ğ
گ	—	g	g	g
ل	l	l	l	l
م	m	m	m	m
ن	n	n	n	n
ه	h	h	h[1]	h[1]
و	w	v or u	v	v
ي	y	y	y	y
ة	a[2]			
ال	[3]			

[1] When h is not final. [2] In construct state: at. [3] For the article, al- and -l-.

VOWELS

	ARABIC AND PERSIAN		OTTOMAN AND MODERN TURKISH	
Long	ا or ى	ā	ā	words of Arabic and Persian origin only
	و	ū	ū	
	ى	ī	ī	
Doubled	ّيـ	iyy (final form ī)	iy (final form ī)	
	ّو	uww (final form ū)	uvv	
Diphthongs	و	au or aw	ev	
	ى	ai or ay	ey	
Short	‫َ‬	a	a or e	
	ُ	u	u or ü / o or ö	
	ِ	i	ı or i	

For Ottoman Turkish, authors may either transliterate or use the modern Turkish orthography.

State of the art

Arab (national) identity is a vast field of research and Middle Eastern scholars have been studying it for years, aiming to grasp its complexity. Christopher Phillips in *Everyday Arab Identity: The Daily Reproduction of the Arab World* (2012) focuses on the concept of Arabism (or Neo-Arabism), a special bond that ideally links the Arab-speakers and transcends boundaries being, in the author's definition, "supra-national". Phillips tries to understand why Nation-States have been forced to promote this peculiar sort of identity to gain and maintain their legitimacy to rule and how this narrative interacted with the national one. For instance, as Paul Ghali (1934) pointed out, Arab societies consist of different religious, cultural, ethnic and even linguistic groups and the concept of Nation-State in the Arab world is relatively new. In fact, the birth and formation of modern national Arab states started between the late eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, under the influence of European colonization[2]. This important stage in contemporary history of the Arab world has been intertwined with the development of the regional system through the foundation of inter-Arab policies and by means of renewed Arab nationalism. Dawn (1991) questioned this explanation of the origins of Arab nationalism and the excessive significance attributed both to the contact with the West and to the Christian bourgeoisie and its missionary schools. According to him "Arab nationalism arose as an

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[2] European colonial domination over the Arab countries lasted a century: from the mid-1800s (in 1830 the French captured Algiers; in 1839 the English took Aden) to the mid-1900s (in 1961 Kuwait gained independence from Great Britain; in 1962 Algeria from France).

opposition movement in the Ottoman Empire […]: Throughout the nineteenth century […] Arab nationalism arose out of the failure of its immediate predecessor and its ideological parent, Islamic modernist Ottomanism"[3]. The relationship between Islamic modernism and Arabism has been discussed also by Sylvia G. Heim who disagrees with Dawn and considers Arab nationalism a Western import, and Elie Kedourie who pointed out the role of the military officers installed in power by the British after the First World War. In his turn Lockman, who contributed to the well-known volume edited by Gershoni and Jankowski (1997) on the topic, underlined how nationalism "always means different things to different people in different contexts"[4] and that, in the MENA region, it was conveyed both by new ideologies and by transnational Arab solidarity in the anti-colonial struggles which different countries had to face, Palestine above any other[5]. Instead, Uri Davis (1995)'s discourse focuses on terminology. According to him, it is crucial to analyze the Arabic terms for identity and citizenship in order to understand the concepts from an inner perspective[6]. In this regard, the work of the Arab historian Ibn Ḫaldūn—and later on of

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[3] Ernest Dawn C., "The origins of Arab Nationalism," in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. Khalidi Rashid, Anderson Lisa, Muslih Muhammad and Simon S. Reeva (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 23.

[4] Zachary Lockman, "Arab Workers and Arab Nationalism in Palestine: A View from Below," in *Rethinking nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, ed. James Jankowski and Israel Gershoni (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 249.

[5] In fact, following the break-up of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, each state adopted its own national laws according to conditions imposed by or agreed with the occupying colonial powers and in 1916, Great Britain and France defined their mutually agreed spheres of influence and control in Southwestern Asia (Sykes-Picot agreement). Finally, the Treaty of Sèvres of 1920 and the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 — that led to the international recognition of the sovereignty of the new Republic of Turkey as the successor state of the defunct Ottoman Empire — were to contain all the provisions relating to citizenship.

[6] Davis discusses the difference between *ǧinsiyya* and *muwaṭana* which he defines respectively as "passport citizenship" and "democratic citizenship. See Uri Davis, "Jinsiyya versus Muwatana: The Question of Citizenship and the State in the Middle East: The Cases of Israel, Jordan and Palestine," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 17, no. 1/2 (Winter and Spring, 1995), 19-22.

Mansoor Moaddel (2001, 2002, 2005)—has been fundamental, especially in the latter's efforts to clarify the concept of *'asabiyya*, a type of pre-Islamic solidarity to be discussed in the following sections.

Likewise, Khoury, Kostiner and the Kuwaiti historian al-Naqeeb[7] further analysed the tribal element and its role in the state-building processes. Moreover, the view of the Moroccan philosopher al-Jabri (Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Ǧābirī, 1935-2010) on this kind of primordial kinship in relation with the religious component is essential, as well as the contribution of the Syrian poet and philosopher Adonis ('Alī Aḥmad Saʿīd Isbir, b. 1930) in *An Introduction to Arab Poetic* (1990), as he underlines the alien nature of the mentioned concepts: in fact, he defines modernity as "illusory and specious", arguing that "the intellectual principles which gave birth to modernity are lost to us, their substance wiped out[8]". Finally, the Moroccan philosopher Abdou Filali-Ansary ('Abduh Filālī al-Anṣārī, b.1946), who presented the quest for legitimacy in Muslim conetxs as a "four-act tragedy", speaking of the fourth act (new deceptions) said:

> Recently born states arising from independence brought neither the freedom nor the prosperity expected. They did not allow the rediscovery of a legitimacy that people had started to associate with a national identity[9].

The present study entered into this debate, albeit through a narrower path: the historical and political developments experienced by the MENA region from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire are analyzed and discussed through the perspectives of the Arabic thinkers of the

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[7] See the "Khaldoun al-Naqeeb archive,"
http://www.khaldounalnaqeeb.com/en/index.jsp
[8] Adonis, *An Introduction to Arab Poetics* (London: Saqi Books, 1990), 85.
[9] Abdou Filali-Ansari, "The Quest for Legitimacy in Muslim Contexts: A Four-Act Tragedy?" *ResetDOC* (15 July 2016): 27, https://www.resetdoc.org/story/the-quest-for-legitimacy-in-muslim-contexts-a-four-act-tragedy/

time mainly following Albert Hourani's landmark work *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (1962), a watershed in the history and historiography of colonialism and its relations with liberalism, published in the very year of Algerian independence from France (and Jamaican independence from Great Britain). Periodization and categorization of these thinkers became a central issue and analyzing the proposed systematizations of different leading scholars proved to be both necessary and insightful. For example, Hisham Sharabi (Hišām al-Šarābī, d. 2005) in *Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years, 1875-1914* (1970) studied the Arab intellectuals during the formative years 1875-1914 by classifying them in groups and trends while Hourani chose not to focus his attention on schools of thought fearing that it could confer a false unity upon the works of very different thinkers. Instead, he decided to study writers and intellectuals "who saw the growth of European power and the spread of new ideas as a challenge to which they had to respond by changing their own societies, and the systems of beliefs and values which gave them legitimacy through acceptance of some of the ideas and institutions of modern Europe"[10]. Indeed, Hourani articulated his analysis presenting the thought of four generations of writers and intellectuals, mostly Egyptians and Syrian-Lebanese that had a leading role in the development of the Arabic thought of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Barakat (1993) instead, divided the modern Arab awakening in three phases and in each one he identified a religious, a liberal and a progressive radical trend. They are: the formative phase from the 1850s to World War I; the period of nationalist struggle for independence between the two world wars; and the independence and post-

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[10] Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), Preface.

independence periods. Instead, the first two generations in Hourani's account (1830-1870; 1870-1900) essentially include the *nahḍa*[11] pioneers like the Lebanese Buṭrus al-Bustānī (1819-1883), the Egyptians Rifāʿa al-Tahtāwī (1801-1873) and Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1849-1905) and Ğamāl al-Dīn al-Afġānī (1838-1897) while the third takes into consideration the works of some leading disciples of Muḥammad ʿAbduh such as the proto feminist Qāsim ʿAmīn (1863-1908), Aḥmad Luṭfī Sayyīd (1872-1963) and Rašīd Riḍā (1865-1935) whose views represent different outcomes of ʿAbduh's legacy. In the present study, particular attention will be given to Riḍā's account of the Islamic Caliphate. In fact, for the purposes of this research it proves to

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[11] Hourani never used the term *nahḍa* preferring the expression "Liberal Age". Nevertheless, the term has a long history that reflects the criticalities of the time and the struggle of the thinkers that witnessed and tried to explain them. The term *nahḍa* was first used by the Syrian Adīb Isḥāq (1856-1885) and Lebanese Aḥmad Fāris al-Šidyāq (1804-1887, who stated that "there is no *nahḍa* without a women's *nahḍa*") but, after an initial period of harmony and syncretism, the publication of some controversial texts such as ʿAbd al-Rāziq (1888-1966) *al-Islām wa Uṣūl al-Uḥkm* (Islam and the Foundations of Rule, 1925) and Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (1889-1973) *Fī al-Šiʿr al-Ğāhilī* (*On the Pre-Islamic Poetry*, 1926) disrupted the balance and the term begun to be used in relation to different versions of Arab nationalist resurgence (Mīšīl ʿAflaq's perspective is a well-known example of it). Later on, when the Arab states had gained independence, the *nahḍa* discourse were marginalized and, after the 1967 defeat, Arab scholars took different stands about the notion, for example Mohammad al-Jabri (Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Ğābirī) criticized it while Laroui (ʿAbd Āllah al-ʿArwī, b. 1933) defended it. Sadeq al-Azm (Ṣādiq Ğalāl al-ʿAẓm, 1934-2016) believed that many contemporary scholars, included himself, erroneously believed that the issues debated during the *nahḍa* such as progress, modernization, modern science, secularism, socialism and national liberation, were surpassed in the second half of the 20th century, while instead the struggle initiated by Ğamāl al-Dīn al-Afġānī and Muḥammad ʿAbduh was far from being concluded. Remarkably, the Tunisian political leader Rashid Gannoushi (Rāšid al-Ghannūšī, b. 1941) changed the name of his movement "Islamic Tendency" in Ennahda Party (*ḥizb al-nahḍa*) to distance himself from his more radical origins and stress his acceptance of liberal democracy. Finally, after the Cold War and the Lebanese war (1985-1989) the *nahḍa* theme re-emerged in the Arab public discourse especially among the leftist intellectuals in Beirut and Damascus that used it to criticize the liberals who were supporting American interventionism in the region. Notably, Elias Khoury (Iliyās Ḫūrī b. 1948) after the American invasion of Afghanistan wrote an essay entitled "Toward a third *nahḍa*" where he called for "a return to modern Arab history to search for the truth that might help Arabs to escape from the decline in which they have slid in the 21st century".

be very useful to understand how the Islamic reformer faced the great political transformations of his time, such as the end of the Ottoman caliphate, the beginning of European domination in the MENA region, the First World War and the foundation of the Republic of Turkey. Riḍā's account of 'Abduh's legacy also goes to the grounds on which he legitimated such a political and religious entity, which today is far from being forgotten, as the so-called Islamic State ―an expression defined by Wael B. Hallaq (2012) as both impossible and inherently self-contradictory― made it the core of its narrative of power. Moreover, the Syrians Adīb Isḥāq (1856-1885) and Sāṭiʿ al-Ḥuṣrī (1880-1968) have been included in the discussion following Tibi's account of *Arab Nationalism* (1997). In fact, he defined Adīb Isḥāq as "the first political theorist of Arab nationalism"[12] since, unlike his contemporaries, his definition of the Nation transcended literature; likewise Sāṭiʿ al-Ḥuṣrī's is a central figure in Tibi's discourse because of his crucial contribution to the political debate as he separated the concept of Nation and State following the lead of the German Romantic philosophers (e.g. Herder, Fichte and Arndt), attempting a synthesis between their idea of Nation and the notion of *ʿaṣabīyya* formulated by Ibn Ḫaldūn (d. 1406)[13]. Lastly, Hourani placed a fourth generation after the Second World conflict only sketching its features in the Epilogue of his text. In the present study, the contemporary developments of the Arabic thought, defined by Campanini (2018) as "locked between the opposing tensions of modernity and tradition"[14], are discussed mainly following Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab *Contemporary Arab Thought: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective* (2010) and Ibrahim Abu

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[12] Bassam Tibi, Arab *Nationalism between Islam and the Nation-State*, 3rd edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 104.
[13] Ibid., 125-127.
[14] Campanini Massimo, "The new roads of Islamic thought," *ResetDOC* (6 September 2018), https://www.resetdoc.org/story/new-roads-islamic-thought/

Rabi' *Contemporary Arab Thought Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History* (2004). As for Abu Rabi', he divided the development of Arab Nationalism into four stages (in the Mashreq) and defined 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī (1849-1903) and al-Ḥuṣrī as the best representatives of the first one.

The stages are: the Ottoman phase, the interwar period, the 1948-70 phase and the 1970 to the present[15].

- The Ottoman phase started with the *Tanẓīmāt* at the beginning of the 19th century; through those reforms the Ottoman Empire sought to achieve the same goals that the European Power had already reached; accordingly, the aim of Ottoman nationalism, whether it were Arab or Turkish, was to create a new civil society bound by new constitutional rules.

- The defeat of the Ottoman Empire during the First World Conflict and the consequent French and British conquest of the Arab East changed the situation; the new phase is represented by Qustantin Zurayq (Qusṭanṭīn Zurayq, 1909-2000)[16], one of the most distinguished Arab nationalist thinkers and historians in the twentieth century Arab world who reflected critically on the intricate aspects of composing a cultural identity.

- Within the post 1948 phase arose the pan-Arab ideology, as Arab Unity was considered the only way to face the challenges of post-colonial capitalism. Accordingly, 1945 saw the

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[15] Ibrahim Abu-Rabi', *Contemporary Arab Thought: Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 77-78.

[16] Constantin Zurayq, an Orthodox Christian from Damascus, published in 1939 a volume of essays on national consciousness where he defined nationalism as a sense of collective responsibility, a will to create and maintain a community, which takes inspiration on its own religion that for Arab can only be Islam. Hourani, op. cit., 309, 310.

establishment of *al-Ǧāmiʿa al-ʿArabiyya*, the Arab League[17] that currently counts 22 members (even though Syria has been suspended since 2011).

Additionally, this phase is divided into three subcurrents:

- The *Baʿaṯ* Party represented by Mīšīl ʿAflaq (1910-1989) and Ṣalāḥ al-dīn al-Biṯār (1912-1980)
- Nasserism
- The Arab Nationalists' Movement represented by George Habash (Ǧūrǧ Ḥabaš, 1926-2008) who was "committed to the liberation of Palestine and to Arab unity[18]".

- The 1967 defeat and the Camp David Accords (1978), considered "the second foundation of the State of Israel"[19], meant the end of the Pan-Arab ideology. The United States took the place of British and French as imperialist power and grew as the major supporter of Israel weakening Arab Nationalism. On the domestic front, the Arab socialist political system collapsed, Egypt abandoned its leading role initiating the Open Door policy (*infitāḥ*) and signing a separate peace agreement with Israel (1979). Finally, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, gave to the US a way to undermine Iraq, the last major bastion of Arab nationalism in the Arab World, harming its economy and giving legitimacy to the artificial rentier states of the Gulf.

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[17] Notably, during the World War I the 'Arab nation' was placed in Asia; later on, in the Twenties and Thirties, 'Arabhood' begun to be defined by language rather than geography and in 1945 a strong African country was one of the founder members of the Arab League: Egypt. Finally, in 1958, the League reached the Atlantic with the admission of Morocco. John F. Devlin, "The Baath Party: Rise and Metamorphosis," *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 5 (1991): 1397.

[18] As'ad Abu Khalil, "George Habash and the Movement of Arab Nationalists: Neither Unity nor Liberation," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 28 no. 4 (Summer 1999): 91-103.

[19] Anouar Abdel-Malek, "The Occultation of Egypt," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (Summer 1979): 177.

However, both Kassab and Abu Rabi' underline the centrality of the defeat of 1967, defined by the Syrian philosopher Sadeq Jalal al-Azm (Ṣādiq Ǧalāl al-'Aẓm, 1934-2016) as "an exceptional event in every sense of the word, a terrifying explosion which destroyed the foundations of the Arab liberation movement"[20]. Accordingly, this generation is called "the post 1967 generation" and describes the major changes and challenges faced by the Arab world through the perspectives of some leading contemporary Arab thinkers such as two of the major representatives of the early post-colonial liberal trend, Sadeq al-Azm and the Moroccan Abdallah Laroui ('Abd Allāh al-'Arawī, b. 1933); the Egyptian Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, 1943-2010) and the Algerian professor Mohammad Arkoun (Muḥammad 'Arkūn, 1928-2010) who defined the Arab contemporary thought as an *idéologie du combat*[21], both liberal hermeneutics; the Egyptian phenomenologist and Islamic Leftist Hassan Hanafi (Ḥassan Ḥanafī, b. 1935), the political theorist Muhammad Abed al-Jabri and the Tunisian politician and thinker Rashid al-Ghannushi (Rāšid al-Ghannūšī, b. 1941), co-founder and current president of Ennahda Party (*Ḥizb Ḥarakat al-Nahḍa*, Renaissance Party), the country's ruling party until January 2014.

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning another crucial event that had the same disrupting weight of the 1967 defeat: the so-called "Arab Spring", an unfortunate and misleading Western label that somehow implied an unrealistically immediate transition of the uprising States from autocratic to democratic political systems. The "Arab Spring", which started when a Tunisian peddler set himself on fire in December

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[20] Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab, *Contemporary Arab Thought: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 98.
[21] Massimo Campanini, *Il pensiero islamico contemporaneo*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005), 15.

2010, will not be discussed within the present chapter, first of all because it is a recent and still ongoing upheaval whose dynamics and profound reasons are yet to be understood and whose outcomes are not clearly defined; secondly, because this chapter has a different focus: it analyses the origin of the national identity in the MENA region and the development over time of the concepts of Nation and nationalism, by retracing the key steps of the nation and state building process in the area aiming to discover whether the feeling of national belonging is a sufficient ground for the legitimacy of the Arab-Muslim States or not. However, aiming to be as complete as possible in presenting the issue, it proves necessary to underline the centrality of the "Arab Spring" or, as Marwan Muasher (2014) calls it, "The Second Arab Awakening", the first one being the intellectual revolution that took place between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries against the Ottoman rule, firstly documented by George Antonius (1939) in *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* and object of this chapter. According to Muasher (and Abu Rabi' agrees on this point), the first Arab Awakening failed as military-backed single parties took the power leaning on their revolutionary legitimacy, thus the post-independence era in the Arab world paid a too little attention to developing political systems, while the new regimes continued to consider pluralism a potential threat; moreover, the Palestinian issue had not been solved and all the necessary political and economic reforms remained unrealized.

Thus, Political Islam emerged as the only alternative to the one-party rule because Islamist parties were the only ones to have the organizational capabilities necessary to run nationwide campaigns. It is within this context that the Second Arab Awakening takes place willing to promote a truly democratic third force, as both Islamists and the

military élite failed in a genuine commitment to pluralism[22]. Probably, it will soon be possible to individuate a "post 2011 generation" committed to discussing the challenges faced by civil society within the new political asset, as the movements that overthrew the regimes placed national identity above all other considerations: "Tomorrow's Middle East will not be the same as yesterday's. Its ultimate shape is, of course, unknown"[23].

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[22] Marwan Muasher, *The Second Arab Awakening and the Battle for Pluralism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), Introduction.
[23] Ibid., 159.

Introduction: from *waṭan* to *waṭaniyya*

The Arab national identity has a complex, multilayered nature and has been influenced by both internal and external factors. Have the Western sovereignty and the new form of power and legitimacy replaced the old authorities? On which grounds do the nation states legitimate themselves? The aim of this work is to examine on which identity criteria the legitimacy of the Arab Muslim countries is founded. This in mind, the main argument presented here is that in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and in the State of Kuwait, chosen as exemplary cases of "hybrid" systems (in Bacik's account, 2008), national belonging as political sentiment reveal to be the dominant identity criterion but indeed in a hybrid form within which primordial loylaties coexist with the Western institutions. Notably, by legitimacy I simply mean the elements that make a government rightful and thus legitimate at the eyes of its people.

Hence, the project starts by retracing the key steps of the State-building process within the MENA region from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire to the European colonization and decolonization both historically, politically and especially theoretically, aiming indeed to highlight the legitimacy foundations of the present-day Arab states. In fact, such developments are discussed and analyzed in the first chapter through the voices of the Arab thinkers that lived that peculiar reality, from the *nahḍa* pioneers to the "post 1967 generation".

Accordingly, the third chapter focuses on the state and nation-building process of Kuwait and Jordan highlighting the findings of the data analysis, meaning 80 individual interviews I made in the two countries. As already noted, the national belonging revealed to be the prevalent identity criterion with the other types of affiliation (religious, tribal, linguistic) being its components rather than its challengers.

Notably, the second chapter studies the methodological and ethical challenges that need to be dealt with when discussing the MENA region, especially focusing on the qualitative approach's crucial aspect of the "positionality" that refers indeed to the different "positions" occupied by the researcher and the participants, often not part of the same cultural and social community and how this may affect the research outcomes.

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When discussing the existing relation between the pre-modern Muslim state and the modern Nation-State, an analysis of the Arabic term for "nation" will be essential. Indeed, the building-process of the present "independent Nation-States increasingly [asserting] their differences and separate identities"[24] is somehow mirrored by the transition from the pre-modern use of the term *waṭan*[25] as homeland to the modern sense of national homeland, from which the term *waṭaniyya*[26], patriotism, originated. The classical *waṭan* "stands as a

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[24] Halim Barakat, *The Arab World: Society, Culture, and State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), Introduction.

[25] Originally, *waṭan* did not have any political acceptation. Notably, when talking about *waṭan* the 18th century Indian encyclopedist Muḥammad b. ʿAlāʾ al-Tahānawī (1191-1777) differentiated between the place of birth about which men do not have choice, and the place of residence deliberately chosen as the place to live for a limited period; while the Sufi authority Abū Sualymān al-Dārānī (d. 830) talks about *waṭanāt* (s. *waṭna*), solid foundations, as opposed to *ḫaṭarāt* referring to something furtive, not to be proud of. Moreover, in the prophetic tradition *waṭan* is considered as an approximate synonym of *dār* (house) and *bilād* (country). Interestingly, the Egyptian National Anthem says *bilādī, laki ḥubbī wa fūʾādī* ("My homeland, you have my love and my heart"). Ulrich Haarmann, *Waṭan* in Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd Edition, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs.
See also Zayde Antrim, "*Waṭan* before *Waṭaniyya*: Loyalty to Land in Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Syria," *Al-Masāq* 22 no. 2 (2010), 174-175.

[26] The term *waṭaniyya* (nationalisim, patriotism) did not appear until the end of the 19th century. The Egyptian writer Rifāʿa Rāfiʿ al-Tahṭāwī had a crucial role in the development of the concept; in fact, *ḥubb al-waṭan* (the love for the homeland) pervades all his work. Starting from the Ottoman *millet* he overcame its initial acceptation of confessional community by including also territorial communities such as *al-ahālī* (indigenous people), *al-raʿiyya* (subjects), *al-ǧins* [or more correctly *al-ʿirq*] (ethnic group) and *abnāʾ al-waṭan* (inhabitants, compatriots) united by a patriotic

primary pre-modern thematic of the self", and if it is true that it has rarely had a political meaning and a precise geographical content, it is also noteworthy that it usually evokes a localized area of personal attachment (a neighborhood, a town or a village) and has a strong subjective meaning: the *waṭan* is the affective birthplace of individuals and it is on this affective structure that the modern ideal of patriotic sentiment rooted itself[27]. The poetic *waṭan* is a lost, irrecoverable Golden Age at both a personal (childhood/youth) and social level, a mythical place where desire and necessity marvelously coincided[28]. The feeling that people had toward their *waṭan* in classical writings, named *ḥanīn* (yearning), was more an overwhelming passion rather than a sentiment like it is in modern patriotism and it was not only a human prerogative: animals, especially camels, were entitled to it too, as longing for the homeland was perceived as a natural, even biological force. During the early Omayyad period this natural longing widened by absorbing a family-idyllic *waṭan* of folkloric origins and the themes of the love poetry (*ġazal*); this resulted in "the image of the poet nostalgically remembering his homeland where he enjoyed familial as

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brotherhood and to whom the adjectives *waṭanī*/*bilādī* are referred. For many decades, *waṭaniyya* meant the nationalist form of the Egyptian patriotism in its quest for the independence from the British control. Then, just before the Second World Conflict, arose the difference between *waṭaniyya*, as referred to territory and *qawmiyya*, as referred to people, that would later become the core of the Nasserist ideology. Jacques Couland, *Waṭaniyya*, in Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd Edition, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs.

[27] Yaseen Noorani, "Estrangement and selfhood in the Classical Concept of *Waṭan*," J*ournal of Arabic Literature*, 47 no. 1/2 (2016): 19.

[28] However, Noorani argues that the poetic *waṭan* has a dual meaning, as it is also the 'homeland of birth' that should be abandoned for the higher 'homeland of maturity': in this sense the self need to deny its primordial desires to gain virtue and rationality. Moreover, regarding this point it is significant to mention the poet Maysūn bint Baḥdal. Syriac Orthodox Christian from the Kalb Bedouin tribe, she converted to Islam after marrying the Omayyad caliph Mu'āwiya (602-680). She wrote about the life in the desert, the love for her husband and the nostalgia for the places dear to her. Francesca Maria Corrao, *Antologia della poesia araba* (Roma: La biblioteca di Repubblica, 2004), 113,114.

well as romantic love, and plenitude despite poverty"[29]. Moreover, the association between *waṭan* and a golden age of innocence, inevitably reveals the Bedouin substrate of the concept, in fact the image of Bedouin women yearning for their homelands that they were forced to leave due to marriage is a standard. It is this *topos* of an idealized, primitive state of life associated with the Bedouin sense of belonging that the Abbasid scholars transmitted to the next generations, when the region of Najd became the proverbial homeland in Arabic poetry[30]. Therefore motherhood, childhood, familial affections, early love and kin are part of the same chronotope, the *waṭan*.

To conclude, it is possible to say that—although the modern love toward *waṭan* is a morally oriented emotion that "gives rise to citizenship and self-sacrifice for the nation" and not a primordial, uncontrollable desire—"the relation between emotional investment and virtue contained in the classical *topos* of *waṭan* allowed it to serve as the basis for developing the modern sense of homeland of the 19th century[31]": its idyllic lost time coincides with the "homogeneous empty time" theorized by Anderson in his 1991 landmark work, while the longing for someone's lost birthplace becomes the longing for the nation's lost splendor. Accordingly, Antrim (2010) criticizes Lewis (1991) according to whom the term *waṭan* initially only meant 'place of residence', and therefore lacked any political content, as, he argued, it was not focused on loyalty, and only to a limited extent on identity,

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[29] Noorani (2016), op. cit., 24.
[30] To this point, it is pertinent to mention the poet Ibn Ḥamdīs (1056-1133) famous because of the nostalgic verses that he wrote thinking about "his" Sicily, while emigrated in Andalusia at the court of al-Mu'tamid (1048-1095). Corrao (2004), op. cit., 40.
[31] Noorani (2016), op. cit., 41.

but instead was related to feelings of affection or nostalgia[32]. On the contrary Antrim states that:

> *Waṭan* was, in the pre-modern era, an evolving concept, one that often held personal, effective resonance but that was also used […] to evoke religious and political ties to land. While […] the existence of such ties does not constitute nationalism, […] it nonetheless reminds us that, like their modern counterparts, pre-modern Middle Easterners at time found that representing a particular territory as *waṭan* acted as a powerful idiom for expressing loyalty[33].

Tibi's *Arab Nationalism between Islam and the Nation-State* (1997) is interesting in this regard as it discusses different social science interpretations of Nationalism and of Nation formation in the 'Third World'[34]. Tibi does not consider Arab Nationalism a purely exogenous phenomenon, in fact he says that "foreign influences can only take effect when conditions for their reception and subsequent transformation exist"[35]. Moreover, he somehow separates nationalism from the concepts of nation and consequently of nationality in colonial and semi-colonial countries affirming that in such contexts "nationalism is not *sui generis* connected with the process of nation formation, since nationalism is not always based on a clearly defined notion of nationality[36]". Besides, he lists three theories, worth briefly discussing, that attempt to explain nationalism in the 'Third World': the "Modernization ideology", the "Process of Acculturation" and the "Nation Formation in the Colonies in the Context of Decolonization achieved by Armed Struggle".

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[32] Bernard Lewis, "Watan," *Journal of Contemporary History* 26 (London: SAGE, 1991): 523-533.
[33] Antrim, op. cit., 190.
[34] Tibi, op cit., ch. 2.
[35] Ibid., 75.
[36] Ibid., 39.

According to the "Modernization ideology", nationalism in socio-economically less-developed countries is a factor at the service of modernization: the aim of nationalism thus conceived is modernization in the sense of the industrialization of the country and such a process can only be led by the Western-educated colonial élite since the indigenous one only attempts to perpetuate traditional social structures. Moreover, the borders resulting from decolonization generally form national states only in a legal sense but not 'true' nationalities, therefore perspective nationalism is detached by nationality. The "Process of Acculturation" theory gives the Western-educated élite leading role as well, but the issue of modernization is not central anymore. According to this theory 'marginal people' receive a creative impulse from the 'nuclear peoples' and consequently start a process of imitative adaptation that leads to a cultural synthesis between the autochthonous and the received culture (that can be unconscious if the process of acculturation is passive-imitative or conscious if the process is active-syncretic). Regarding a possible application of the acculturation theory within the Middle Eastern context Tibi wrote:

> Social change in the Middle East may be explained in terms of acculturation theory, to the extent that the archaic-chiliastic and secular-nationalist variants of the literary and political renaissance which took place in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire in the early nineteenth century were generated by forces from outside the area. However, this theory cannot be particularly fruitful if it implies a Euro-centric approach. […] It is clear that Arab nationalism and the movements which preceded it have largely developed under the influence of Europe. However, such an approach cannot by itself lead to a real understanding of the phenomenon[37].

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[37] Ibid., p. 75.

Finally, the third theory considers the formation of nations as a necessary consequence of the decolonization process. According to this theory, national unity shapes itself initially as group solidarity in the anti-colonial struggle and then, in the course of the revolutionary struggles, true nationalities start to develop. However, the nationalism that emerges in these peculiar circumstances is usually a form of ethno-centric nationalism rather than a national consciousness. In fact, the national bourgeoisie often turns to pre-national structure and normative systems that provide fertile soil for ultra-nationalism, chauvinism, racism and therefore the installation of semi-fascist military dictatorships.

I. The Arab nation in Arab thought: Between kinship, religion and national identity

Introduction

  The chapter follows a chronological order. The first section discusses the peculiarities of the Islamic community (*umma*) in order to retrace how this crucial multilayered reality – as it is at once a religious, ethnic and moral community —changed and developed over time. In fact, all the political regimes that succeeded the Prophet in leading it, being exogenous or endogenous, had eventually to face its actual and symbolic value by questioning its universal character or exploiting it in order to gain legitimacy. To give a significant example, when Bonaparte first attempted to approach the Egyptians, he addressed them in his famous introductory proclamation as *al-umma al-miṣriyya* (the Egyptian community)[38]. Then, moving along an ideal timeline begun with the birth of the Prophet and continued with the challenges faced initially by the Rightly Guided caliphs and later on by the Omayyads and the Abbasids until the Mongol invasion (and the centuries of fragmentation that followed), the focus shifts onto the role of the Ottoman Empire, its social structure, its legitimacy claims, its contribution to the modernization process and the reasons for its decline, as it is from its ashes that the modern Arab Nation-Sates arose. Consequently, the second section discusses the period that goes from the European rule (materially started with the French occupation of Tunisia in 1881 and the British occupation of Egypt in 1882) to the formation of the Arab Nation-States, as the rising Western presence in the region with the political and cultural domination that followed, had

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[38] Ami Ayalon, *Language And Change In The Arab Middle East The Evolution of Modern Political Discourse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 23.

a central role in the formation of the Arab states and their nation-building process. These historical and political developments are discussed and analyzed through the voices of the Arab thinkers that lived such a peculiar reality, well-described by Barakat (1993) as follows:

> […] Arab thought can best be understood in the context of ongoing external and internal contradictions and challenges in a highly transitional era. The historical tasks of forging a nation out of conflicting communities, of achieving independence, and of establishing social justice have been central to the ongoing Arab debates. In these debates, the West has been viewed as a challenge, and in most instances as an exploitative and repressive force. So the need to confront the West has coexisted with the emulation of Western models and paradigms[39].

At this point, it is important to stress how the faiths of the Fertile Crescent, the Arabian Peninsula, the Nile valley and the North African coast differ greatly as each area experienced Western occupation or influence in its own terms. Accordingly, the rise of nationalism in the MENA region has to be considered not as a singular trend but rather as a series of smaller realities born largely (but not exclusively) in response to Western imperialism, each with its peculiar outcome[40]. Hence, the aim of the following sections is neither to discuss each and every outcome nor to present an unrealistic uniformity, but rather to set the ground of the inquiry in order to both clarify the conceptual dimensions used to analyze the empirical data gathered from the interviews, and to frame the historical and political background of the case countries, Jordan and Kuwait, to be discussed in detail in the third chapter through the analysis of the empirical data collected in the field work.

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[39] Barakat, op. cit., 242.
[40] Omar Ali, "The Two Nationalism of the Arab word," *The Ali Papers* (13/03/2018), http://thealipapers.com/papers/2016/12/18/the-two-nationalisms-of-the-arab-world

Finally, the third section analyzes the Arab sovereignty and its "hybrid" nature, following Bacik's account of *Hybrid Sovereignty in the Arab Middle East* (2008). The two sub-sections of the segment take into account the tribal and the religious components of the Arab Nation-States that, alongside the political implications of external revenues, are among the major sources of power and legitimacy of the Arab-Muslim regimes.

1. Sources of legitimacy: from the first Islamic community to the Ottomans

1.1 The Islamic Umma

Bernard Lewis (1988) described the *umma*[41] as "the single universal Islamic community embracing all the lands in which Muslim rule is established and the Islamic law prevails" and he underlined its multifaceted identity:

> It can be ethnic, since the *Qurʾān* speaks of the *umma* of the Arabs. It can be religious, since the *Qurʾān* also speaks of the *umma* of the Christians. It can be moral, since the *Qurʾān* speaks of the *umma* of the good people, as opposed to the *umma* of bad people[42].

Such a complex community (which is also a 'collective identity'[43]) could not come but from a complex background: The pre-Islamic Arab society had a kin-structure, a type of bond that Ibn

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[41] *Umma* is considered an imported term from the Hebrew *ummā* or the Armenian *umm^e_tā*. Initially, the Prophet Muḥammad considered the Arabs in general and his Meccan compatriots in particular to be a closed *umma*. Later on, when in Medina, he started a new community that did not include only the actual Muslims and had a political nature (regulated indeed by the Chart of Medina), a development imposed only by necessity. Hence, once his position became strong enough he excluded the non-Muslims from his community: the original *umma* of Arabs became an *umma* of Muslims. Rudi Paret, *Umma*, in Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1st Edition, ed. M. Th. Houtsma, T.W. Arnold, R. Basset, R. Hartmann.

[42] Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 32, 33.

[43] Riaz defines collective identity as follows: "Collective identity is grounded in the socialization process in human societies. Individuals develop it by first identifying with the values, goals and purposes of their society, and then by internalising them. This process, besides constructing the individual identity, also constructs the collective identity. Rituals and ritualised behaviours of the society further reinforce it and give the members a sense of similarity, especially against the 'Others' whose collective identities are different. The key role in the construction of a collective identity is played by symbolic systems of shared religion, language and culture, which also act as a boundary defining the mechanisms of the collective identity". Riaz Hassan, "Globalisation's Challenge to the Islamic umma," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 34, no. 2 (2006): 314-315.

Ḫaldūn[44] articulated in the above mentioned concept of *'aṣabiyya*, a sense of belonging mostly based on blood ties, generally translated as group feeling, sense of solidarity, group loyalty or *esprit de corps*[45]. According to Asyiqin et al. (2012) the spirit of *'aṣabiyya,* despite losing its centrality over time, has been essential in spreading the teachings of Islam, as it constituted the basis upon which to build a truly cohesive society, reinforced by a common faith; in other words, unless *'aṣabiyya,* common good, and law were combined in some form, stable Sates could not come into being; quoting Ibn Ḫaldūn "the Arabs only became a political force when their religion cemented their leadership with the religious law and its ordinances"[46]. However, it is important to underline that while religion is considered a powerful social glue that strengthens the rulers' power it is not a *conditio sine qua non* in Ibn Ḫaldūn's account. On the contrary, the Prophet, the Rightly Guided Caliphs, and later the Omayyads and the Abbasids needed the *'aṣabiyya* to legitimate their role[47]. Nevertheless, the religion of Islam created a moral solidarity to support the structure of rights and duties shared by

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[44] Ibn Ḫaldūn (1332, Tunis – 1406, Cairo) was a jurist, a politician, a diplomat and a courtier. A master of the Maliki school of law, he was the first political philosopher that analyzed the Islamic world from a sociopolitical perspective, thus retracing the Islamic political experience in a secular way. His originality lies above all in the method imbued with great realism (human reality is subject both to materialistic, such as climate and geographic conditions, and ethical-spiritual variables) and fully aware of history and its cyclicity. Accordingly, history has to be considered, methodologically and philosophically, both as a search for the causes and for the social and human truth. Peculiar of Ibn Ḫaldūn is the concept of *'umrān bašarī* (human "sociability"), a set of economic, social, political and cultural conditions which is divided into the Bedouin (*badawī*) and the urban (*ḥaḍarī*) societies, held together by the natural institution of the *'aṣabiyya*, a group spirit derived by blood ties, clientelistic affiliations and other forms of partnerships. Massimo Campanini, *Islam e Politica*, 3rd edition (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2015), 132-139.

[45] Abdul Halim Asyiqin, Roslan Mohd Nor Mohd, Ahmad Zaki, Ibrahim Berahim and Faisal Ahmad Faisal Abdul Hamid, "Ibn Khaldun's Theory of 'Asabiyyah and its Application in Modern Muslim Society," *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research* 11, no. 9 (2012): 1232-1237.

[46] Hourani (1962), op. cit., 24.

[47] Campanini (2015), op. cit., 132-139.

its community of believers and the *šarīʿa* was conceived as both a system of laws and a system of morality: it changed the Arab tribes into an Arab community and later different groups of Muslims into a community of believers.

Even though the internal divisions did not take long to emerge[48], the unity of the community had never been in question: It embodied the universalism of Islam and established a religious and cultural supra-national identity that to this day remains strong and deep-rooted, being the most legitimate basis of collective consciousness.

Nevertheless, in the intermediate stages the disconnection of the first proselytes from their kin relations was everything but linear and progressive. Indeed, Parolin (2007) identified three phases in the formative period of the Islamic community. The first coincides with the Meccan stage (610-622) and it is characterized by the indifference and even the rejection of Muḥammad's preaching. The second phase starts after the *hiǧra* (622), when the political dimension of the community began to take shape: Muḥammad organized the people of Medina through the *sahīa* or 'Charter of Medina' that somehow marginalized the kinship (even if the pre-Islamic kin-order never fully disappeared) by including within the community Jews as well as Christians. However, this organization proved to be unstable and the Arab character of the prophetic message prevailed, as it differentiated Islam

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[48] In the early days of Islam the question of the succession of the Prophet (d. 632) was the most problematic because of the lack of indications left by Muḥammad himself. The rivalries for power, which divided the Medinese elite, ended up in a civil war started in 656 with the assassination of the third rightly guided caliph ʿUṯmān and ended in 661 when the son-in-law of the Prophet and fourth rightly guided caliph ʿAlī concluded a treaty acknowledging the rule of the first Omayyad caliph Muʿāwiya. The war, called *al-fitna al-kubrà,* remained very significant not only for the political future of Islam, but especially for the meaning of religious authority in Islam that changed ever since.

from the other monotheistic faiths (Christianity and Judaism)[49]. After 627—when no more Jews were allowed in the city—the *umma* entered in the third phase and acquired its distinctive and ultimate characters, reaching a full, although short-lived, political and religious unity[50]: in fact, in the earliest stages, the Prophet and his successors (to whom the community owed complete obedience[51]) had the responsibility of ruling the *umma*, although the true sovereignty rested in God's hands. About the Medinese system al-Jabri wrote:

> […] the system did not have a political denomination, because Mohammed always refused to be clled "king". The classic Arab vocabulary had not any term except "king", to indicate the "political presidency". However, the Islam refuses and condemn this term, because the only true king is God[52].

1.2 The Rightly Guided caliphs and the Islamic empires

More identity challenges to the new born community arrived with the death of 'Alī, the last caliph who could claim a religious legitimation according to An-Na'im (the Omayyads tried to legitimate their authority by maintaining "the fiction that the authority of their caliphs was an extension of the authority of the Prophet"[53]), and with geographical expansion. 'Umār, the second of the Rightly Guided caliphs (*al-Ḫulafā' al-Rāšidūn*, 632-661), conquered Syria, Egypt and

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[49] Christians and Jews were recognized as 'People of the Book', left free to profess their religions but requested to pay a tax *per capita* (*ǧizya*) and recognize the political authority of Islam.

[50] Gianluca P. Parolin, *Citizenship in the Arab World. Kin, Religion and Nation-Sate* (Amsterdam: IMISCOE Research, Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 41-47.

[51] Within the pastoral representation, the ruler is called shepherd, *ra'iyya*, while the ruled are its herd, the *ra'āyā*. (Parolin, op. cit., p. 24). Moreover, the *sūrat al-nisā'* (4, 59) affirms: "Obey God, obey His Prophet, and obey those in authority over you". Lewis (1988), op. cit., 91.

[52] Mohammed Abed al-Jabri, *Democracy, Human Rights and Law in Islamic Thought* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 7-9.

[53] Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, *Islam and the Secular State; Negotiating the Future of Shari'a* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 61.

Persia in the 7th century, leading in the long term to processes of Islamization and Arabization and changing the *umma*'s social structure, then composed of a majority of non-Arab Muslims led by an Arab Muslim élite. The campaign of expansion started by 'Umār, continued under the Omayyad caliphate (661-750), who conquered Spain, Transoxiana and parts of India. Moreover, the Arab element, significant in the first Medina period, became more essential: despite all, the *umma* grew up to be an ethno-religious community where Islam and Arabhood were impossible to disentangle. As Halliday (2002) pointed out:

> […] under the first Arab dynasty, the Ummayads, a sense of strong Arab identity led to a reduction in commitment to the broader community, which by now included Persians and others, while under the Abbasids, who were strongly influenced by Persia, and under the Ottomans, who ruled a multi-ethnic empire, *umma* became a symbol of unity[54].

Indeed, under the Omayyads all documents and official papers had to be rewritten in Arabic, and non-Arabs suffered from different kinds of discrimination and marginalization: the *mawālī*, the non-Arab Muslims newly converted, became victims of cultural bias; they were banned from any task involving authority and they could not act as imams, judges or governors. The 8th caliph, 'Umār II (682-720), tried to solve these problems, especially regarding the tax burden and his vision was later taken up by the Abbasids (750-1258) who built a cosmopolite and heterogeneous society where Arab and non-Arab Muslims were treated almost as equals. In fact, under the Abbasids the political weight of the Arabs was reduced while the *mawālī* were politically recognized and started to occupy positions until then

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[54] Fred Halliday, "The politics of the Umma: states and community in Islamic movements," *Mediterranean politics* 7, no. 3 (2002): 24.

reserved only to Arab Muslims. Nevertheless, it was still not possible to talk about full rights for the minorities[55].

Moreover, under the Abbasids the professionalization of the military became official and at the time of the caliph al-Mu'tasim (796-842) the utilization of Turkish slaves was pretty normal: many dynasties such as the Mamelukes[56], owe their origins to this practice.

Notably, as stressed by Patricia Crone (2003) the Abbasids tried to legitimate their authority by affirming to descend from the Prophet's family:

> Like the Umayyads, the Abbasids were the best of creation after the Prophet, almost prophets themselves[57], and chosen by God to be heirs of the prophets, but of the Prophet above all. Unlike the Umayyads, they were also kinsmen of the Prophet, to whose legacy they had a hereditary right, and thus able to pride themselves on the fact that they did not make the *rasūl* [Prophet] secondary in importance to the *khalīfa* [caliph][58].

Under the Abbasids "messianic" caliphate a new society took shape, a society "characterized by the cohesive powers of a common language and currency and a unifying religio-political center"[59] embodied by their capital Baghdad with its symbolic round shape, "the City of Peace" (*madīnat al-salām*). However, the golden age was short

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[55] Francesca Maria Corrao, *Islam, religion and politics* (Roma: LUISS University Press, 2017), 39.

[56] The Mamelukes reigned in Egypt since 1250 to 1517. Their reign is divided in two periods: the *baḥrī* or Turkish period (1250–1382) and the *burğī* or Circassian period (1382-1517).

[57] Abu al-'Abbās 'Abd Allāh ibn Muhammad al-Saffāḥ (721-754), the first Abbasid caliph, "duly styled himself *al-mahdī* to indicate that the world had now been filled with justice." Patricia Crone, *God's Rule - Government and Islam: Six Centuries of Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 87.

[58] Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 81, 82.

[59] Tayeb El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Harun al-Rashid and the Narrative of the Abbasid Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1, 2.

lived and, along with the territorial expansion and the growing presence of the Turkish element introduced into the army, the Abbasid caliphate faced crises on both the political and a social level. Politically, some provinces became semi-independent states, their source of legitimacy still being the caliphate toward which they maintained a certain degree of loyalty. Socially, the level of injustice and inequality among the various communities increased because of the inadequate practices undertaken by the Turkish soldiers; as a result, several opposition groups arose[60] causing the formation of sectarian movements. In the 945 the Shiite dynasty of the Buwayhids[61] gained power at the expenses of the Abbasids. However, they both remained in charge. In fact, the Buwayhids, such as the Seljuks— the defenders of Sunnism[62] that overthrown them in 1055— held a military and political power and legitimized themselves claiming to protect the Caliph, holder of the spiritual power.

In the 1285 Hulagu— grandson of Genghis Khan and founder of the Ilkhanid dynasty— put an end to the Abbasid Caliphate even though he kept alive a symbolic Caliphate to legitimate his power. The Ilkhanids represented a true watershed in Arab-Muslim history, in fact they followed for the most part Tibetan Buddhism or Nestorian Christianity and even when they converted to Islam, showed a marked preference for Sufism. The Ilkhanids were then defeated by the Timurids (1370-1500) but neither Tamerlane nor its successors

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[60] Ahmad Oran and Khaida Khaznakatbi, "The Economic System under the Abbasids Dynasty", *The Encyclopedia of Islamic Economics* 2 (2009): 258.

[61] Meanwhile, in the 10th century, Egypt was under the rule of another Shiite (Ismailite) dynasty, the Fatimides.

[62] Regarding the Seljuks' religiosity, Ayalon said: "Transoxiana accepted Islam and Islamic culture with great and growing zeal. The population was […] deeply religious, immersed in Muslim culture, generous toward foreign Muslims […]; very warlike and imbued with the spirit of *jihād* against the unbelievers". David Ayalon, "The Mamlūks of the Seljuks: Islam's Military Might at the Crossroads," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 6, no. 3 (1996): 321.

managed to successfully unite the conquered territories, and from this fragmentation emerged the Mughal Empire in India, founded by Bābur (Zahīr al-Dīn Muḥammad, 1483-1530)[63].

This brief overview aimed to retrace the different forms of social aggregation and point out how the relations between the ruler and the ruled changed within the Islamic community after the death of the Prophet. In fact, governments, leaders and thinkers have always widened and narrowed the ideal boundaries of the *umma* according to the necessities of their time and in order to legitimate their standpoints. Indeed, under Muḥammad's rule "religious and political values and religious and political offices were inseparable"[64] but after the four Rightly Guided Caliphs such unity slowly shifted into two separated spheres. Later on, according to Lapidus (1975), the Omayyads stressed the absolute authority of the Caliph's rule favouring political decisions (such as the strengthening of the army and the administration) over religious ones while the Abbasids, supported by the population of Khurasan, attacked the corrupted Caliph in the name of the "true Islam" and gave life to a more legitimate Caliphate for the *umma*. Then, in the middle of the 10th century

> The effective control of the empire passed into the hands of generals, administrators, governors, and local provincial lords; the Caliphs lost all effective political power. Governments in Islamic lands were henceforth secular regimes – Sultanates – in theory authorized by the Caliphs, but actually legitimized by the need for public order[65].

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[63] See Ira M. Lapidus, *A history of Islamic societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Corrao (2017), op. cit., ch.1.
[64] Ira M. Lapidus, "The Separation of State and Religion in the Development of Early Islamic Society," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6, no. 4 (October 1975): 364.
[65] Ibid.

While, since the 8th century, religious representatives developed a certain autonomy from the Caliphs' authority because of their role of experts in Islamic jurisprudence and some judges became influent and reached leading positions being more in touch with the Muslim masses than the Caliph himself.

After the Abbasid caliphate fragmentation and before the assumption of power over most of the Western Islamic world by the Ottomans, for half-millennium many dynasties continued to rise and fall, unable to mantain the *umma* united, neither as religious nor as ethnic community.

Under the Ottoman rule, the Muslim *umma* was partly re-united and the conquest of Mecca and Medina gave to the Sultan the opportunity to strengthen his legitimacy through the title of "Guardian of Sacred Places". Besides, from the Arab-Islamic system the Ottomans inherited the *ḏimma* that they extended to the ethnic groups and substituted with the *millet* system granting non-Muslims a great deal of autonomy. The *millet* would be abolished only with the *Tanẓīmāt* reforms. Such reforms, to be further analyzed in the next section, turned the subjects into citizens and terminated the special status of the autonomous communities for strengthening the central power. Indeed, the *millet* system gave each of the major religious communities "a great degree of legal autonomy and authority" to the extent that "the millets were able to set their own laws, have their own milli courts, and collect and distribute their own taxes"[66]; however, it is due to remember that they still payed the taxes to the Sultan.

During the final phase of the Ottoman Empire, by the end of the 19th century, the caliphate was resumed to revive the sense of community in

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[66] Rachel M. Scott, "Contextual Citizenship in Modern Islamic Thought," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 18, no. 1 (2007): 3, 4.

the Empire. However, the corruption of the central government gave little credibility to the utopia of the Caliphate while the modern Nation-State seemed both a plausible alternative and a useful tool by which renew the damaged administration of the Empire.

Clearly, such transitional period is sensitive and not easy to analyze. The core of the present chapter aims precisely to discuss how the Arab thinkers of the 19th and 20th centuries faced such a challenging concept and whether they gave a secular (Western-style constitutional-liberal thought) and/or a religious answer (Islamic modernism). In the very beginning, the first standpoint generated two trends, one gave priority to the common ethno-linguist origins and the other believed that the sole unifying element of a homeland was socio-economic interest. Likewise, the religious standpoint soon was divided into two currents. Both believe that the constitutional system should be the guarantor of the Islamic caliphate, but they disagree about the extent to which they could accept the very principles of constitutionalism and weather to be open to certain socialist tendencies[67].

As for the religious answer, the most influent representatives were the Islamic reformist Ğamāl al-Dīn al-Afġānī who purified the concept of nation of its secular connotations and declared that all Muslims were a single Nation, and his disciple Muḥammad 'Abduh who continued the process, started by his predecessors, of identifying certain traditional concepts of Islamic thought with the dominant ideas of modern Europe.

Instead, the Syrian scholar al-Kawākibī, considered the theorist of Arabism, claimed the existence of an independent Arab *umma* alongside the Islamic one, making one step toward Western secularism

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[67] Francesca Maria Corrao, *La rinascita islamica. Il nazionalismo di Muḥammad Farîd* (Palermo: Quaderni del Laboratorio Antropologico dell'Università di Palermo n. 2, 1985), 16.

and promoting an almost racial theory of nationality while remaining an orthodox Muslim[68]. Notably, the fact that al-Afġānī, 'Abduh and al-Kawākibī were in Cairo at the same time surely stimulated the debate leading to the formation of generations of future nationalists. Among them stand two figures: the prominent Egyptian lawyer, journalist and activist Muṣṭafà Kāmil (1874-1908), who in 1907 founded the *Ḥizb al-waṭan* (National Party) and its newspaper *al-Liwāʾ* (the Standard), immediately joined by Muḥammad Farīd (1868-1919), the party's secretary and the successor of Kamīl after his death, and Aḥmad Luṭfī Sayyid (1872-1963), a lawyer and student of Afġānī and 'Abduh who gradually distanced himself from Farīd and Kāmil, for he believed that independence was to be considered a result rather than a premise. Luṭfī Sayyid stressed the importance of a Western-like school reform that would raised the Egyptians' political awareness. Hence, alongside Qāsim ʾAmīn and a number of other intellectuals that developed Muḥammad 'Abduh's ideas toward secularization, he founded the *Ḥizb al-umma* (People's Party, 1907) and its newspaper *al-Ǧarīda* (the newspaper), giving to the term *umma* the narrower meaning of nation proper to the European perspective.

Moreover, Kāmil and Sayyd had different views regarding the role of the Caliphate too. For the founder of the National Party, the Ottoman Empire was the last bulwark against European imperialism while Sayyid did not believe in the panislamic discourse convinced as he was that the pillars of the States' very existence are shared interests rather than shared feelings. The Caliphate had for him only a symbolic and spiritual value while he looked at the British as his privileged allies

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[68] Sylvia Haim, "Islam and the Theory of Arab Nationalism," *Die Welt Des Islams* 4, no. 2/3 new series (1955): 139.

in in his effort to reform the country at all levels: scholastic, juridical, administrative and economic[69].

A completely different conception of the caliphate is the one of Ḥasan al-Bannā (1906-1949) according to which the caliph is the symbol of Islamic unity. Indeed, in an atmosphere of such intellectual ferment, in 1928, when many Egyptians had lost confidence in the Western ideas of modernization and liberalism, the Egyptian schoolteacher and *imām* founded the Muslim Brotherhood (*ğamʿiyyat al-Iḫwān al-Muslimīn*), a transnational Sunni Islamist organization focused on educational, social, economic and religious activities that soon became involved into the Egyptian politics. Al-Bannā's statement at the Fifth conference of the Brotherhood well summarizes his religious-political thought:

> We believe the rules and teachings of Islam to be comprehensive, to include the people's affairs in the world and the hereafter. Those who believe that these teachings deal only with the spiritual side of life are mistaken. Islam is an ideology and a worship, a home and a nationality, a religion and a state, a spirit and work, and a book and sword[70].'

Later on, the Syrian scholar Sāṭiʿ al-Ḥuṣrī (born in Aleppo he received a Turkish education in Constantinople) formulated a complitely different theory by developing the definition of the Arab *umma* in its German acceptation of "a living organism which has developed organically through common language and history and […] is determined by subjective impulses"[71]. Al-Ḥuṣrī's pan-Arab perspective, which the Brotherhood opposed, was as universal and transnational as the Pan-Islamist one, and later the founder of the *Baʿaṯ*

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[69] Corrao (1985), op. cit. 24-36.
[70] Abd al-Monein Said Aly and Manfred W. Wenner, "Modern Islamic Reform Movements: The Muslim Brotherhood in Contemporary Egypt," *Middle East Journal* 36 no. 3 (Summer 1982): 340.
[71] Tibi, op. cit., 152.

Party Mīšīl 'Aflaq (1910-1989) added to it a social component by opposing the collective character of the *umma* to Western individualism.

It is not easy to conclude this section as the term *umma* never stopped evolving, modifying and being modified. Indeed, Hassan (2006) by focusing on the effects of the globalization stresses how modern technology changed the very essence of the *umma* since worldwide communication made it easy to reveal not only similarities but also differences among Muslims of different countries in some cases causing the emergence of Islamic movements that sought the community's lost "authenticity". Moreover, such transformations may have de-centered the Islamic world, conferring a kind of legitimacy to its regional "*ummas*", each one with a peculiar and unique character.

1.3 Significance and decline of the Ottoman rule

During the 15th and 16th centuries most of the Muslim world was ruled by three great empires: the Ottoman Empire, the Safavid Empire (Persia) and Mughal Empire (India). Alongside Anatolia and southeastern Europe, all the Arabic speaking countries were governed by the Ottomans, except for some parts of Arabia, the Sudan, and Morocco. The language of the military and administrative élite (largely composed of converts to Islam coming from the Balkans and the Caucasus) was Turkish while religious education and law were the Arabic language's prerogatives.

The Ottomans based the legitimacy of their system of government and their military expansion on Islamic grounds. In fact, Islamic ideological universalism implicitly authorized the supra-national character of the Empire, and the sultans had been declared the legitimate heirs to the caliphate by the Ottoman court historians.

According to the myth they created, the last Abbasid Caliph in Cairo al-Mutawakkil III (d. 1543) — who most likely was imprisoned in Istanbul— handed over his office to Sultan Salim I in 1517[72], the year in which Cairo fell to the Ottomans. Such legend, gained in credibility also because the Ottomans menaged to seize both the stick and the mantle of the Prophet, until then safeguarded by the Abbasids in Cairo. Furthermore, the historians made up genealogies for the sultans, tracing their Arab origin back to the Prophet Muḥammad and its tribe, the Qurayš[73]. Later on, Sāṭiʿ al-Ḥuṣrī attributed to this manipulation of history the Ottomans' success in securing the loyalty of the Arabs to the Empire, and the consequent delay in the rise of the Arab National movement[74]. However, following this narrative, the Ottoman Empire presented itself as a champion of Sunnism, a warrior state that fought a holy war against the Byzantine frontier; it took the responsibility of protecting and extending the frontiers of the Muslim world, guarding the holy cities of Arabia and organizing the pilgrimage toward them. Moreover, the Ottoman Sultan, alongside the Moghul emperor, was considered the defender of Sunnism against the Shiite Persia and, although he never claimed the title of caliph (that gradually disappeared after the Mongol conquest of Baghdad), Muslims owed him loyalty and religious allegiance as he justified his legitimacy on the divine right of those who rule and maintain the power in the interest of Islam.

However, by the end of the 17th century, the Ottoman system started to decline: the power passed into the weak hand of the grand vizier; the tax-collection method was no longer efficient; the slave-élite

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[72] Peter Holt, "Some Observations on the 'Abbāsid Caliphate of Cairo," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 47, no. 3 (1984): 507.
[73] Tibi, op. cit, 78.
[74] Ibid., 175.

relation weakened as free-born Muslims were allowed to enlist in the military, and the Janissaries (disbanded by Mahmud II in 1826) of the provincial capitals turned into an actual political party[75]. Moreover, in the 18th century two interconnected balances changed: the one between Ottoman central and local governments—that gave room to local ruling families or groups to gain a relative autonomy, while remaining faithful to the Ottoman state—and the one between the empire and the states of Europe, which after the scientific revolution and a considerable growth of their economic power were threatening it militarily from the west and from the north[76]. At this regard, the capitulations[77] are of special interest because of their impact on the society. Indeed, these Sultans' decrees that regulated the relations between the Empire and the Western nations, by granting large privileges and powers to Europeans resident on Ottoman soil contribueted to the formation of a bourgeois class among the non-Muslim population at the expense of the Muslims, thus opening the way to the European domination of the Arab-Muslim lands' internal affairs[78]. Besides, Ottoman Catholics were protected by European missions: the Maronites of Lebanon were under the French umbrella while the Orthodox Christians, especially Greeks, were connected with Russia. Meanwhile, in central Arabia the Wahhabi movement arose, a movement of reform led by Arabs, aimed at returning to the beginnings of Islam and born within the strictly orthodox legal school (*maḏhab*) of Hanbalism—especially within the political theology of Ibn Taimiyya (d. 1328). The founder of the movement, Moḥammad Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (d. 1792), denied the

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[75] Hourani (1962), op. cit. 25-66.
[76] Hourani (2011), op. cit., 263, 264.
[77] According to Angell, "to these decrees in due time the name of Capitulations was given, apparently for the reason that they were divided into articles or chapters. They were personal grants, valid only for the life of the grantor". James B. Angell, "The Turkish Capitulations," *The American Historical Review* 6, no. 2 (Jan., 1901): 254.
[78] Corrao (1985), op. cit., 7, 8.

legitimacy of the Ottoman Sultan as leader of the Islamic *umma* by accusing the Ottoman rule of corruption and by affirming that "only Arabs could bring Islam back to its original pristine purity", he formulated potentially nationalist aspirations against the Ottomans. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia owes its origins to the alliance of ʿAbd al-Wahhāb with the small dynasty of Ibn Saʿūd; this alliance gave to the Wahhabi political and theological notions the possibility to form "the ideology of a political and religious revivalist movement of an archaic and millenarian kind"[79] that survived its founder[80].

When the Ottoman ruling élite became aware of a relative weakening in power and independence, it decided that a step toward the modernity was necessary for its survival. The empire should have become a modern centralized Sate composed of semi-autonomous provinces. Therefore, a plan to reform was enacted in order to make the empire a modern centralized State composed of semi-autonomous provinces: The *Tanẓīmāt* (1839-1876). These reforms were based on two models: traditional confessional communitarianism (whose goal was to reorganize the major religious communities of the Empire in order to limit their autocracy) and Ottomanization, aimed at strengthening the equality of all Ottomans, regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliation, strongly opposed by the Arabs. Thus, a process of secularization took place alongside the centralization and modernization of the administration: the fiscal system was improved, European codes of law were introduced, students were sent to Europe to study and different sectors of state bureaucracy, such as the military and economic organization were reformed. However, as far as the (proto) national identity is concerned the most important reform was

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[79] Tibi (1997), op. cit., 88-90.
[80] For more information, see Hamid Algar, "Wahhabism: A Critical Essay," *Islamic Publications International* 6, no. 3 (2002): 419-433.

the *Vilayet* Law of 1864 that provided a standard framework for provincial administration, dividing the empire into provinces ruled by a governor, thus leading to the crystallization of local identities by starting a process of territorial definition and creating the earliest forms of modern and central statehood in the Arab lands. Lisa Anderson (1987) affirmed that those reforms "inaugurated a period of state formation, comparable to that in Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries[81]". However, it should be stressed that not all the countries had the same faith, for example Transjordan was not one of those new provinces, therefore a Jordanian political society in the true sense of the term did not emerge, and the area suffered from isolation and negligence; nevertheless, the Ottoman influence in Jordan remained essential to the extent that the new Nation-State continued to use Ottoman legal codes until the late Forties.

Moreover, officers of the Ottoman Army started to be trained either in Europe or in the Empire by European instructors and this originated a class of Westernized officers of bourgeois origin that later played a decisive political role in the region, in fact from their ranks emerged the Young Turks[82] and then the Kemalists[83] who actually dissolved the Empire. The same origin is shared also by the Arab nationalist officers, crucial for the Arab national movement. Regarding this, Bernard Lewis (1979) wrote:

> Of all the groups in Middle Eastern society, the army officers have had the longest and most intensive exposure to Western

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[81] Lisa Anderson, "The State in the Middle East and North Africa," *Comparative Politics* 20, no. 1 (1987): 5.

[82] A Turkish nationalist party formed at the beginning of the 20th century that wanted to replace the Ottoman Empire's absolute monarchy with a constitutional government. Their leaders led a rebellion against the absolute rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II in the 1908 Young Turk Revolution.

[83] Kemalism or Atatürkism (as it was implemented by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, d. 1938) is the founding ideology of the Republic of Turkey as embodies the separation of the new secular Turkish state from its Ottoman predecessor.

influence, and have the most vital professional interest in modernization and reform. This may help to explain the phenomenon, unusual in other parts of the world, of the professional officer as the spearhead of social change[84].

Furthermore, in 1869 the first Ottoman Law on citizenship, which was deeply inspired by the 1851 reform of the French legislation on naturalization, was ratified. The 1869 Law discussed citizenship as a political authority issue, outside the Islamic Law: the principle of paternal *jus sanguinis* (art. 1) was adopted, every individual born on Ottoman soil by foreign parents could apply for Ottoman citizenship three years after having come of age (art. 2) and citizenship by conversion could only be requested but not imposed, as it was before. Moreover, the 1869 law was modified for the citizens of those provinces that during the 19th century had gained a certain autonomy, such as the mountains of Lebanon and northern Palestine, Kurdistan in northern Iraq and Egypt. Accordingly, within the Arab countries, where people knew only religious and kinship bonds, the indigenous nationality (*al-ra'awiyya al-mahalliyya*) emerged as an additional form of secular membership, alongside the Ottoman nationality[85]. At the end of the First World War, the Ottoman nationality ceased to exist alongside the political unity of the Ottoman rule, following some decisive events such as the Great Arab revolt[86] and the Sykes-Picot agreement (1916), the Balfour Declaration of (1917) and especially the

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[84] Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey,* 2nd edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), 42.

[85] Parolin, op. cit., 71-75.

[86] Al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī al-Hāšimī (d. 1931), *šarīf* and *amīr* of Mecca, sought independence from the ruling Ottoman Turks aiming to create a single unified Arab state from Aleppo in Syria to Aden in Yemen.

After World War I he refused to sign both the Treaty of Versailles (in protest at the Balfour Declaration and the establishment of British and French mandates in Syria, Iraq, and Palestine) and the Anglo-Hashemite Treaty thus losing the British support against the expansionistic aims of Ibn Sa'ūd, that eventually defeated him in 1924.

His sons Fayṣal and 'Abd Allāh were made rulers of Iraq and Transjordan in 1921.

post-war peace treaties of Sèvres (1920) and Lausanne (1923) that completed the partition of the Empire and drew new political boundaries in the region. The two treaties were very similar as far as the nationality issue was concerned:

> [They] granted former Ottoman subjects the right to opt for Turkish nationality (art. 124) or the nationality of the state the majority of whose population was of the same race as the person exercising the right. […] Jews of other than Turkish nationality who were habitually resident within the boundaries of Palestine on the treaty's coming into force became *ipso facto* citizens of Palestine to the exclusion of any other nationality. Natives of a certain territory who were resident abroad at the time of the treaty's coming into force were allowed to exercise the right of option for the nationality of the territory they were natives of, with the consent of the government exercising authority therein (art. 23)[87].

Notably, Turkey refused to sign the 1920 treaty and, after the Turkish War of Independence led and won by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in Losanna, Turkish sovereignty was preserved through the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in Anatolia. The Turkish republic in the interwar period adopted the Swiss Civil Code and in 1928 enacted a Turkish Nationality Law.

This brief overview clarifies that nationality as a political principle started to become significant among Muslims since the decline of the Ottoman Empire because of both the *Vilayet* Law and increasing contact with the West: by the end of the 19th century some Ottoman Arab intellectuals introduced theories against the right of Turks to rule Arabs, formulating the ideology of Arabism. In fact, when Abdülhamid II (1842-1918) accessed to power in 1876 there was a drastic change in the state's education and linguistic policy (for

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[87] Parolin, op. cit., 77.

example Turkish became mandatory) that indicated both a centralization and a growing of Turkish nationalism. As a consequence, the space for the cultural and literary production of non-Turkish Muslim groups such as Albanians, Arabs, and Kurds lessened and, quoting Soleimani (2016):

> […] it becomes evident that the Ottoman élite's effort to differentiate themselves from other Muslims was informed by their nationalism and ethnic self-perception as the only ethnic group capable of modernizing "the rest"[88].

Later on, patriotism obtained political significance and nationality started to connect with territoriality. Accordingly, Hourani (1962) identifies three main overlapping types of nationalism between the French Campaign in Egypt and the beginning of World War II: religious nationalism, territorial patriotism (especially in Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia), and ethnic or linguistic nationalism.

2. From European rule to the formation of the Arab Nation-States

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire, defined by Hourani (1991) as "the last great expression of the universality of the world of Islam[89]", but especially the rising Western presence in the region with the political and cultural domination that followed, had a central role in the formation of the Arab states and their nation-building processes. In fact, Islamic modernism and Pan-Islamism, Arab nationalism and Pan-Arabism shaped themselves in response to this foreign threat. Nevertheless, the Arab national awakening cannot be considered only an exogenous phenomenon: the West was its counterpoint rather than

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[88] Kamal Soleimani, *Islam and Competing Nationalisms in The Middle East, 1876-1926* (New York: Palgrave McMillian, 2016), 3.
[89] Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Faber&Faber, 1991), Part III, The Ottoman Age.

its leading cause, as Arab nationalists made of the Western colonizer the 'other' to fear and fight against. Therefore, the national movement was triggered by colonialism and its implicit denial of the national existence of the people to whom it was applied, and by doing so it generated both a movement of resistance within the colonial world.

This contributed to the formation of the multilayered Arab national identity, a result of the *supra* and *sub*-state identities[90] with which the state builders would have to cope and that, by implicitly or explicitly separating the territory (state) from the identity (nation), would be one of the major causes of the Arab Nation-States' sovereignty and legitimacy crisis over time[91].

2.1 The *nahḍa* pioneers

Notably, this process was neither fast nor linear. In fact, when the Ottoman Empire was about to collapse, Arab nationalism was still in an initial stage and took the form of a literary renaissance. According to Tibi (1997) "the early Arab nationalists confined themselves to emphasize the existence of an independent Arab cultural nation without demanding a national state"[92], meaning that they either uncritically accepted the existence of a 'nation' under Ottoman rule or criticized the Ottoman government for its despotism but never questioned its social organization. The First Generation of reformers (1830-1870) in Hourani's categorization were mostly linguists and men of letters. In fact, at that time in the Middle East there were neither the subjective nor the objective conditions for a political movement. However, as already stressed, every region followed its peculiar path during the

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[90] Raymod Hinnebusch, "Toward a Historical Sociology of State Formation in the Middle East," *Middle East Critique* 19, no. 3 (2010): 202, 203.
[91] 'Ali, op. cit.
[92] Tibi op. cit., 104.

collapse of the Ottoman Empire and its consequent fragmentation, and so did the writers and the intellectuals of those regions due to many factors. Among these were the extent of the autonomy from the central government reached by their respective countries and their consequential access to the West and to Western thought. In Egypt Napoleon Bonaparte, after his brief campaign (1798-1801), was defeated by the Albanian officer Muḥammad ʿAlī (1769-1849) who — with only nominal rcognition of the Sultan's suzerainty— ruled the country independently[93]. The dynasty that he established governed until the Egyptian Revolution of 1952. 'Ali is considered the founder of modern Egypt. In fact, he created the basis of the country's modern economy, and reformed the transportation and the military system; notably, although high posts in the military hierarchy continued to be awarded to non-Egyptians, within the civilian administration the number of Egyptians started to grow and to secure important positions to the point that not long after Arabic replaced Ottoman Turkish as the language of administration[94].

Most importantly, Muḥammad 'Ali opened professional schools, changed schools' curricula, sent students to Europe, and established a press and an official newspaper thus contributing to the formation of the first intelligentsia of modern Egypt (e.g. al-Tahtāwī)[95]. Conversely in Syria, at the beginning of the 19th century Arab Muslims, embedded in their Islamic background, were still untouched or even hostile to the "new" ideas of reform. Besides, unlike Egypt, they had not yet experienced European occupation, as Bonaparte failed to

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[93] Iliya Harik, "The Origins of the Arab State System," in *The Arab State* ed. Giacomo Luciani (London: Routledge, 1990), 15.

[94] William L. Cleveland and Murtin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009), 72-73.

[95] Afaf Lutfi Sayyid-Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 22, 23.

occupy Syria. On the other hand, the Christian Syrians had already been in contact with European thought since the 16th century through the religious missions established by the Catholic Church within the eastern Christian communities (such as Maronites, Armenians, Copts and Nestorians) under the French protection that created the conditions for the establishment of a network of schools, especially in Lebanon and in Aleppo. It was from these schools that later came many families of religious and laymen intellectuals, fully aware of European thought and masters in Italian, Latin and Arab languages, such as the Bustānī and the Šidīāq families. If it is true that Muslim thinkers of this generation were aware that modern reform was not only a legitimate but a necessary component of the social teaching of Islam, it is also true that Christian thinkers did not have to face the problem of becoming part of the modern world while remaining Muslim, in other words they did not need to defend modern civilization in traditional Islamic terms. Moreover, for Christians, the transformation of the Ottoman Empire into a secular State on the European model meant that they could finally become full-fledged citizens with equal rights and a 'supra religious' national feeling.

Therefore, they could embrace and support such a transformation without the hesitation of those Muslims who still had a deep loyalty to the Empire[96]. Meanwhile Tunisia—officially under Ottoman rule since the 16th century— had been virtually independent since the 17th century, when power passed into the hands of a local military group; later, in the 18th century the Husaynid dynasty took the title of Bey even though the country remained under the formal suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire. The messengers of the new political ideas in the North African region were the officers of the modern army

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[96] Hourani (1962), op. cit., 97.

and in 1860 Tunisia was the first between the other Muslim countries to issue a constitution (a member of the Commission who drafted the Constitution was Ḫayr al-Dīn al-Tūnisī). Although the constitutional government was a short-lived experiment, it formed a political consciousness in the country contributing in the creation of a group of intellectuals and writers that played a crucial role in its future political and cultural development, coming either from the Islamic background of the Zaytuna Mosque or from the School of Military Sciences established by Ahmad Bey (Husaynid Bey of Tunis, d. 1855).

Finally, the intellectuals of Constantinople were still defining themselves as a part of the Ottoman community which included both non-Turks and non-Muslims, they were democrats but stressed the Islamic roots of their fatherland trying to justify the Western institutions that they were willing to adopt in Islamic terms. In the second half of the 19th century these figures organized themselves into a political group, the Young Ottomans[97], politically liberal but with a strong Turkish and Muslim patriotic substrate to which Cairo responded with a form of Egyptian territorial patriotism, articulated by Rifāʿa al-Tahtāwī.

2.1.1 Rifāʿa al-Tahtāwī (1801-1873)

Al-Tahtāwī was one of the imams chosen by *šayḫ* Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār (rector of al-Azhar, d. 1835) to lead a group of students within the first study mission in Paris organized by Muḥammad ʿAlī. He remained in France for five years, from 1826 to 1831, and the experience deeply affected him. He thoroughly studied the French language, Greek philosophy and mythology, geography, arithmetic, and logic; however, what left a permanent mark on him was the thought of

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[97] A secret political group established in 1865 with the aim of modernize the Ottoman society by adopting a constitutional government without abandoning its Islamic roots.

the French Enlightenment, gained from a full access to the works of the major French thinkers of the 18th century, such as Montesquieu, Rousseau (*Social Contract*, 1762), Voltaire, Racine, and Condillac. Al-Tahtāwī kept a diary while he was in Paris, published shortly after his return in Egypt (1834) under the title *Takhlīṣ al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Bārīz* (*The Extraction of Gold or an Overview of Paris*, known as *Paris Diaries*) and then translated into Turkish and made a compulsory reading for Egyptian civil servants; in this document he described institutions and customs of French society, looking at Europe only as a cultural and socio-economic example to follow and never as a colonial power, which happened with the next generations of Arab intellectuals. Regarding this, Abu Rabi' (2004) wrote:

> R. R. al-Tahtāwī, Muḥammad 'Abduh and their colleagues thought that the tension between stagnation and science could be resolved only if the intellectual Muslim élite of the nineteenth century linked its own doctrinal philosophy to the logic of Western science and philosophy. That is to say, all of them advocated the central concept of nineteenth century European modernity: progress. However, in resolving this first contradiction, a second and perhaps more astounding one was revealed: the contradiction of colonialism and science, two givens in the West[98].

As for al-Tahtāwī's perception of the European countries, terminology and geography are indeed noteworthy. In fact, in his early works he regarded Europe as a single land (*bilād*), considering countries such as England or Switzerland as its regions (*iqlīm*) or provinces (*wilāya*). However, as soon as he studied geography in France such terminology became unsatisfactory and, by the 1840, he started to use

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[98] Abu-Rabi' (2004), op. cit., 175, 176.

the term *bilād* to refer to the single European states rather than to the whole continent[99].

Once back in Egypt al-Tahtāwī became editor of the newspaper *al-Waqā'i' al-Miṣriyya* (the Egyptian affairs) and in 1836 founded a language school, and launched through it an important movement of translation. He then wrote many books promoting modern education both for girls and boys and urging the clergy to integrate secular modern disciplines in the training of its members[100].

As far as political authority is concerned, al-Tahtāwī had a conventional Islamic view, thus he always remained within the tradition of Islamic thought while enriching it with new and significant developments. In other words, according to al-Tahtāwī, the principles on which European progress was based had their equivalents in Islamic culture: *šarī'a* structure was close to the rationalist Natural Law of modern Europe (even though he claimed that the door of *iǧtihād* needed to be reopened to reinterpret the Islamic law in conformity with modern needs), French patriotism corresponded to Islamic solidarity, and reason, as used in Western science, was applied even in the most traditional of Islamic disciplines, jurisprudence. He was clearly concerned with pushing for these principles, while giving them an indigenous character and even a universal character. He also stressed the centrality of political justice as the necessary condition for the subjects' well-being, prosperity and the advancement of knowledge. Moreover, according to him, Rousseau's legislator—the embodiment of reason that helps the masses to pursue the good as they are not equipped for self-government[101]—has affinities with the function of the

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[99] Ayalon, op. cit., 18, 19.
[100] Kassab, op. cit., 39-44.
[101] Harvey Fireside, "The Concept of the Legislator in Rousseau's Social Contract," *The Review of Politics* 32, no. 2 (1970): 191-196.

Prophet as Muslim philosophers described it. Besides, as Rousseau stresses that the people's consent is necessary for the exercise of power, al-Taḥtāwī affirms that people could and should participate actively in the process of government and that they should be educated for this purpose.

Finally, as for the idea of Nation, he was deeply influenced by Montesquieu's thought, as the idea of a geographically limited community is central in his work. According to him, States rise and fall due to causes that are to be found in the 'spirit' of the nation, the love for which represents the basis of all the political virtues[102]. Accordingly, love for the country (*ḥubb al-waṭan*) is the leading factor contributing to a civilized community; the citizen has many duties toward his country such as unity, submission to law and sacrifice, but he also enjoys many rights, above all the right to freedom. Under this perspective *ḥubb al-waṭan* comes to have for al-Taḥtāwī the same meaning that *ʿaṣabiyya* had for Ibn Ḫaldūn, a sense of solidarity that binds together people living within the same community and that constitutes the basis of their social strength. However—and this is his original contribution to the debate—his emphasis is not only on the mutual duties of the *umma* but of those who live together in the same country. *Ḥubb al-waṭan* becomes therefore a carrier of territorial patriotism in the modern sense and consequently the *waṭan* takes the place of the *umma*, as the brotherhood between the people transcends both religion and the blood ties narrated by Ibn Ḫaldūn. When al-Taḥtāwī refers to his *waṭan* he defines it as Egyptian, not Arab; according to him, Modern Egypt is both a distinct and historically continuous reality, the legitimate descendant of the land of the Pharaohs

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[102] Hourani (1962), op. cit., 69-83.

and in this sense it is both part of the Islamic *umma* and constitutes a separate *umma* itself.

2.1.2 Ḫayr al-Dīn al-Tūnisī (1820-1890)

In Tunis, the reformer Ḫayr al-Dīn believed, like al-Tahtāwī, that the principles of progress and prosperity were freedom and justice, and he tried to convince his compatriots that these principles were not tied to Christianity but they had to be considered the modern equivalent of those found in the spirit of the *šarīʻa*. In this regard, he insisted on the importance of the principle of *maṣlaḥa*, public interest/good[103]: the interpretation or ruling form to be chosen is the one that better serves the public interest/good of the Muslim community. In other words the *šarīʻa* is indeed of divine origin but should not be viewed as a fixed code. Ḫayr al-Dīn's major work was *Aqwam al-masālik fī maʻrifat aḥwāl al-mamālik* (*The Straightest Path in Knowing the States of Kingdoms*), published in Tunis in 1867 and where—unlike al-Tahtāwī whose Parisian diary is often recalled in the book—Ḫayr al-Dīn focused on the Islamic *umma*, not on the nation, meaning that his ideas applied to all the Islamic states as Islamic while the uniqueness of each Nation was not conceived. Moreover, again unlike al-Tahtāwī, he was aware of the colonialist ambitions of the European powers, therefore his view of Europe was more critical and less idyllic.

As for Ḫayr al-Dīn's personal and public life, he was born in the Caucasus and moved to Istanbul at a young age. Later on he was taken into the service of Aḥmad, Bey of Tunis, where he received both a modern and religious education and learned French. The Bey sent him in Paris where he remained for four years, a very significant experience

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[103] The juristic principle of *maṣlaḥa* (welfare) or *maṣaliḥ al-ʻibād* (the welfare of people) have been developed by early Muslim jurists such as al-Ġazālī, Ibn Taymiyya, and most specifically Imām Ibrāhīm Ibn Isāq al-Šaṭibī (d. 1388). Abu-Rabiʻ, op. cit., 136.

for his formation, as it had been for al-Tahtāwī. Ḫayr al-Dīn was always very active politically, his goals being the application of the principle of justice through the strengthening of the ministers' power to limit the ruler's power—an effort that the Bey resented and defeated—and, above all, the Porte recognition of the autonomy of Tunis within the Ottoman Empire and the hereditary right of the Husaynid family in order to counterbalance the French colonialist ambitions in the region.

He finally reached the latter in 1870 as France had been weakened by the war with Germany and, as soon as Tunis was proclaimed an autonomous region of the Ottoman Empire, he became at first minister in control of interior, finance and foreign affairs and then, in 1873, Prime Minister. When his political career in Tunis ended, as he lost the support of England, France and Italy—the three States which had interest in the region—he moved to Constantinople, convinced that the survival of the Empire was necessary for the welfare of Islam and in 1878 became grand vizier[104].

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[104] Kassab, op. cit., 43.

2.1.3 Aḥmad Fāris al-Šidyāq (1804-1887)

Aḥmad Fāris al-Šidyāq came from a Maronite family but converted first to the Protestantism, then to Islam (that is why he added Aḥmad to his name, probably after he met Aḥmad Bey of Tunis in Paris) and finally is said to have become a Catholic before he died. His brother, the historian As'ad, converted to Protestantism before him and as a result was imprisoned and sentenced to death by the Maronite Patriarch. Because of this, al-Šidyāq's social criticism implied a harsh attack against the Maronite hierarchy.

He travelled throughout Europe and beyond as he was sent by the American missionaries to Egypt and to Malta (where he worked as a translator) and later he went to England and France where he stayed for few years and published a set of *maqāmāt*[105] under the original title *Al-Sāq ʿalā al-sāq fī mā huwa al-Fāryāq* (*One Leg over Another* or *The Pigeon on the Tree Branch,* 1855), in which he recorded his experiences like al-Tahtāwī did in his Parisian diary[106]. After France he moved to Constantinople where, in 1860, he founded the first important Arab newspaper, *al-Ğawā'ib* (*The Wonders*). His vision of identity, shared by all the early pioneers such as Nāṣīf al-Yāziğī (1800-1871) and al-Bustānī, was based on the Arabic literary heritage and common Arab history. They all stressed the need for a solidarity around this identity that could overcome religious diversity while remaining within the Ottoman boundaries. He focused mostly on language thus he worked to modernize the Arabic literature and the Arabic language through translation and creative writing.

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[105] An Arabic prosimetric literary genre which alternates the Arabic rhymed prose (*saǧʿ*) with intervals of poetry rich of rhetorical extravagance.
[106] Tibi, op. cit., 102.

2.1.4 Buṭrus al-Bustānī (1819-1883)

Al-Bustāni comes from the same Maronite community of al-Šidyāq, like him he was educated at the Maronite seminary of 'Ayn Waraqa, converted to Protestantism and started to work for the American missionaries as an Arabic teacher and translator. In the seminary he was taught Syriac, Latin and Italian and later on, when he moved to Beirut in 1840, he studied and learned Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, thus mastering all the languages of the earliest scriptural texts. He also knew French and English and was able to translate the Bible into Arabic. Through all his works, he contributed to modernize the Arabic language aiming at making it capable of expressing the concepts of modern thought without betraying itself. Working toward this goal, he started an encyclopedia (*Dā'irat al-ma'ārif*, *The dictionary of knowledge*; 1876), carried on by his sons after his death and wrote an Arabic dictionary in two volumes (*Muḥīṭ al-muḥīṭ*, *The Breadth or Diameter of the Ocean*; 1870)[107].

He was convinced that the Near East needed to learn from modern Europe the importance of a national unity that overcomes religious affiliations as, according to him, all who speak Arabic, whether Christians or Muslims, are Arabs[108]. Even though he still felt a sense of belonging to the Ottoman Empire and his loyalty to the sultan had never been in question, he perceived the smaller territorial unit where he lived, Syria, as his *waṭan*. In fact, the motto of *al-Ǧinān* (*The Paradises*), the magazine that his family published since 1870 until 1886 (when it was shut down due to increasing Ottoman censorship) was "the love for the country is an act of faith" (*ḥubb al-waṭan min al-'imān*). Moreover, in 1860 he stated:

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[107] George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1939), 42-45.
[108] Hourani (1962) op. cit., 99-102.

It is for *abnā' al-waṭan* [the sons of the fatherland] to claim their *waṭan*'s protection of their most precious rights [*ḥuqūq*], namely, their life, honor and property, including freedom [*ḥurriyya*] of their civic [*madanī*], cultural and religious rights; in return, they should devote themselves to the attainment of their country's welfare[109].

Al-Ǧinān and the other magazine published by al-Bustāni in 1860, *Nafīr Sūrīa* (*Appeal to Syria*[110]), were the first organs of Arab cultural nationalism. Furthermore, in 1863, convinced that only knowledge leads to enlightenment, he founded the National School, *al-madrasa al-waṭaniyya*, the first secular school in Syria, based on national rather than religious principles. Notably, the principal Arabic teacher of the al-Bustāni school was another leading figure in the intellectual life of the period, the above mentioned Lebanese scholar Nāṣīf al-Yāziǧī, with whom he also founded "the Literary and Scientific Society" (*ǧam'īyyat al-adab wa al-'ulm*), the first literary society in the Arab world, initially composed only of Europeans and Syrian Christians and later superseded by "The Syrian Scientific Society" (*ǧam'īyyat al-'ilmiyya al-sūriyya*), which included also Western educated Muslims and Druzes[111].

2.1.5 Adīb Isḥāq (1856-1885): the first political theorist of Arab nationalism

Isḥāq was Syrian Christian by origin and received a Jesuit education, but moved to Egypt at a very young age where he pursued a literary career and produced many publications. Among these was the

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[109] Ayalon, op. cit., 52
[110] Founded in 1860, during the Mount Lebanon civil war, a rebellion started in the north of Mount Lebanon by the Maronite peasants against their Druze lords and ended with a massacre in Damascus: Around 20,000 Christians died and more than 500 villages and churches have been destroyed.
[111] Kassab, op. cit., 50

newspaper *Miṣr* (*Egypt*), published at first in Alexandria and then in Paris. Tibi (1997) defines him as "the first political theorist of Arab nationalism" because of his definition of the Nation which transcended literature and that Isḥāq discussed in the treaties collected by his brother and known as *al-Durar* (*The Pearls*)[112]. According to him, "there is no *waṭan* without *ḥurriyya* [freedom], they are identical [...] and the *waṭan* cannot exist without rights"[113]. However, despite the modernity of his political thinking for his time, just as al-Bustāni he remained always loyal to the Ottoman Empire and never questioned its existence.

2.1.6 The notion of Muslim world of Ǧamāl al-Dīn al-Afġānī (1838-1897)

According to Cemil Aydin (2017) the "Idea of the Muslim World" and the Muslim identity which resulted from it, originated from both pan-Islamism and Islamophobia, the roots of which lie in the late 19th century when Muslims themselves, as al-Afġānī states, "strategically essentialized a notion of the Muslim world driven by a political will[114]". Indeed, unlike al-Tahtāwī who regarded Europe only as an example to follow and never as a threat or Ḫayr al-Dīn who, although more aware of the imperialist European ambitions, was convinced that they could be resisted with the help of the liberal Powers themselves, al-Afġānī faced a completely different reality. In fact, in 1881 France had occupied Tunisia and in 1882 England had taken power in Egypt: the dangerous nature of the European Powers suddenly became very clear. At first, this new awareness seemed to favor the Young Ottomans narrative, leading to the deposition of sultan Abdülaziz and the promulgation of the 1876 Ottoman constitution, but

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[112] Tibi, op. cit., 104-106; Hourani (1962) op. cit., 195, 196.
[113] Ayalon, op. cit., 53.
[114] Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World. A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 231, 232.

the constitutional movement had many enemies such as the *'ulamā'* and the new sultan himself, Abdülhamid II who ended it by exiling and then sentencing to death its creator, the official Midhat *Pasha*. Abdülhamid II then gradually transformed his image of a benevolent liberal monarch, father of all his subjects regardless of their faith into the sultan of Sunni Islam, protector of the Pilgrimage to Mecca, "shadow of God on earth, appealing to all Muslims to rally around the throne in defense of the *umma*"[115]. The aim of the Pan-Islamic propaganda initiated by Abdülhamid II was securing the support of the Arabs, the largest Muslim group of his Empire and resisting European control of the African territories through their help. Pan-Islamism in this perspective had been the Ideological weapon of the Islamic modernism formulated by al-Afġānī. In fact, although his aim was to unite Islam against a common enemy, he never wanted the autocracy of the sultan as the foundation of that unity: its revolutionary pan-Islamism was composed of both a religious and a national sentiment and by a form of European radicalism, later on Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī worked to prove that Afġānī's writings never actually formulated a political framework for Pan-Islamism; al-Afġānī took the European idea of Nation, purified it of its secular connotations and declared that all Muslims were a single Nation. However, he later "reduced it to a form of consciousness which implied the solidarity of all Muslims against colonialism and completely dropped the idea of a Pan-Islamic state"[116]. As for the life of this peculiar intellectual of such importance for the Islamic world of the late 19th century, some aspects are still obscure: in fact, al-Afġānī declared himself to be a descendant of the Prophet of Afghan origins while his enemies claimed him to be Persian implying that he was a

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[115] Hourani (1962), op. cit., 106.
[116] Tibi, op. cit., 88.

Shiite. He spent his early youth in India where he received a traditional Islamic education and acquired also the knowledge of sciences and mathematics of modern Europe[117]. Then he moved to Afghanistan seeking a political career that turned out to be brief. Thus, he went to Istanbul and then to Egypt where he met Muḥammad 'Abduh, stayed for eight years and became the guide of a group of young al-Azhar students that were to become central for the political history of their country—like the leader of the Egyptian nation Sa'ad Zaġlūl (1859-1927)—and that would continue to be influenced by their master's thought. In 1884 al-Afġānī moved to Paris where he and 'Abduh published an Arabic periodical, *al-'Urwa al-'uṯqà* (*The firmest bond*[118]) that had the scope of analyzing the policy of the European countries in the Muslim world and stressed Muslim unity[119]. The magazine invited Islamic intellectuals and notables to join its membership and pay a subscription fee; many Middle Eastern intellectuals such as the eccentric Persian scholar Mīrzā Muḥammad Bāqir Bawānātī (d. 1893), the Egyptian Jewish journalist and activist Yaʿqūb Sannūʿ (d. 1912) and Qāsim Amīn cooperated in order to support the publication of the magazine in Europe and helped al-Afġānī obtain information from European newspapers[120].

Al-Afġānī was aware that the success of Europe derived from its modern knowledge but according to him that knowledge could not be acquired simply by imitation as it implied a different system of social

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[117] Kassab, op. cit., 43, 44.

[118] The term *al-'Urwa al-Wuṯqā* derived from the Qur'anic verse 'whoever disbelieves in Satan and believes in Allah he indeed has laid hold on the firmest bond (*al-'urwa al-wuṯqà*), which shall not break off, and Allah is Hearing, Knowing' (*Sūrat al-Baqara*: *Āya* 256). Hirano Junichi, "Islamic Moderate Trends and Printing Media: A Reflection on Modern Islamic Reformers in the Arab World," *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies* 2, no. 2 (March 2009): 43.

[119] Hourani (1962), op. cit., 110-129.

[120] Hirano, op. cit., 43-50. See also Omar Imady, *The Rise and Fall of Muslim Civil Society* (Salinas: MSI Press, 2005), 39.

morality. He read Guizot's *Histoire de la Civilisation en Europe* (1828; translated in Arabic in 1877) and considered Islam more as a civilization than a religion: the *umma* in its earliest times was indeed a flourishing civilization founded on the values of reason, unity, religious solidarity (*taʿṣṣub dīnī* opposed to *taʿaṣṣub ǧinsī*, the blood tie was overcome by the religious bond) and individual and social development: such values and the sense of responsibility that the members of the community felt for each other had to be restored. Hirano (2009) quotes a meaningful passage of al-Afġānī on this subject:

> Arabs, Turks, Persians, Indians, Egyptians, and Maghribis had originally held onto their religious reins so tightly and kept so deep a kinship, that when one of their companions was troubled by misfortune or their country was being loosened and divided, they would all feel great sorrow[121].

Al-Afġānī talked about the Islamic civilization in order to address the racist claims of some European intellectuals, such as Ernest Renan, who considered Islam incompatible with science and culture. To these accusations he replied that Islam was in complete harmony with the principles of the scientific reason unlike Christianity that confined the direct knowledge of divine truth only to the priesthood. Accordingly, he reopened the door of *iǧtihād* (reasoning) to interpret the Qur'an and the words and actions of the Prophet (*ḥadīṯ*) and to adapt Islamic law in order to accommodate the necessity of the times[122]. For al-Afġānī, *iǧtihād* is indeed an eternal process as the human begins would always have to find the interpretation of God's words which is right for their time.

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[121] Ibid., 45.
[122] Tibi, op. cit., 88-92.

2.2 The Arab thinkers' responses to the European threat

Al-Afġānī's standpoint shows how, when the dangerous nature of the European Powers became clear (with the French occupation of Algeria in 1830 and Tunisia in 1881, and the British occupation of Egypt in 1882), the Arab perspective toward the West completely changed. Besides, as noted before, at the beginning of the 20th century, the Ottoman nationality ceased to exist alongside the political unity of the Ottoman rule, and new artificial boundaries were drawn in the region. Such boundaries were rarely congruent with indigenous social formations or economic systems, and cut off many cities (especially in the Gulf) from their hinterlands and divided ethnic units (e.g. Kurds) among different new states[123]. Indeed, this generation of reformers lived in a very different world compared to the previous one: change could not be avoided anymore and thinkers and intellectuals articulated different answers. Some (such as Kawākibī, Riḍā and ʿAbd al-Rāziq) tried to adapt Islam to the "new", a process already started by al-Afġānī. Certainly, the most representative figure of the religious approach is Muḥammad 'Abduh, whose project of Islamic modernization influenced many intellectuals, leading to different outcomes, such as the views of Rašīd Riḍā, who took the modernist *salafiyya*[124] movement toward conservatism, and Aḥmad Luṭfī Sayyīd who emphasized the modernization aspect of 'Abduh's project and was eager to give increasing importance to secular human experience. In fact, alongside the Islamic reformism of al-Afġānī and 'Abduh, another current of thought arose around the turn of the 19th century, a current rooted in the European idea of nationhood and that proposed solutions within a modern Western institutional frame, represented, along with Sayyīd, by

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[123] Anderson (1987), op. cit., 6.
[124] From *salaf* (the ancestors); it refers to the first generations of Muslims.

Adīb Isḥāq, Qāsim Amīn, Sāṭi` al-Ḥuṣrī, Mīšīl ʿAflaq and Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (1889-1973):

Therefore, the present section presents these thinkers according to the following chronological systematization[125]:

- 1879-1904; from the ʿUrābī revolt (1789-1882) against the *Khedive* Tawfīq *Pasha* (d. 1892) to the Entente Cordiale, a series of agreement through which the United Kingdom and France mutually recognized their colonial zones of influence.

- 1907-1936; from the official foundation of the national political party *al-Ḥizb al-Waṭanī* led by Muṣṭafā Kāmil *Pasha* to the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty through which the United Kingdom was required to withdraw all its troops from Egypt (except the Suez Canal).

     The Ottoman administrative development started with the *Tanẓīmāt* was suspended when the Europeans dismantled the Empire, and for many countries of the region the European rule in the interwar period was characterized by discontinuity and lack of legitimacy. Indeed, the liberal oligarchies in charge in the first decades of independence in MENA suffered serious legitimacy deficits because of the artificiality of their borders quite unrepresentative of the subjects (as pointed out by Binder, 1999), the presence of a growing *supra*-state Arab nationalism and the Palestine conflict.

- 1940-1960; from the end of the mandate system to the MENA region countries' achievement of independence (1962 Algeria).

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[125] See Corrao (1985), op. cit., 15-25.

2.2.1 Islam and modernity: Muḥammad 'Abduh (1849-1905)

Muḥammad 'Abduh, born in a village of the Egyptian Delta, was not a political agitator like his master, especially after the British exiled him for supporting the Egyptian nationalist uprising led by the officer Aḥmed Urābī (d. 1911) in 1879. During the exile he spent several years in Lebanon and then moved to Paris where he published, with al-Afġānī, the periodical *al-'Urwa al-'uṯqà*; when he went back to Egypt he was convinced that Islam could only be revitalized through cultural rather than political activity[126]. Like al-Afġānī, he stressed the essentiality of *iǧtihād* insisting on the necessity that only those in possession of the necessary knowledge could exercise it and that two essential principles had to be employed:

- The principle of public interest (*maṣlaḥa*) always accepted by the Mālikī school followed by 'Abduh, and according to which the general welfare of mankind at any time needs to lead the reasoning and the interpretation of the Book.
- The principle of *talfīq* ('piecing together') according to which in any case a judge could choose the interpretation of the law that best meets the needs of the time and the circumstances through a comparison and even a synthesis of the four legal schools' perspectives, aiming at the creation of a unified and modern system of Islamic law.

Moreover, he continued the process, started by his predecessors, of identifying certain traditional concepts of Islamic thought with the dominant ideas of modern Europe; for example, like al-Tahtāwī, he considered the *šarī'a* the equivalent of the European national law and suggested that parliament and *šūrà* were two slightly different versions

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[126] Ibrahim Abu-Rabi', op. cit., 92-95.

of the same notion, being both instruments that allowed the voice of the ruled to be heard by the ruler[127].

Furthermore—even though for him the *umma* was a moral community, thus nothing prevented it from dividing into National-Sates—'Abduh feared the Arab National awakening as its secular nationalism could challenge Islam and its all-embracing system: to him national education without religion was simply unthinkable[128]. He accepted and even stressed the need for change but for him that change needed to be linked to the principles of Islam as Islam could work as the moral basis of a modern and progressive society. On this subject, Kassab (2010) wrote:

> 'Abduh claimed that Islam, more than any other religion and certainly more than Christianity, was akin to modernity because it naturally incorporated reason, justice, equality, and freedom in its creed. In fact, he went so far as to claim that modern Europe was Muslim in its modernity without realizing it[129].

In 1887, 'Abduh founded the journal *al-Manār* (*The Minaret*) with one of his disciples, Rašīd Riḍā who continued to publish it until his death in 1935. The journal included articles of many prominent Islamic reformers, such as al-Kawākibī and, because of its judicial discussions and its news on the Islamic world it became known even in Indonesia, India, Syria and North Africa. 'Abduh is said to have received many letters form Indian Muslims and his religious work *Risāla al-Tawḥīd* (*Treatise on the oneness of* God, 1897) has been translated into Urdu and later taught as a religious text in Islamic universities and schools in India and Pakistan[130].

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[127] Ayalon, op. cit., 122.
[128] Hourani, op. cit., 130-160.
[129] Kassab, op. cit., 44.
[130] Hirano, op. cit., 44.

3.2.2 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī (1849-1903) and his critique of despotism

Al-Kawākibī was an orthodox Muslim born in Aleppo from a family of Kurdish origin. He received a traditional Arabic and Turkish education and worked as an official and journalist gaining the nickname of *Abū al-ḍu'afā'* (Father of the Weak) as he was accustomed to to give free legal advices to indigent people[131]. He remained in Aleppo until 1898, when, as his relations with the Turkish authorities worsened, he moved to Cairo and entered the circle of 'Abduh and Riḍā. He published many articles in the review *al-Manār* and later collected them in two volumes: *Umm al-qurà* (*Mother of the villages*) and *Ṭabā'i' al-Istibdād* (*Features of Tyranny*). In the first, twenty-two characters representing scholars from as many parts of the Muslim world debate over the reform of Islam while assembled in Mecca in occasion of the pilgrimage. Notably, the symposium concludes with a digression on the caliphate in which Kawākibī questions the Ottoman rule and its capability to lead the Islamic community stressing the necessity of a shift of power inside the *umma*, from the Turks to the Arabs (as only the Qurayš, the tribe of the Prophet, can rightfully lead it).

Instead, *Ṭabā'i' al-Istibdād* is an articulate critique of despotism; the author argues that despotic rule is destructive to man and can only be ended by education and enlightenment while Islam is rooted in justice, equality and consultation[132]. Both books were published anonymously in Cairo and were widely known both in Egypt and in Syria.

According to al-Kawākibī, the Arabs were the only legitimate representative of Islam and in this sense he can be considered a pioneer

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[131] George Antonius, op. cit., 78-80.
[132] Tibi, op. cit., 170-177.

of Arab Nationalism although he has always been more an Islamic revivalist than a conscious nationalist since he never advocated a total separation of the Arab lands from the Ottoman Empire. His aim was to stress the Arab specificity within the Empire, as he was convinced that the reformist potential of Islamic societies lied in their Arab component, especially in the Bedouin characteristics of pride, solidarity and freedom alongside their peculiar linguistic, cultural and historical ties[133].

2.2.3 The proto feminism of Qāsim Amīn (1865-1908)

Amīn received a thorough education both in Egypt and in France (Montpellier) and became a prominent judge in Cairo: an important social and professional position that helped in the spreading of his ideas. Although he cannot be defined as a feminist in the current acceptation of the term since he never advocated political rights for women, his contribution had been crucial to the emancipation of women and the debate about their role within the Eastern society.

He wrote two books that Kassab (2010) placed "among the major publications of the first *Nahḍa*"[134]: *Taḥrīr al-mar'a* (*The Liberation of Women*) in 1899 and *Al-Mar'a al-ǧadīda* (*The New Women*) in 1900. In *Taḥrīr al-mar'a,* Amīn stressed the importance of education as the only means that can improve women's role within the Eastern society: according to him, Islam had always recognized women as equal to men and above all, educating women is the right way to educate the whole Nation. However, it is with *Al-Mar'a al-ǧadīda* that a real rupture with the past occurred: influenced by the concept of evolution as formulated by the English philosopher Herbert Spencer (d.1903), Amīn made the science and social thought of the Modern

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[133] Kassab, op. cit., 54-59.
[134] Ibid., 51.

West his standards of judgment, abandoning the quest for the right interpretation of the Qur'an and the *šarī'a* for the great concepts of the 19th century, such as freedom, progress and civilization. Thus, the freedom of women became the basis of all other kinds of freedom: "when woman is free, the citizen is free"[135]. He individuated four stages that led to the attainment of full rights for women, placing the Eastern countries in the third phase and the European in the fourth one. They are the following: The state of nature, when women were free; the formation of the family, when women were restrained; the formation of civil society, when women were conscious of their rights but could not exercise them; and the period of real civilization, when women finally reached equality and obtained full rights. Notably, for Amīn Islam cannot be taken as a model of perfect civilization because it reached its climax and full development before the true science arose. Perfection lies in the future, not in any wrongfully idealized past and no religion, not even Islam, creates by itself a State or a society, as claimed by 'Abduh. Islam and civilization belong to different dimensions and civilization deserves to develop its own path.

2.2.4 Rašīd Riḍā (1865-1935)'s account of Caliphate

Rašīd Riḍā was born in a Lebanese village where he received a traditional education at the local Qur'anic School. Later he had the chance to continue his studies in Tripoli, first at the Turkish government school and then at the school of Ḥusayn al-Ǧisr (1845-1909), the Sunni Muslim theologian who thought him, alongside Islamic sciences and Arabic, the new Western sciences and basic French.

Notably, Riḍā is a key figure of the Modernist-*salafiyya* movement alongside al-Afġānī and 'Abduh. In this regard, Abdullah

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[135] Hourani (1962), op. cit., 167.

Saeed (2013)[136] explained how such a movement emerged during the 19th century in response to the context of the time but he stressed also that it was deeply influenced by the ideas of innovators from the 16th and the 17th centuries, such as the Indian theologian Šāh Walī Allāh (d.1762)[137] who carried the legacy of Aḥmad al-Fārūqī al-Sirhindī (d.1624), founder of the Sufi order *Naqšbandiyya*, to which Riḍā belonged for a while, extremely impressed as he was by al-Ġazālī's (d.1111) work while deepening his studies of the Islamic classics. However, he later abandoned it fearing the spiritual dangers of the mystical systems that, according to him, were presenting Islam as a passive submission, especially in a time when Islam needed strength to fight for its own survival. It was probably because of this experience and his increasing suspicions toward Sufism, that in later years he approached the Wahhabism—whose tradition was more alive in Syria than in Egypt—and especially the teaching of Ibn Taymiyya. Muḥammad Ibn al-Wahhāb (d.1792) was indeed very critical toward the Sufi practices and his version of Islamic reformism was a movement back in time, toward the glorious Islamic past. Moreover, aiming to understand the significance of the *salafiyya* movement and its development over time, it is useful to place Riḍā, 'Abduh and Afġānī within the "colonial *salafiyya*", the third phase of Abu-Rabi''s (2004) classification of the movement. The author divided it into four stages: the classical *salafiyya* represented by Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855) and Ibn Taymiyya (d.1328); the pre-colonial *salafiyya* embodied by the

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[136] Abdullah Saeedm, "Salafiya, Modernism and Revival," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*, ed. John L. Esposito and Emad El-Din Shahin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 27-41.

[137] Šāh Walī Allāh can truly be called a "modernizer" as he argued that: "The divine laws differ due to reasons and beneficial purposes. This is because the religious rituals of God were rituals for intended purposes and the quantities in their legislation take into account the situation and the customs of those on whom they were imposed" (Ibid., p. 29).

religious and political movement of the *wahhabiyya*, born in response to the decline of the Ottoman empire and the increasing strength of Shi'a in Iran; the already mentioned colonial *salafiyya* of Riḍā, 'Abduh and Afġānī; the post-colonial *salafiyya* represented by the leading member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood Sayyīd Quṭb (1906-1966), and finally the post 1967 *salafiyya* that include also the main Islamic movements of the Arab world such as for example the National Salvation Front in Algeria, the *Ḥizb al-Amal* in Jordan and *Ḥizb al-Nahḍa* in Tunisia[138].

It was within this theoretical and theological background that Riḍā's thought developed. According to him, the teaching of Islam already included prosperity and modernity if followed properly. In fact, Islam shared many principles with the modern civilization such as the principle of activity (*ǧihād*, positive effort). The decay of Islamic civilization was therefore imputable to a misleading tenet of Islam: only by being truly Islamic the *umma* could have taken back its deserved leading role amongst the other civilizations of the world. Europeans replaced religion with nationality but Muslims needed to find unity within their religion if they wanted to succeed. In fact, Islam is not only a Church, it is a community in many senses, it is of course a religious community but it is also cultural, political and above all linguistic since Arabic is the universal language of devotion. Moreover, following his master 'Abduh, he gave particular importance to the principles of *maṣlaḥa* (that became even more central as it almost replaced analogy, *qiyās*) and *talfīq* that according to him should have been applied more systematically[139].

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[138] Abu-Rabi', op. cit., 65, 66.
[139] Ibid., 222-244.

Moreover, for the purpose of the present query, it is essential to focus on Riḍā''s account of caliphate and how it developed in response to the challenges of his time, mirroring three precise and peculiar historical phases such as the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the emergence of the European threat and the deposition of the last caliph. In fact, he presented it at first "as the symbol of a constitutionally limited government, then as the symbol of an independent Muslim power and finally as the spiritual leader of an ideal *salafī* religious institution, whose main task was to modernize the *šarī'a*"[140].

When the last Sultan of the Ottoman Empire Abdülhamid II was still alive, Riḍā' did not advocate for the establishment of a spiritual caliphate but for a religious society under the Sultan-Caliph, a "caliphate of necessity" that could reunite all the Muslim countries against the common Western enemy. He never considered the Ottomans real or ideal caliphs because their *'aṣabiyya* was based on *mulk* (temporal power) and not on religion but he didn't want to risk the collapse of the last temporal power capable of protecting Islam and he thought that more autonomy for all the provinces was the only solution for its surviving. Thus, before World War I he never advocated the formation of an Arab Caliphate, as he was critical toward any form of racial nationalism, a European concept that he considered incompatible with Muslim interests, as it could undermine the unity of the *umma*.

Eventually, when the First World Conflict broke out, the future political independence of Islam became for him the central issue: the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was then inevitable and the major threat was the European control of the Arab-Muslim lands. In 1915, he

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[140] Mahmoud Haddad, "Arab Religious Nationalism in the Colonial Era: Rereading Rashīd Riḍā's Ideas on the Caliphate," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117, no. 2 (1997): 254.

theorized the "General Organic Law of the Arab Empire", a thorough plan for an Arab (Qurayshite) caliphate supported by the British and founded on the separation between religious and temporal powers. However, when he realized that the British were not committed to give their support, fearing that the caliphate was going to end for good, Riḍā' decided to back the Arab Revolt of *Šarīf* Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī al-Hāšimī (1854-1931) of Mecca in 1916 although he did not consider it a movement of political emancipation of the Arabs from the Ottomans (to whom he still pledged allegiance and loyalty) but instead a way to protect the holy territory from the European control. Nevertheless, he later turned against *Šarīf* Ḥusayn as he made secret agreements with the British that put at risk the independence of Syria and Iraq[141].

In 1922, Turkey won the Greco-Turkish War, the Turkish National Movement culminated in the formation of a new Grand National Assembly led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk that, in 1923, declared the establishment of a Republic in Turkey. Moreover, in 1922, the last Sultan and caliph of the Empire, Mehmed VI (Waḥīd al-Dīn, 1861-1926), was deposed and exiled by Atatürk, who appointed Abdulmejid II (1868-1944) as caliph in Istanbul, moving the center of the State to Ankara, a big step toward the secularization. In this phase Riḍā' supported the Turkish National Movement and even their decision of deposing the caliph but stressed the emptiness of the newborn spiritual caliphate in Ankara.

It is within this historical and political background that Riḍā' wrote his famous treatise *al-Ḫilāfa aw al-Imāma al-'Uẓmà* (*The Caliphate or*

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[141] The Ḥusayn-McMahon correspondence is a series of letters exchanged in 1915/1916 between *šarīf* Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī, *amīr* of Mecca, and Sir Henry McMahon, the British high commissioner in Egypt. The correspondence traded British support of an independent Arab state in exchange for Arab assistance in opposing the Ottoman Empire. It was later contradicted by the incompatible terms of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, concluded between Britain and France in May 1916, and Britain's Balfour Declaration of 1917.

the Grand Imamate, 1922-23), the culmination of his political and religious thought. The treatise is divided in two parts, in the first he postulated that the caliphate should be of Qurayshite lineage as the Arabs have primacy in the religious sphere and presented the theoretical foundations of the caliphate in accordance with the theories of many medieval jurists, especially al-Māwardī (d.1058). Besides, he individuated three types of caliphate:

- The ideal caliphate existed under the *Rāšidūn* and under the Omayyad caliph 'Umar which he called "the fifth of the *Rāšidūn*;

- The caliphate or imamate of necessity existed under the Omayyads and Abbasids that did not have the necessary knowledge to exercise *iğtihād*;

- The caliphate of tyranny or conquest to which belonged the Ottoman Caliphate. He affirmed that even this type of caliphate must be obeyed if there are no valid alternatives but also it must be overthrown as soon as it becomes possible (in this sense Turkish Nationalists actions are legitimate, even though they failed as they substituted one caliphate of conquest with another).

The second part of the treatise focuses on Riḍā''s suggestions for creating a new caliphate and within it he stresses three central themes: the desirability of civil government and consultative and democratic rule, the need for an Arab spiritual caliphate, and the preservation of a Muslim temporal power. He conceived the *ḫilāfa* as governance by both secular and Islamic leaders and presented *al-ḥizb al-iṣlāḥ al-islāmī al-mu'tadil* (The moderate party of Islamic reform) as the only feasible

middle way between 'westernizers' and exponents of the religious institutions[142].

To conclude, Kosugi Yasushi (2006) listed eight essential characteristics of Riḍā''s account of the *ḥilāfa* (Caliphate):

1. The *ḥilāfa* is the only legitimate Islamic polity for the *umma*;

2. The *ḥilāfa* must be reinstituted in a way which is suitable to the contemporary times;

3. Government must be run by the Council of *šūrà* (consultation), composed of *ahl al-ḥall wa'l-'aqd* (people of authority), both Islamic scholars and secular leaders;

4. The *ḥalīfa* (Caliph) will be representing the government, therefore he must be a qualified *muğtahid* (one who exercises independent reasoning [*iğtihād*] in the interpretation of Islamic law);

5. The *ḥalīfa* must be of Qurayš origin (the tribe of Prophet Muḥammad)

6. The Muslims must do whatever they can to establish an Islamic government under a calpih;

7. If it is not possible to establish a true caliphate, an imperfect one must still be established and obeyed;

8. The Arabs and the Turks should have a leading role in the achievement of this task.

2.2.5 The "Arab Nation" of Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī (1880-1968)

Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī was born in Aleppo but received a Turkish education in Constantinople. In fact, he spoke Turkish and naturally belonged to the Young Turks generation, immersed as he was in the

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[142] Stéphane A Dudoignon, Komatsu Hisao and Kosugi Yasushi ed. *Intellectuals in the Modern Islamic World: Transmission, transformation, communication* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 19-22.

ideas of the French positivism and the European Nationalism. When the Empire collapsed he left his post within the Ministry of Education and moved to Damascus to join the Arab government of King Fayṣal (Fayṣal al-Awwal ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī al-Hāšimī, 1885-1933), son of the leader of the Arab Revolt al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī al-Hāšimī, and brother of ʿAbd Allāh (d.1951), the future first king of Jordan. Fayṣal's government had been established only the year prior, when the San Remo Conference (1920) gave France the mandate for Syria: the French won the Franco-Syrian war that had broken out in response to it (described by al-Ḥuṣrī in *Yawm Maysalūn*, *Day of Maysalūn*, 1945) and Fayṣal was expelled from the region. However, within the Cairo Conference (March 12 to 30, 1921), the British agreed to appoint Fayṣal king of the newly born Kingdom of Iraq and al-Ḥuṣrī followed him, giving a precious contribution to the formation of an Arab consciousness in the country. Later on, al-Ḥuṣrī went to Beirut and then to Cairo, where he worked as an official of the Arab League and started to write essays in defense of Arab nationalism[143].

Al-Ḥuṣrī witnessed and documented the beginning of a decisive change in Arab nationalism's political directions and goals: at the end of the Second World War in fact, the decolonization process brought independent national states to life, whose boundaries were drawn by the colonial Powers and that Sulzbach (1962) classified as "administrative nations" because of their artificial nature. Regarding this point, Leonard Binder (1999) wrote:

> The breakup of the Ottoman Empire and the determination of the boundaries of successor states was largely guided by: the provincial divisions of the empire; European imperialist interests as developed historically; and certain geographical

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[143] Hourani (1962), op. cit., 311-323; Yasir Suleiman, *Arabic, self and Identity: A Study in Conflict and Displacement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 126-134.

features, such as mountains, deserts, rivers, and, of course, the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Gulf of Aqaba. But that breakup was not based on coherent, well-formulated, nationalist doctrines […] <u>no general principle of legitimacy was proffered</u> as a basis for legitimizing or rationalizing the division of the region into political entities[144].

This reality fostered the idea of a single "Arab Nation" and al-Ḥuṣrī started his work from the justification of the very existence of such an entity. The French[145] and Anglo-American concepts of nation were not suitable for his goal as their accounts of nationalism were the philosophical counterpart of the bourgeois-democratic revolutions successfully carried out in their countries: according to them, the ideas of nation and national state could not be separated. Conversely in Germany, nationalism was born in reaction to an exogenous challenge, with the aim of ending a foreign rule and obtaining independence[146], in this sense it was a cultural expression detached from its political representation: following the German account of Nation, al-Ḥuṣrī could affirm that the Arab Nation existed even without a state (*dawla*) that represented it. Therefore, al-Ḥuṣrī read the works of two major German philosophers: Johann Gottfried Herder (d.1803) who theorized a distinction between nation and state where the nation is sacred and eternal while the state is only its administrative apparatus and stressed the importance of the national language and thus of the national literature, without which a people cannot exist; and Johann Gottlieb Fichte (d.1814) who, in his famous book *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (*Addresses to the German Nation*, 1808), suggested to his compatriots

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[144] Leonard Binder, *Ethnic conflict and international politics in the Middle East* (Gainsville: University Press of Florida, 1999), 12.

[145] Al-Ḥuṣrī critiques Renan account of nation. Renan in fact considers nations to be historical products of state formation and therefore transient structures.

[146] Between 1794 and 1815 most of Northern Europe was directly under French rule or within the French sphere of influence. The First French Empire of Napoleon had been defeated in 1813 during the German Campaign.

a strategy to overcome the foreign rule and reach a political homogeneity: they needed a new national self and above all a complete reform of the educational system that should provide a form of national education. Moreover, in order to gain an understanding of the artistic expression of the German nationalism, al-Ḥuṣrī read the poems of Ernst Moriz Arndt (d. 1860), for which people and nation were synonyms. Finally, he formulated his own notion of *waṭan,* rooting it on a more endogenous basis as is the notion of *'aṣabiyya* that Ibn Ḫaldūn (d. 1406) articulated in the *Muqaddima*, an introductory volume of his universal history. Al-Ḥuṣrī studied Ibn Ḫaldūn's work extensively, publishing two books discussing his thought, in 1943 and 1944[147].

With this theoretical background, al-Ḥuṣrī's political theory is certainly crucial within the Arab Nationalism debate. His main focus has always been the unification of all Arabs, thus he is almost exclusively concerned with the emergence and the development of the concept of nation. According to him, in the 19th century the idea of nation superseded the loyalty to king and kingdom as the base of national states and thus in Europe begun the age of Nationalism, then widened in the 20th century to all the other peoples, when Europeans and Americans had to concede them the right to form nations. As stressed by Wilson in the aftermath of the Frist World War: every nation had then the right to sovereignty, territorial integrity and freedom from aggression. Following Herder, al-Ḥuṣrī gave a central role to the

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[147] As previously noted, Ibn Ḫaldūn formulated the theory of *'aṣabiyya* in order to clarify and explain how human groups (being tribes, peoples etc.) form the basis of their unity. Accordingly, *'aṣabiyya* is the bond that unifies such groups and can articulate itself in various forms depending on the historical moment in which it appears: in nomadic societies it is a form of solidarity based on blood ties; later on it develops in a system of relations of alliance and protection and finally, in the urban society phase, it generates a feeling of community and unity. Moreover, as far as religion is concerned, Ibn Ḫaldūn affirmed that no religion can replace *'aṣabiyya* but *'aṣabiyya* is strengthened by the presence of a 'national religion', to speak in modern terms. Tibi, op. cit., 125-165.

language that he considered the soul of the nation while history represents its consciousness. The Arab Nation is composed of all those who have Arabic as their mother tongue, thus it includes Egypt and North Africa (Arab nationalists of his generation saw the Sinai as the extreme border of the Arab Nation). In this regard, it was not easy to convince Egyptians of their "Arabhood" as their nationalism until the Thirties had a Pharaonic or Mediterranean basis (comparable to the Phoenician common heritage in Lebanon). Indeed, in later years, major figures such as Luṭfī Sayyīd and Ṭāhā Ḥusayn advocated a form of purely Egyptian nationalism. Moreover, like Ibn Ḫaldūn, he denied the possibility that a religion could be used as basis of social commitment: for him the Arabs are not a Muslim nation, they would still be Arabs even if they ceased to be Muslims. However, he stressed the success of the national religions compared to the universal ones, giving Judaism as an example. Finally, education is another crucial point of his agenda as national education is a means of spreading loyalty throughout the nation and thus strengthening patriotism.

2.2.6 "Islam and the Principles of governing" (1925). ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Rāziq (1888-1966)

In the context of the idea of the caliphate and its development over time, it worth discussing ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Rāziq's account of the concept as his views were in total opposition to those of Riḍā'. In fact, according to the Egyptian thinker (trained at the Azhar and Oxford), Islam did not prescribe any particular form of government, therefore Muslims should have the right to decide which form best suits the need of their time[148]. He published a controversial book on the topic in 1925 (*al-Islām wa Uṣūl al-Uḥkm*, *Islam and the Principles of Governing*)

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[148] Abu-Rabiʿ, op. cit., 97.

when the caliphate no longer existed, and even the shadow-caliphate instituted by the Turkish National Assembly in 1922 had been abolished in 1924. Moreover, in 1926, a group of Egyptian *'ulamā'* presided over by the rector of al-Azhar organized a "Congress of the Caliphate" in Cairo which concluded by reaffirming the necessity of a Muslim caliphate that must have both spiritual and temporal power: the debate about such crucial topic had never been so intense[149].

According to al-Rāziq, the very idea of the caliphate was based on a misconception or a misunderstanding of the Prophet's words, as he never specified which form of government his community of believers were supposed to follow after his death: in fact he created a community, not a State and he considered his mission primarily spiritual, and not political[150]. Under this perspective, Islam becomes a religious faith and not a political ideology or a source of legitimacy for a state order. Al-Rāziq's text was harshly criticized, he was banned from holding any public office and accused of corrupting Islam with a Christian distinction between the spiritual and political spheres. Nevertheless, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire his views became less threatening and secular nationalism prevailed until the Seventies, with the exception of the Muslim Brothers and the Saudi political system. However, Tibi (1997) pointed out how, after the Seventies, many Islamic movements tried to politicize Islam reasserting the universality of the *umma* as a supra-national entity that should override national and ethnic bonds[151].

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[149] Hourani (1962), op. cit., 184-192
[150] Kassab, op. cit., 59-61.
[151] Tibi, op. cit., 226-229.

2.2.7 The "Egyptian Nation" of Aḥmad Luṭfī al-Sayyīd (1872-1963)

Luṭfī al-Sayyīd attended the school of Law in Cairo in 1889 with some of the leading figures of the political life of his country, such as Muṣṭafā Kāmil, the founder of modern Egyptian nationalism. He later distanced himself from Kāmil as he started to criticize his Islamic interpretation of nationalism and his Ottomanism. However, he did not support the Pan-Arab nationalism of the Siro-Lebanese intellectuals either: he always stressed the existence of an "Egyptian Nation"; he argued that liberal nationalism suffered because of the lack of a material base for the European liberal ideology that the Egyptian bourgeoisie failed to provide, opening the way to the Muslim Brothers and other supporters of fundamentalism, weakened only by the Pan-Arab nationalist Free Officers of President Nasser (Ğamāl ʿAbd al-Nāṣir Ḥusayn, 1918-1970) in 1952[152].

Al-Sayyīd was keen toward the European liberal-democratic tradition and advocated for the establishment of a constitutional parliamentary democracy in Egypt as only uncivilized communities need despotism while a free individual must live in an independent nation defined in terms of territory, not of language. He read Montesquieu and accepted his principle of the separation of powers but was also aware of the thought of Comte, Mille and Spencer. According to him, religion is only one of the factors that constitute a society, therefore he did not feel the need to defend it or reform it as ʿAbduh and al-Afġānī before him[153].

[152] Ibid., 182-184.
[153] Hourani (1962), op. cit., 171-183.

2.2.8 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (1889-1973): The spokesman of Egyptian nationalism

Hourani described Ṭāhā Ḥusayn as

> the writer who has given the final statement of the system of
> ideas which underlay social thought and political action in the
> Arab countries for three generations, […] as conscious as he was
> of the need to preserve the Islamic past in the imagination and
> heart, but to become part of the modern culture which had first
> shown itself in western Europe[154].

Indeed, the figure of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn is crucial, although more
from an historical and literary perspective, and he can be defined as the
spokesman of Egyptian Nationalism. However, his legacy is
controversial: many accused him of being excessively Westernized as
he advocated the principles of liberalism and refused the Pan-Arab
standpoint, engaging on the matter in a harsh debate with al-Ḥuṣrī in
the columns of a journal. In other words, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn spoke neither of
Arab *umma*, nor of Islamic *umma* as his focus was the Egyptian nation
that, according to him, had to be considered part of Europe, as far as
intellectual and cultural life was concerned[155]. Regarding the role of the
Arabic language, Ḥusayn's position differed from the one of his master
Luṭfī al-Sayyīd since he considered language to be the basis of a sound
national life. Moreover, according to him, language overcomes religion,
therefore Arabic is not in any sense a means to a religious awakening
or the foundation of a universal Islamic community as it was for the
Islamic reformers, on the contrary Arabic, as any other language, is just
one of the bonds that helps keep a nation united[156].

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's original perspective toward the issues of nation,
nationalism and legitimacy is multilayered and deeply influenced by the

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[154] Ibid., 326.
[155] Tibi, op.cit., 119; 187-189.
[156] Hourani (1962), op. cit., 326-340.

important personalities of the political-literary scene that the writer had the opportunity to meet throughout his life and studies[157]. In fact, during the years spent at al-Azhar Ḥusayn started to question and criticize the archaic methods of its time, advocating for a modernization of the scholastic programs thanks to the encounter with the professor and *šayḫ* Sayyd al-Marṣafī (1862-1931)[158] who, in his *Risālat al-kalim al-ṯamān* (*Tract on Eight Words*, 1984), defined the *umma* as a community determined not only by faith but also by territory and by language: through his teachings the innovations of 'Abduh acquired for Ṭāhā Ḥusayn a literary value as he became aware of the indissoluble bond existing between literature and freedom[159], an awareness that then led him to the following conclusion:

> Arab nationalism owes its existence, its strength and its development to Arab literature, modern Arab nationalism owes its rebirth, its strength and the great hopes that they support to modern Arab literature[160].

Later on, while in Cairo studying at the National Egyptian University, Ḥusayn met Arabic professor Carlo Alfonso Nallino (1872-

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[157] Ṭāhā Ḥusayn *curriculum studiorum* can be divided into three phases that somehow exemplify his theoretical development: the first phase is characterized by the traditional and Islamic education that he received at the Qur'anic school of his village and at al-Azhar University in Cairo; the second phase corresponds with his first approach to Western thought at the National Egyptian University; and the third phase coincides with the author's studies at the Sorbonne, in Paris. During the first years of formation Ḥusayn had the chance to attend some lessons of Muḥammad 'Abduh, thus acknowledging the *šayḫ* program of Islamic reformism; he later defined him as "the one who gave to Egypt its intellectual freedom" since he always insisted with his students on the importance of personal reasoning and freedom of thought. See Mahmoudi Abdelrashid, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's Education. *From the Azhar to the Sorbonne* (Richmond and Surrey England: Curzon, 1998), 18, 19.
[158] See Isabella Camera D'Afflitto, *Letteratura araba contemporanea. Dalla nahḍah a oggi* (Roma: Carocci, 2007), 162.
[159] As it is clarified in the introduction of his text on the pre-Islamic literature of 1927, a revised and modified version of the 1926 volume on pre-Islamic poetry.
[160] Monica Ruocco, *L'intellettuale arabo tra impegno e dissenso. Analisi della rivista libanese al-Ādāb (1953-1994)* (Roma: Jouvence, 2000), 76.

1938)[161], who taught him the modern methods of historical investigation applied to the study of Arabic literature. Such methods deeply affected Ḥusayn's perspective by giving him new tools and keys to understand both the tradition and the challenges of his time.

The literature in fact needs to be studied scientifically as it is essential for the progress and achievement of the unity of any nation.

On this basis Ṭāhā Ḥusayn begun to question the authenticity of ancient Islamic poetry, a discussion that then led him to write *Fī al-šiʿr al-ǧāhilī* (*On the Pre-Islamic Poetry*, 1926) which appeared only one year after the controversial work of ʿAbd al-Rāziq (*al-Islām wa Uṣūl al-Uḥkm*, 1925); the book was immediately banned and Ḥusayn was accused of apostasy but never convicted, and one year later a modified and revised version of the book was published under the title *Fī al- ādāb al-ǧāhilī* (*On the Pre-Islamic Literature*). Although the theme of this text may appear to be far from the focus of this research, it addresses the question of legitimacy. In fact, in his book, Ḥusayn questioned the authenticity (and consequently the legitimacy) of the pre-Islamic poetry as it was traditionally presented, even in the Qur'an. According to him:

> What we call 'pre-Islamic' literature had nothing to do with the pre-Islamic period, but was simply fabricated after the coming of Islam [when] the Meccan tribe of Qurayš, in order to win the struggle for power within the nascent Islamic community, had needed authoritative texts to enhance its own prestige, and so it forged a literature in its own dialect as a basis of support for its political ambitions[162].

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[161] On the figure of Carlo Alfonso Nallino and his role of mediator between the Italian culture and the Arab countries see Andrea Borruso, "L'italianistica nei paesi arabi" in *La presenza culturale italiana nei paesi arabi: storia e prospettive*, (Roma: I.P.O., 1982), 143-153; Camera D'Afflitto, op. cit., 161.
[162] James Monroe, "Oral Composition in Pre-Islamic Poetry", *Journal of Arabic Literature* 3, no. 1-53 (1972): 2, 3.

Finally, at the Sorbonne University Ḥusayn studied subjects entirely new to him such as Greek, Roman and Byzantine history and sociology, and he learned about the prevailing current of thought of the epoch, the positivism that he will not abandon until the Thirties.

It is at the end of this long and articulated process of formation that *Mustaqbal al-ṯaqāfa fī Miṣr* (*The Future of Culture in Egypt*) appeared: written in 1936 and published in 1938, probably the book through which the author has best exposed his account of the Egyptian nation. Notably, Ḥusayn wrote the book after the Anglo-Egyptian treaty[163] had been signed and in it he described and compared the Egyptian and Western cultures highlighting their similarities, and presented his ideas on culture and education for the newly independent nation[164]. According to him, the state had the responsibility to ensure universal literacy to its people by building a network of schools across the country and translating Western modern knowledge into Arabic in order to make it available to all. Accordingly, he advocated a universal and compulsory primary education, an increase in the number of governmental schools, and a change in the content of the programs (that should include, alongside Arab language, foreign languages, but only after the fifth year, and classical languages, such as Greek and Latin)[165].

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and the other exponents of the liberal school were marginalized, alongside the Islamists, when General Nasser and his Free Officers took control of Egypt in 1952.

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[163] The Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 was a 20 years treaty signed between the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Egypt that postulated the withdraw of all the British troops from Egypt, except those necessary to protect the Suez Canal.
[164] Ṭāhā Ḥusayn had been advisor of the Ministry of Education from 1942 to 1944 and minister himself from 1950 to 1952.
[165] Kassab, op. cit., 61-54.

2.2.9 Mīšīl ʿAflaq (1910-1989) and the Baʿat̲ Party

The Orthodox Christian Mīšīl ʿAflaq translated al-Ḥuṣrī's Pan-Arab ideology into political action by founding, along with the Sunni Muslim Ṣalāḥ al-dīn al-Bit̲ār, the first Arab political party with pan-Arab goals: the *Baʿat̲* (Resurrection) Party[166]. Notably, the *Baʿat̲* contributed to the creation of the United Arab Republic (UAR, 1958-61) between Syria and the Nasserist Egypt[167], one of the last acts of (Pan-)Arab Nationalism that finally ended with the 1967 defeat and the Camp David Accord. In fact, the states established after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and decolonization acquired over time, in spite of the artificiality of their nation-building process, a certain degree of autonomy and separate interests; therefore, the claimed Arab belonging became less and less powerful compared to the call of the local nationalisms[168]. Mīšīl ʿAflaq shared with al-Ḥuṣrī the deep appreciation and interest in the German Romantic philosophers and their account of nation, thus he fought for a *umma ʿarabiyya waḥīda maʿa risāla ḫālida* ("one Arab Nation, with an eternal message") and for him:

> Whose language is Arabic and who lives in the Arab land [...] belongs to the Arab nation[169].

Notably, he used the term *umma* when referring to the nation:

> […] in the Arab context, the partial character of decolonization, the Second World War, and the Palestine question combined to promote the emergence of a radical nationalism that used some Islamic vocabulary but was secular in leadership and intent. Nasserism in Egypt (1952–70) and Ba'thism in Iraq and Syria

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[166] Later *ḥizb al-baʿat̲ al-ʿarabī al-ištirākī* (The Socialist Arab Resurrection Party) as it merged with the Arab Socialist Party of Akram al-Ḥūrānī in 1953.
[167] After the failure of the UAR other (again failed) attempts were made to establish Arab unity: between Egypt, Syria and Iraq (1963), between Egypt and Libya (1973), and between Syria and Iraq (1979).
[168] Halliday, op. cit., 29.
[169] Hourani (1962), op. cit., 357.

(1968–, 1963–) were the most cogent expressions of this radical nationalism. In each case, the goals of independence and of building socialism, this latter defined as state control of society and economy, were combined with an appeal for Arab unity: the term used to denote this Arab community was *umma*.

In fact, 'Aflaq aimed to achieve freedom from the foreign rule and unity of all Arabs in a single State, but he also sought a synthesis between nationalism and socialism, especially after 1953 when his party merged with the Arab Socialist Party of Akram al-Hourani (Akram al-Ḥūrānī, 1912-1996); the three complementary and inseparable principles of the *Ba'aṯ* doctrine were in fact unity, freedom and socialism. However, his account of socialism had nothing to do with Marxism or the class struggle: he interpreted it as social justice for the poor and unprivileged and stood in principle for constitutional democracy. Besides, as already noted, 'Aflaq adopted the Islamic account of collectivity, secularizing the *umma* in terms of a Western nation (as Islam is part of the Arab identity as a civilization, not a religion) and then added to it a social dimension: his unitary "Arab Nation" clearly stood against the individualism of the West[170].

It is important here to briefly retrace the birth and development of the *Ba'aṯ* as its significance and following outcomes cannot be detached from the historical and political context in which it was born. The French mandate (1923-1946) had devastating effects for Syria as the country suffered under a policy of fragmentation that exacerbated pre-existing economic and social problems. Between 1933 and 1936 many attempts were made in order to find an accord with the French but they all failed; many youth organizations emerged from this political fermentation and 'Aflaq was part of one of them, the League

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[170] Tibi, op.cit., 204-208.

of National Union. After the loss of the *sanjak* of Alexandretta[171], a faction of the League broke away and ʿAflaq and his colleague al-Biṯār founded a secret organization, the Youth for Arab Resurrection also known as *al-Baʿaṯ al-ʿarabī*. The *Baʿaṯ* became an official party only in 1946 and in the same year ʿAflaq and Biṯār got permission to publish a newspaper. When the French occupation ended, the scope of the party became how to build a political community within the new artificial, post-independence borders. In the Fifties, the party radicalized and gained influence outside Syria, notably among Iraqi and Jordanian officers; meanwhile, the attraction toward Nasser, the Pan-Arab hero and champion of nonalignment policy, became too strong to be resisted: all political parties in Syria dissolved in favor of a single mass party and Egypt and Syria became the United Arab Republic even though for less than three years[172]. During the union period, the Syrian officers in Egypt formed an autonomous military committee (*al-laǧna al-ʿaskariyya*) led by ʿAlawi officers among which the name of Hafez al-Asad (Ḥāfiẓ al-Asad, 1930-2000)[173] stands out. Regarding this, Tibi (1997) affirmed that "Arab nationalism as formulated by Aflaq became the ideological legitimacy for military dictatorship in the Middle East"[174].

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[171] The sanjak of Alexandretta is currently part of the Republic of Turkey and was the bone of contention for Kemalist Turkey, the French Mandate for Syria, and the French Republic. In 1937, the sanjak became 'distinct but not separated' from the French Mandate of Syria on the diplomatic level and linked to both France and Turkey for defense matters. See Marcu Florian, "Why did France abandon the Sanjak of Alexandretta?" (PhD diss. University of Reading), https://www.academia.edu/7479079/Why_did_France_abandon_the_Sanjak_of_Alexandretta

[172] Norma Salem-Babikian, "Michel 'Aflaq: A Biographic Outline," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (1980): 162-179.

[173] Devlin op., cit., 396-1407.

[174] Tibi, op. cit., p. 204.

2.3 Pan Arabism's demise: the "post 1967 generation" of Arab thinkers

Following an ideal time line, this section will now briefly retrace the political and historical events that the "post 1967 generation" had to face and discuss, to be further analyzed in the last chapter because of their centrality in Jordanian history. Between the 5th and the 10th of June 1967 Israel won the so-called Six Day War against the (Pan-)Arab coalition formed by Egypt, Jordan and Iraq and led by General Nasser, thus taking over the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, most of the West Bank, East of Jerusalem, and Golan Heights. The Arab countries suffered great losses: Egypt's casualties numbered more than 11,000, Jordan 6,000 and Syria 1,000, compared with 700 for Israel. Moreover, the conflict created hundreds of thousands of refugees and brought more than one million Palestinians to the occupied territories under Israeli rule. A few years later, the Black September (1970)[175] meant a redefinition of the region's identity at a national level: the Trans-Jordanian identity revealed to be intrinsically tribal, Islamic and Hashemite, and differentiated itself from the Palestinian one. In 1974 the Arab League indicated the PLO (The Palestine Liberation Organization) as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinians in occupied lands and in the diaspora, and in 1988 King Ḥusayn (1935-1999) announced the administrative disengagement of the West Bank from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Besides, with the Camp David Accords of 1978 and the Egypt-Israeli Peace treaty of 1979, Egypt abandoned the leading role it had under Nasser within the (Pan-) Arab

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[175] *Aylūl Al-Aswad* is the conflict fought in Jordan between the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF), under the leadership of King Ḥusayn, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), under the leadership of Yāsir `Arafāt (1929-2004). The fedayeen (*fidā'iyūn*) acted as a state within a state disregarding local laws and regulations, and they even attempted to assassinate King Ḥusayn twice.

scene, initiating the Open Door policy (*infitāḥ*). Finally, the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 was a great victory for the political opposition articulated in Islamic terms creating what came to be called "Political Islam", a project of Islamization of modernity rather than modernization of Islam (as it was at the time of al-Afġānī and 'Abduh)[176].

According to the majority of the Arab thinkers, such a defeat represented a watershed in Arab popular and intellectual consciousness as it meant the end of the Pan-Arab nationalist project (even though Arabism was not lost as an identity source[177]) and the revival of the Islamist standpoint as the failure of the political leadership then in charge, in providing for the welfare of their people and the threat of American neocolonialism made Islamic movements an appealing alternative (e.g. the social and political prominence achieved by the Muslim Brotherhood[178] in Egypt or the victory of the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria whose slogan was *Islām huwwa al-ḥāl*, "Islam is the solution"). However, the Islamists were not the sole opposition group that saw an opportunity in the 1967 loss; both the Marxists and the liberals welcomed the Palestinian defeat as well: the Marxists considered it as a consequence of the incomplete application of socialism, while the liberals used it as an occasion to stress the

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[176] John O. Voll, "Political Islam and the State," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*, ed. John L. Esposito and Emad El-Din Shahin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 57; Campanini (2005), op. cit., 22.

[177] As Dawisha pointed out "[Arabism] continued to set general parameters Arab regimes would be loath to transgress and Arab leaders knew that the policies they devised for their states would be scrutinized and judged beyond the confines of their territorial boundaries by a wider 'Arab public'. But what continued to live on was Arabism *not* Arab nationalism". Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century. From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 252.

[178] The Society of Muslim Brothers (*Ǧamā'at al- Iḫwān al-Muslimīn*) is a transnational Sunni Islamist organization founded in Egypt by the Islamic scholar Ḥasan al-Bannā (1906-1949) in 1928.

importance of the democratization process in the MENA region far from being concluded at that time. In fact, the 1967 defeat and the political and identity crisis that followed, embodied the failure of the liberation and decolonization movements in the region: in the Forties, Fifties and Sixties the Arab states achieved at least formal independence from the colonial powers but they were ruled by the old establishment of notables and monarchs. Later on, in the Sixties and Seventies that old establishment was replaced by secular, revolutionary regimes that, although selling themselves as patriotic, turned out to be repressive as well. Finally, in the last decades of the 20th century neocolonial and neoliberal powers threatened the area until the outbreak of the two Gulf Wars in the 1990-91 and 2003[179]. According to Abu Rabi' (2004), the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 represented a Trojan horse for the United States that could finally justify their military presence in the area, initiating a sort of *Pax Americana* that no one dared challenge.

Nevertheless, the 1967 defeat does not have to be seen only as a rupture with the past given that, alongside the discussion of 'new' topics—such as the rise of the military state, the Open Door policy, the disintegration of the Soviet System and the acceptance by some Arab thinkers of the state of Israel as a regional fact—it also represented a continuation of the concepts and ideas that had already been debated such as the issue of the Arab unity (and its failure) vis-à-vis regionalism, the role of religion within the society (both as religion *per se* and as a philosophy of life) and the decolonization process and its outcomes, as in a postcolonial environment as such the search for a cultural self could not be separated from the struggle against European colonialism and American neocolonialism. In the words of Albert Memmi (1957):

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[179] Kassab, op. cit., Introduction.

The colonized's self-assertion, born out of protest, continues to define itself in relation to it. […] So goes the drama of the man who is a product and victim of colonization. He almost never succeeds in corresponding with himself. […] He always considers the colonizer as a model or as an antithesis. […], [thus] the colonization precipitated the awakening of national consciousness of the colonized[180].

Anyway, all the above listed issues are interconnected and essential aspects that together contributed to change the Arab Regional System after 1967 causing the political, cultural, identitarian and social challenges that followed. However, the status of religion in society, the rise of the Gulf States in the Seventies and the gradual proliferation of the capitalist mode of production in the area, all proved to be crucial and need to be briefly discussed.

As for the role of Islam, Abu Rabi' listed four main perspectives among contemporary Arab thinkers:

- The Marxist standpoint that considers religion to be a human creation and a tool of legitimation for the ruling élites across time;

- The liberal secular standpoint that considers religion as a subjective relationship between men and God;

- The Islamist position that considers religion to be part of the political sphere and not only a collection of ideas and rites;

- The "statist" position that historically protected "official Islam" in order to be legitimized by the *'ulamā'*, thus the state never completely disconnected from religion. Nevertheless, even if, as Marxists and liberals, the statists seek to prevent Islamists from controlling the power and gain governmental positions when

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[180] Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* trans. Greenfield Howard (Boston: Beacon, 1967), 139-40.

they could not get legitimation from their longstanding allies often turned to political Islam.

Moreover, some Arab thinkers affirmed a deep connection between the failure of the Arab civil society and the emergence of fundamentalism and religious fanaticism in the Eighties and Nineties, and that this Islamic revival was connected with the expansion of capitalism between the Gulf States and the new role that they gained in the Arab world. The "rich weak states" of the Gulf, as defined by Anderson (1992)[181], entered the global market thanks to the internationalization of American capital (Marshall Plan) while maintaining a political authoritarianism; in other words, they initiated a process of economic modernization lacking its cultural counterpart: modernism. The great oil revenues accumulated in the Gulf States over time, especially in the Nineties, made it possible to establish a rentier financial system of redistribution of the wealth among the masses irrimediabily changing their relations with the government; in the words of the Egyptian journalist Muhammad Hassanein Hayakal (Muḥammad Ḥssanayn Haykal, 1923-2016): "_ṯarwa_ (wealth) had taken over from _ṯawra_ (revolution)"[182]. Besides, such enormous wealth gave to Gulf Arabs a false claim of distinctiveness among 'the other' Arabs. Therefore, they stopped supporting Arab masses in their struggles against dictatorships and American imperialism, and this shift in the Gulf policy represented one of the major causes of the end of the Arab unity narrative and the rise of the regional state in the Arab world, alongside the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, that gave the US a way to

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[181] The States in which the influence of historic patterns of patrimonialism is high are attributed the value of "weak states". See Benedict Anderson, "The New World Disorder", _New Left Review_ 193, no. 10 (1992). The label "weak states" as referring to the Third World countries was first used by Joel S. Migdal in his 1988 book _Strong Societies and Weak States. State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World_.

[182] Dawisha, op. cit., 256.

undermine Iraq, the last major bastion of Arab nationalism in the Arab World[183]. Finally, the leading role of the Gulf countries contributed, through their economic support, to the establishment of a 'new' Islamic discourse that the Egyptian philosopher Fouad Zakariyya (Fu'ād Zakarīyā, 1927-2010) called Petro-Islam, "a politically-motivated discourse aimed to prevent Arabs, and Muslims in general, to enter the modern world"[184] and that engaged a fight against Arab nationalism itself, using Islam as a counterforce against nationalist and progressive liberal forces[185].

Finally, the very concepts of legitimacy and legitimation gained a new meaning in this peculiar phase. According to Yasmeen Daifallah (2012):

> Laroui, Hanafi and al-Jabri's conceptualizations of "Arab consciousness," the "Arab self" and "Arab reason" […] includes a particular understanding of authority, legitimacy, justice, human agency, and of how collective human life should be approached and organized[186].

In fact, the post-1967 generation of thinkers were looking for ways to legitimize modern reforms from within the tradition because they were not (apart from al-Jabri and al-Ghannoushi) directly involved in politics. In other words, they were making the tradition itself the legitimate carrier of any sort of change, be it liberal, Marxist, Islamic-leftist or Arabist-nationalist. Thus, the concepts of authenticity, tradition and heritage became central in the debate. A trend confirmed by the two following conferences, both held in the Seventies: The

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[183] Abu-Rabi', op. cit., 344-369.

[184] Issa J. Boullata, "Trends and Issues in Contemporary Arab Thought" (New York: *SUNY Series in Middle Eastern Studies*, 1990), 154.

[185] Barakat, op. cit., 160, 161.

[186] Yasmeen Daifallah, "Political Subjectivity in Contemporary Arab Thought: The Political Theory of Abdullah Laroui, Hassan Hanafi, and Mohamed Abed al-Jabiri" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2012), 3-5.

Conference on Authenticity and Renewal in Contemporary Arab Culture established by ALECSO (the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization), held in Cairo between October 4 and 11, 1971[187] and the conference of Arab intellectuals held in Kuwait only six months after the Kippur-Ramadan war and the limited Egyptian victory (7-12/04, 1974) with a focus on the "Crisis of Civilizational Development in the Arab Homeland" and the relation between the past, the present and the future of the Arab people.

Remarkably, both the conferences debated the notion of heritage (*turāṯ*) and its implications, as rethinking that concept in a "rational and socially viable way" could make it "a tool to relaunch Arabism as an autonomous civilizational project in the modern world"[188]. In fact, every human group has a cultural heritage that needs to be continuously modified in accordance with the circumstances of the time to ensure the survival of the identity group. Arab people refused to do so fearing that modernity would negate Arab authenticity and thus jeopardizing their own survival. To conclude, the Kuwait conference Final Declaration stated as follows:

> The problem […] is the role of the Arab past in orienting the Arab future [...]. Our look at it has been ahistorical. The heritage

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[187] In the Cairo Conference, the Egyptian scholar Shukri Mohammad Ayyad (Shukrī Muḥammad ʿAyyād, 1921-1999) reflected on the term authenticity (*aṣāla*) and its two apparently oxymoronic meanings: in fact, while in the Fifties the word acquired the new sense of individuality, invention and liberation from tradition (thus embodying the opposition to imitation both of the Arab past and the European present), it also meant the continuous preservation of the original ancestral elements of a particular culture. Ayyad underlines that the contradiction is only an apparent one, as the first meaning is related to the personal sphere while the second to the national one; the two components have to be reunited by the successful writer that selects the old culture elements worthy of survival while adopting the most useful elements of the modern Western culture and adapts them to the Arab-Islamic one. Armando Salvatore, "The Rational Authentication of *turāth* in Contemporary Arab Thought: Muḥammad al-Jābiri and Ḥasan Ḥanafi," *The Muslim World* 85, no. 3/4 (1995): p. 189.
[188] Salvatore, op. cit., 191.

is part of us and part of our civilizational formation but it ought not to make our future possessed by our past[189].

2.3.1 Sadeq Jalal al-Azm (Ṣādiq Ǧalāl al-ʿAẓm, 1934-2016)

In a 1997 interview, Sadeq al-Azm described the impact of the 1967 defeat on Arab intellectuals as follows:

> Naturally, the defeat of June 1967 interrupted all plans and revealed the fragility of the modern Arab intellectual renaissance on which the Arab liberation movement based its hopes. Most of these hopes revolved around the concept of the inspired leader, and when the leader [Nasser] fell everything crashed with him, leaving nothing behind but emptiness, loss, and confusion. I would not be exaggerating when I say that the defeat hit us like a lightning bolt[190].

According to al-Azm, the liberation movement failed in really challenging the systems of thought, value and belief of Arab society. Accordingly, in *al-naqd al-ḏātī baʿd al-hazīma* (*self-Criticism after the Defeat*, 1969) he compared the Israeli-Arab War of 1967 to the Japanese-Russian War of 1904 stressing the similarities between the two conflicts as in both cases a small country had defeated a larger nation against all odds. However, while in Russia the defeat led to a serious self-examination of the institutions somehow provoking the 1905 and even the 1917 revolutions, the Arabs had a completely different reaction, perhaps more indicative than the defeat itself. In fact, they put the blame on everything (God's punishment, colonialism, imperialism, Western support to Zionism and so on) but themselves.

The very word used in referring to the 1967 defeat, *naksa* (disaster) is very revealing of such an 'inevitability narrative'. On this point, Brakat (1993) wrote:

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[189] Boullata, op. cit., 16.
[190] Kassab, op. cit., 98.

The June 1967 defeat could have ushered in a new stage in Arab history if the Arabs had decided to confront the challenge. Instead, they chose a course of acceptance of the status quo and ultimate resignation[191].

In fact, according to al-Azm, underdevelopment and the lack of scientific thinking are the main factors that keep the Arabs in a state of defeat and impotence (*al-ʿaǧz*). Their revolution needs to radicalize itself, middle ways are not acceptable anymore, as no socialist revolution can be successfully undertaken without a scientific approach at all levels: military, political, social and cultural; besides, the emancipation of women is in itself a crucial goal to achieve. Moreover, in the controversial book *Naqd al-fikr al-dīnī* (*Critique of Religious Thought*, 1970[192]) for which al-Azm was charged with the crimes of apostasy, blasphemy and atheism (and then acquitted), he affirms that Islam does conflict with science, using a sharp antinomy: religion/tradition versus science/modernity[193].

2.3.2 Abdallah Laroui (ʿAbd Allāh al-ʿArawī, 1933-)

Laroui can be defined as a liberal Marxist. In fact, especially in his first writings, he has been deeply influenced by the Marxist theory, that he considered to be the most advanced ideological system available, and he reworked some central Marxist issues (such as class, bourgeoisie, capitalism, political élite, the masses) to use them as tools to understand the evolution of the modern Arab world from colonialism to Nation-States. The 1967 defeat meant to Laroui the decline of the "progressive" standpoint, replaced in the Seventies by the conservative

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[191] Barakat, op. cit., 256.
[192] Translated in Italian as *La tragedia del diavolo. Fede, ragione e potere nel mondo arabo* (Rome: LUISS University Press, 2016). See Professor Al-Azm presentation of the book at LUISS on May 10th, 2016: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuqTqn3ndYk.
[193] Kassab, op. cit., 98-107.

stance embodied by the tribal rentier Gulf States, the new leading élite that eventually promoted modernization but, as said, without its ideological counterpart, modernism.

Accordingly, Laroui's form of legitimizing change starts from stressing the necessity of the Arab States' cultural decolonization from the West (that in the MENA region has been both a symbol of universal progress and oppressive force), a process undertaken but far from being concluded. In fact, the legacy of imperialism is a hard problem to solve and often prevented the newly independent countries from gaining their own cultural space. Indeed, colonialism, like the 1967 defeat, made modern Arabs aware of both their weakness and the West's political and economic power.

Laroui's major works are *L'idéologie contemporaine* (1967), where he criticizes the Islamist standpoint of Sayyd Quṭb (1906-1966), and *La crise des intellectuels arabes* (1974). In both texts the author underpins that the 'crisis' of the Arab intellectual—that mirrors the crisis of the whole Arab society—can only be resolved through a historical approach[194]. Arabs must become real contemporaries of their thoughts and their realities and they can do so only through a historicist contextualization and a critical appropriation of the theories that they believe to be useful[195]: history has indeed both an educational and a demystifying function as it allows one to question the Eurocentric and misleading interpretations of the Arab-Muslim vicissitudes given over time by colonialist perspectives[196]. In fact, according to the scholar, the 1967 defeat is nothing but the consequence of the dominance of old mental and epistemological structures that must be deconstructed and

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[194] See Ahmed Safdar, *Reform and Modernity in Islam. The Philosophical, Cultural and Political Discourses among Muslim Reformers* (London-New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013).
[195] Kassab, op. cit., 107-118.
[196] Campanini (2005), op. cit., 133.

replaced in order to overcome the political/economic and cultural/intellectual backwardness of the contemporary Arab world[197].

Interestingly, the Moroccan scholar identified and criticized three trends of thought— religious, liberal and scientific-rational[198]— that dominated the political scene of the Arab World since the beginning of Western imperialism and never completely disappeared even with the advent of the post-colonial Nation-State. The political approaches that he detected had the same aim, meaning to find a solution to the crisis faced by the Arab world; however, the first trend seeks it in faith, the second in liberal thought (democracy) and the third in scientific progress. According to Laroui, they should be substituted with an enlightened nationalist philosophy that does not see contradiction between Islam and modernity as Islam is the religion of reason and modernity is based on reason.

Finally, as for the role of the State, the author believe it to be the sole body able to enhance social development, civil society, and citizenry, as pointed out by Habti (2016):

> [In Laroui's understanding] the state [has] a pivotal role in implementing a modernization programme. For the modern state, the best way to attain economic success is through carrying the banner of public good. However, many current Arab states suffer in their legitimacy as the populace is doubtful of its performance[199].

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[197] Abu-Rabi', op. cit., 344-369.

[198] The religious trend is represented by the religious intellectuals that lost its preeminence in the liberal but colonized states of the Thirties and then it reinvented itself as a religious movement advocating for a form of universal Islam. The political trend is represented by the liberal intellectuals that were supposed to confine the religious consciousness within the private domain but eventually failed: they still use Islamic tradition as a legitimacy source by giving an Islamic umbrella to liberal concepts they borrowed from the West, such as democracy and consultation. The scientific-rational trend is represented by technocrats whose sole aim was the achievement of modernization, thus they cared about neither Islam nor politics and formed the backbone of the emerging new state.

[199] Driss Habti, "Debating Islam, Tradition, and Modernity in Contemporary Arab Islamic Thought. Perspectives of Hassan Hanafi and Abdallah Laroui," in *Debates on Civilization in the Muslim World: Critical Perspectives on Islam and Modernity*, ed.

2.3.3 Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, 1943-2010)

The Egyptian scholar Abu Zayd left Cairo to Netherlands in 1995 after been victim of a harsh attack from the Egyptian Islamists[200] that found him "guilty" of wanting to examine the Qur'an as a cultural and linguistic product, as Ṭāhā Ḥusayn before him[201]. In fact, in *Mafhūm al-naṣṣ: dirāsa fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān* (*The Concept of the Text: A study in the Sciences of the Quran*, 1990) and *Naqd al-kitāb al-dīnī* (*The Critique of Religious Discourse,* 1992) he stressed the importance of sociopolitical factors in the interpretation of the sacred texts and attacked the Islamists of "reducing the Islamic religious tradition to a monolithic, ahistorical corpus of absolute and homogeneous truths"[202].

Besides, Abu Zyad entered the debate of the time criticizing the use of *turāṯ* (heritage) as the sole source of authority, especially because it negates any kind of role to human agency and it is often used as an ideological cover to legitimize social and political despotism.

Moreover, the Egyptian scholar discussed two postulates of the Islamist discourse of particular interest for the purposes of this project: sovereignty (*ḥākimiyya*[203]) and the text (*naṣṣ*). According to the

Lutfi Sunar (Oford Scholarship Online, December 2016), 314, 315, DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199466887.003.0011

[200] In 1993 in Cairo, he was accused of apostasy and then asked to divorce his wife as a Muslim woman cannot stay married to an infidel. In 1994, despite his attempts to challenge the verdict, his marriage was annulled, thus in 1995 he and his wife decided to flee to the Netherlands.

[201] Abu Zayd and Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's standpoints need to be placed within a theological controversy about the nature of the sacred book which started in the 9th and 10th centuries between the rationalist school of Islamic theology, Muʿtazila and the traditional movement, *ahl al-ḥadīṯ*. While the first considered the sacred text an act of God, the latter believed it to be his attribute, thus uncreated and eternal. Eventually, under the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil, the conservative stance prevailed, becoming a dogma. Abu Zayd believes that the Mu'tazila view must be developed and enriched with the use of modern textual sciences that could help to uncover the implicit and the unsaid within the holy texts.

[202] Kassab, op. cit., 223.

[203] See Stéphane Lacroix, "Ḥākimiyya," in Encyclopaedia of Islam, 3rd edition, ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Everett Rowson. Consulted online on 03 July 2018 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_30217>

principle of *ḥākimiyya* only the rule of God (expressed through the words of His book) can legitimately regulate human affairs while the notion of *naṣṣ* was used to clarify ambiguous passages in the sacred books, thus imposing the "right" (thus legitimate) interpretation of them. Indeed, these two principles combined led to a "totalitarianism of the text". According to Abu Zayd, detaching the word of God from its socio-historical and cultural background makes the sacred text an abstract metaphysical thing, distorting its original meaning, even though contextualizing the statements (*tārīḫiyya*) does not mean limiting their meaning to specific contexts (*zamāniyya*): on the contrary historicity aims to make the sacred messages understandable and reasonable to people.

Finally, Abu Zayd, like his contemporaries, discussed the consequences of the 1967 defeat especially under a psychological point of view. In fact, in *Dawā'ir al-ḫawf: Qir'a fī kitāb al-mar'a* (*The Circles of Fear, A Reading in the Discourse of Women*, 2000) he stressed how such a defeat and the demise of Pan-Arabism left Arabs angry, humiliated and powerless thus pushed them to seek refuge within an idealized glorious past.

2.3.4 Mohammad Arkoun (Muḥammad 'Arkūn, 1928-2010)

Like Abu Zayd, the Algerian scholar Muhammad Arkoun stressed the importance of historicizing the sacred texts by examining the human context of revelation and transmission without forgetting its historical, cultural, linguistic and gendered contingencies. He detailed his standpoint in two books, both written in English, *Rethinking Islam Today* (1985-86) and *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (2001) where he called for a rethinking of the epistemological premises of the study of Islam by using modern semiotics, linguistics and anthropology. Indeed, his work aimed to develop a new epistemology

for the understanding of religion as a universal dimension of human existence and to articulate a theory for the comparative study of cultures, especially those with a tradition of revealed religions[204]: there is no perfect time to go back to, God's words are embedded in history, culture and language and cannot be understood outside of those coordinates. Quoting Lee (1997):

> If Muslims seek the truth about themselves, they must reexamine not simply the truths of revelation but all the particular ways in which those truths have been felt, understood, elaborated, justified, fashioned into orthodoxy, and experienced in context, over time and within geographical space[205].

The Muslims need to exit the realm of the *un-thought* and sometime even the *unthinkable*, a dimension built over time by theology, jurisprudence and religious critique and constituted by all the elements considered incompatible with the orthodox traditional standpoint, such as secularism, historicity and sexuality[206]. Finally, Arkoun's message is implicitly political as, in attacking Islamic Reason, he also attacks the regimes that rely on it as a basis for the legitimacy of their rule.

2.3.5 Hassan Hanafi (Ḥassan Ḥanafī, 1935-)

The Egyptian scholar Hassan Hanafi, who had been a Nasser supporter and then shifted closer to the Muslim Brotherhood to form his ideas of "Islamic Left," aims to start a human revolution and placed his project in continuity with those of al-Afġānī and 'Abduh.

He delegitimized the dominant political authority through progressive hermeneutics, which take side with the poor and the

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[204] Kassab, op. cit., 211; Boullata, op. cit., 40-45.
[205] Robert Lee, *Overcoming Tradition and Modernity: The Search for Islamic Authenticity* (Boulder: West View Press, 1997), 144.
[206] Campanini (2005), op. cit., 122.

oppressed against the ruling class and the reach. At this regard, Habti (2016) wrote:

> The most interesting aspect of Hanafi 's theorizing is the extent to which the delimitation of the legitimacy of political authority through a theory of social revolution depends on the hermeneutics of the interpreter set up through a qualitative improvement of the traditional Islamic hermeneutics of the text[207].

Moreover, according to the author, eurocentrism has to be replaced by an Islam-centered world civilization[208]. In his utopic world, a new age of renaissance (*nahḍa*) and enlightenment (*tanwīr*) is about to begin as the Arab masses need to regain their true identity through a new understanding of their own heritage (Hanafi re-reading of *turāṯ* is related to the renewal, *taǧdīd*, of Arab-Islamic thought[209]) which has to be considered a powerful source of strength and authenticity, rather than a set of eternal truths and unchallengeable answers[210]. In other words, the East needs to regain possession of its self-consciousness for interacting on par with the Western cultural subject[211]. As he clarified in his periodical *The Islamic Left* (launched in 1981) the political forces in power nowadays in the Middle East, both Islamic and secular, are unjust and oppressive and use their ideological umbrellas to legitimize their true intents. Accordingly, at the international conference "The Arab Renaissance: Renewing the Civilizational Message," organized in Amman, on 25-26 April 2018, in the occasion of the 10th anniversary

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[207] Habti, op. cit., 296.
[208] Hassan Hanafi, "From Orientalism to Occidentalism," in *Building Peace by Intercultural Dialogue. Essays in Honor of Professor Tuomo Melasuo on the Occasion of his 60th birthday*, ed. Kirsi Henriksson & Anitta Kynsilehto Tampere Peace Research Institute, Occasional Paper no. 97 (2008), 259.
[209] Campanini (2005), op. cit., 63.
[210] Kassab, op. cit., 240-247.
[211] Campanini (2005), op. cit., 67.

of the Arab Renaissance Foundation for Democracy and Development (ARDD)

> Hanafi centralized the role of human change and perpetual interpretations of religion and the tradition, and asked the youth to rebel whenever their rights and aspirations are not met by the ruling class or are threatened by external hegemons; he demanded an urgent revival of the humanist spirit in the tradition[212].

2.3.6 Muhammad Abed al-Jabri (Muḥammad 'Abid al-Ǧābirī, 1935-2010)

The Moroccan political theorist Mohammad al-Jabri, an activist of the Moroccan Left from the Fifties to the Eighties, has been defined as an Arab-Muslim Leftist, and accused of being too political. Al-Jabri worked to deconstruct and reconstruct Arab Reason by reading it through the perspective of the Medieval Andalusian philosophy—especially that of Ibn Rušd's (Averroes, d. 1198)—that, by refusing to interpret religion with philosophical tools and vice versa, opened the way to the independence of science[213]. Such work on the Arab (and Islamic) Reason aimed to reconcile faith with reason, the Arab/Muslim intellectual tradition with the modern Western intellectual tradition. In fact, al-Jabri strongly defended modern state institutions while never losing his faith and admiration for the Arabic tradition.

According to al-Jabri, a philosophical renaissance is the necessary precondition for a renaissance of the modern Arab culture and civilization but, unlike Laroui, his way of legitimizing change took the past and the significance of the *turāṯ* into account as, in his opinion, they are essential to face the challenges of the contemporary age. This

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[212] Mohammed Hashas, "Optimism Reigns over Arab Renaissance Amman Conference," *ResetDoc* (3 May 2018), http://www.resetdoc.org/story/optimism-reigns-arab-renaissance-amman-conference/

[213] Campanini (2005), op. cit., 49.

past must be revised, desacralized and reconstructed in an enlightened way[214]. Indeed, al-Jabri denounced the Arab political regimes which, over time, lost legitimacy, sacralized their power and made it untouchable and unquestionable, in a progressive degeneration of political systems from the prophetic mission (*da'wa nabawiyya*), to the caliphate (*ḫilāfa*), to the patrimonial power (*mulk*) [215].

Finally, as far as the figure of the Arab intellectuals is concerned, al-Jabri stressed how the ruiling elites always tried to use the (mostly) compliant scholars to legitimate their power, generally on religious grounds. This conservative role needs to change toward more progressist standpoints[216]. That is why al-Jabri underlined the importance of re-examining the objectives of *šarī'a* and tried to give special place to the concept of *maṣlaḥa* (public interest/good).

2.3.7 Rashid al-Ghannushi (Rāšid al-Ghannūšī, 1941-)

The thinker and political leader Rashid al-Ghannushi was educated in a traditional Muslim community and continued his studies in Tunis. However, as he moved to the capital to continue his studies Ghannushi entered the debate between modernity and tradition that governed the political-cultural scene of the country and faced the identity crisis that such a debate generated. A convinced Nasserist and romantic (Pan-) Arabist, in the mid-Sixties he turned into a more committed ideologue of Arab nationalism following Sāṭi` al-Ḥuṣrī's reasoning. However, while in Damascus for attending a BA in philosophy, he started to question the Arabist standpoint considering it too indebted to the scientific and cultural aports of the Western

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[214] Mohammed Hashas, "Mohammed Abed al-Jabri: The Future of the Arab World?," *ResetDoc* (27 December 2014), http://www.resetdoc.org/story/mohammed-abed-al-jabri-the-future-of-the-arab-world/; Abu-Rabi' (2004), op. cit., 256-263.
[215] Campanini (2005), op. cit., 49-52.
[216] Ibid., 54.

modernity. Accordingly, he substituted Islamic readings for Arab nationalist ones, thus rediscovering what he defines as the "true Islam", an authentic Islam, free of distortions of any sort. In the Seventies, after a year of studies in France, Gannoushi went back to Tunis where he founded *al-Ǧamāʿa al-Islāmiyya* (The Islamic Group, outlawed by the Tunisian government in 1973) considering himself the rightful inheritor of Ḫayr al-Dīn al-Tūnisī and coming close to the teaching of the Algerian writer and philosopher Malik Bennabi (Mālik Bin Nabī, 1905–1973) who faced the backwardness and the weakness of the "colonizable" Arab-Muslim world and his relations with the West, for knowing better the enemy is the only way to defeat him[217]. In 1979, *al-Ǧamāʿa al-Islāmiyya* set up a general conference within which the movement adopted a constitution and elected both a leadership council (*šūrà*) and its first president, Gannoushi. However, the *Ǧamāʿa* was dissolved in 1980 and replaced in 1981 with the *Mouvement de le Tendence Islamique* (MTI), a movement deeply committed to the democratic system and that considered the electoral process the only true source of legitimacy. As a member of the MTI, Gannoushi experienced prison first from 1981 to 1984 and then again in 1987, when he was released by the new President Ben Ali (Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn bin ʿAlī, b. 1936) who had just replaced Bourguiba (al-Ḥabīb Būrqība, 1903-2000) ousted by the 1987 *coup d'état*. Ben Ali initially seemed in favor to a multi-party system. Thus, trying to gain official recognition, Gannoushi renamed his movement *Ḥarakat al-Nahḍa*, removing any reference to Islam. However, the initial openness of Ben Ali proved to be only apparent, in fact, despite Ennahda' success at the polls in the 1989 elections (14, 5 % of the national vote and 30% in the big cities) all parliamentary seats were assigned to the ruling party

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[217] Campanini (2005), op.cit., 35-37.

(*Rassemblement Constitutionel Démocratique*, RCD) candidates. Eventually, in the same year Gannoushi fled to London (to come back only after 2011) where he could complete and publish his landmark work *al-ḥurriyyāt al-ʿamma fī al-dawla al-islāmiyya* (*Public Liberties in the Islamic State*, 1993) where he discusses crucial topics such as civil liberties, democracy and human rights within an Islamic framework. According to him, an ideal system of governance must recognize and protect the human dignity and prevent despotism to take root by diminishing and eventually eradicating the gap between the ruled and the ruler. Following the teachings of nineteenth and twentieth-century reformists previously discussed (such as al-Tahtāwī, Ḫayr al-Dīn al-Tūnisī, al-Afġānī, 'Abduh, al-Kawākibī and Riḍā) he tried to integrate Western concepts into the Islamic discourse aiming to achieve an authentic Islamic renaissance, but also one able to benefit from the positive aspects of the Western modernity[218]. In fact, according to him, "an authentic modernist perspective cannot be merely transferred from one culture to another. It must be indigenous, homegrown"[219].

To conclude, according to Abu Rabi', Gannushi "represents the first generation of active Tunisian Islamists who opposed the post-colonial secular state"[220]. In fact, according to him colonialism has never ended but it only turned into neo-colonialism and globalization and kept exploiting the Third World under this new shape.

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[218] Azzam Tamimi, "Rashid al-Ghannushi" in *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*, ed. John L. Esposito and Emad El-Din Shahin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 212-221.
[219] Abu Rabi', op. cit., 209.
[220] Ibid., 206.

3. The hybrid sovereignty of the Arab Middle East

The previous historical and conceptual outline of the formation of Arab Nation-States raises many questions as far as the concepts of sovereignty and legitimacy are involved: did the end of Pan-Arabism mean the final consolidation of Westphalian principles in the region? Did the emergence of the Western-like sovereignty mean the death of Arabism, or did territorial nationalism and (Pan-) Arab nationalism find a way to coexist thus generating a relative stability (Barnett, 1996)[221]? Does the invasion of Kuwait show that sovereignty has settled? This concluding section tries to answer to these and other questions starting from the analysis of Arab sovereignty and its hybrid nature, an approach that condemns the Eurocentric perspective according to which the Western Nation-State, and more generally liberal democracy (along with capitalism), is the final solution as far as the political organization of human societies is concerned[222]. Thus, Arab Middle Eastern states are wrongly considered failed, unsuccessful or semi-states only because they did not fully Westernize, while they just followed a different historical, cultural and economic path which obviously differentiated their outcome from the Western one.

Indeed, the Arab Nation-States have a multilayered character derived from the encounter between their traditional forms of loyalty and the preexistent local authorities with the Westphalian system and its model of statehood. Accordingly, Bacik (2008) talks about "hybrid sovereignty" which is neither completely Western nor traditional, being

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[221] Michael Barnett, "Sovereignty, nationalism, and regional order in the Arab states system," in *State sovereignty as social construct*, ed. Biersteker Thomas J., Weber Cynthia (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 148-189.

[222] Anderson (1991) affirmed that nationality or better nation-ness "is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time" from the time when the nation-state emerged as the final system thorough which human societies have to be organized. See also Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

a model that "accepts the coexistence of tribal networks and ethno-religious loyalties and the modern state format" and where "primordial identities and patterns coexist with citizenship within the Western-like borders"[223]. Referring to the many strategies and narratives used over time by the Jordanian establishment to preserve and maintain its legitimacy, Susser (1999) wrote:

> The Jordanian kings juxtapose images of tradition and modernity in artful ways. This is manifest in the laudations they gave themselves: Liberal Democratizer, Monarch, Descendant of the Prophet[224], Secularist, and Sheikh of all Tribal Sheiks[225].

Thus, in the Arab-Muslim context, Western sovereignty is realized only in a limited way because, although Arab States originated within the European system, the imposition of the new system of rules could not be unilateral, but instead involved constant negotiation and identity recognitions, leading to the coexistence of multiple levels of identity, some of which were never affected by foreign influence.

Besides, the Arab states "created through colonial processes of empowering certain ethnic, national, tribal or religious groups over other ones, forced the domination of one identity over the rest of the society"[226], thus, quoting Kumaraswamy (2006) "the region suffers from the inability to recognize, integrate, and reflect its ethno cultural diversity"[227].

Notably, when talking about sovereignty, Bacik stresses the importance of both the international and the domestic sovereignties,

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[223] Gökan Bacik, *Hybrid Sovereignty in the Arab Middle East* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 5.

[224] The *Banū Hāšim* claim to descend from the Arab chieftain *Qurayš*.

[225] Asher Susser, "The Palestinians in Jordan: Demographic Majority, Political Minority," in *Minorities and the State in the Arab World,* ed. Ofra Bengio and Gabriel Ben-Dor (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 98.

[226] Kennet Christie and Mohammed Masad, *State Formation and Identity in the Middle East and North Africa* (New Yotk: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 24.

[227] P. R. Kumaraswamy, "Who am I?: The identity crisis in the Middle East," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 10, no. 1 (March 2006): 63.

embodied respectively by the state-state territorial boundaries and the state-society social boundaries. International sovereignty indeed derives from the recognition of a state by the other component of the system (community of states), and can be defined as a protection mechanism as it stands on the principle that the sovereignty of a state cannot be violated (non-intervention, non-interference principles).

Instead, the domestic sovereignty's significance is often neglected, although, according to the author, it says much more about the real nature of a state. Indeed, state practices such as citizenship, passport and border markers exist to establish social boundaries, to legitimate the separation between the state and other social formations. The basic, neutral institutions (e.g. taxation, law) of modern statehood should avoid preferences (e.g. tribal) and remain always objective, accountable, predictable and transparent[228]. Notably, the strong familiar bonds of the Arab societies prevented the creation of impersonal bureaucratic relations: the institutional culture is still under the influence of traditional forms as people still care about tribal links. Therefore, no Arab state, following Bacik's reasoning, has a full domestic Western-like sovereignty: in fact, the perseverance of tribal loyalties in the state structure causes the failure of domestic boundaries that in turn generate sovereignty crises. Interestingly, such crises usually lead to the adoption of substitution mechanisms, meaning that the establishment, in order to rescue itself and regain legitimacy, turns to certain primordial patterns (such as tribalism or sectarianism), or to the use of violence, or even to transnational agendas such as Pan-Arabism or Pan-Islamism.

The next sub-sections briefly analyze the tribal and the religious components of the Arab Nation-States that, alongside the political

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[228] Bacik, op. cit., 18, 19.

implications of the external revenues, are among the major sources of power and legitimacy of the Arab-Muslim regimes.

3.1 The tribal component

Tribes played essential roles in the formation of Islamic Empires, such as Omayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid, Ottoman, Safavid etc., and they also dominated vast areas of the MENA region that were not under any imperial authority (e.g. the Syrian desert, the Arabian Peninsula, the Upper Nile and the desert and mountains of North Africa). However, in the mid-19th century they began to be incorporated into the modern Nation-States but, even if some traditional forms of tribal authority have been forcibly broken, they never ceased to exist and two apparently incompatible institutions, tribes and states, started to coexist while tribal behavior continued to influence the collective identity and the decision-making process of the Arab states. Hourani (1991) affirmed that tribes owe their solidarity to a "myth of common ancestry", meaning that they have social, cultural, ethnolinguistic and territorial bonds, and that they are a fluid entity that formed with the state a dialectical symbiosis through which the levels of autonomy and subordination of both varied over time. Thus, sometimes tribes united with other tribes in chiefdoms (a hybrid political formation between tribe and state) to form states whose legitimacy was enhanced also by religious ideology; other times they resisted the states by acting as anti-states, but more often they coexisted and coevolved with state formation. In fact, such primordial groups helped the states undergo social change and modernization by providing a strong legitimacy source, and a symbolic counterbalance that facilitated the process of state expansion. The words of Sadik al-Azm are particularly significant in this regard. In fact, in *self-Criticism after the Defeat* (1968) he wrote that

Because of the lack of social institutions, political organizations, and political parties working effectively among the masses, the Arab citizen falls, at the time of sudden danger, under the spontaneous sway of the tribal, behaving in accordance with its norms, and thus feels that his ties with his family or group are stronger than his ties to the "land", and his connection to his tribe, daughters and relatives is more significant and important than his connection to the threatened "soil of the fatherland"[229].

As mentioned above, the Gulf region and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan are very noteworthy cases to be analyzed under this perspective. Indeed, most of the Gulf region's royal families (such as the ruling family of Kuwait, the al-Ṣabāḥ, in charge since 1700) have tribal origins and could not impose their will on rival tribes and clans until Britain formalized their respective claims to rule through defense treaties in the late nineteenth century, and later helped to put down internal resistance; while the Emirate of Transjordan, an area deeply divided by tribal and regional affiliations, was offered in 1921 by the minister of the British colonies of the time, Winston Churchill to ʿAbd Allāh, the son of al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī al-Hāšimī, *šarīf* and *amīr* of Mecca[230]. To this point, Betty S. Anderson (2005) stressed how "the Hashemites had literally to 'imagine' the state because no such entity called Jordan existed before the establishment of its boundaries and administrative structures in 1921"[231]. Moreover, the tribes of the area were made very powerful during the Ottoman rule, especially in the

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[229] Sadik Al-Azm, *self-Criticism after the Defeat*, (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'ah Press, 1968). First English Print edition published in 2011 by Saqi Books, London, ch. 2.

[230] The Syrian Arab government of ʿAbdallah's brother King Fayṣal (Fayṣal al-Awwal ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī al-Hāšimī,1885-1933), had been established in 1919 and only one year later the San Remo Conference (1920) gave France the mandate of Syria: French won the Franco-Syrian war that had broken out in response to it and Fayṣal got expelled from the region. However, within the Cairo Conference (March 12 to 30, 1921), British agreed to appoint Fayṣal king of the newly born Kingdom of Iraq.

[231] Betty S. Anderson, *Nationalist Voices in Jordan. The Street and the State* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 2.

province of Ajloun: the Ottomans used to pay the Bedouins not to attack the Muslims pilgrims passing through, thus they became overly well-armed and strong over time. Accordingly, 'Abd Allāh had to court the tribes in exchange for their allegiance by offering public employments, tax breaks, and payoffs[232]. Tribalism is indeed central in the development of Jordan, quoting Alon (2007):

> Unlike the other countries of the Fertile Crescent, based on urban élites and cultures, the Hashemite Kingdom explicitly incorporated tribalism into the political order and built on it for its own legitimacy and survival from the outset[233].

In other words, Jordan has been built on a form of social contract between the tribes and the Hashemite ruling family as the latter promised to provide services (electricity, water, transportation) and jobs (especially in the army) in exchange for their unreserved support. The Jordanian Bedouins' special legal status was abolished only in 1976[234] but they remained privileged in the army and still have reserved quotas in public universities[235]. To conclude, the words of King 'Abd Allāh II

[232] Ann M. Peters and Pete W. Moore, "Beyond Boom and Bust: External Rents, Durable Authoritarianism, and Institutional Adaptation in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan," *Springer Science - Business Media* (2009): 264.

[233] Yoav Alon, *The Making of Jordan. Tribes, Colonialism and the Modern State* (London and New York: Tauris, 2007), 2.

[234] The law of tribal courts was issued in 1924, later modified in 1936 and abolished in 1976. These laws "listed the tribes of Jordan which submitted to its jurisdiction and left to the individuals of those tribes the freedom to submit their cases to their traditional judges for finding the solution [to cases] according to legal tradition". Ann Furr, and Muwafaq Al-Serhan, "Tribal Customary Law in Jordan," *South Carolina Journal of International Law and Business* 3, no. 2/3, (2008): 23.

However, even after 1976 tribe remained an essential element of the political, social and cultural structure of Jordanian society, and the regulations of the tribal system are still respected as it operates alongside the formal legal system and *šarīʿa* Law especially in collective disputes and in disputes between tribes. WANA (West Asia-North Africa Institute), "The Status of Legal Empowerment in Jordan: Evidence to support the post-2015 development agenda" (2014): 8, http://wanainstitute.org/sites/default/files/publications/StatusOfLegalEmpowermentInJordan_WANA_2014.pdf

[235] Nadine Méouchy, Norig Neveu and Myriam Ababsa, "The Hashemites and the Creation of Transjordan," in *Atlas of Jordan. History, Territories and Society*, ed. Myriam Ababsa (Ifpo, Institut français du Proche-Orient, 2013): 212-221.

(January 2013) exemplify the central role played by the tribes up to the present day in legitimating its status of king and its rule over "his larger tribe", Jordan:

> We are all sons and daughters of tribes from various backgrounds and origins, whether the Badia[236], villages, cities or refugee camps. This is the most important source of our strength, of our national unity and our society's security and stability. There was never a day when tribe and family were reason for chaos, violence or breaking the law, as some who have no knowledge of the true definition of tribe and nature of tribal society claim. On the contrary, the tribe contributed in a major way to the foundation of the modern Jordanian state—a state of institutions and law. The tribe has always been and will remain a symbol of valor, authentic values, allegiance and the safeguard of security, stability and the rule of law. And I, Abdullah ibn Al Hussein, take pride in the Jordanian tribes because they are my family and my larger tribe[237].

3.2 Religious legitimacy vs. rentierist legitimation

Schlumberger and Bank (2001/2002) stress the importance of the distinction between legitimacy (an attribute of political rule) and legitimation (the process of actively creating legitimacy), a distinction that proves useful for the purposes of the present study, and above all helps better understand the significance and the role of the religious and the economic system as guarantors of the Arab states' apparent stability and survival. Indeed, Schlumberger describes rentierism as "a form of legitimation as it consists of a continuous process of creating legitimacy

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[236] *Al-bādiyya* is a region of semi-arid, steppic rangeland and constitutes 80% of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The Hashemite Fund for Development of Jordan Badia, "Jordan Badia," http://www.badiafund.gov.jo/en/node/310 (Accessed 2018/06/07).

[237] "Speech of His Majesty King Abdullah II at the Graduation of the 26th Class of Muta University's Military Wing," Amman, 16 June 2013. English translation retrieved from: http://jordanembassyus.org/news/speech-his-majesty-king-abdullah-ii-graduation-ceremony-26th-class-muta-universitys-military (Accessed 2018/05/23).

through the implementation of certain policies, as opposed to constant already-existing and stable religious legitimacies[238]". According to Lisa Anderson (1987):

> The legitimacy of the state in the West, with its notions of secular patriotism, citizenship, and the various rights of citizens, was intimately tied to the taxing powers of the state and the popular participation which developed as a consequence[239].

On the contrary, a "rentier state"[240] depends on external sources of income for its survival and not on domestic taxation, thus it lacks in popular participation and does not have a proper civil society: citizens' loyalty is bought by the state, and citizenship becomes a pecuniary relation and a source of economic benefit rather than a civil status[241]. Therefore, a rentier state is invulnerable to its citizens, as it does not need to justify its actions to the society.

The most classic examples of rentier states are the oil-rich states of the Gulf, which enjoy the revenues of the exportation of such goods. However, there are other non-oil-producing countries whose survival depends on external sources different from hydrocarbons, such as Jordan that is highly dependent on the budgetary support of the Gulf State, as well as bilateral and multilateral Western development aid (that can be considered "rent equivalents"); accordingly, countries like Jordan can be labelled as "rentier states of second order" or "semi-renter states". Peters (2009) clarifies this point as follows:

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[238] Oliver Schlumberger and Andre Bank, "Succession, Legitimacy, and Regime Stability in Jordan," *The Arab Studies Journal* 9/10 no. 2/1 (Fall 2001/ Spring 2002): 70, note 8.

[239] Anderson Betty, op. cit., 15, 16.

[240] The concept of rentier state was first expressed by the economist Hossein Mahdavy in 1970 with reference to Pahlavian Iran and was subsequently applied to Arab countries by Hazim Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani. See Hussein Mahdavy, "The Patterns and Problems of Economic Development in Rentier states: The Case of Iran" (New York: Croom Helm, 1970).

[241] Bacik, op. cit., 50-52.

[…] Jordan extends the set of rentiers beyond oil and gas exporters, to include lower-middle income developing countries that have relied upon a variety of external rents over time, such as development assistance, protocol trade, and security support. Limiting the set of cases to pure oil rentiers misses the point that even moderate levels of aid or trade in the hands of rulers can far exceed the resources available to potential domestic challengers[242].

In this regard it is worth mentioning the interesting point of view of the journalist and political analyst Mohammad Ayesh, reported by the *Middle East Eye* when talking about the recent protests that occurred in the country. According to Ayesh:

The real problem is the Saudi aid that has stopped in recent years; Jordan depends on foreign aid as the main source for the economy, thus these protests could be planned messages from Jordan to outside countries, especially Saudi Arabia and UAE: We have an internal crisis and we need direct aid to save the stability of the country[243].

The situation of the "rich weak states" of the Gulf, as defined by Benedict Anderson (1992), is quite different. As noted above, they entered the global market thanks to the internationalization of American capital while maintaining a political authoritarianism. In fact, the redistribution of the wealth derived from the oil revenues, led to the

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[242] Peters and Moore, op., cit., 259.

[243] In fact "a five-year aid package from GCC states to Jordan, worth some $3.6bn, ended in January 2017, but no further assistance was offered". Ahmed Kaamil and Mustafa Abu Sneineh, "Jordan's king freezes price hikes as protests continue," *Middle East Eye* (Friday 1 June 2018), http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/jordanians-prepare-more-protests-over-oil-and-tax-2135714445; Mohammad Ayesh, "Jordan's message to the world: Don't cut our aid," *Middle East Eye* (1 June 2018), http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/jordan-s-message-world-don-t-cut-our-aid-754226402. See also Patrick Neil, "Saudi Arabia and Jordan: Friends in adversity," *Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States* no. 31 (July 2013), http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/55661/1/__lse.ac.uk_storage_LIBRARY_Secondary_libfile_s hared_repository_Content_LSE%20Kuwait%20Programme_PARTRICK%20(Jan% 202015%20update).pdf

establishment of a rentier financial system and consequently created a very obedient class of people with no intent of ever criticizing the ruling élite, facilitating a convergence toward neo-patrimonialism.

To sum up, rentierism is a legitimation process, while religion is a legitimacy source and it helped in many states to strengthen the loyalty to the ruler by providing dynasties with an ideology able to legitimate public institutions (e.g. *Waḥabiyya* in Saudi Arabia, *Mahdiyya* in Sudan and *Sanusiyya*[244] in Libya). In Jordan, the claimed line of descent of the ruling family from the Prophet clan[245] provided the regime a kind of legitimacy that cannot be contested by its opponents. However, according to Schlumberger and Bank (2001/2002), religious-traditional legitimacy does not play a crucial role in Jordanian politics, it is rather a long-term structural constant, a pillar upon which stands the political power of the Hashemites.

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[244] See Mahmud Ghāzi, "Emergence of the *Sanusiyyah* Movement: A Historical Perspective," *Islamic Studies* 22, no. 3 (1983): 21-43.

[245] Through his daughter Fatima, considered also a descendant of the great-grandfather of Muḥammad and progenitor of the *Banū* Hāšim, Hāšim ibn ʿAbd Manāf (464-497). Méouchy, op. cit., 223.

II. The tools of research

Introduction

This chapter aims to clarify the methodological approach of the study and it links the first section, focused on the theoretical and terminological issues, with the last one, dedicated to the findings of the empirical work. As a recent work edited by Clark and Cavatorta (2018) highlights, there are methodological and ethical challenges that need to be dealt with when discussing the MENA region, the most obvious of which being the authoritarian or semi-authoritarian nature of the Middle Eastern regimes, as the dramatic vicissitude of the Italian researcher Giulio Regeni reminded us. The very choice of the qualitative over quantitative methodology is linked to this criticality and became a trend in the field. Many researchers in fact choose a qualitative approach because access to the administrative data, such as population census or election results, is often restricted or even denied in many countries or because the data itself is not reliable[1]. Nevertheless, the qualitative approach needs to face an increasingly important aspect: that of "positionality", which indeed refers to the different "positions" occupied by the researcher and the participants, often not part of the same cultural and social community and how this affects the research outcomes. In fact, "the identities of both researcher and participants have the potential to impact [its] process"[2].

Accordingly, as the chosen approach for the present study is indeed qualitative, the first section attempts to frame the wide and multidisciplinary field of qualitative research by stressing its main

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[1] Janine A Clark and Francesco Cavatorta, *Political Science Research in the Middle East and North Africa* (New York: Palgrave Mcmillian, 2018), 10, 11.
[2] Brian Bourke, "Positionality: Reflecting on the Research Process," *The Qualitative Report* 19 (2014): 1.

aspects, its strengths and weaknesses, its tools of analysis and its peculiarities.

The second section focuses specifically on the research tools that have been used, the semi-structured interview, highlighting its components and describing its building process. The questions (both in English and in Arabic) and the respondents' sample are listed, explained and justified within the fourth and the fifth sections. Each question investigates or aims to examine in depth a different conceptual dimension following the theoretical framework presented in the first chapter. These dimensions, alongside the ones that came up during the empirical work, are only listed in the last section and will be discussed in the third chapter alongside the data analysis. Finally, the third section discusses advantages and limitations of interviewing in a Middle Eastern context; the aim of this section is to understand weather the research method of the individual interview needs some adjustments in such a complex environment and how it is socially perceived. In this regard, recurring dynamics and particularly interesting episodes that occurred during the field work proved to be very useful to investigate the following significant realms: self and society, time and space, language, and gender.

Notably, Islamic religion is not included because all the criticalities faced within the field work were culturally and socially rooted. Obviously, Islam plays a crucial role in the self-determination of Muslims in the Middle East and everywhere else; it is a substantial identity criterion for many and no researcher would ever be able to discuss any Middle Eastern issue without being aware of its importance; however, within the present study's empirical work, the differences between interviewer and interviewees' standpoints were not 'Islam-related'. For example, on average, both Muslim and Christian subjects would have had a worse attitude toward an atheist researcher than

toward a believer, regardless of his or her belief; this to say that religiosity, rather than affiliation to a specific faith, has to be taken into consideration when dealing with such a context.

1. Qualitative research, framing the methodological path

Qualitative methods of analysis have been chosen for a variety of reasons. In fact, the present research aims to recognize and analyze the identity criteria perceived as most significant and distinctive in the case countries, Jordan and Kuwait (the choice of which is justified and discussed in the next chapter) as they are fundamental to understanding the foundation of these states' legitimacy. In fact, a qualitative approach (and the interview method in particular), deals appropriately with the subject of this research[3]. In other words, the appropriateness of qualitative research is indissolubly linked to the phenomena to be studied as it values the subjective importance of self-experience. Quoting Pamela Cawthorne:

> [Qualitative methods] destroy all illusions that the facts 'speak for themselves' or that the identity and values of the knower are irrelevant to the knowledge that she or he produces[4].

Whilst quantitative methods are suitable for capturing "a view of the social world as a concrete structure"[5], as soon as we assume that human beings may contribute to the creation of the social world itself, they become less and less satisfactory.

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[3] Besides, since large samples were not available (because of field access and gender issues) accuracy becomes more important. See Meike Watzlawik and Aristi Born, *Capturing Identity: Quantitative and Qualitative Methods* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2007), 10-13.

[4] Pamela Cawthorne, "Identity, values and method: taking interview research seriously in political economy," *Qualitative Research* 1, no. 1 (2001): 86.

[5] Gareth Morgan and Linda Smircich, "The case for qualitative research," *Academy of Management. The Academy of Management Review (pre-1986)* 5, no. 3 (October 1980): 499.

At this point, a brief overview of the main characteristics of qualitative research is necessary, as it sets the conceptual coordinates within which to read the empirical data and subsequent findings of the present study.

Literature aimed at defining the qualitative research methodology appeared only in the late Sixties. In fact, the first systematic contribution to qualitative approach is commonly considered *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* by Glaser and Strauss (1967)[6]. During the first decades of the nineteenth century, the term methodology was an exclusive prerogative of the experimental method. Moreover, while statistics were considered a doctrinal argument that consequently required some kind of special training, fieldwork appeared to be something that could be learned with practice only. According to Gobo, in the Sixties[7] qualitative methods were finally legitimated and institutionalized in order to contrast the quantitative positions in a more systematic way[8]. In the Eighties, Melucci suggests that the success of quality over quantity, and flexibility over standardization in the business field had repercussions in sociology. Therefore, a methodological literature appears, and it includes the first textbooks on

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[6] Giampietro Gobo, "The Renaissance of Qualitative Methods," *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 6, no. 3, Art. 42 (September 2005): 3.

[7] However, already in the Fifties there were significant publications for the qualitative research such as Howard Becker, S. and Blanche Geer, "Participant Observation and Interviewing: A Comparison," in *Human Organization: Field Relations and Techniques*, ed. Richard N. Adams & Jack J. Preiss, 28-31. Kansas City: Community Studies Inc., 1960. Raymond L. Gold, "Roles in Sociological Field Observation," *Social Forces* XXXVI, no. 3 (1958): 217-223; Florence R. Kluckhohn, "The Participant-Observer Technique in Small Communities," *The American Journal of Sociology* XLVI no. 3 (November 1940): 331-343 and Melvin Schwartz, "Problems in Participant Observation," in *American Journal of Sociology* 60 (1955): 343-35.

[8] Gobo (September 2005), op. cit., 5.

participant observation, in-depth interviews, discourse and conversation analysis, and textual analysis of documents.

Despite these systematic efforts, it is not easy to define the term qualitative research, since it is an all-encompassing category that covers a wide range of approaches and methods found within different research disciplines[9]. In fact, a wide variety of categories define themselves as "qualitative researchers"[10]. Each and every one of these subjects have different practical problems, theoretical approaches, research traditions and of course different audiences to whom the research is addressed. Therefore, according to Seale, a "categorization of qualitative practice into a series of progressive stages is implausible"[11].

However, some researchers tried to catch the essence of qualitative research by attempting to define it or listing its key characteristics. In *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2005), Denzin and Lincoln paraphrased Nelson, offering the following definition:

> Qualitative research is an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counter disciplinary field. It crosscuts humanities and the social and physical sciences. […] it is multi pragmatic in focus. Its practitioners are sensitive to the value of the multimethod approach. They are committed to the naturalistic perspective and to the interpretative understanding of human experience. At the same time, the field is inherently political and shaped by multiple ethics and political positions[12].

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[9] Jane Ritchie and Jane Lewis ed., *Qualitative Research Practice. A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers* (London: SAGE, 2003), 2.

[10] Including geographers, sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, educationists, business and management analysts, health care workers, market researchers, historians, policy analysts, cultural studies experts, communications and media studies scholars, even accountants and many others. Clive Seale, Giampietro Gobo, Jaber Gubrium F. and David Silverman ed., *Qualitative Research Practice* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE, 2007), 2.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Denzin Normann K., Yvonna S. Lincoln ed., *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* 3rd edition (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE, 2005), 8.

Moreover:

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices turn the world into a series of representations including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them[13].

John W. Creswell, in the third chapter of *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design. Choosing Among Five Approaches* (2007), suggests his own definition that emphasizes the very process of research:

> Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and it extends the literature or signals a call for action[14].

According to Creswell, the common characteristics of qualitative research are: natural settings; the key role of the researcher; the use of multiple sources of data; a "bottom-up" or inductive data analysis; the central role of the participants' meaning; the changing nature of the research design; a theoretical setting through which researchers look at the collected data; the space given to researchers', participants' and readers' interpretation of the research itself, and

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[13] Ibid., 417.
[14] John W Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design Choosing among Five Approaches* 2nd edition (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE, 2007), 37, 38.

finally, a holistic approach to the issues that tries to identify the complex interactions of factors in any situation.

In conclusion, Creswell identifies different approaches to qualitative inquiries that, while sharing the above listed characteristics, differ from each other in focus, types of issues, discipline background, unit of analysis, data collection forms and analysis, and general structure of the study. The five approaches are:

Narrative research: it is generally used for capturing the detailed stories of life experiences of a single life or the lives of a small number of individuals. Types of narrative research include biographical studies, autobiographies, oral histories, life history portraits.

Phenomenology: it describes the meaning of several individuals' lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon, such as insomnia, grief or anger. There are two types of phenomenology: hermeneutical, that focuses more on the researchers' interpretations of the reality, and psychological, which is configured as a description of the collected lived experiences.

Grounded theory; this kind of study has the intent of generating or discovering a theory. There are two types of grounded theory study, namely systematic and constructivist.

Ethnography: it focuses on an entire cultural group. The researcher describes and interprets the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group;

Case study: this kind of research is "a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations,

interviews, audiovisual material, documents and written accounts) and reports a case description and case-based themes"[15].

Furthermore, in *La ricerca qualitativa* (2011), Mario Cardano pinpoints some key characteristics of the qualitative research, such as the close observation of the subject matter of the research and the context sensitivity that it requires, while Snape and Spencer, in the first chapter of *Qualitative Research Practice* (2003), list the following main aspects:

> […] the overall research perspective and the importance of the participants' frames of reference; the flexible nature of research design; the volume and richness of qualitative data; the distinctive approaches to analysis and interpretation; and the kind of outputs that derive from qualitative research. [...] Moreover, certain data collection methods have also been identified with qualitative research such as observational methods, in-depth interviewing, group discussions, narratives, and the analysis of documentary evidence[16].

In other words, the strength of the qualitative approach lies in its capability of giving a different thus perhaps deeper and more profound representation of social phenomena as "the aim of qualitative approaches is to reconstruct the tacit rules, the shared experience and the collective knowledge of social actors". Although the reliability of its instruments and the validity of its results are often criticized, according to Cardano, standardization and random trials have their own limitations too because they risk denying/overlooking undeniable specificities of different phenomena. Besides, as already noted, political science research in the MENA region is generally qualitative, as researchers in the region tend to face limited access to data, the quality

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[15] Ibid., 73.

[16] Jane Ritchie and Jane Lewis ed., *Qualitative Research Practice. A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. (London: SAGE, 2003), 16.

of which remains a concern. Instead, using qualitative data can bypass this problem without losing methodological rigor.

To conclude, the different accounts of qualitative research presented prove qualitative methods to be flexible and subjects-centered, capable of adapting to different situations[17] and more able to read contemporary multicultural societies characterized by the presence of ethnic and linguistic diversity. "Foreigners" are not a rare phenomenon anymore. Quoting Gobo (2005):

> […] even in small Italian towns we find people from Asia, South America, Africa, Eastern Europe, and the Balkans. Many of them do not know the Italian language well, are poorly educated, suspicious of native researchers, and competent in different interactional models and rituals from the Western world[18].

It is within this conceptual framework that the present study is placed, aiming to reach a deep and accurate understanding of the subjects' visions and insights. No other tool but the individual interview would be in fact appropriate to investigate the inner reality of the respondents and understand what the word "identity" means to them.

2. The individual interview, a social interaction

As mentioned in the previous section, qualitative research encompasses different research techniques and data collection approaches such as observations, individual interviews, focus groups, analysis of documents (biographies and autobiographies, medical charts, private journals, archive materials etc.) and analysis of audiovisual material (physical trace evidence, videotapes of photographs, e-mails, cellphone messages etc.)[19].

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[17] Gobo (2005), op. cit., 10, 11.
[18] Ibid., 9.
[19] Ibid., figure 7.3, 130.

Within the present study, individual interviews have been chosen as the preferable method and the most appropriate to investigate the due subject. Rita Bichi in *La conduzione delle interviste nella ricerca sociale* (2011) suggests the following definition of individual interview:

> The individual interview is a social interaction between an interviewer, who requests it, and an interviewee. It has exploratory purposes and it is leaded by an interviewer who uses an interrogation scheme[20].

The assumption that the interview is a type of social interaction is analyzed in the next paragraph in order to understand whether and how the culture, religion, language and the social and behavioral habits of the interviewees affect the conduction of the interview or its findings. This section has the more technical purpose of highlighting the key characteristics of the interview as a research tool and to justify the methodological choices that have been made; in fact, the features of the interview are an integral part of the scientific knowledge as they define the boundaries within which it is produced.

Although literature presents many classifications of the individual interview, Bichi introduces four features that appear to be essential to make a proper systematization[21]:

1. Standardization

   This feature deals with the homogeneity of the interrogation procedures, referring both to their forms and the order in which they are placed. The self-administered questionnaire with closed answers has the highest level of standardization, since questions and possible answers are presented in the same order to all the interviewed subjects.

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[20] Rita Bichi, *La conduzione delle interviste nella ricerca sociale* (Roma: Carocci, 2011), p. 15.
[21] Ibid., 20-41.

2. Directivity

   This is strictly connected with standardization; as the standardization increases, so does the directivity and vice versa. This feature reveals itself in the making of the interview; it distinguishes procedures with a pre-determined content from those procedures in which the interviewer determines the content during the interview itself, building it upon the respondents' answers.

3. Structuring of the interrogation scheme

   This refers to the level of complexity of the interview, to the extent of the details used. It is not related to standardization and directivity; in fact, there are very complex and detailed interviews with low levels of standardization and directivity.

4. How the interrogation scheme functions during the interview

   This refers to the concepts needed by the researcher in order to read his findings. The interview outline includes the necessary conceptual categories and it is the skeleton of the final analysis. However, in standardized interviews the outline contains all the conceptual meanings, making the conceptual system empirically detectable, while in less standardized interviews where it is possible to add concepts and meanings along the way, the outline functions more as an 'interrogation tool'.

   Following this line of reasoning, it is possible to identify three fundamental types of research interviews: structured (or standardized), non-directive (or in-depth) and semi-structured.

2.1 Structured interview

   This is an interaction characterized by high levels of standardization, directivity and structuring, generally defined questionnaire (the survey's tool). The interaction between interviewer

and interviewee is very limited because their roles are pre-determined. The questions have to be asked with the same wording and in the same order (even though sometimes randomizations are acceptable, for example in exit pools when listing candidates or political parties) to all the interviewees in order to get comparable answers and proceed with a statistical analysis of the data. It is generally used in studies that consider a large number of subjects. According to Addeo - Montesperelli (2011) the false assumption behind this approach is that all the interviewed subjects, when asked the same question/ given the same stimulus, will give the same interpretation, meaning the one of the interviewer: every questionnaire's question is subjected to the individual interpretation of the interviewee; in fact he or she may give a different meaning to the question and reach conclusions not predictable beforehand. Structured interviews can be face-to-face (CAPI), telephonic (CATI), and self-administrated (CAWI) and can last a maximum of 15 minutes.

2.2 Non-directive interview

It is a narration. It does not reflect any predetermined theories or ideas and is performed with little or no organization. This kind of interview may simply start with one opening question such as 'Can you talk about your childhood?' and will then progress based, mostly, upon the initial response. In the 2008 article "Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups" Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick described it as follows:

> Unstructured [non-directive] interviews are usually very time-consuming (often lasting several hours) and can be difficult to manage, and to participate in, as the lack of predetermined interview questions provides little guidance on what to talk about (which many participants find confusing and unhelpful). Their use is, therefore, generally only considered where

significant 'depth' is required, or where virtually nothing is known about the subject area (or a different perspective of a known subject area is required)[22].

The non-directive interview has, in Bichi's account, high levels of standardization and structuring and it is non-directive in the sense that the interviewer collects information regarding his study's topics of interest without worrying about the wording or the succession of the questions asked. The interviewees are at the center of this technique; they are asked to relive their experiences and delve deeper into their social identity; even their non-verbal language has to be recorded and analyzed; therefore, the interaction in this case is free and in-depth and the interview itself is very flexible and open.

2.3 Semi-structured interview

Gill et al. (2008) defined it as follows:

> The semi-structured interview consists of several key questions that help to define the areas to be explored, but also allows the interviewer or interviewee to diverge in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail. The flexibility of this approach, particularly compared to structured interviews, also allows for the discovery or elaboration of information that is important to participants but may not have previously been thought of as pertinent by the research team[23].

In other words, the semi-structured interview consists of a list of topics or more simply of open questions. The interviewer has to adapt and shape the interview following his subjects' inputs; therefore, he can skip a question if the interviewee anticipated it or he can add one if some clarification or a deeper analysis of specific aspects is required.

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[22] Paul Gill, K. Stewart, E. Treasure and B. Chadwick, "Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups," *BDJ* 204 (22 March 2008): 290.
[23] Ibid., p. 291.

Besides, the communicative process is less rigid if compared with the structured interview; when/if needed the interviewer can clarify the meaning of obscure questions by rephrasing them and he/she can choose which topics are worthy of being further analyzed. On the other side, the interviewees are free to express their feelings and their opinions, hence they lead the interview alongside the interviewer. That is why the semi-structured interview cannot be properly defined as standardized.

Moreover, the level of structuring is lower compared with both the questionnaire and the non-directive interview, since the outline is often rough and never includes answers. The directivity decreases as well because there are very few pre-determined concepts and the subjects' answers can, and very often will, add new leads in progress.

Once these main aspects have been clarified, it is very important to highlight the fact that a plurality of approaches can be included under the umbrella "unstructured-interviews" (plural is needed) and that they vary as standardization and directivity levels vary. In fact, unstructured-interviews exist and move between the two *continua* of standardization and directivity. Consequently, a proper definition according to Bichi would be the following:

> Semi-structured interviews are systematic set of acts of questioning that present different degrees of standardization and directivity[24].

In conclusion, the semi-structured interview can be regarded as the most flexible among the above analyzed techniques because it involves different approaches and styles: closed and open questions, verbal and non-verbal inputs can and do coexist within it. It is because of these features, its fluidity and the dynamism that characterizes its

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[24] Bichi, op. cit., 57.

communicative process, that this type of individual interview has been chosen as the proper research tool to use in the peculiar social, cultural, linguistic and religious background of the present study, as will become clearer in the next section.

3. Advantages and limitations of interviewing in a Middle Eastern context

The previous sections focused on the chosen methodology, aiming to explain the appropriateness of both the qualitative approach as the theoretical setting, and the semi-structured interview as the research tool used for the empirical work. Whilst those are essential premises, this is the core section of the chapter. In fact, it has been affirmed that qualitative research methods in general and individual interviews in particular have been chosen because of their ability to read contemporary multicultural societies characterized by the presence of ethnic and linguistic diversity. However, contemporary methodology is a product of Western academic culture, therefore it is due at this point to retrace its birth and its development through time– obviously giving more space to qualitative research–in order to understand first of all how it started to be perceived as universal, and second, which are the criticalities of the Middle-Eastern context in this regard. Recurrent dynamics, episodes which occurred during the field work and abstracts of interviews will be used to investigate the following essential realms.

3.1 Birth of social research methods and their globalization

In the 17th century, the rise of capitalism alongside the processes of urbanization and industrialization triggered the emergence and development of empirical social research as an answer to the need of understanding society. The place of birth of the new field is actually Europe, not United States:

[…] many of the techniques which are now considered American in origin were developed in Europe and then exported from the United States after they had been refined and made manageable for use on a mass scale[25].

The aim of the first studies was to gain a deeper knowledge of contemporary social problems, such as poverty and moral issues related to the living conditions of the working class. The first researchers came from different and not only academic backgrounds; at the beginning they collected data from informants, assuming that low-income people would not be able to describe their own situation, an aspect that reveals the bourgeois inner nature of the then newborn field[26]. Weber himself followed this approach in the first place, as shown in his 1981/1982 study about payment relationships and developments in the social and cultural conditions of agricultural work in some German regions: he used in fact 'key informants' (*Generalberichterstatter*) to collect the data through interviews. Later on, he changed his mind and embraced direct interviews regardless of the subjects' social class[27].

The early social survey in the States was influenced by its European counterpart but expanded its use to other areas of interest, such as political and opinion polls. America gained the leading role that still holds nowadays after the two world wars; the interwar period was also crucial because of the central contribution of the Chicago School, which is generally considered to be the birthplace of qualitative methods. Survey methods had a dominant position since the economic depression of the Thirties and were systematized in numerous methodological textbooks—such as *Social Research* (1942), where

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[25] Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Preface. In *Empirical Social Research in Germany 1848-1914*, ed. Oberschall, Anthony (Paris: Mouton &Co., 1965), v-viii.
[26] Marja Alastalo, "The history of social research methods," in *The SAGE handbook of social research methods*, ed. Pertti Alasuutari, Leonard Bickman and Julia Brannen (London: SAGE Publications, 2008), 26-41
[27] Sam Whimster, *Understanding Weber* (Milton Parl: Taylor & Francis, 2007), 15.

Georg Lundberg enlists the necessary steps for conducting an appropriate scientific research—while texts on qualitative methods did not appear until the Sixties, as mentioned in the first section.

However, the distinction between qualitative and quantitative approaches appears only in the Seventies when they are depicted as incompatible and rooted in the opposed epistemological traditions of positivism and hermeneutics. This harsh incompatibility between the two approaches remained dominant until the Eighties, when mixing them finally became a possibility. Nevertheless, in the States, the predominance of survey (or positivism or quantitative methods) persists, while in Europe at first the qualitative standpoint somehow prevailed.

Giampietro Gobo in his paper "Glocalizing methodology? The encounter between local methodologies" (2011) distinguishes three phases of the diffusion of social research methods:

- European domination (1850-1930) until the rise of Nazi-fascism.

- European cultural colonization of the US universities (first in the 1890s by immigrants, and then in the 1930s by scholars escaped from Nazi Europe).

- Globalization, namely the American cultural and Anglophone colonization of Europe that started in the Fifties and spread the methodology from the USA to the world[28].

In fact, science and methodology were exported in the aftermath of World War II, a period of political, economic and cultural American preeminence, alongside other American 'products' such as music, movies, food, cigarettes etc. Europe had been decentered and the pre-

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[28]Giampietro Gobo, "Glocalizing methodology? The encounter between local methodologies", *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 14, (2011): 417-437.

existent indigenous research methods of the different countries were trumped by the American ones; the former were, in fact, considered obsolete when compared with the "modern" American techniques, which were regarded, on the contrary, as tools of progress, modernization and scientific advancement.

Pertti Alasuutari (2004) reflects on the concept of globalization within qualitative research and methodology, often equated with 'Westernization' or Americanization. Is it true that the global spread of US standards gradually homogenized world cultures? Certainly, English became the new *lingua franca* of science and that favored English mother-tongue scholars that nowadays hold most of the publishing market. However, Alasuutari highlights another reason for the Anglo-American dominance in the field of social science: its role of center opposed to peripheries, of normality opposed to others, its image of special example. It is from the point of view of the center that the others must be seen, and the characteristics of the center are considered the standards to which we will all align at some point in the future. The consequence of this dynamic is what Alasuutari calls "the phenomenon of fashions in social thought" [29]: when a phenomenon or a theoretical paradigm is born in the center, a non-American author is somehow obliged to take it into consideration in his studies, implicitly perpetuating and reinforcing the dominance of the center and its very legitimation as "standards producer". Alasuutari adds:

> We have to make Anglo-American and other readers believe that everything worthwhile takes place in the Anglo-American countries, in the center. In order to get our works published in the international market, we have to contribute to reproducing the center-periphery structure. […] We have to adopt the gaze

[29] Pertti Alasuutari, "The globalization of qualitative research," *Qualitative research Practice* (2004): 598.

of the people in the center, looking at ourselves from afar or above[30].

Moreover, this dynamic subtends a sort of "evolutionary process" within which societies labelled as developing and a-scientific gradually change, converging in a single global "culture of modernity" represented by the American model.

Alasuutari et al. classification of the history of qualitative research, in the cardinal textbook *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2000), follows this eight steps evolutionary pattern. Staring from the traditional moment (1900-1950) where "the field worker was lionized, made into a larger-than-life figure who went into the field and returned with stories about strange peoples[31]", they then describe a modernist phase characterized by the systematization of qualitative methods in textbooks. By the third phase, called blurred genres, researchers already had different formalized strategies and techniques to use in their studies while the researcher had lost his privileged voice. The fourth moment, crisis of representation, occurred in the mid-Eighties and represents a profound rupture since new issues started to be investigated, such as gender, class and race; the researcher needed new models of truth, new methods and new forms of representation since issues such as validity, objectivity and reliability were questioned. The fifth moment, the post-modern period, tries to overcome the triple crisis of representation, legitimation and praxis by exploring new ways of composing ethnography that present the 'other' in different perspectives. The last moment is the future and is preceded by the post-experimental inquiry (1995-2000)—when the boundaries between social sciences and humanities started to fade, bringing in different forms of expressing lived experience such as literary, poetic, autobiographical and visual

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[30] Ibid., 599.
[31] Denzin and Lincoln, op. cit., 15.

representations—and the tense phase of the <u>methodologically contested</u> <u>present</u> (2000-2004). Even if Denzin place his periodization in North America and emphasize the overlapping of the eight moments, his account still implies a progressive narrative where the present and the future are implicitly perceived as better, more developed and "America-centric".

Accordingly, having assumed that the interview is a cultural product, Gobo writes that "specific (cultural) skills, tacit knowledge, and sociological conditions are required to sustain this particular social encounter"[32]. Here are some unwritten conditions that the interviewees should have and that are the parameters of the so-called "interview-society":

- They need to consider it normal or socially acceptable to talk with strangers;
- They need to be able to talk about themselves;
- They need to be able to talk about feelings and emotions;
- They need to know how to express themselves properly in different contexts;
- They are supposed to live in a democratic political system with a pretty strong civil society so they can feel free to answer without restrictions to any question.

Obviously, those parameters are problematic in non-Western societies; for example, Kuwaiti women, and especially Bedouin women (*badū* opposed to *ḥaḍarī*, sedentary[33]), showed inadequacy in describing themselves, their feelings and their emotions, mostly because they are not used to share private information with anyone but

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[32] Ibid., 424.

[33] About the dichotomal category *badū-ḥaḍarī* see: John E. Peterson ed., *The Emergence of the Gulf States: Studies in Modern History*, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 242-246.

their family members; they were all extremely shy and restrained during the interviews and their attitude represented a difficult obstacle to overcome. Moreover, both in Jordan and in Kuwait (although in Jordan young generations are keener to talk) it is not socially acceptable to talk to strangers, therefore field access represented an issue too. Subjects had to be contacted in advance by some sort of guarantor who reassured them about the interviewer's intentions.

However, those parameters are not problematic only in non-Western environments. In fact, Gobo underlines the multiculturalist nature of the twentieth century Western societies: the growing number of immigrants is irremediably changing "our" societies, therefore some adjustments have to be made, nowadays more than ever, in order to reconcile methodology and reality; mono-cultural research methods do not fit multicultural and non-Western societies anymore.

The struggle that Gobo describes became central in the past years. The milestone publication of Tuhiwai Smith's (1999, 1st edition) *Decolonizing Methodologies* stresses the need to free methodology from Western supremacy. Smith defines the word research as "inextricably linked to European colonialism and Imperialism" and "one of the dirtiest worlds in the indigenous world vocabulary"[34] and she presents Indigenous methodologies (IMs) and participatory action research (PAR) as ways of overthrowing methodological colonialism:

> Indigenous peoples across the world have other stories to tell which not only question the assumed nature of those ideals and the practices that they generate, but also serve to tell an alternative story: the history of Western research through the eyes of the colonized. These counter stories are powerful forms

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[34] Tuhiwai Linda Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 1.

of resistance which are repeated and shared across diverse indigenous communities[35].

This brief overview raises many questions, for example: what are the repercussions of this ethnocentrism on methodology and research methods? How can a culturally local product (American, Canadian or British) possibly claim any sort of universality by setting up principles to be applied potentially in all cultures? What are the inner limitations of this approach in dealing with "stranger" environments perceived as "peripheries"? And finally, narrowing the reasoning to the subject of this study, does this approach fit the complex, multi-level Arab-Muslim context? An attempt to answer this question is offered within the next sections, in terms of self and society, conceptions of Time and Space, gender and language.

3.1.1 self and society

Denzin, in *Global Dimensions of Qualitative Inquiry* (2013), states that in-depth interviews and surveys are both "rooted in an individualist social philosophy derived from the doctrines of Christianity, Enlightenment and American utilitarianism"[36]. Therefore, according to Gobo (2011), they are based on "a notion of society as a collection of individuals"[37]. In fact, the person became primary under a juridical perspective within the Roman law[38], and later with Christianity, in opposition to the ancient Greek account that subordinated the individual to the cosmos. Saint Augustine gave priority to the individuals' subjectivity, laying the foundations for the dichotomy between world as "object" vs. "self" as "subject".

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[35] Ibid., 2.
[36] Norman K. Denzin, *Global Dimensions of Qualitative Inquiry* (New York: Left Coast Press, 2013), 49.
[37] Gobo (2011) op. cit., 423.
[38] See Francesco Viola. "Lo statuto giuridico della persona in prospettiva storica", *Studi in Memoria di Italo Mancini* (1999): 621-641.

Following this reasoning, the interview, one of the "technologies of the self" according to Foucault, cannot be considered merely as tool used to collect data, but it becomes an integral part of society, an expression of the historical moment in which it was devised (the early twentieth century) that embodies all its contingent cultural features. Read under this light, Bichi's definition of interview as social interaction becomes even more significant. How can we manage a social interaction, where the questions are an expression of a certain society with very specific cultural and philosophical roots, while the answers come from a completely different one?

According to Smith (1999), the individual—considered the simplest social unit, the starting point from which all social relations are formed—is nothing but a Western system of ideas, a product of centuries of philosophical debate. Moreover, quoting Kagitçibasi (1997):

> The roots of individualism in the Western world have been traced in the history of ideas, in political and economic history, in religious history, and in psychosocial history. […] Individualism is to a large extent a characteristic of Western society[39].

Kagitçibasi mentions Hobbes' standpoint and the centrality of his *homo economicus* in the 17th century, while from a rationalist perspective he stresses Descartes epistemological individualism that makes the individual mind the primary source of knowledge (*cogito ergo sum*). On the contrary, in the East, since the 5th century B.C., Confucius teaches a form of social morality that supports a collectivist worldview and that can be found in other eastern polytheistic religions and philosophies (such as Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and

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[39] John W. Berry, Marshall H. Segall and Cigdem Kagitçibasi ed., 2nd edition, *Handbook of Cross-cultural Psychology: Social behavior and applications* vol. 3 (London: Allyn and Bacon, 1997), 3, 4.

Shintoism) and in the monotheistic religions born in the Middle East: Judaism, Islam and Christianity (except that later on, Christianity emphasized individual responsibility). Besides, Kagitçibasi focuses on the centrality of the family bonds within a collectivistic society. In "Autonomy and relatedness in cultural context: Implications for self and family" (2005) he states that, whilst nowadays the material interdependence between generations is becoming weak, the psychological one is not:

> What seems to happen is that with urban lifestyles and increasing affluence, material interdependence between generations decreases, because elderly parents do not need any longer to depend on the economic support of their adult offspring. Nevertheless, psychological interdependence, as closely-knit selves, continues, because it is ingrained in the culture of relatedness (collectivism) and is not incompatible with changing lifestyles[40].

Dionigi (2014) moves forward by putting Communitarianism together with Islamism when it comes to the relation between the community and the individual:

> Communitarianism and Islamism rely on a conception of the person whereby his/her ethical principles are defined in relationship with the community of which the person is part of. Whereas liberalism understands persons as autonomous moral agents (and on this basis postulates norms and institutions as rights, democracy, and liberal statehood which are concerned with the protection of the status of moral agent), communitarians and Islamists rely on the idea of community as constitutive of the person's ethical principles[41].

How such a multifaceted and deeply rooted dichotomy can be solved when interviewer and interviewee represent its opposed poles?

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[40] Cigdem Kagitçibasi, "Autonomy and relatedness in cultural context: Implications for self and family," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 36 (2005): 406-409.
[41] Filippo Dionigi, "Islamism as Communitarianism: A Comparative Analysis," in The Middle East Today book series (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2014), p. 65.

Before answering the question, it is necessary to recognize to which extent the very assumption of this dichotomy is correct and in what way the recent social developments of our societies worldwide cannot help but reshaping it.

Particularly interesting in this sense is Simondon's (1989) standpoint that argues against the individual/collective dichotomy by introducing the concept of "transindividuality", a relation that is simultaneously and mutually constitutive of both the individual and the collective. Moreover, according to him, the very process of individuation, namely the process of becoming an individual, is affective before it is cognitive. Scott (2014) explained Simondon's account of the individual as follows:

> […] the individual neither comes into existence alone nor ever exists alone. The individual is always relative to the milieu associated with its existence and can never be defined in isolation. Simondon considers the collective as anterior to an individual. Individuation is always simultaneously collective and psychic: humans are both social and psychological beings[42].

Moreover, Westerik in "Immigrants and the socialization of the Self" (2011) states that—whilst a distinction between "allocentric" (individuals that prefer collectivistic ideals) and "idiocentric" individuals (that tend more toward individualistic goals) exists—"cultures and individuals are not exclusively individualistic or collectivistic"[43]. Westerik mentions a third type of self, the "autonomous-related self", to be added next to the autonomous self, that is characteristic of individualistic cultures, and the related self, characteristic of the collectivistic cultures. In fact, Westerik's analysis

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[42] David Scott, *Gilbert Simondon's Psychic and Collective Individuation: A Critical Introduction and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 42.
[43] Milou Westerik, "Immigrants and the socialization of the Self", *Social Cosmos* 2, (2011), 138.

takes place within a crucial dimension: that of immigrant communities. In general, immigrants come from less-industrialized and more collectively oriented countries, whereas the receiving countries usually have an individualistic setting. This encounter can have different outcomes depending on the kind of relation established between migrants and the dominant society. Westerik lists four strategies: integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization; if the integration strategy turns to be successful and well-planned, more individualistic goals and practices prevail and the hybrid autonomous-related self takes shape. Its characteristics are high relatedness and high autonomy, two dimensions that can finally coexist. Within this frame of reasoning, integration policies become even more crucial since they are the key to preventing the rise of fundamentalisms (especially within the Muslim communities), often seen as the only alternative left to a community in search of its identity. Integration should be the means through which immigrants find themselves able to express their communitarian self under a more individualistic light. In fact, the second generations' radicalization is nothing but an identity misplacement generated by unsuccessful integration policies that failed to meet the needs of an evolving community who is only struggling to build a new but still authentic self.

However, within the field work of the present study, a bridge between these two apparently opposite dimensions has been built, although not without difficulties. Indigenous middle-eastern societies are indeed collectivistic in the sense that, broadly speaking, the good of the larger community comes before the good of the individuals. While in individualistic communities the establishment of a unique identity is central, along with gaining a high self-esteem and reaching self-maximization (meaning one's full potential), the leading values of the collectivistic middle-eastern communities are respect, obedience and

connection to the family. For example, according to Triandis (1989), "it is more likely for people from non-Western cultures to possess a collective self because their child-rearing practices accentuate the in-group"[44]. Regarding this point, it is interesting to notice that the majority of the subjects interviewed used the same word to describe both personal and wider, more-comprehensive forms of identity: the word *intimā'*, belonging. The sense of belonging is revealed to be central: belonging to the family or the wider clan, to the Muslim and/or the Arab community, to a specific geographical area, a linguistic family or a shared history. These are perceived as overlapping and essential bonds that, broadly speaking, seem to both divide and unify "Arabs" by including them within this or that identity dimension. The significance of this point is confirmed by Abdel-Fattah and Gunter (2003) as follows:

> Collectivistic societies […] emphasize loyalty to the group (while the group in turn cares for the well-being of the individual), emotional dependence on groups and organizations, less personal privacy, the belief that group decisions are superior to individual decisions, interdependence, an understanding of personal identity as knowing one's place within the group, and concern about the needs and interests of others[45].

A collectivistic standpoint is therefore detected, but it has a peculiar nature since there is no univocal collectivity to refer to, or better, to belong to; there are many forms of collectivity. Being aware of this pluralistic self, connected to an all-encompassing sense of belonging, has been essential in this study in order to make effective

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[44] Harry C. Triandis, "The self and Social Behavior in Differing Cultural Contexts," *Psychological Review* 96, no. 3 (1989): 510.

[45] Darwish E. Abdel-Fattah and Huber L. Gunter, "Individualism vs Collectivism in Different Cultures: a cross-cultural study," *Intercultural Education* 14, no. 1 (2003): 48.

use of the research tool of choice: the "Western-oriented" individual interview.

Ğamāl, a 40+ years old Jordanian-Palestinian writer, when asked about his primary identity source answered as follows:

Arab identity, yes, is more important than Islamic identity; for me and for intellectuals, Arab identity is a universal identity; Christians can have the Arab identity, so Muslims, so Hindus, if they were Arabs, could have it, so Shiites and Sunnis.

Moreover, about the high number of Syrian refugees resident in Jordan, he said:

[…] the identity of the Levant countries is unique; the Levant countries are Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Palestine, their traditions and their culture are very close, therefore, even if there was an effect given by the presence of Syrian refugees, it would still remain within the same identity circle, because there isn't a true new identity. If the immigrants were Turkish or Afghan or Europeans, and they were a lot, identity would begin to change, this is the difference between the identity influences. Suppose that five million of immigrants arrived in Italy, certainly this would affect Italians' behaviors, because people would be in contact with new types of food, new habits, new forms of entertainment. Here, the change stays within narrow margins. I will give you an example: when the Palestinians emigrated to Jordan, the identity in Jordan remained Arab.

Ğamāl's account of identity is collectivistic in the sense that he identifies himself above all as Arab, therefore he has a sort of pan-Arab identity that is shared, according to his reasoning, with the Levantine countries[46].

To conclude, particularly revealing in this regard is the interviewees' reaction to the question below, because it confirms the existence of the above mentioned "pluralistic self"[47].

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[46] Ğamāl spoke about *bilād al-šām*, referring to Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Palestine.

[47] All the questions are presented in the fifth paragraph of the present chapter, booth in Arabic and in English.

"Generally speaking, can I ask you what the word 'identity' means to you? What comes to your mind when you think about this concept?"

Age revealed to be a discriminating factor; subjects between 18 and 30 years old generally gave more subjective accounts of identity, they talked about themselves, their habits and their peculiarities as human beings. For example, according to Līnā — a Palestinian-Jordanian English literature student and Arabic language teacher — *identity is what differentiates people from each other*, while another girl (a volunteer in a school for kids with special needs in Gaza Camp[48]) responded that: *identity represents the person. Who I am. That's my identity*. On the contrary, elder subjects (40+), such as Ğamāl, gave less personal answers, remaining within pan-Arab or pan-Islamic dimensions or even stressing the national identity (especially in Kuwait). Nayf al-Faḍlī, professor at the Open Arab University in Kuwait City answered: *identity is nothing but national <u>belonging</u>. We do not know anything but Kuwait, this is our identity, it means everything to us*.

3.1.2 Conceptions of Time and Space

As for the conceptualization of the self, accounts about time and space embody language, philosophy and science of the culture to which they belong and influence considerably the way the world and the society are viewed. Smith (1999) wrote:

> Different orientations toward time and space, different positioning within time and space, and different systems of language for making space and time 'real' underpin notions of

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[48] While Palestinians who moved to Jordan during the British mandate (1920-1948) and after Israel foundation received citizenship, those who arrived from Gaza after 1967 never got it. They live in Jordan with temporary residence permits since more than 50 years and their citizenship's right continues to be denied. Many of them live in the so-called "Gaza Camp", a ghetto town near Amman.

past and present, of place and of relationships to the land. Ideas of progress are grounded within ideas and orientations toward time and space[49].

Every language expresses these dimensions in different ways; for example, some indigenous languages make no clear distinction between the two, such as the Maori language that has only one word to express both.

Moreover, according to Broditsky (2011), if it is true that people generally spatialize time in order to represent it, it is also true that every language has different spatial terms. For example, depending on the language, people can imagine the future as if it is ahead (English), behind (Aymara[50]) or below of them (Mandarine Chinese)[51].

Interestingly, Broditsky underlines also that the writing direction can affect the perception of time. Accordingly, Arabic speakers are more likely to arrange time from right to left, following their writing direction.

According to Smith, the West colonized the indigenous construct of space by representing its lands in a particular way, renaming it and ideologically changing it; therefore, indigenous space becomes the "outside", in "an oppositional relation to the colonial center"[52]. Besides, "Western time" is considered by the New Zealand author the imperialistic son of the industrial revolution and the Protestant ethic[53]; likewise, Walter Benjamin's "homogenous empty

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[49] Smith (1999), op. cit., 57.

[50] Aymara is an Aymaran language spoken by the Aymara people of the Andes. It is one of Native American languages and it has over one million speakers. Aymara, along with Spanish, is one of the official languages of Bolivia and parts of Peru. It is a minority language in northern Chile.

[51] Lera Boroditsky, "How languages construct time," in *Space, Time and Number in the Brain*, ed. Stanislas Dehaene and Elizabeth Brannon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 334.

[52] Smith (1999), op. cit., 55.

[53] Ibid., 52-59.

time" (1968) "emerged in reaction to developments such as the Enlightenment, natural law, and the French Revolution"[54]. Indeed, Benjamin explains that Western perception of mankind's historical progress depends on a conceptualization of "homogeneous empty time"; he criticizes that, within Social Democratic theory, time is nothing but a linear progress of events thorough history where no moment of time is qualitatively different from another. According to Benjamin, modern Nation-States use and used (referring to Nazism) this homogenous empty time in order to justify exploitation on a large scale:

> Social Democratic theory, and even more its practice, have been formed by a conception of progress which did not adhere to reality but made dogmatic claims. Progress as pictured in the minds of Social Democrats was, first of all, the progress of mankind itself (and not just advances in men's ability and knowledge). Secondly, it was something boundless, in keeping with the infinite perfectibility of mankind. Thirdly, progress was regarded as irresistible, something that automatically pursued a straight or spiral course. [...] The concept of the historical progress of mankind cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogeneous, empty time[55].

In opposition to the Western "homogeneous empty time", Benjamin places the "messianic time", where all events coexist eternally and simultaneously in history:

> "In relation to the history of organic life on earth," writes a modern biologist, "the paltry fifty millennia of homo sapiens constitute something like two seconds at the close of a twenty-four-hour day. On this scale, the history of civilized mankind would fill one fifth of the last second of the last hour." The present, which, as a model of Messianic time, comprises the

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[54] Susanne Stadlbauer, "Displaced Islamic Identities: Language, Time, and Space in a Post 9/11 America," *Linguistics Graduate Theses & Dissertations* 14 (2012): 150-152.
[55] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 261.

entire history of mankind in an enormous abridgment, coincides exactly with the stature which the history of mankind has in the universe[56].

Susanne Stadlbauer in "Displaced Islamic Identities: Language, Time, and Space in a Post 9/11 America" (2012) discusses the recent approaches of linguistic anthropologists that utilized Benjamin's dimensions of time to investigate language, nationalism, and identity. The homogenous empty time, in fact, as a progression of hours, days, months, and years, produces a progressive narrative within which people proceed only forward, moving from the past into the future, supported by renewable technologies and replaceable products. According to this reasoning past and present are two completely separate realities.

Anderson (1991) places the very idea of nation within Benjamin's homogenous empty time:

> The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history. An American will never meet, or even know the names of more than a handful of his fellow-Americans. He has no idea of what they are up to at any one time. But he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity[57].

In plain contrast, messianic time entails that every event has existed from the beginning and keeps happening until the present time, since

> the here and now is no longer a mere link in an earthly chain of events, it is simultaneously something which has always been,

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[56] Ibid., 263.

[57] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of* Nationalism, 2nd edition (London: Verso, 1991), 26.

and will be fulfilled in the future; and strictly, in the eyes of God, it is something eternal, something omnitemporal […][58].

Stadlbauer (2012) summarizes all these perspectives by stressing that "spatiality and temporality, as constructed in discourse, are never objective since they interact with a number of social categories, such as religion, gender, or ethnicity, which are always colored with emotions or ideologies"[59]. Middle-eastern accounts of time and space are indeed indissolubly linked with Arabic language and Islamic faith; Muslims' understandings of these dimensions are often perceived as a threat for the progressive narrative conception proper to Western contexts.

In fact, whilst globalization somehow standardized temporality and spatiality worldwide, Arab-Muslims still keep chronotopes proper to what Agha (2007) calls "biblical time", as opposed to the "evolutionary history"[60]. When they express themselves in *fuṣḥā* (the literary or classical Arabic) and when they need or want to present themselves as Muslims, giving priority to their religious identity, they move to Benjamin's messianic time, where all events occur simultaneously and eternally and where improvements are not necessarily ahead. Stadlbaur noticed this language-rooted dichotomy in her study; in fact, referring to her sample of women of the Muslim Student Association (MSA) at the University of Colorado at Boulder (questioned about the negative stereotypes of Islam and Muslims proliferated since 9/11), she wrote:

> When they talk about their use of spoken varieties of Arabic, such as Egyptian Arabic, Sudanese Arabic […] they position themselves as a community progressing together through time, united by a shared form of communication that enables them to

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[58] Ibid., 24.

[59] Stadlbauer, op. cit., 10.

[60] Asif Agha, "Recombinant selves in mass mediated spacetime", *Language & Communication* 27 (2007), 322.

demonstrate ethnolinguistic belonging. When they talk about their use of Qur'anic Arabic, they imbue the present with Muslim ancestors who lived in the time of Prophet Muhammad, and with God's message to prophet Muhammad, eternalized in the Qur'an[61].

Within the present study, the majority of the interviews have been made in spoken varieties of Arabic, such as Jordanian and Palestinian in Jordan, and Kuwaiti, Egyptian, Syrian, Lebanese, Saudi, and Palestinian in Kuwait (as expats from different Arabic countries were interviewed). Nevertheless, some university professors, writers and intellectuals chose to talk in *fuṣḥā*, probably for a variety of reasons. They certainly thought to be more understandable to a foreign ear by avoiding regionalisms and perhaps they wanted to stress their status as highly educated individuals, since being fluent in Classical Arabic is surely an indicator of a person's educational background. Ibrahīm (40+), Professor at the University of Kuwait, spoke in Classical Arabic throughout the entire interview and gave an interesting periodization of Kuwait's history dividing it in "before" and "after" the first Gulf war. Professor Ibrahīm emphasized the indescribable happiness that he felt at the end of the war but at the same time, he affirmed that nowadays he does not recognize his fellow citizens anymore:

> *It is like I do not live among Kuwaitis anymore. I feel like this, I swear to God. It is like they come from different countries, like they are Sudanese, Iranians, Iraqis or Syrians.*

He somehow idealized the past, both his past—meaning his childhood, a time when, he believes, people's actions were moved by high moral principles—and his country's past,when he felt a true connection with his fellow-citizens and the social unity of the country was not threatened by any form of sectarianism. Actually, many

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[61] Stadlbauer, op. cit., 154.

Muslims keep surrendering to the luring call of the idyllic Islamic Golden Age, in several forms. This "step back" is at the very least incompatible with the Western "the best is yet to come" narrative. Indeed,

> According to a famous *ḥadīth*, the Prophet had said that his generation was the best of all, that the one which would come after him would be the next best, and after that each succeeding generation would be worse[62].

However, as for the conceptualization of the self, awareness has been the key to overcome this diversity and conceptually translate the questions into the "interviewees' language".

3.1.3 Language

The first chapter of Albert Hourani's landmark work, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (1962) extensively used in the first chapter starts as follows:

> More conscious of their language than any people in the world, seeing it not only as the greatest of their arts but also as their common good, most Arabs, if asked to define what they meant by 'the Arab nation', would begin by saying that it included all those who spoke the Arabic language[63].

The previous sections highlighted how Arabic permeates and deeply affects both the perceptions of the self and the conceptions of time and space of the Arab community. Language is indeed an essential identity criterion that overcomes both ethnic and religious affiliations; quoting Barakat (1993) "the great majority of Arabs speak Arabic as their mother tongue and thus feel that they belong to the same nation regardless of race, religion, tribe, or region [64]".

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[62] Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 8.

[63] Ibid., 1.

[64] Halim Barakat, *The Arab World: Society, Culture and State* (California: University of California Press, 1993), 33.

Although not surprisingly the majority of the interviewees of this study are Muslims, some Christian subjects have been sampled in order to give a more complete picture of the two countries' societies.

Christians' accounts are quite significant when it comes to language and nationality. Compared with Muslim subjects, many more Christians considered their national identity more important than their religious one and all of them stressed their Arab identity and their sense of belonging to the "Arab native speakers" community. In fact, the majority of Arab countries' citizens share the same mother language, except for some ethnic minorities such as Kurds, Berbers, Armenians, and some southern Sudan ethnolinguistic groups. Moreover, native Arabic speakers all over the world enjoy a sense of nationhood that, according to Barakat, can explain the tendency to consider the existing states as artificial Western creations and to count a political unity as legitimate only if it coincides with linguistic identity (even though nowadays Pan-Arab claims are nothing but ideals).

Barakat quotes many theoreticians of Arab nationalism, such as the Iraqi historian 'Abd al-'Azīz Dūrī (1919-2010) and Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī who stressed, as he does, the significance of the Arabic language in the formation of nationalism and national identity. In fact, Arabic is not a simple communication tool, it represents a whole culture by both expressing it and embodying it.

In this regard, the above quoted Līnā when questioned about which identity criterion she considered to be the most significant between Palestinian origins, Jordanian nationality, belonging to the Islamic or the Arab community, and her tribal/familiar affiliations, answered as follows:

> […] *Language is very important in our identity.* […] *Especially literary Arabic because it is shared among all the Arab countries. And of course it is the Language of* Qur'ān. *Arabic is*

a piece of my identity and I am very proud of it because of the richness of its vocabulary and its beautiful complexity. No other language is comparable.

On the contrary, Aḥmad, a 32 years old Jordanian engineer with Palestinian origins responded:

I do not consider the language to be very important, to me it is just a tool through which human beings can communicate between each other. It is important in the workplace, or to share news, or even in art and poetry. Every language in this regard is beautiful and unique but to me no language has value outside its use.

However, Suleiman (2003) also stresses the association between language and national identity:

[..] language mirrors the soul of the nation and, as such, is the most effective way of apprehending the spirit of the community. [...] [Language] connects the individual in social time and social space to follow nationals who, he or she will never hear of, meet or know[65].

The focus is not on the communicative or instrumental function of language, but on its symbolic one, in both its verbal and written manifestations (Arabic writing plays a significant role as a boundary marker). Moreover, Suleiman offers different accounts of the correlation between language and national identity. Whilst the German Romantic tradition considers it to be one of "the most important instrument of making humankind human", other scholars, such as Edwards and Deutsch, believe that language plays a central role in national identity formation only when it is helped by other factors such as territory, common culture, shared memories etcetera; in fact, sometimes it is easier to understand familiar concepts expressed in a foreign language than to interpret new ones in our mother tongue.

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[65] Yasir Suleiman, *The Arabic Language and National Identity: A Study in Ideology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 27-30.

However, broadly speaking, this study would have been impossible if making the interviews in Arabic was not an option. Given the deep correlation between Arab-Muslim identity and Arabic language, it is not possible to investigate the one without the other; Arabic was indeed both the tool and scope of the interviews as no Arab would be able to define himself but using his true and only "language of the self". Interestingly, a minority of the interviewees chose to speak in Italian— this was the case for some Jordanian Christian priests, who in doing so affirmed the central role of their religious identity —or in English, especially in Kuwait, where younger people wanted to give a sort of 'international' (meaning American) image of themselves to the Western interviewer. On these occasions, Arabic proved once more to be crucial in the self-construction of Arab respondents; in fact, by deciding not to answer in Arabic, these subjects were not simply opting to express themselves in a different way: they were defining themselves by its absence.

3.1.4 Gender

The individual interview has been defined in the second paragraph as a social interaction and certainly, gender is a distinctive factor when it comes to social processes. The question is whether the difficulty of overcoming Middle Eastern women's mistrust during an interview stems from their Muslim faith (even though other religions are present in the Middle East), their identity as Middle Eastern or their condition of being women. The answer is probably a combination of these factors. However, being a woman proved to be the most significant aspect in the majority of cases, therefore the gender issue cannot be left aside.

Indeed, Ann Oakley (2003) discusses the struggle of interviewing women and stresses how the interviewer-interviewee

relationship mirrors and rationalizes social inequality at women's expense. The author laments that too often sociologists fail to report fundamental issues related to their interviews such as "social/personal characteristics of those doing the interview; interviewees' feelings about being interviewed and about the interview; interviewer's feelings about the interviewees; quality of the interviewer-interviewees interaction; attempts by interviewees to use interviewers as sources of information; the extension of interviewer-interviewee encounters into more broadly-based social relationships"[66]. According to Oakley the level of awareness of these interviewing characteristics mirrors the level of researchers' embeddedness within a research protocol that rests on a masculine model of sociology and society.

In fact, methodology textbooks generally refer to the interviewer as male, reinforcing the assumption that only a male researcher can truly conduct a "proper" interview thanks to gender-related inner qualities such as rationality and objectivity. On the contrary, the very definition of "improper" interview, or more precisely, the aspects that make an interview poor and inadequate are feminine characteristics; subjectivity, involvement and sensibility are therefore opposed to objectivity, detachment and hierarchy and this dichotomy reflects the psychology of "subordinate and dominant social groups" proper of "feminine and masculine psychology in patriarchal societies"[67].

On the male hegemony of global science's fundamental assumptions, Haraway (1988) wrote:

> Natural, social, and human sciences […] have been about a
> search for translation, convertibility, mobility of meanings, and

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[66] Ann Oakley, "Interviewing women: a contradiction in terms," in *Turning Points in Qualitative Research: Tying knots in a handkerchief,* ed. Yvonna S. Lincoln and Norman K. Denzin (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2003), p. 243.
[67] Ibid., 250.

universality – which I call reductionism only when one language (guess whose?) must be enforced as the standard for all the translations and conversions. What money does in exchange orders of capitalism, reductionism does in the powerful mental orders of global sciences[68].

This dynamic appears to be wrong for two interconnected reasons. First, it puts the interviewees in a subordinate position while the interviewer has the dominant and leading role of getting information, and second it fails to be a true social interaction as it never assumes the women's perspective. Moreover, artificially eliminating the sentimental and emotional aspects from our society in order to 'masculinize' it, has proven to be a mistake, especially in social science methodology.

> […] it becomes clear that, in most cases, the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship[69].

Within the field work of the present study, being a female interviewer has been both an advantage and a disadvantage. A disadvantage because of obvious practical reasons: a woman alone, who aims to ask questions to strangers and record their answers is not well viewed or accepted in this context; after all the Middle-Eastern society lacks those signature characteristics of an "interview-society" that were discussed at the beginning of this section. However, being a woman was also an advantage in making the interviews more effective; in fact, male interviewees were generally more comfortable and prone to open up as they considered a female researcher inoffensive, while female interviewees felt a sense of reciprocity with the interviewer, which

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[68] Donna Haraway, "Situated knowledges: The Science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14 (1988): 580.
[69] Oakley, op. cit., 252.

obviously made their interaction more honest and valuable. To sum up, gender has been discussed because, while patriarchy-related difficulties are obviously not the exclusive prerogative of the Middle Eastern context and being fully aware of the evident limitations and probably risks (for example male interviewees could have abusive behaviors) that a female researcher could have to face within the field work, it is interesting to stress that gender can be also a gift in such a setting. For example, a female researcher can have access to society constituencies from which men are forbidden such as Saudi woman that otherwise would need their guardian's (*maḥram*) consent to meet a male researcher. Besides, this is especially true for non-Arab female scholars because of their status as "outsiders", meaning that they are not expected to comply with the societal norms and practices[70].

4. Justifying the sampling procedures

Stephen J. Gentles et al. (2015) defines sampling in qualitative research as "the selection of specific data sources from which data are collected to address the research objectives"[71].

In qualitative research, the sample is not intended to be statistically representative: the selection is made following the characteristics of the population to be studied in order to include all the relevant features that can improve the understanding of the research subject. Qualitative samples are usually well suited for small-scale, in-depth studies and involve a low number of subjects. Again, the aim of qualitative research is not to determine statistically significant discriminatory variables but to give a detailed account of phenomena.

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[70] Clark and Cavatorta, op. cit., 14, 15.
[71] Stephen Gentles J., Cathy Charles, Jenny Ploeg, and Ann K. McKibbon, "Sampling in Qualitative Research: Insights from an Overview of the Methods Literature," *The Qualitative Report* 20, no. 11, Article 4 (2015): 1775.

Ritchie and Lewis, in *Qualitative Research Practice. A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers* (2003)[72], list four sampling techniques for qualitative research:

1. criterion based, purposive or purposeful sampling;
2. theoretical sampling;
3. opportunistic sample (a very flexible approach that changes as the field work context changes);
4. convenience sample (it lacks any clear sampling strategy: the researcher chooses the sample according to its ease of access).

The first two strategies share some key characteristics, which are fundamental to qualitative sampling: they both rely on the use of prescribed selection criteria; they use small-scale samples and they have the possibility to supplement a sample or even add one, as in the case of theoretical samples. However, within the "criterion based sampling" the decisions about selection criteria are made in the early design stages of the research, while the "theoretical sampling" is an iterative process within which researchers start from a sample, then analyze the data and then proceed in selecting a further sample in order to improve the consistency of their findings.

The present study follows the "purposive sampling" method that Patton (2015) described as follows:

> The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for in depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry. […] Studying

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[72] Jane Ritchie and Jane Lewis ed., *Qualitative Research Practice. A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE, 2003), chapter 4.

information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding[73].

Forty subjects were selected for each country. In Kuwait, in order to give a proper and complete representation of the country's population, both Kuwaiti citizens and Arab expats[74]—residing in the country since birth or that lived in it for a significant period of time—were interviewed. In Jordan the most relevant identity related issue is the self-representation of Jordanians of Palestinian origins, as opposed to the "purely Jordanians" or "Jordanians Jordanians", as the East Bank natives often call themselves. Accordingly, both categories were included in the sample. Most of the interviews are originally in Arabic, always quoted in the text in the English translation.

The selection criteria that have been used are:

- gender
- age (18-40/40+)
- profession (the distinctive criterion is students vs. workers, as access to the job market affects to some extent people's self-perception)
- level of education (high: university degree or higher/low: up to secondary school)
- religion (Islam/Christianity)
- country of origin

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[73] Michael Q. Patton, *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* 4th edition (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2015), p. 264.

[74] Expatriates are about 70% of Kuwait population, including 1.1 million Arab expatriates and 1.4 million Asian expatriates. The Kuwait government rarely grants citizenship to foreigners to maintain status quo. The largest expat communities in the country are Indians and Egyptians. Within the present study, given that aim of the inquiry is understanding the identity criteria within the Arab-Muslim context, only Arab expats were taken into consideration. Precisely from Syria, Lebanon, Palestine/Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Sudan.

Every sample member was chosen to both represent and symbolize features of relevance to the investigation and it was selected on the basis of known socio-demographic characteristics[75].

In the charts below, the two case study samples are systematized according to the selection criteria that have been used. Names and/or surnames are reported only when the subjects explicitly agreed not to remain anonymous. Finally, particular relevance was given to the interviews' language chosen by the interviewees, for the reasons explained in the previous section.

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[75] See Gentles J., et al., op. cit. and Martin N. Marshall, "Sampling for qualitative research," *Family Practice* 13, no. 6 (1996): 522-525.

KUWAIT

Citizens

Gender	Age[1]	Profession	Education[2]	Religion	Origin	Name	Language of the interview
F	18/40	Freelance	High	Muslim	(Syrian) Kuwaiti nationality	Fā'iza	Arabic
M	18/40	Employee Ministry of Defense	Low	Muslim	Kuwaiti	_	Arabic
M	18/40	Soldier	Low	Muslim	Kuwaiti	_	Arabic
F	18/40	Employee Hospital	Low	Muslim	Kuwaiti	_	Arabic
F	18/40	Employee Ministry of Interior	Low	Muslim	Kuwaiti	_	Arabic
F	18/40	Employee Ministry of Justice	Low	Muslim	Kuwaiti	_	Arabic
F	18/40	Employee	Low	Muslim	Kuwaiti	_	Arabic
M	18/40	University Student	High	Muslim	Kuwaiti	_	Arabic
M	40+	University Professor	High	Muslim	Kuwaiti	Nayf	Arabic
M	40+	University Professor	High	Muslim	Kuwaiti	Ibrahīm	Arabic
F	40+	Employee	High	Muslim	Kuwaiti	_	Arabic/ English
F	18/40	Dentist	High	Muslim	Kuwaiti	_	English
F	18/40	University Student	High	Muslim	Kuwaiti	Mahā	English
M	40+	University Professor	High	Muslim	Kuwaiti	_	English
F	18/40	English Teacher	High	Muslim	Kuwaiti	Sārā	English
F	18/40	Employee Bank	High	Muslim	Kuwaiti	Faṭima	English
M	40+	University Professor	High	Muslim	Kuwaiti	_	English
F	18/40	Unemployed	High	Muslim	Kuwaiti	Šayma	English

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[1] The median age in Kuwait is currently 29 years: 25.32% of Kuwait's population is under the age of 15; 15.21% are between the age of 15 and 24; 52.32% are between 25 and 54; 4.82% are between 55 and 64 and just 2.33% of the population is 65 and older. http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/kuwait-population/

[2] It is important to mention that almost all the male interviewees over 40 have a high level of education. This cultural bias could not be avoided because of field access issues.

Gender	Age	Profession	Education	Religion	Origin	Name	Language of the interview
F	18/40	University Student	High	Muslim	Kuwaiti	_	English
F	18/40	University Student	High	Muslim	*Stateless*	_	Arabic

Expats

Gender	Age	Profession	Education	Religion	Origin	Name	Language of the interview
F	40+	Housewife	Low	Muslim	Syria	Naǧāḥ	Arabic
M	18/40	Employee Hospital	High	Muslim	Lebanon	ʿAzīz	Arabic
M	40+	Math Teacher Secondary School	High	Muslim	Syria	Anas	Arabic
M	18/40	Employee touristic field	High	Muslim	Palestinian Jordanian	Nūr	Arabic
F	18/40	Nurse	Low	Muslim	Saudi Arabia	_	Arabic
M	18/40	Employee	Low	Muslim	Syria	_	Arabic
M	18/40	Architect	High	Muslim	Egypt	_	Arabic
F	18/40	Employee	Low	Muslim	Egypt	_	Arabic
M	18/40	Engineer	High	Christian	Egypt	_	English
F	40+	Secretary	Low	Christian	Lebanon	Mīrnā	English
M	18/40	Unoccupied	Low	Muslim	Lebanon	_	English
M	18/40	Unoccupied	Low	Muslim	Palestine	_	English
F	18/40	University Student	High	Muslim	Egypt	Sārā	English
F	18/40	Employee Bank	High	Christian	Syria	Sylvie	English
M	18/40	IT	High	Muslim	Syria (Circassian)	_	English
F	18/40	University Student Employee	High	Muslim	Palestine/ Jordan	Suhā	English
M	40+	Business Man	High	Christian	Lebanon	Tūfīq	English
M	18/40	Employee	Low	Muslim	Sudan	Walīd	English
F	18/40	English Teacher	High	Muslim	Saudi Arabia	_	English
F	18/40	University Student	High	Muslim	Saudi Arabia	Šahīd	English

Men: 18
Women: 22
Kuwaiti citizens+1 stateless person[3]: 20 (13 women, 7 men) High Educated 14+Low Educated 6
Expats: 20 (9 women, 11 men) High Educated 12+ Low Educated 8

Syria	Lebanon	Palestine/Jordan	Egypt	Saudi Arabia	Sudan
5	4	3	4	3	1

Muslims: 36[4]
Christians: 4 (all expats)
High Educated: 26
Low Educated: 14

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[3] The *bidūn ǧinsiyya*, literally 'without citizenship', are the stateless people of Kuwait making up about 30% of the population. It is very hard to get access to a *bidūn*, interview him or her and especially record the interview because they are understandably distrustful, given their social and political status, which will be further discussed in the next chapter.
[4] Most people in Kuwait are Muslim, although there are about 450,000 expatriate Christians, 600,000 Hindus, and 100,000 Buddhists. About 70% of the Muslims in Kuwait are Sunni while 30% are Shi'a.

JORDAN

Gender	Age	Profession	Education	Religion	Origin	Name	Language of the interview
M	40+	Writer/ Intellectual	High	Muslim	Palestinian	Ǧamāl	Arabic
M	18/ 40	Employee	High	Muslim	Jordanian/ Circassian	ʿAlī Kašt	Arabic
F	18/ 40	Arabic Teacher	High	Muslim	Palestinian	Imān	Arabic
M	40+	Teacher/ Intellectual	High	Muslim	Palestinian	Ilyās	Arabic
M	18/ 40	Engineer	High	Muslim	Palestinian	Aḥmad	Arabic (skype)
M	40+	Arabic Teacher	High	Muslim	Palestinian	Aḥmad	Arabic
M	40+	Civil Engineer	High	Christian	Jordanian (Salt)	_	Arabic
F	18/ 40	Arabic Teacher	High	Muslim	Palestinian	Līna	Arabic
M	40+	Worker	Low	Muslim	Palestinian (Gaza)	_	Arabic
F	18/ 40	Teacher (center for disabled people)	Low	Muslim	Palestinian (Gaza)	_	Arabic
F	18/ 40	Secretary (Language Center)	High	Muslim	Palestinian	Farāḥ	Arabic
F	40+	Volunteer (center for disabled people)	Low	Muslim	Palestinian (Gaza)	_	Arabic
F	40+	Physiotherapist	Low	Muslim	Palestinian (Gaza)	_	Arabic
F	40+	Teacher (center for disabled people)	Low	Muslim	Palestinian (Gaza)	_	Arabic
F	18/ 40	Volunteer (center for disabled people)	Low	Muslim	Palestinian (Gaza)	_	Arabic
F	40+	Volunteer (center for disabled people)	Low	Muslim	Palestinian (Gaza)	_	Arabic

F	40+	Nurse (center for disabled people)	Low	Muslim	Palestinian (Gaza)	_	Arabic
F	18/40	Teacher (center for disabled people)	Low	Muslim	Palestinian (Gaza)	_	Arabic
F	18/40	Administration (center for disabled people)	Low	Muslim	Palestinian (Gaza)	_	Arabic
M	40+	Janitor (Cervantes)	Low	Muslim	Jordanian	Ayman	Arabic
M	18/40	Arabic Teacher	High	Muslim	Jordanian	Ḫaled	Arabic
F	18/40	Arabic Teacher	High	Muslim	Palestinian	ʿAbīr	Arabic
F	18/40	Student	High	Muslim	Palestinian	Rūlā	Arabic
M	18/40	Employee	High	Muslim	Palestinian	Muḥammad	Arabic
F	18/40	Student	High	Muslim	Palestinian	Dūḥa	Arabic
F	18/40	Accountant/ secretary Terra Santa	High	Christian	Jordanian	Rāša	Arabic
F	18/40	Accountant/ secretary Terra Santa	High	Christian	Jordanian	_	Arabic
F	18/40	Teacher Terra Santa	High	Christian	Jordanian	_	Arabic
F	18/40	Spanish Teacher	High	-	Jordanian/ Spanish	Almūdīna	Arabic
M	40+	Economist	High	Christian	Jordanian	Dr. Qāqīš	English
M	18/40	Arabic Teacher	High	Christian	Jordanian	Aḥmad	English
M	18/40	Freelance	High	Christian	Jordanian	Sulaymān	English
F	18/40	Arabic Teacher	High	Muslim	Jordanian/ Philippian	_	English
M	18/40	Arabic Teacher Employee at AICS	High	Muslim	Palestinian	Nāṣir	Italian
M	40+	Hotel receptionist University student	Low	Muslim	Palestinian	Tamīm	English
F	18/40	Medicine student	High	Muslim	Palestinian	Farāḥ	English

M	18/40	Student	High	Muslim	Palestinian	Ḥakīm	English
M	40+	Priest	High	Christian	Jordanian	Bassām	Italian
M	40+	Priest	High	Christian	Jordanian	Firāz	Italian
M	40+	University Professor	High	Muslim	Palestinian	Nāṣir	English
M	18/40	Spanish/Arabic Teacher at Cervantes	High	Muslim	Jordanian	Ismāʿīl	Italian

Men: 20
Women: 21
Jordanians of Palestinian origin: 28 (17 women, 11 men)[5]
"Purely Jordanians": 13 (4 women, 9 men)
Muslims[6]: 31 (17 women, 14 men)
Christians: 10 (4 women, 6 men)
High Educated: 29 (12 women, 17 men)
Low Educated: 12 (9 women, 3 men)

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[5] Population of Jordan: 9.456 million (2016); population of the city of Amman: 4,007,526; according to the 2008 Minority Rights Group, about 3 million people residing in Jordan have Palestinian origin and are overwhelmingly concentrated in northern and central Jordan, specifically in the Amman Governorate, Zarqa Governorate and Irbid Governorate.

[6] The majority of Jordanians are Muslim, about 92% are Sunni Muslim, and 1% are Shiʿa or Sufi. Cities in the south of Jordan have the highest percentage of Muslims. Christians, living mostly in Amman or the Jordan Valley, make up 6% of the total, with 1% representing other religions. The majority of Christians are Greek Orthodox, and the rest are divided among Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics (Melkites) and few Protestants and Armenians. Their status as a minority is guaranteed by law. As explained by Aruri "They are entitled to 9 out of the 60 seats in the House of Representatives […] thus they occupy 15 % of the seats. Whereas the Muslim Arabs are currently represented in the House of Representatives according to a ratio of one seat for every 36,800 inhabitants, the Christians have one seat for each 12,222 inhabitants. The system of communal representation does not only inflate the electoral strength of the minorities, but it also guarantees them seats in districts where they may have few or no inhabitants". Naseer H. Aruri, *Jordan: A Study in Political Development (1921-1965)* (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhojf, 1972), 40, 41.
See also www.jordanembassyus.org/page/culture-and-religion

5. Questions of the interviews

Notably, each question investigates a different conceptual dimension following the theoretical framework presented in the first chapter. These dimensions are used, in the third chapter, to analyze and compare the two chosen countries through the interviews' findings.

Since the inquiry aims to understand on which identity criteria the State legitimacy of Jordan and Kuwait is founded, the conceptual dimensions to be discussed mostly coincide with these criteria, also serving the purpose of identifying the most relevant between them, both in Jordan and in Kuwait, so that a comparison can be made. Following this line of reasoning, the last question of the interview is revealed to be the most important, since it includes all the dimensions, while all the other questions have the purpose of analyzing each issue in depth from different perspectives.

As stated above the detected dimensions, specifically "national belonging", "Islamic identity", "Arabhood" and "Hybridity, tribal affiliations and clientelism" will be detailed in the last chapter alongside the data analysis.

KUWAIT

(English)

Kuwaiti citizens

1. To start, I would like to know something about you, where are you from, where did you go to school, what is your current occupation etc.
2. You said that you are Kuwaiti. Can you explain me better what being Kuwaiti represents to you? Are you proud to be Kuwaiti?
3. Generally speaking, can I ask you what the word "identity" means to you? What comes to your mind when you think about this concept?
4. In which circumstances did you first think about your identity? Is the national identity relevant to you?
5. What can you tell me about the State you live in? Are you interested in the history of Kuwait? For example, could you tell me in which year it gained its independence?

6. Do you think that the Syrian crisis effected Kuwait? How?

7. I will give you some identity criteria, can you order them from the most relevant to the least relevant according to your perception and then justify your decision?

- Religion
- National Belonging
- 'Arabhood' - Language
- Family

Expats

1. To start, I would like to know something about you, where are you from, where did you go to school, what is your current occupation etc.

2. For how long you and your family lived in Kuwait?

3. How do you feel about this country? Are you happy to live here?

4. Generally speaking, can I ask you what the word "identity" means to you? What comes to your mind when you think about this concept?

5. In which circumstances did you first think about your identity? Is the national identity relevant to you?

6. What can you tell me about the State you live in? Are you interested in the history of Kuwait? For example, could you tell me in which year it gained its independence?

7. Do you think that the Syrian crisis effected Kuwait? How?

8. I will give you some identity criteria, can you order them from the most relevant to the least relevant according to your perception and then justify your decision?

- Religion
- National Belonging
- 'Arabhood' - Language
- Family

(Arabic)

المواطنون الكويتيون

ـ بالبدء، لو سمحت أريد أن أعرف شيئا عنك. من أين أنت ، أين و ماذا درست ، ماذا

تفعل الآن و الخ

ـ قلت أنك كويتي (*سؤال 1 من أين أنت*) هل يمكن ان توضح لي أفضل ماذا يمثل لك هذا؟ هل أنت فخور أن تكون كويتي؟

ـ وبصفة عامة، يمكن أن أطلب منك ما معنى كلمة "هوية" بالنسبة لك؟ ماذا يتبادر إلى ذهنك عندما تفكر في هذا المفهوم؟

ـ كم كان عمرك عندما فكرت لأول مرة بهويتك؟ هل تشعر أن الهوية الوطنية مهمة؟

ـ ماذا يمكنك ان تقول لي عن الدولة التي تعيش فيها؟ هل درست تاريخ الكويت؟ فمثلا، هل تعرف في أي سنة الكويت حصلت على الاستقلال؟

ـ هل تعتقد أن الأزمة السورية أثرت على كويت؟ كيف؟

ـ سأعطيك بعض معايير الهوية، لو سمحت, نظمها من الأكثر أهمية إلى الأقل أهمية بالنسبة لك و وضح اختيارك:
الدين
المواطنة   (الشعور بالانتماء الوطني)
عروبة ـ اللغة
الأسرة

الأجانب

ـ بالبدء، لو سمحت أريد أن أعرف شيئا عنك. من أين أنت ، أين و ماذا درست ، ماذا

تفعل الآن و الخ

ـ منذ متى أنت وعائلتك تعيشون في الكويت؟

ـ هل أنت سعيدة هنا؟

ـ وبصفة عامة، يمكن أن أطلب منك ما معنى كلمة "هوية" بالنسبة لك؟ ماذا يتبادر إلى ذهنك عندما تفكر في هذا المفهوم؟

ـ كم كان عمرك عندما فكرت لأول مرة بهويتك؟ هل تشعر أن الهوية الوطنية مهمة؟

ـ ماذا يمكنك ان تقول لي عن الدولة التي تعيش فيها؟ هل أنت مهتم بتاريخ الكويت؟ هل درست تاريخ الكويت؟ فمثلا، هل تعرف في أي سنة الكويت حصلت على الاستقلال؟

ـ هل تعتقد أن الأزمة السورية أثرت على الكويت؟ كيف؟

ـ سأعطيك بعض معايير الهوية، لو سمحت, نظمها من الأكثر أهمية إلى الأقل أهمية بالنسبة لك و وضح اختيارك:

الدين

المواطنة   (الشعور بالانتماء الوطني)

عروبة ـ اللغة

الأسرة

JORDAN

<u>(English)</u>

1. To start, please introduce yourself. I would like to know something about you and your family, where are you from, where did you go to school etc.

2. You said that you are____ (referred to Q1 "where are you from"). Can you explain me better why do you feel to be ____ and what this represents to you?

3. Generally speaking, can I ask you what the word "identity" means to you? What comes to your mind when you think about this concept?

4. In which circumstances did you first think about your identity?

5. Talking about Jordan in particular, do you think that the personal lives of the citizens can be in some way influenced by their identity (e.g. access to education, work, health services etc.)? If yes in which way according to you? Can you tell me an episode you witnessed?

6. What can you tell me about the State you live in? Are you interested in its history and foundation? Do you know the historical and political process that made it as it is nowadays?

7. Do you think that the Syrian crisis affected in any way the self-perception of the Jordanian citizens?

8. What do you think about the expression "purely Jordanian"? What does it mean to you?

9. I will give you some identity criteria, can you order them from the most relevant to the least relevant according to your perception and then justify your decision?

- Religion
- National Belonging
- 'Arabhood' - Language
- Family
- Palestinian origins

<u>(Arabic)</u>

ـ بالبدء، لو سمحت,عرف عن نفسك. أريد أن أعرف شيئا عنك وعن عائلتك. من أين أنت ، أين و ماذا درست و الخ

ـ قلت أنك ـــــــ (سؤال 1*من أين أنت*) هل يمكن ان توضح لي أفضل لماذا تشعر أن أنك تكون ـــــــ و ماذا يمثل لك هذا؟

ـ وبصفة عامة، يمكن أن أطلب منك ما معنى كلمة "هوية" بالنسبة لك؟ ماذا يتبادر إلى ذهنك عندما تفكر في هذا المفهوم؟

ـ في أي ظرف من الظروف فكرت لأول مرة بهويتك؟

ـ في الأردن بشكل خاص، هل تعتقد أن هوية المواطنين تأثر على حياتهم الشخصية (مثلا الوصول إلى التعليم والعمل والخدمات الصحية وغيرها)؟ إذا كانت الإجابة نعم بأي طريقة؟ ؟ هل يمكن أن تخبرني عن تجربة شهدتها؟

ـ ماذا يمكنك ان تقول لي عن الدولة التي تعيش فيها؟ هل أنت مهتم بتاريخها نشأتها؟ هل تعرف ٫تاريخيا وسياسيا٫ كيف أصبح الأردن كما هو في الوقت الحاضر؟

ـ هل تعتقد أن الأزمة السورية أثرت على التصور الذاتي للمواطنين الأردنين؟

ما رأيك في تعريف "*أردوني حقيقي*"؟ ماذا يعني ذلك بالنسبة لك؟

ـ سأعطيك بعض معايير الهوية، لو سمحت٫ نظمها من الأكثر أهمية إلى الأقل أهمية بالنسبة لك و وضح اختيارك:

الدين

المواطنة   (الشعور بالانتماء الوطني)

عروبة ـ اللغة

الأسرة

أصل فلسطيني

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III. Jordan and Kuwait: Two rentier states with tribal roots

Introduction

Between 1974 and 1990, over 30 countries in southern Europe, Latin America, some parts of Asia, Eastern Europe, and Africa made transitions to democracy, nearly doubling the number of democratic governments in the world. As for the MENA region, Roel Meijer and Nils Butenschøn (2017) perfectly summarized the alternation of optimistic and pessimistic views regarding this over time: in the Fifties the military regimes were considered a modernizing force able to build modern states where a new middle class would develop; however, already in the Seventies Michael Hudson (1977) stressed the lack of legitimacy of the ruling regimes of the time while in the Nineties the blame was on the weakness of the civil society, considered an essential element in the path toward democracy[1]. Yet, Samuel Huntington in *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (1991) claimed that the third wave of democratization might become a dominant feature of Middle Eastern and North African politics in the Nineties. However, since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the first Gulf war, researchers and experts expecting the democratization of the area have continually been disappointed, witnessing on the contrary the re-emergence and strengthening of pre-state primordial loyalties that actually undermine the stability of the state itself:

> In the MENA region citizens have almost no influence on the state, and in the rare cases they do it is through patronage, clientelism, and informal relations, all of which undermine or severely damage the notion of citizenship[2].

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[1] Roel Mejer and Nils Butenschøn, *The Crisis of Citizenship in the Arab World* (London: Brill, 2017), Introduction.
[2] Ibid., 3.

Even after the so-called Arab Spring, with the exception of Tunisia, no regime-change led to the installation of a lasting democratic system. Clearly, the reason behind this apparent failure is not some cultural, inner resistance of the Middle East to democratization but, according to Hinnebusch[3], is the resultant of three structural factors, all somehow related to the state-building process historically and theoretically analyzed in the first chapter: the "artificial" nature of the states, the weakness of the indigenous bourgeoisie, and the lack of state-building resources.

Aiming to understand which identity sources underpin the legitimacy of the Arab-Muslim states and how these criteria affect the very functioning of the modern institutions, this last chapter discusses the two cases of Jordan and Kuwait, by analyzing the findings of the empirical work[4]. Obviously, Jordan and Kuwait are not representative of the whole MENA region where each and every country has his own political path, historical background, colonial history and peculiar social composition; however, being both artificial colonial creations in the eternal quest for domestic and international legitimacy, Jordan and Kuwait have a particularly interesting (national) identity history, worthy of being further analyzed, and particularly useful when dealing with the notions of legitimacy, sovereignty and citizenship.

Accordingly, the chapter starts by highlighting the many aspects that these two apparently distant realities share. Then, the state and nation building process of each one will be briefly retraced especially focusing on the citizenship status and on the political representation and

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[3] Raymond Hinnebusch, "Prospects for democratisation in the Middle East," in *Democratisation in the Middle East. Dilemmas and Perspectives*, Birgitte Rahbek ed. (Lancaster: Aarhus University Press, 2005), 34-42.

[4] Meaning the 80 open semi-structured interviews made in Amman and in Kuwait City between October 2016 and July 2017 and whose methodology and criticalities have been explained in the previous dedicated section.

participation of all the constituencies of these complex societies, as it is necessary in order to contextualize and better understand the empirical data. Notably, some constituencies appeared to be crucial. First of all, it is not possible to discuss the Jordanian reality without taking into account the status of the Jordanians of Palestinian origin (that often call themselves "Palestinian Jordanians" as opposed to "Jordanians-Jordanians" or "purely Jordanians"). In fact, even though they are at least half of the country's population, this Sunni Arab people are yet a political minority. Then, the neglected case of the Circassian ethnic minority and transnational diaspora proved to be noteworthy as its privileged relationship with the ruling élite and its tribally influenced identity are very revealing of the inner contradictions of the multifaceted Jordanian society. As for Kuwait, the *bidūn* (the stateless persons) and the expatriates are a very clear sample of the citizenry crisis suffered by the Emirate as their living conditions and their legal status clearly reveals the limits of the country's sovereignty. Finally, the findings of the interviews will be analyzed according to the following conceptual dimensions: "national belonging", "Islamic identity", "Arabhood" and "hybridity, tribal affiliations and clientelism".

1. Two apparently distant realities

An analysis of the present-day outcomes of the Jordanian and Kuwaiti state and nation building processes proved to be very productive for the present study purposes precisely because of the two countries' many shared characteristics:

a) They are Muslim-majority constitutional hereditary monarchies with a designated prime minister. Their ruling families, the Āl Ṣabāḥ in Kuwait and the Hashemites in Jordan, have retained

near-absolute political authority while timidly granting some political participation over time.

b) They are <u>small artificial states</u>, surrounded by large, aggressive neighbors, thus equally sensitive to regional shifts and external threats. Nevertheless, they have been quite <u>politically stable</u> and, despite the weakness of their institutions, survived the "Arab Spring" turmoil. In fact, Yom in the aftermath of the revolts (2012) wrote:

> […] the eight Arab monarchies stand firm. Saudi Arabia and Oman saw only isolated protests, while in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) virtually no dissent mobilized. In Jordan and Morocco, youth-driven oppositionists filled some streets but failed to rouse the masses. In Kuwait, popular protest stemmed from long-running tensions between parliamentary factions and the ruling family rather than any new political demands. […] In short, the scorecard of the Arab Spring neatly divides by regime type. Monarchies fared far better than republics[5].

> It is worth mentioning that Jordan recently (Amman, May 31, 2018) witnessed a new wave of protests against the tax policies and the new price hikes on fuel, electricity and bread. In response to the riots, the King decided to freeze the inflation for the moment and, on June 4, accepted the resignation of the Prime Minister Hani al-Mulki (Hāni Al-Mulqī, b.1951) and asked to Omar al-Razzaz ('Umar al-Razzāz, b. 1961) to replace him.

c) They both experienced the <u>British occupation.</u>

The state of Kuwait, previously an autonomous region belonging to the province of Baṣra (Iraq), had been a British

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[5] Sean Yom L., Gregory Gause III F., "Resilient Royals: How Arab Monarchies Hang On," *Journal of Democracy* 23, no. 4 (October 2012): 74, 75.

protectorate from 1899 to 1961, while the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was not even a political entity of any form before 1921, when the British protectorate of Transjordan was established. In fact, no national movement emerged before or during World War I calling for the establishment of a nation in the region. Its northern inhabitants had the Syrian town of Damascus as their political center, while the south had the Hijaz. The importance of the land was mainly given by its location as a rout for the pilgrimage to Mecca. In fact, it was called, depending on the pilgrims' starting point, *mašārif al-Šām* (approaches to Syria) or *mašārif al-Hiǧāz* (approaches to the Hijaz). Transjordan reached independence from Great Britain in 1946.

d) They are characterized by a deeply-rooted tribal structure.
Kuwait, like all the Gulf States, is ruled by a tribal family whose legitimacy is based on force, blood relationship, protection and the redistribution of the oil wealth. In Jordan, tribes have been essential in the state-formation process and built a form of partnership or even symbiosis with the (originally foreign) government[6].

e) Their rentier economic system has an enormous influence on both government policy and citizens' political identity. In fact, thanks to external revenues, the governments of rentier states can finance public expenditure and provide the community with services without resorting to taxation. While it is easy to understand the Kuwaiti revenues, the case of Jordan is more complex. In fact, as already discussed in the first chapter,

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[6] Gökhan Bacik, *Hybrid Sovereignty in the Arab Middle East: The Cases of Kuwait, Jordan, and Iraq* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 149.

Jordan, whose foreign policy has been described as driven by a quest for "budget security", can be classified as a "rentier state of second order" or "semi-renter state" as a large share of the state's budget is drawn from fiscal sources outside the kingdom and not from taxing the domestic production[7].

f) The two countries have intense regional interactions. Quoting Moore (2004):

> Of all the Arab states, no other is tied to Kuwait's travails quite like the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. In addition to foreign aid from the West, Jordan is a major recipient of development aid from Kuwait. […] Some of the massive oil revenues received by the Kuwaiti state are channeled back to Jordan through remittance income and development aid[8].

Thus Kuwait assumed over time an incredible significance in Jordan's quest for state budgetary security. This financial aid relationship began after the Khartoum Arab League summit that followed the 1967 war and was improved or extended in the successive summits held in Rabat in 1974 and in Baghdad in 1979. As for the private sector, Jordan soon became one of most important export markets for the Emirate, second only to Iraq[9].

Moreover, hundreds of thousands of Jordanians (mainly of Palestinian origin) have worked in Kuwait since the 1950s but in the aftermath of Kuwait's liberation from Iraq were forced to return to Jordan, in response to the alignment of the

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[7] Russell E. Lucas, *Institutions and The Politics of Survival in Jordan Domestic Responses to External Challenges, 1988–2001* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 5, 6.

[8] Pete W. Moore, *Doing Business in the Middle East. Politics and Economic Crisis in Jordan and Kuwait* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1, 9.

[9] Laurie A. Brand, *Jordan's Inter-Arab Relations: The Political Economy of Alliance Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 122, 123.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat (Yāsir 'Arafāt, 1929-2004) and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) with Saddam Hussein (Ṣaddām Ḥusayn ʿAbd al-Maǧīd al-Tikrītī, 1937-2006). The flux was so significant as to be called "the Palestinians' third exodus"[10]. Notably, according to Brand (1995) such a group, numbering around 200,000 units, did not adjust easily to living in the kingdom. In fact, many lacked of any sense of belonging to the country and even doubted its very existence as a sovereign state. Besides, their obviously strong "Palestinian-ness" was mixed with other elements of separate identities (such as for example the hatred of Saddam Hussein) that inevitably separated them from the other Palestinian citizens[11]. Moreover, their arrival "exacerbated what was already a serious unemployment problem, strained state services, and drove up food and housing price [leading toward] a gradual development of a much broader sense of Transjordanian-ness reminiscent of the 'East Banker first' surge in the wake of Black September"[12]. The political relation between the Kuwaiti and the Palestinian leadership improved in 2004 thanks to the official apology of Mahmud Abbas (Maḥmūd ʿAbbās, b. 1935) but the Palestinian embassy in Kuwait was re-opened only in 2012. The Palestinians resident in the Emirate are now estimated to be around 80.000 compared to the 400,000 before the 1990-1991 war.

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[10] See Yann Le Troquer, Rozenn Hommery al-Oudat, "From Kuwait to Jordan: The Palestinians' Third Exodus," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 28, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 37-51.

[11] Laurie A. Brand, "Palestinians and Jordanians: A Crisis of Identity," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24, no. 4, (summer, 1995): 49, 50.

[12] Ibid., 56.

g) They both have <u>internal conflicts</u>: Sunni/Shi'a, Muslims/Christians, West Bank/East Bank, sedentary people/Bedouins, tribal affiliation, citizenship status and history are divisive elements in their societies.

h) All the above listed factors make them two exemplary cases of <u>hybrid states</u> in Gökhan Bacik's definition (2008), being both a mixture of modern institutions and traditional affiliations held together by a rentier economic system.

2. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

This section retraces the birth of the Jordanian state thus clarifying why Jordan needed and still needs to legitimize its own existence by creating new myths of origin and historical narratives able to justify the unfamiliar entity of the Nation-State to its "citizens". In fact, not only is Jordan the Arab country that hosts the greatest number of Palestinian refugees[13], one of the largest and longest-lasting refugee populations in the world[14] but, the high numbers of Iraqi and Syrian asylum seekers that entered the country after the 2003 and 2011 crises[15]

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[13] According to the 2008 *Minority Rights Group* report, about 3 million people residing in Jordan have Palestinian origin and are overwhelmingly concentrated in northern and central Jordan, specifically in the Amman Governorate, Zarqa Governorate and Irbid Governorate. Eric, Witte "Middle East," *Minority Rights Group* Report (2008), https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/old-site-downloads/download-470-Middle-East.pdf

[14] Ilana Feldman, "The Humanitarian Condition: Palestinian Refugees and the Politics of Living," *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 3, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 155.

[15] The Syrians in Jordan according to UNHCR are 661,859 (2018) while the Iraqis 61.000 (2017). UNHCR, "Syria Regional Refugee Response" (Last updated 12 Nov 2018), https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/36 UNHCR, "Jordan: UNHCR Operational Update" (January 2017), http://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/jordan-unhcr-operational-update-january-2017

changed once again the already complex composition of its society[16]. In fact, by January 2017, the number of registered Syrian refugees in Jordan exceeded 650,000, around 10% of Jordan's native resident population. While around 20% of Syrian refugees in Jordan currently live in designated camps, the rest have settled in cities and rural areas across the country. The refugee influx has placed growing pressure on Jordan's infrastructure and resources; however, the "refugee as burden" narrative is mainly a governmental fabrication aimed at creating a convenient "other" to fear and fight; in fact, the Jordanian rentier economy depends on the revenues generated by human mobility, being the money sent by the Jordanian expatriates or, as in this case, the International community aid given to support the accommodation of refugees. Notably, some interviewees do not comply with this governmental discourse:

> *I: Ok. I have one last question. What do you think about the Syrian crisis... all these Syrian refugees coming to Jordan? How do you think it has affected the country?*
> *Q: For me, it affected the country positively. First of all, when the people came to the north, everybody worked. They rented houses. Money increased. People in northern Jordan have money for the first time. Economic results, positive economic results. The markets are working, you know, very well[17].*

Anyhow, the effects of the Syrian refugee crisis on the Jordanian labor market indeed touched a variety of aspects including the rising of child labor and an expansion of the informal labor market[18]. More than

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[16] See Bani Salameh, Mohammed Torki and Khalid Issa El-Edwan, "The identity crisis in Jordan: historical pathways and contemporary debates," *Nationalities Papers* 44, no. 6 (2016): 985-1002.

[17] Dr. Hanna Qāqīš, 40+ years old, Economist, Christian, Jordanian of Palestinian origin. Language of the interview: English.

[18] While according to the *ILO Decent Work Country Profile for Jordan 2007*, back then only 1.6 per cent of all children aged 5-16 worked, the recent influx of refugees from Syria has exacerbated the situation in terms of the magnitude and the complexity of the issue. Nowadays the number of child laborers has roughly doubled to more than

60% of Syrian children between 15 and 17 years old are out of school as confirmed by the following interviews' excerpts[19]:

> *A: How old are you?*
> *B: I am 14*
> *A: 14 years' old… When did you leave the school?*
> *B: 4 years ago*
> *A: Why?*
> *A: Because of the war… I studied until the 5th grade and I couldn't continue because of the circumstances. Later we came to Jordan and I never started…*
> *B: How many are you at home?*
> *A: We are 8 sisters and with my parents we are 10*
> *B: 10 people… who works?*
> *A: Two of my sisters and me.*
> *B: Where do you work?*
> *A: We are housekeepers.*
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> [13 years old] *B: I am a housekeeper.*
> *A: How many hours do you work per day?*
> *B: Since 7 am to 7 pm*
> *A: Ok, and when you go to these houses, aren't you afraid? Don't you feel uncomfortable?*
> *A: Of course. I have been harassed and abused. I am afraid for myself. I have to work all day and my employers never let me rest, not even 1 hour.*
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69,000 since 2007, with around 44,000 engaged in hazardous work, according to the latest *National Child Labor Survey* released on August 2016. International Labour Organization, "ILO Response to Syrian Refugee Crisis in Jordan" (2016), http://www.ilo.org/beirut/areasofwork/syrian-refugee-crisis/jordan/lang--en/index.htm

[19] The interviews (originally in Arabic, here in the English translation) have been made to Syrian working girls and boys resident in the Southern governorate of Aqaba, and are part of a report about Child Labor realized by the author during an internship at the Amman office of the Italian NGO AVSI (October 2016-June 2017). Names are not mentioned, A stands for the interviewer while B for the interviewee.

> [13 years old] *My name is B and I sell roses at the seaside. My friends sell with me and we often go back home with not even one or two dinars.*

Notably, in response to these challenges, King 'Abd Allāh II (1962) launched different initiatives to enforce civic education and national identity such as the following national campaigns, both part of national and civic education curriculum in schools.

- *al-Urdun Awwalan* ("Jordan First"), launched in 2002 and officially promoted as an "instrument of modernization". The campaign addressed political reform and social development while giving priority to national concerns over regional ones[20];

- "Amman Message" launched in 2004.

And the school reform project ERfKe (The Education Reform for Knowledge Economy) in 2003, a two-phase project (2003-2007; 2007-2013) that focused on the country's labor market challenges but was also "an example of a nation-building project meant to align Jordan with a Western model[21]". Moreover, the Ministry of Education lists among its education policy principles "emphasizing the importance of political education in the educational system, and enhancing the principle of participation, justice and democracy and their practices[22]". In this regard, the following interview's excerpt is particularly significant:

> […] *Because they taught us in the school... about the flag, they taught us about Jordan, they taught us about the King... they taught us that the King was like our father. Wherever we are,*

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[20] Musa Majd, *Amman: Gulf Capital, Identity, and Contemporary Megaprojects* (London: Routledge, 2017): 86-88.

[21] Patricia Kubow and Lana Kreishan, "Citizenship in a Hybrid State: Civic Curriculum in Jordan's Education Reform for Knowledge Economy Era," in *Middle Eastern & African Journal of Educational Research* 13 (2014): 8.

[22] Website of the Jordanian Ministry of Education http://www.moe.gov.jo/en/node/19404

he's our father. So from 7 years [since we are 7 years' old]*, we are taught that Jordan is our country*[23].

Regarding such immigration influxes, El-Abed (2014) raised a very interesting point when talking about the labelling process operated by the government, a political act of inclusion or exclusion of the new constituencies of the society. Indeed, the migrants had very different faiths, some have been made citizens, some have been called "refugees"[24] or "displaced", others "asylum seekers" and many even "guests"[25] according to the "guest hood" narrative proper of the Islamic, (Pan-) Arab and Bedouin identity. By labelling, the state built a space of competitions between the categories it created; such a strategy allowed it to manage security concerns while maintaining control over the population and the territory. Indeed, Bacik (2008) defines Jordan as a hybrid state, since in it "the modern and the traditional coexist behind the formal appearance of statehood"[26]. In other words, Jordan appears to be an artificial creation where Westphalian principles and local traditions are strongly and indissolubly fused.

The modern Jordan indeed has exogenous origins, being the result of Ottoman, British and Hashemite policies. As for the Ottoman role, particularly relevant is the already mentioned *Vilayet* Law of 1864. A part of the *Tanẓīmāt* process of reform (1839-1876), the law provided a standard framework for provincial administration, dividing the empire into provinces ruled by a governor, thus starting a process of territorial definition and creating the earliest forms of modern and central

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[23] Dr. Hanna Qāqīš, 40+ years old, Economist, Christian, Jordanian of Palestinian origin. Language of the interview: English.

[24] However, Jordan is not a signatory of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its Law of Residence and Foreign Affairs Number 24 of 1973 does not provide any clear definition of the term refugee.

[25] Oroub El-Abed, "The discourse of Guesthood: Forced Migrants in Jordan," in *Managing Muslim Mobilities* ed. Anita Fabos, and Riina Osotalo (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 82.

[26] Bacik op. cit., 9.

statehood in the Arab lands. Transjordan was not one of those new provinces; in fact, what then became the Emirate was made up of the southern part of the *Vilayet* of Syria (the Balqā' district) and the northern part of the Hijaz *Vilayet* whilst the territory of the Mandatory Palestine formerly constituted the *Sanjak* of Jerusalem and the southern part of the Beirut *Vilayet*.

Later on, as the Ottoman Empire was about to collapse, the interest of the Great Powers in the region increased and the Pan-Islamist narrative of Abdülhamid II inspired by al-Afġānī's Islamic reformism, gave way to the Pan-Arab ideology of the late 19th century championed by al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī al-Hāšimī and based on Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī's (Pan-Arab) notion of *waṭan*. The *šarīf* and *amīr* of Mecca[27] sought independence from the ruling Ottoman Turks aiming to create a single unified Arab state from Aleppo in Syria to Aden in Yemen and in order to reach his goal asked for British support in exchange for Arab assistance in opposing the Ottoman Empire (Ḥusayn/McMahon correspondence, 1915/1916). As for the British, they actually gave military support to the Great Arab Revolt[28] but this deal was later contradicted by the incompatible terms of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, concluded between Britain and France in May 1916, and the Balfour

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[27] The Hashemite family occupied the role of *šarīf* of Mecca and Medina since the 10th century until 1924, although not continuously (the Hashemite leaders of the Emirate of Mecca in this period total less than a hundred). Among the *šarīf* 's duties were organizing the *ḥağğ* (annual pilgrimage) and guaranteeing safe passage to the pilgrims and ensuring the supplies of the holy cities. Nadine Méouchy, Norig Neveu and Myriam Ababsa, "The Hashemites and the Creation of Transjordan," in *Atlas of Jordan. History, Territories and Society* Myriam Ababsa ed. (Ifpo, Institut français du Proche-Orient, 2013), 213.

[28] Notably, the significance of the Great Arab Revolt of 1916 is symbolized even in the Kingdom's flag. In fact, the black, white and green bands represent the Abbasid, Ummayyad and Fatimid (909–1171) dynasties while the red triangle on the left side joining the three bands represents the Hashemites. Finally, in the center of the trangle there is a seven-pointed Islamic star that represents the unity of Arab peoples in Jordan (http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/jo_anthem.html).

Declaration of 1917. Then, in 1921, the minister of the British colonies of the time, Winston Churchill, decided to offer the Emirate of Transjordan to the son of Ḥusayn, 'Abd Allāh[29]. The decision was motivated by many factors. Indeed, at that time, the officers of the failed Syrian government of 'Abd Allāh's brother, Fayṣal, sought refuge from French attacks in Transjordan; they arrived in Amman aiming to establish a (Pan-) Arab government thus rejecting the very existence of a Transjordanian nation (still considered a province of the Great Syria); meanwhile, the Transjordanians were starting to articulate their own identity. Thus, questions such as nationhood and boundaries began to be discussed; the arrival of an Arab prince was perceived as a feasible solution. Notably, 'Abd Allāh's message was at first pan-Arab and anti-imperialist: his claimed goal was to retake Syria on behalf of the Arabs. It was within this context that Churchill asked him to form his own government in Amman (at first for a six month trial period; 'Abd Allāh's position became permanent in 1923 when Transjordan became an independent state under the British rule); in exchange for British economic support the prince agreed to prevent attacks against the French from his territory and, most importantly, he accepted the British policy in Palestine[30]. Accordingly, Britain marked the Palestine mandate alongside the Jordan-River until the Gulf of Aqaba and then gave the eastern part, named Transjordan, to 'Abd Allāh[31] who became

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[29] The Syrian Arab government of 'Abd Allāh's brother King Fayṣal (Fayṣal al-Awwal ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī al-Hāšimī,1885-1933), had been established in 1919 and only one year later the San Remo Conference (1920) gave France the mandate of Syria: French won the Franco-Syrian war that had broken out in response to it and Fayṣal got expelled from the region. However, within the Cairo Conference (March 12 to 30, 1921), British agreed to appoint Fayṣal king of the newly born Kingdom of Iraq.

[30] Betty S. Anderson, *Nationalist Voices in Jordan: The Street and the State* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 37, 38.

[31] Bacik, op. cit., chs. 2 "Genesis of the Western Model in Kuwait, Jordan, and Iraq" and 4 "Jordan: The Competition of Different Constituencies".

the leader of both a Nation-State and a pan-Arab entity and this dichotomy characterized the Hashemite rule over Jordan throughout the whole 20th century. He relied on symbolic acts to straighten his position within Transjordan, such as for example a ritual procession from his palace through the city center to attend the Friday prayers. Furthermore, "laying new roads, erecting government buildings and telephone and telegraph poles […] was the visual manifestation of a central government which was slowly but steadily consolidating itself[32]". But in the meantime, the King established the first organized military force in the country naming it the "Arab Legion" and never abandoned his transnational narrative even after the Revolution of 1923 that broke out under the slogan "Transjordan is for Transjordanians" advocating the expulsion of all the foreigners from the country, as the majority of the governmental, bureaucratic and military posts at the time were indeed filled by Syrian, Palestinian, Iraqi and Hijazi immigrants. In addition, over the years he incorporated the tribes[33] into the state system through schooling and land reforms policies, thus making them a basic pillar of the Hashemite monarchy as they gradually transferred their group loyalty to the Nation-State. Notably, even though sedentary groups outnumbered the Bedouins, the latter were politically favoured since the very foundation of the Kingdom whose national character is associated with the tipically Bedouin virtues of honour, frugality and

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[32] Joab B. Eilon and Yoav Alon, *The Making of Jordan: Tribes, Colonialism and the Modern State* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 81.

[33] The main tribes present in Transjordan at the time of its creation were: the Ṣaḫr in the North —in conflict with the al-Bištāwī of the Jordan Valley—, al-'Adwān also in the Jordan Valley and al-Ḥuwayṭāt that dominated the region from Karak to Aqaba (divided into four branches). Besides there were other smaller tribes (allied against the powerful Ṣaḫr) such as al-Ruwala in the periphery of Damascus, the Ḫālid, the Ḥassān and the Sirḥān. The British modified their hierarchies and alliances by abolishing the *ḫuwa* (the protection tax that the tribes enforced on sedentary populations and that Circassians refused to pay) and by classifying the tribes into nomadic and semi-nomadic categories. Méouchy, op. cit., 217.

courage through what Massad (2001) defined as a process of "cultural tribalization"[34].

The first Anglo-Jordanian Treaty of 1928 recognized 'Abd Allāh as the head of state with hereditary rights while after the second, held on 25 May 1946, the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan (renamed the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in 1949) was proclaimed independent and 'Abd Allāh was crowned king in Amman under the name of 'Abd Allāh I[35]. With the end of the 1948 war and the unification of the two banks in 1950, the Jordanian national identity became a combination of two elements (not yet two identities): Trans-Jordanian and Palestinian. However, in the mid-Sixties, Palestinians started to gain some sort of political awareness and after the emergence of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), Palestinian identity gained distinctiveness and social divisions began. Moreover, the 1967 defeat meant the demise of the Pan-Arab ideology which in turn lead to the emergence of a narrower Jordanian national identity, different from the Arab and the Palestinian ones. Finally, the conflict exploded in 1970: Black September re-defined the country's national identity and the Trans-Jordanian identity was revealed to be intrinsically tribal, Islamic and Hashemite. In 1974 the Arab League indicated the PLO as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinians in occupied lands and in the diaspora and in 1988 King Ḥusayn announced the administrative disengagement of the West Bank (*fakk al-irtibāṭ*).

The next sub-section will retrace the intertwined history of Palestine and (Trans)Jordan starting from the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the mandate era to the Jordanian disengagement of the West Bank,

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[34] Massad, op. cit., 67.
[35] 'Abd Allāh I's son Ṭalāl reigned only one year as he was forced to abdicate by the Parliament due to mental illness in 1952 and succeeded by his son Ḥusayn. Ḥusayn remained in power until his death in 1999 and was in turn succeeded by his son 'Abd Allāh II, now in power.

with the aim of detailing the Palestinian role in the nation-building process of Jordan and how it still threatens the citizenry and national identity of the Levantine country.

2.1 Jordanians of Palestinian origin

Indeed, the agreement concluded in 1916 between Sir Mark Sykes and Georges Picot called for the partition of the area into three zones: The Blue zone in the north (that included Cilicia and the coast from Alexandretta to Acre) was assigned to the French; the Red zone (present-day Iraq, the Negev region and the southern part of Transjordan) in the south to the British and Brown zone in the center (essentially covering the areas immediately surrounding Jerusalem, Nazareth, and Bethlehem) was left under an international administration (a tripartite condominium of France, Britain, and Russia) that would guarantee free access to the holy places.

However, it was with the 1920 conference of San Remo that the future of the area was defined: Syria has been given to France, while Britain gained the mandatory power over Mesopotamia and Palestine mostly respecting the frontiers of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, with the important exception that the proposed international Brown Zone was made an integral part of the mandatory award to Britain. Then, the mandate was amended to divide Palestine from Transjordan (which nonetheless remained technically part of the mandate)[36] thus excluding the latter from all the clauses concerning the establishment of a Jewish

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[36] The revised Article 25 stated: "In the territories lying between the Jordan and the eastern boundary of Palestine as ultimately determined, the Mandatory shall be entitled, with the consent of the Council of the League of Nations, to postpone or withhold application of such provisions of this mandate as he may consider inapplicable to the existing local conditions, and to make such provision for the administration of the territories as he may consider suitable to those conditions".

national home[37]. In fact, article 25 of the Palestinian Mandate was implemented in 1922 via the Transjordan memorandum, which established a separate "Administration of Transjordan" under the general supervision of Great Britain. Anyhow, after the British left, the mandate was divided into three geopolitical entities: Israel, the West Bank annexed to Jordan and the Gaza Strip controlled by Egypt (according to the 1949 Rhodes Armistice and until 1967[38]). However, as stressed by Feldman (2008), "from the Egyptian perspective, Gaza was always Palestinian and its future lay as part of a Palestinian state […] thus Palestinian sovereignty […] remained latent, awaiting the moment when it could be actualized"[39]. This policy helped Egypt in maintaining and legitimizing its rule over Gaza, as the nation he presented itself as only a caretaker of the Palestinian space, while Jordan chose the more "aggressive" standpoint of annexation.

After the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948 and the first Arab-Israeli war that followed, on April 24, 1950 the Jordan House of Deputies and House of Notables adopted a resolution[40] declaring

> Complete unity between the two sides of the Jordan [river] and their union in one state […] at whose head reigns King Abdullah Ibn al Hussain, on a basis of constitutional representative government and equality of the rights and duties of all citizens[41].

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[37] Martin Sicker, *Reshaping Palestine: From Muhammad Ali to the British Mandate* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999), 116-167.

[38] "Egypt, unlike Jordan, succeeded in persuading the Israelis, already in 1967, that for them the Gaza Strip was a liability and would never form part of Egypt. So a million and half Palestinians remained an "Israeli" problem and responsibility—although geographically the Strip is located on the margins of the state of Israel, psychologically it was still in 2006 very much in its midst". Noam Chomsky, Ilan Pappe and Frank Barat. *Gaza in Crisis: Reflections on Israel's War against the Palestinians* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010), 84.

[39] Ilana Feldman, "Waiting for Palestine: refracted citizenship and latent sovereignty in Gaza," *Citizenship Studies* 12, no. 5 (2008): 453.

[40] Ilan Pappé, *The Modern Middle East* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 34.

[41] Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, "The Constituent Assembly. First Knesset 1949-1951. Annexation of the West Bank by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Sitting 135 - 3 May 1950," http://www.jcpa.org/art/knesset6.htm

The unification tripled Jordan's population as nearly 500,000 Palestinians became citizens[42], meaning that they were given a "national number", a civil registration number recorded on national identity cards and family registration books. However, after the assassination of 'Abd Allāh in 1951, the Citizenship Code was amended (in 1954) and a four-year residency in the country became a prerequisite for naturalization, a process that became tougher and tougher over the years mainly because of the pressures exerted on the government by the tribal groups, afraid of losing their privileges (a standpoint not shared by the Islamists, according to whom Palestinians and Jordanians should have the same rights as they are part of the same *umma*). Additionally, the term Palestine was replaced with "West Bank" and the Jordanian *dinār* became the only valid currency of the country. In fact, king Ḥusayn abandoned the Pan-Arab discourse of his predecessor looking for a Jordanian nationalism that could give stability to his state.

Moreover, after the 1967 defeat, a new flux of refugees fled to Jordan (about 350,000) and the PLO made of the East Bank its "headquarters"; the Fedayeen (*fidāʾiyyīn*, Palestinian militants of nationalist orientation) begun to run their operations from the refugee camps in Jordan basically developing a state within a state with the support of Jordanians critical of the Hashemites and their policies. This represented an exemplary domestic-sovereignty crisis to which king Ḥusayn responded—after the guerrillas hijacked several Israeli and American airplanes—by declaring martial law and appointing a loyal Bedouin soldier as commander-in-Chief of the army. In 1970, with the support of Israel and the United States, and thanks to the tribal legitimation, Jordan managed to expel the PLO (recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people within the 1974 Arab

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[42] Eilon and Alon, op. cit., 152.

summit of Rabat) forces from the country while the Fedayeen were forced to recognize Jordanian sovereignty[43]. Then, in 1983 the Hashemite government introduced color-coded travel cards (green for the WB residents and yellow for those who have moved to the EB[44]) for Jordanians of Palestinian origin with the stated aim of shortening their travel procedures to and from the West Bank under Israeli occupation; however, the system essentially generated three classes of citizenship by differentiating East and West Bank Jordanians, in turn sub divided into two groups. Finally, the situation of those form Gaza is the most critical. In fact, they reflect a dual-minority status, that is, as Palestinians vs. Jordanians and also as Gazans vs. the Palestinians themselves. Also, they represent an anomaly being doubly displaced refugees, forced to move after the 1948[45] conflict and then again after the 1967 defeat. In 1948 they were issued Egyptian travel documents as Egypt was in charge of the military and administrative rule in Gaza at the time[46]. After 1967 some fled to Lebanon, some to Jordan. The latter

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[43] Bacik, op. cit., 142-157.

[44] After 1988, "those Palestinians holding green cards no longer held a valid Jordanian national number and since 1992 the Jordanian government has only issued national numbers to those of Jordanian nationality. These people were granted temporary passports from the Jordanian authorities, renewable every two years and later extended to five years in 1995 (RRT 2009). For those green card West Bankers who no longer held a Jordanian national number, their status became equal to blue card holding ex-Gazan 'displaced persons.' Those who held yellow cards maintained their Jordanian citizenship". Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD)-Legal Aid, "Mapping the Legal Obstacles Palestinians Face in Jordan" (March 2015), https://ardd-jo.org/sites/default/files/resource-files/mapping_the_legal_obstacles_palestinians_face_in_jordan_en.pdf

[45] The 1948 naḥba displaced about 750,000 Palestinians that fled both to neighboring countries such as Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, and to the parts of Mandate Palestine that later became the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Ilana Feldman, "The Challenge of Categories: UNRWA and the Definition of a 'Palestine Refugee'," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 25, no. 3, (2012): 390.

[46] "Under the existing Jordanian system, anyone who was born in Gaza or whose father was born in Gaza is given a blue card to use when travelling. This necessitates a special security clearance prior to entering Jordan. This security clearance is required even if the person in question is transiting to another country via Jordan; it takes weeks or even months to be processed and is often denied without a clear reason". Samar Batrawi, "The noose tightens: Jordan adds to the suffering of Gaza's Palestinians,"

(between 118,000 and 150,000), prevented from going to Egypt because of the Israeli attacks on the Sinai—with the exception of few influential families—never gained citizenship[47]. Instead, they were initially issued temporary travel documents to replace the Egyptian ones, then a one-year temporary "passport" the validity of which was later extended to three years. Finally, since the Eighties this passport, that is in fact only a residency permit, needs to be renewed every 2 years[48] and has value as an international travel document only if the receiving state allows the entry of temporary passport holders[49].

Moreover, Gazans are not allowed to register with professional unions or to establish their own offices, firms or clinics, thus the available jobs for them are either in the private sector after getting the approval of the state or the informal sector; as for the education they are included in the 5% quota reserved for Arab foreigners, thus it is not easy for them to enroll in university, their only option left being UNRWA aid (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine

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Middle East Eye (28 May 2016), https://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/jordan-adding-suffering-palestinians-gaza-58472352

[47] In the present-day Jordan there are several categories of citizenship that vary depending on the origin of the citizens: Jordanian - East Banker (Permanent residency in Jordan. Five-year passport with National Number); Jordanian - Palestinian of 1948 (Permanent residency in Jordan. Five-year passport with National Number); Jordanian - Palestinian of 1967 (Permanent residency in Jordan. Five-year passport with National Number. Yellow Card - family reunification); Jordanian - Palestinian of 1967 (Permanent residency in the West Bank. Five-year passport without National Number. Green Card); Jordanian - Palestinian from Jerusalem (Permanent residency in Jerusalem. Five-year passport without National Number. Green Card); Palestinians of Gaza (Permanent residency in Jordan. Two-year temporary passport in case of family reunification. Blue Card); Palestinian of the West Bank or Gaza Strip (Permanent residency in West Bank or Gaza Strip. Palestinian Authority passport [LP] Permission to enter).

[48] Recently the Palestinians from Gaza have been requested to pay a fee of 200 Jordanian dinars (almost 300 dollars) instead of 25 as it was in the past in order to renew their temporary documents. Muhammad 'Aish, "The Gazans' sufferance in Jordan," *Al Quds al-Arabi* (February 21, 2017), http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=677541

[49] See Oroub al-Abed, "Immobile Palestinians: ongoing plight of Gazans in Jordan". *Forced Migration Review* no. 26 (august 2006), https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/forced-migration-review-no-26-palestinian-displacement-case

Refugees in the Near East whose funds have been recently cut by the Trump administration[50]), if they are eligible as the agency's mandate is limited to those who "lost both their homes and means of livelihood"[51].

Besides, as the women in Jordan cannot pass on their citizenship to their children, the daughters and the sons of Jordanian female nationals and Gazans remain stateless[52]. Nowadays and already for three or even four generations many of them live in two refugee camps run by UNRWA, the Gaza Camp in the Jerash district and the Mārkā Camp (known as Ḥiṭṭīn) in the eponymous district. I had the possibility to access to the Gaza Camp and collect interesting testimonies. The majority of the people that I interviewed came to Jordan in their childhood and never left the camp but all maintained a fierce Palestinian identity and hope to one day return to their true homeland. Indeed, a 41 year old woman said:

> *I am born in al-ʿArīš* [the Egyptian governorate of North Sinai which borders Palestine]*, I came here when I was 40 days old. I am a refugee. I have been raised here in the camp, I got married and I remained in the camp. I never went out. I studied here but I could not look for a governmental job because I do not have a national number.*

While a 61 years old woman who teaches to disabled children in the camp stressed the double displacement endured by her family:

> *My family is from Bi'r al-sabaʿ* [the largest city in the Negev desert]. *They emigrated in Gaza in 1948 and then in Jordan in*

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[50] See for example Peter Beaumont and Oliver Holmes, "US confirms end to funding for UN Palestinian refugees," *The Guardian* (Friday 31 Aug 2018), https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/31/trump-to-cut-all-us-funding-for-uns-main-palestinian-refugee-programme

[51] See Ilana Feldman, "Difficult Distinctions: Refugee Law, Humanitarian Practice, and Political Identification in Gaza," *Cultural Anthropology* 22, no. 1, (2007): 129-169.

[52] See West Asia-North Africa Institute (WANA), "Women And The Law In Jordan: Islam as a Path to Reform" (October 2016), http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/amman/12930.pdf

1967. I was born in Gaza but I don't know anything about it, we came here when I was 4 years old, the camp at first had tents, then containers then finally real houses like now. […]

Finally, the following words express very well the strength of the Palestinian identity within the community:

I was born in 1966, my family emigrated in 1967. So of course I did not see Palestine and I have never lived in it. But I love Palestine, Palestine is my country. Palestine is everything to me. I would never give up on my nationality or on my country and I know that one day we will go back. We are here in Jordan only as guests.

However, continuing along an ideal time line, in the Eighties, because of king Ḥusayn's new "nationalist" discourse, many Jordanians of Palestinian origin lost their jobs in the public sector and in the media, while the Jordanian Jordanians started to dominate the bureaucracy and the army. Later on, due to the latest events and after the 1987 Intifada, King Ḥusayn acknowledged that the Palestinian people had voluntarily elected the PLO as their representative, abandoning his old narrative according to which the very existence of the organization was to be considered an Arab imposition over the Palestinian people. "From this premise", he affirmed in Radio Amman on May 3, 1988, that Jordan could "not carry any more burdens". Eight years after stating that "[…] Jordan is Palestine and Palestine is Jordan" (1981), the king formalized the disengagement suddenly nullifying the Jordanian citizenship of an estimated 1.5 million Palestinian-Jordanians which resided in the West Bank at that time and making them stateless people under Israeli occupation. Over time such withdrawals of nationality occurred again; in fact, the Jordanian officials stated that, in order to maintain the Jordanian nationality, Jordanians of Palestinian origin must renew their Israeli residency permit, for it grants their right to return to the West Bank. Accordingly, those who could not renew the permit or even those

who hold an open-ended residency permit that does not need to be renewed had their nationality withdrawn with serious consequences for their lives (education, healthcare, driving licenses, job market access etc.)[53].

In conclusion, quoting Susser:

Jordan still has vital interests in Palestine. But ever since King Hussein's decision to disengage from the West Bank in 1988, the Jordanians have been on the horns of a dilemma. Jordan's quandary is how to remain involved and influential in Palestinian affairs without assuming responsibility for the destiny of the Palestinians, and without tying Jordan to Palestine too closely for the comfort of the East Bank élite, forever on guard against an erosion of their dominance by a Palestinian majority[54].

2.2 The Jordanian Circassians

In Jordan, where the Hashemite ruling group is itself a (foreign) "minority" despite its control of the state apparatus, an analysis of the peculiar Circassian ethnic minority and (transnational) diaspora proves to be very interesting as it helps to better understand the complex Jordanian society from a different perspective. Accordingly, this section aims to highlight the development of its identity formation by retracing the key steps of the Circassian settlement in present-day Jordan. The discussion will be enriched by some insightful excerpts from three interviews made to two Jordanian Circassians and one Syrian Circassian resident in Kuwait City.

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[53] Human Rights Watch, "Stateless Again. Palestinian-Origin Jordanians Deprived of their Nationality" (February 1, 2010), https://www.hrw.org/report/2010/02/01/stateless-again/palestinian-origin-jordanians-deprived-their-nationality

[54] Asher Susser, "Jordan: Preserving Domestic Order in a Setting of Regional Turmoil", *Middle East Brief* 27 (March 2008): p. 3.

Indeed, the very nature of diaspora communities poses a more serious challenge to host societies than do other minorities as they implicitly test the limits of pluralism of the country in which they live. In fact, when dealing with them the host country has to decide whether to forbid all cultural and organizational expressions of diaspora sentiment for the sake of the Nation-State's survival or encourage such expressions as politically innocuous manifestations of a sub political identity[55].

Interestingly, the Jordanian Circassians enjoy a relative autonomy and have been able to maintain and preserve over time their distinct ethnic identity within the host country due to both historical and political reasons. Nevertheless, nowadays many accuse the Jordanian government of trying to erase other identities, above all the Palestinian one, through for example the educational initiatives launched by the king in the recent years and mentioned above. The hybrid nature of the Jordanian monarchy and its tribal component are topical in this regard.

In fact, the co-existence of traditional and European-like loyalties and the lack of domestic sovereignty which is intertwined with the significance of the familiar (tribal) bonds of the Jordanian society that still prevent the creation of impersonal bureaucratic relations, contributed to shaping both the Jordanian and in turn the Jordanian Circassian identities. Indeed the latter articulated its own self alongside the main steps of the state-building and nation-building process experienced by the newborn Jordanian state, meaning the end of the Ottoman rule, the British mandate, the Pan-Arabism triumph and its demise, and the disengagement of the West Bank.

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[55] William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 97.

In the mid-19th century, when the Ottomans seemed to reassert direct control in the northern part of the present-day Jordan, they encouraged the Circassians, blindly loyal to their Sunni masters, to settle in the area, especially to help contain the Bedouins[56] that unsurprisingly did not receive them in a friendly manner because the Circassian refugee community, according to the 1858 Refugee Code, was exempt from paying taxes to the Empire. Moreover, they refused to pay the *ḥuwa*[57], the protection payment requested by the Bedouins. However, the ability in war—especially as horsemen—the technical skills in the agricultural sector, the resilient devotion to Sunni Islam, and the indestructible loyalty to the Sublime Porte, made the Circassians the perfect buffer zone between the settled areas in Palestine and the desert tribes. The Ottomans wanted them to straighten the people's faith and give their contribution to developing the country; in time, they also received the task to guard the Hijaz railroad, arrived in Transjordan in 1905[58]. The first Circassian group settled in Amman between February and August 1878[59] and, by the early 1920s, when the capital (or what might be better referred to as the first administrative center) of Transjordan was still al-Salt, Amman was described as a "Circassian village" or "Circassian town"[60].

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[56] Peter Gubser, *Historical Dictionary of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1991), 63.

[57] See Fidelity and William Lancaster, *People, Land and Water in the Arab Middle East: Environments and Landscapes in the Bilad ash-Sham* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 76, 213, 300, 345-347.

[58] In 1905 Mizra Wasfi Pasha, the head of their community, asked Istanbul the permission to form a volunteer cavalry unit, as the Circassians were willing "to offer their lives in sacrifice to the homeland": The Volunteer Circassian Cavalry of over 1200 soldiers actively defended the Hijaz Railway and fought against the Arabs in the 1916 Revolt. Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 367.

[59] Ibid., 70. Interestingly, my interviewees dated the first settlement much earlier, in 1864.

[60] Abu Nour Assab, "Narratives of Ethnicity and Nationalism. A Case Study of Circassians in Jordan," PhD Diss. University of Warwick, 2010-2011), 29-31.

During World War I the Circassians remained loyal to the Ottoman Empire, therefore, after the war their position became very insecure for two reasons: first, the British preferred to deal with the Arab tribes; second, Nationalism in the Arab lands after the fall of the Ottoman Empire took the form of pan-Arabism rather than pan-Islamism, so non-Arabs of Transjordan founded themselves in danger of being excluded from the public and political spheres[61].

This is the background of the arrival of *amīr* 'Abd Allāh in Maʿān (south of Amman) in 1920. As already mentioned, Prince 'Abd Allāh initially came with the intention of raising an army and marching on Damascus to restore his brother Fayṣal to the throne of Syria, and the governor of the city of Salt immediately informed him that the Arab tribes were against any political purpose from his side. Therefore, Circassians became a natural ally of the king to-be: they were a stable minority, with a long tradition of successes against the local tribes and they owned a large portion of land in Amman and the surrounding area.

Moreover, from the Circassian point of view, 'Abd Allāh was an ideal champion: Sunni-Muslim, descendant of the Prophet, and in need of a local military force. He never forgot the loyalty and the allegiance plied by Circassians at an uncertain time for him and his family, therefore it is at this time that the privileged status of the Circassian minority started. Quoting Weightman (1961)[62]:

> Of all the ethnic minorities in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan none occupies a higher position of social importance nor wields such tremendous political and economic power than does a related group of people known in English as Circassians and in Arabic as the *Sharakisa*.

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[61] Walter Richmond, *The Circassian Genocide* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 123-125.

[62] Geroge H. Weighman, "The Circassians," in *Readings in Arab Middle Eastern Societies and Cultures* ed. Abdulla M. Lutfiyya, Charles W. Churchill (The Hague: Mouton & Co. N. V. Publishers, 1970), 92.

Indeed, 'Abd Allāh accepted their proposal of establishing a personal bodyguard for the prince, composed of Circassians in their traditional dress (black wool hats, red capes and leather boots; 16 decorative rifle cartridges on the chests: traditionally one held honey for sustenance and another held poison to allow suicide if captured, or to place in a slot in their sword). The Royal Bodyguard still exists even if today it is a strictly ceremonial unit composed by 14 members (out of 40). Each and every member has been chosen from the various Circassian tribes in Jordan by Ġāzi Bilāl Qalā', head of the Royal Circassian Guards, now retired. In order to officially become royal guards, the candidates must attend an eight-month training that includes self-defense, security, palace protocol, and basic military techniques[63].

Regarding the Royal guards Dr. 'Azmī[64] added that they must be Circassians "from mother and father". Moreover, speaking of the present king he said:

> *He speaks Circassian, he knows how to dance* [like a] *Circassian* […]. *We have a special relation.*

'Alī[65] described the birth of the privileged relation between the Circassian minority and the ruling family with emotional words:

> *Prince 'Abd Allāh I arrived in the area called* ğabal l-quṣūr [the castles' mountain]*, where today there is* Raġadān *Palace* [the Royal palace, from the Arabic word *raġad*, a comfortable life]. *He announced his arrival to the Arab tribes with a missive, informing them that he wanted to give support to the Arab*

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[63] "Rare look at the world of Jordan royals' Circassian guards," *Al-Arabiya* (1/29/2016), http://english.alarabiya.net/en/variety/2016/01/29/Rare-look-at-the-world-of-Jordan-royals-Circassian-guards.html

[64] Open, semi-structured interview made in June, 2017 in Amman. Gender: male; age: 40; level of education: high (PhD); religion: Islam; language of the interview: English. Dr. 'Azmī is the former President of the Circassian Charity Association.

[65] Open, semi-structured interview made in June, 2017 in Amman. Gender: male; age: 35; level of education: high (PhD); religion: Islam; language of the interview: Arabic (here in the English translation). 'Alī Kašt is a young scholar and author of the book *The Internal Conflict in the Northern Circassian Caucasus: Study and Analysis* (2009).

Revolution in Syria against the French, and in Palestine against the British. However, his arrival was received with protests. […] All the tribes refused his authority and decided to team up in order to defeat him. When he reached Amman, Circassians felt the duty to protect him, since he is a descendant of Prophet Mohammad. They surrounded his campsite with stunning Circassian horses… it was in that exact place that he later built the Royal Palace. In order to give recognition to Circassians for that generous gesture, the Hashemite family decided that the Royal Guard must be formed by Circassians.

Following an ideal timeline, when Prince 'Abd Allāh finally took the power internationally supported by the British, in 1928 the promulgation of several laws positively affected the Circassian and the Christian communities. In fact, until 1928 Transjordan was governed without constitution and both the British and the *amīr* were eager to give some sort of legitimacy to the new born state; accordingly, they concluded the Anglo-Transjordanian Treaty on February, 20 1928. Part III of the 1928 Transjordan Organic Law dealt with the legislature and contained a special section regarding the proportional representation of the Christian and Circassian minorities. They were both overrepresented: one seat was reserved to a Circassian for every 5,000 inhabitants, while the rest of the population got one seat for every 27,000[66]. Dr. 'Azmī added:

> […] *the Circassians and the Christians in Jordan have quotes in the Parliament. Because of our regulation, there must be a representative for ethnic and religious* [minorities] *in Jordan within the Parliament... so* [since] *the Circassians have peculiar language and origins... they have to be represented; we have 3 representatives in the People House, and the Christians... I think they have 12 seats there*[67].

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[66] Jacob M. Landau, *Man, State and Society in the Contemporary Middle East* (London: Routledge, 1972), chapter 6.

[67] Christians have actually 3 seats, same as Circassians. In the House of Representatives, 115 members are elected from 23 electoral districts using open list

If in the Thirties the primary role of the Circassians in Transjordan was in the military, later their principal career was agriculture and by the early Forties, they gained the reputation of a wealthy class of landlords[68]. In the Seventies, the process of assimilation of the Circassians within the local community reached its apex and, as stressed by Rannut (2009) they needed to make strong efforts to preserve their language, customs and traditions:

> The Circassian language in Jordan has no official or even recognized status, it is just a tolerated language which is not promoted by the government. […] Currently there is one private school and two kindergartens in Amman where Circassian is taught as a subject. The Circassian language is an optional extra and not included in the curriculum, it is neither graded nor assessed. This even in the only Circassian school in Jordan[69].

'Alī confirmed the little regard given to the Circassian language even by the teachers of Amīr Hamza, the sole Circassian school of the country:

> *I attended* Amīr Hamza *primary school* […]. *There they did teach me Circassian language but not… How can I tell you, not as an official language, they did not focus on it very much, it was like an extra subject. They taught me how to read and write in Circassian but they were teaching you only if you were really willing to learn, without insisting too much.*

Moreover, the number of intermarriages increased and some Circassians men have taken Arab women as wives. Despite this fact, and their contributions to the wellness of the nation (for example, the Mufti family, a notable Circassian clan, helped to establish the

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proportional representation. 15 seats are reserved for women and 9 seats are reserved for Christians, Chechens, and Circassians. Election Guide, "Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan", http://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/2965/

[68] Bruce Douglas Mackey, "Circassians in Jordan" (PhD Diss., Naval Postgraduate School of California, 1979), 39-70.

[69] Ulle Rannut, "Circassian language maintenance in Jordan," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 30, no. 4 (2009): 308.

Jordanian National Bank) they are still perceived as outsiders by part of the Jordanian population[70].

Dr. 'Azmī stressed throughout the whole interview the role of Circassians in the development of Amman from both the cultural and the economic point of view:

> *When we came to Jordan, Amman was nearly empty, we started to build Amman, and we gave life back to the city.* […] *One of the Prime Ministers in Jordan was a Circassian*[71]*, and was the Senate president for a few years. The first judge in Jordan, was a Circassian... we have also the first heart surgeon, a woman, she's a Circassian Jordanian.*

In conclusion, the Circassian identity built itself through the Caucasian war and the exodus to the Ottoman Empire, and took different shapes depending on the region of the Empire where each community settled, on its relations with the central power and its peculiarities. In Jordan, the hybrid nature of the regime alongside the privileged position enjoyed by the minority and their utter loyalty to the ruling family, somehow prevented the formation of a genuine Circassian national movement. Even though the Circassian minority generally speaking falls within Nina Glick Schiller's (2004) category of Long-Distance Nationalism – "a set of identity claims and practices that connect people living in various geographic locations to a specific territory that they see as their ancestral home"[72]–, the Jordanian Circassians perceive themselves to be both Circassian and Jordanian and, albeit they stress the importance of maintaining and preserving

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[70] Richmond, op. cit., 126.

[71] Sa'īd al-Muftī served as the Prime Minister of Jordan for 3 times since April, 14 1950 to the first of July 1956.

[72] Nina Glick Schiller, "Long-Distance Nationalism," in *Encyclopedia of Diasporas: Immigrant and Refugee Cultures around the World*, ed. Melvin Ember, Carol R. Ember and Ian Skoggard (New Haven: HRAF Yale University & Springer, 2004), 570.

their linguistic and cultural roots and continue to consider the Caucasus their true motherland, they never question the legitimacy of their king. Circassians in the Middle East asked themselves many questions in the course of the time, questions mostly left unanswered but revealing of this people's self-struggle: why did they leave the Caucasus, were they pushed out by the Russians or pulled in by the Ottomans? Are they primarily Circassians or Muslims, and how does this affect their relationship with Arabs and Turks? Does intermarriage lead to the disappearance of community or to the consolidation of alliances? How can they have political influence through participation while preserving their cultural integrity?

According to Dr. 'Azmī, the fate of the Circassians was decided mostly by Ottomans:

> […] *the Turks convinced the Circassians to fight for them against the Russians, so that the Russians were busy with that fight, and Turks could take the Balkan area.* […] *At the end of the war, when the Circassians lost, the Turks went to the Qafqās* [Caucasus] […] *and told them: if you want to stay alive and protect your religion* [Islam], *follow us; so the Circassians went with the Turks to the Middle East and other parts where the Turks would use them as trained soldiers for their fights in that time. The majority went to Turkey, the second majority went to Syria and Palestine, because the civilization was there. The minority came to Jordan and settled here.*

While 'Alī, stressed the importance of a 'nationalistic education', thus implicitly emphasizing the significance of the Homeland Myth as it "solidifies ethnic consciousness and solidarity when religion can no longer do so"[73]:

> *Circassians grow up as refugees. Where is their identity? Will they become true Circassians? Nowadays a Circassian State doesn't even exist and Circassian people lack national*

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[73] Safran op. cit., 91.

awareness. […] Circassians born here [in Jordan] *need a "nationalistic education". If I will have a son, I must explain him that, yes, he is born in Jordan but his homeland is the Caucasus. […] The national identity criterion is better than the religious one because there is difference between Muslims, Christians, Sunna, Shi'a, but the nationalistic umbrella unifies everyone. Following the "original" ethnicity.*

Moreover, while in Turkey Circassian identity takes the form of minority politics, in Jordan it presents itself as tribalism embodied by the establishmtnt in 1980 of a Cricassian-Chechen Tribal Council[74]. Regarding this, 'Alī said:

The tribal structure is still predominant in the Middle Eastern States. Sectarianism is prevailing, no one truly belongs to a Nation State in the proper sense of the term. […]. If, God forbids, I get in trouble here in Jordan, if I fight with someone for example, my cousin, all my relatives, even the entire Circassian community has to come to protect me. That is the meaning of clan.

Finally, the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 was a decisive moment in the Circassian history as the motherland, until that time only a place to yearn for, suddenly became a reality. The community adopted a new form of nationhood freed from the boundaries of the Nation-State, entering the "new matrix of transglobal network nation" highlighted by Laguerre (2009), a dimension that suggests the "de-territorialization" of the nation as its borders expand beyond the state's territorial jurisdiction[75]. Within such a dimension the Circassians share a sort of "racialized" identity exemplified in their recurrent use of metaphors of blood as only blood ties can legitimize

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[74] Shami Seteney, "Displacement, Historical Memory and Identity: Circassians in Jordan," *Population Displacement and Resettlement* 1, (1994): 625.
[75] Michel S. Laguerre, "The Transglobal Network Nation: Diaspora, Homeland and Hostland," in *Transnationalism Diasporas and the advent of a new (dis)order* ed. Eliezer Ben-Rafael and Yitzhak Sternberg with Judit Bokser Liwerant and Yosef Gorny (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009), 196-210.

their transnational bonds. Relevant to this point are the words of Aḥmad, a 34 years' old Syrian-Circassian born in Kuwait[76], who decided not to marry ever in his life since there are no Syrian-Circassian women of his age in Kuwait:

> *I'm single cause I'm* šarkasī, *and you wanna get people like me.* […] *It's like keeping ourselves from being extinguished. Most of the* šarkass *are like this, some people say they're racist, because you're not allowing anyone outside* [the community] *to come inside... but for me because my family left Russia more than 200 years ago, so we have now pure Circassian blood, I won't give this blood away, ok?*

However, the long-dreamed journey "back" had been for many everything but easy: for example, Circassians in the Caucasus see themselves as dark (they are the "dark Southerners") and are described as such by the Russians, while Circassians in the Middle East are seen by Turks and Arabs as blonde and beautiful (a vestige of their historical relationship to Ottoman courts and harems). Therefore, Circassian visitors from the Middle East perceive a physical difference between them, and the dark locals. This difference is not accepted as a reasonable diversity within a common biologically-imagined ethnicity but as an opposition. Consequently, the Caucasus somehow lost its symbolic value as the place where one could finally reunite with the

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[76] Open, semi-structured interview made in March, 2017 in Kuwait City. Gender: male; age: 34; level of education: high (Master degree); religion: Islam; language of the interview: English. Aḥmad represents a minority within a minority being Syrian and Circassian but born and resident in a non-inclusive rentier state such as Kuwait. The Circassian community of the Emirate consists only of few families and does not get any official recognition from the government that instead of acknowledging its existence marginalizes it. Compared with the Circassian-Jordanian community it is much more closed and less inclined to integrate with the natives. Inter-racial marriages are not socially accepted and, paraphrasing Aḥmad words, safeguarding the "purity" of Circassian blood is a priority. In fact, the social and legal marginalization experienced by all the expats in the Gulf region, reinforced the *sub*-identities, thus Aḥmad defined himself as Circassian (while many Jordanian Circassians put these two identity sources, national and ethnic, at the same level) and picked his family as the community to which he primarily perceive to belong.

inner self, revealing an alienating face and an unknown nature. The question that is now posed to the newly formed diaspora is not only how, but also <u>where</u> one can be truly Circassian. Seteney Shami (1998), director-General at the Arab Council for the Social Sciences, explained this "territorial" issue and its implications as follows:

> It is not only the mobility of people beyond national boundaries that transforms identity but the problematization of the nature of boundaries and borders that creates the possibility for, and may impose, a condition of post-nationality. This condition is marked by the production of 'diasporic public spheres' and 'non territorial principles of solidarity'. [...] Territoriality can no longer be regarded as the prime regulator of the international order. The resultant [...] is a transition from territory to space [...][77].

In conclusion, Circassians had many faces over time: they are dark Southerners in the Caucasus and fair blond men in the Middle East; they were members of an ancient chief-less community used to living at the margins of central powers; they have been pagans, then Christians, then mystics and finally Orthodox Muslims. They have been described as savage Easterners by Russians, and used as champions of the Sunni Islam and skilled warriors by Ottomans. They were minorities imprisoned in the states born after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and became self-conscious transnational diasporas after the collapse of Soviet communism. After four centuries they still recognize themselves as Circassians but they do not have a State to consider their own, therefore their community became their motherland and in this sense their identity shifted from 'territoriality' to 'space'. Will they be able to preserve their identity now that it gained this peculiar transnational dimension? And, above all, will they be able to define themselves in concert and not in opposition with 'the other', breaking

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[77] Seteney, op. cit., 642.

the chains of the power-centric domination that controlled their history until today?

3. The State of Kuwait

In the 17th century, present-day Kuwait was known as "Qurain" (from *qarn*, high hill). However, between 1672 and 1680, a *šayḫ* of the *banī ḫālid* (the tribe that ruled eastern Arabia at the time) built a *kūt* (fort) in the area, henceforth called Kuwait, literally "small fort".

The Gulf Emirate has been ruled for almost two hundred and fifty years by the Āl Ṣabāḥ, one of the families of the 'Utūb tribal confederation—along with the al-Ḫalīfa (that then became the ruling family of Bahrein) and the al-Ǧalāhma—that arrived in the area around 1710 coming from the region of Najd, in the North East of the Arabian Peninsula[78].

> Quoting al-Hajeri (2015):
>
> Kuwaiti identity, from the early beginnings, has always been structurally complex, based on two components: The first component is represented by the Bedouin tribes who settled in Kuwait; the second component is represented by the small groups and individuals who were already living in 'Al-Kut' or those who came and settled after the arrival of the tribes. These two components constituted the community of the Emirate[79].

Before the British colonization, Kuwait was a marginal and autonomous *kaza* (sub-district) of the Basra *vilayet* under the Ottoman rule, thus it was considered an integral part of Iraq as it provided its natural access to the Persian Gulf. In 1871, Midhat Pasha (d.1883) in order to bring Kuwait closer to the Ottoman administration, named

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[78] Michael S. Casey, *The History of Kuwait* (Westport, Connecticut, London: Greenwood Press, 2007), 18-19.

[79] Abdullah M. Al-Hajeri, "The 'Bedoun': Kuwaitis without an Identity," *Middle Eastern Studies* 51, no.1 (2015): 17.

'Abd Allāh Āl Ṣabāḥ as *kaymakam* (district administrator), formed an army to support his rule and established a new administrative model.

However, when the 5th Emir Muḥammad was murdered by his brother Mubārak[80] who in turn managed to win the loyalty of many tribal rulers, the British took advantage of the turmoil that followed and of the tension that threatened Ottoman-Kuwaiti relations and started to sign a series of diplomatic agreements with the local leaders to the point that the entire area along the Gulf (from Oman to Bahrain) became known as the "trucial coast[81]"; the trucial system became the path toward the Westernization of the region as it introduced many new regulations, transformed the country into a new Western-like political structure and entered it into the emerging world capitalist system of production[82]. However, in 1899 the British colonel Meade signed an agreement with Mubārak that obliged him and his successors to reject the representatives of any "Power or Government" without the prior approval of the British government. The aim of Mubārak was to assure and preserve Kuwaiti independence and sovereignty but the agreement essentially gave Britain complete control over the country's foreign policy. Besides, the British wanted to take control of the Persian Gulf so as to stop the Turkish-German plan to build a railway line – the so-called Baghdad line – linking Istanbul to Basra, the ideal counterpart to the Suez Canal[83].

Later on, within the 1920 San Remo conference Britain was awarded the mandate over Iraq (and consequently Kuwait): borders had to be finally drawn in order to incorporate Kuwait into the British

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[80] Mubarāk ("the Great") has been considered the father of modern Kuwait as he established new schools to educate administrative personnel and created the basis for the earliest centralized state administration.
[81] Ibid., 40.
[82] Bacik, op. cit., 65.
[83] Reinhard Schulze, *Il mondo islamico nel XX secolo. Politica e società civile* (Torino: Feltrinelli, 1998), 38-40.

international system. Notably, even though in 1914 the British political agent in the Gulf sent a letter to *šayḫ* Mubārak stating that the Crown recognized Kuwait as "an independent government under British protection" and confirmed the *šayḫ* political authority over 80 km from Kuwait City, at the 1922 'Uqayr conference (called upon by Sir Percy Cox, the British High Commissioner for Iraq at the time)[84] Saudi Arabia got two thirds of the land claimed by Kuwait, also ending the Kuwait-Najd war that had broken out in 1919 between Ibn Sa'ūd and *šayḫ* Mubārak[85]. For the same reason, the decision was made to establish a Neutral Zone between Najd and Kuwait, undone in 1965 with the "Kuwaiti-Saudi Arabia Agreement to Partition the Neutral Zone": only then the borders between the two countries were clearly defined.

Nonetheless, such interference deeply affected the country's identity, as the tribal pre-national spatial imaginaries never ceased to coexist with the territorial ideas. Indeed, as Beaugrand (2017) wrote:

> [There are] discrepancies […] between the state-imposed territorial bounding and the resilient sociological identities and symbolic practices of people in Kuwait, that predates it and are embodied in the persistent, re-activated and reshaped dichotomy between town dwellers (*hadhar*) and Bedouins (*badû*). […] In Kuwait, the imposition of border did not reflect a pre-existing difference, only superimposed on existing identities; a new state-centered narrativity created a set of 'others', which had not previously existed, among the category of Bedouins[86].

Interestingly, the Birtish Arabist Harry St. John Bridger Philby in his *Sau'di Arabia* (1955) stressed that even Ibn Saʿūd himself, preferred a flexible tribal boundary to the British ideal of a fixed

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[84] Claire Beaugrand, "Borders and Spatial Imaginaries in the Kuwaiti Identity," *Geopolitics* (2017): 4.
[85] See Anthony B. Toth, "Tribes and Tribulations: Bedouin Losses in the Saudi and Iraqi Struggles over Kuwait's Frontiers, 1921-1943," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no. 2 (November 2005): 146-159.
[86] Ibid., 6.

frontier, given that the former would surely be a better fit for the featureless Arab desert and the habits of its inhabitants. In fact, before the establishment of such borders the rulers of the Arabian Peninsula used the seasonal migrations of the Bedouins to define their spheres of political domain and the very formation of Kuwait in the late 17th/ early 18th century was due to these kind of demographic fluxes. In fact, at first the border meant very little for the Bedouin population who physically continued to cross it.

To sum up, the delimitation of the borders alongside the rise of a Western-like centralized rule had a disruptive impact in the country; it even challenged the crucial relationship between the clans—afraid to lose their historical status—and the ruling family, a relationship that Bacik defined "the historical social contract of Kuwait"[87].

Besides, in the same period the merchants underwent a profound economic crisis: in the 18th century they were almost all dependent on the pearl market and its profits but with the global depression of the 1920s and the marketing of cultured pearls by the Japanese the situation changed dramatically: Kuwait's pearl-based economy collapsed making the country poor almost overnight.

However, within a few years, a very well-known discovery would force another social, economic, political and cultural "revolution" on Kuwait: the siphoning in 1936, of the first oil well by a jointly held British and American petroleum company in the Burgan oil field[88] that transformed the little Emirate from a poor, tribal-power based entity into a wealthy, globalized Nation-State again very rapidly[89].

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[87] Bacik, op. cit., 69.
[88] Casey, op. cit., 48.
[89] In 1960, Kuwait will be one of the original members of the Oil Producing and Exporting Countries (OPEC) along with Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, and Venezuela.

Notably, the Kuwaiti leaders have been both prudent and clever since the very beginning: being well aware that oil is not an eternal resource and that as a very tiny state surrounded by powerful counterparts, Kuwait would have been in the perpetual need of military support, they started both to invest some surplus in overseas markets and to economically support—through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED)—some friendly nations and entities, mostly Arab countries (Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and the Palestine Liberation Organization); a diplomatic strategy that proved to be essential to the country's survival during the 1980s and that contributed to building its legitimacy as a sovereign state.

By 1951, oil revenues (soon increased as Kuwait started to build its own refineries), until that time officially property of the Āl Ṣabāḥ family, started to be divided between the rulers and the people. More importantly, half of all future profits were destined to public projects, improvements, and government services. Kuwait had become a rentier state, with all that that entails. Indeed, as already stressed, in a country where the state does not impose taxes, the government is not forced to pay the political price of taxation. Moreover, revenues offer further means to authoritarian regimes for keeping power and limiting political mobilization. For these reasons, the production model of a rentier economy usually weakens the democratic process in oil-producing countries. In fact, because of the oil revenues, citizenship in Kuwait is tied to, or better, is embodied by the state subsidies[90]. Besides, through the distribution of the oil wealth, the ruling family had been able to free himself from the yoke of the merchants. By dressing up their traditional hierarchy as a new administrative structure and through the

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[90] The benefits given to Kuwaitis by the State are many and include 30.000 KD loan, 4.000 KD for marrying a Kuwaiti woman, 35 KD/month rent allowance and many others (1 Kuwaiti *dinār* being equal to 2.88 euro).

centralization of the state, the Āl Ṣabāḥ diminished the very role of the merchant class, and the traditional contract that had bonded them for decades ended. In fact, the rulers did not need the merchants' financial and political support anymore thus the latter renounced their political claims in exchange for a conspicuous share of the oil revenues.

Still, despite the new oil-founded welfare system with its new schools, roads and hospitals, the rulers could not completely overturn the pre-existing structure: certain tribal and political dynamics along with old beliefs and practices stayed the same[91], citizenship and tribal bonds came to coexist while personal relationships remained fundamental in the bureaucratic apparatus. This hybridization of the state happened at all levels. For example Baaklini (1982), referring to the Emirate constitutional order wrote that

> [The Kuwaiti state] was linked to the Arab-Islamic heritage at the conceptual level. […] In referring to the process whereby the crown prince is confirmed by the legislature, the constitution used the Arab word *mubaya*, acclamation. […] This concept and others were intended to make the Kuwaiti feel that his constitution and the practices it instituted have their origin in Islamic history and practices and were not the mere importation of Western practices[92].

Moreover, the outcomes of a study by Dashti et al. (2015)[93] on the influence of sectarian and tribal discourse in newspapers readers' online comments in the country gives a better understanding on how deeply the tribal factor is rooted in Kuwaiti society and how it undermines the cohesion of the country itself. The study—conducted

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[91] Ceyda Oskay, *Tribalism, state formation and Citizenship in Kuwait'* (MA Thesis, Middle East Technical University of Ankara, 2010), 18-20.

[92] Abdo A. Baaklini, "Legislatures in the Gulf Area: The experience of Kuwait, 1961-1976," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 14 (1982): 364.

[93] Ali Dashti, Ali Al-Kandari and Hamed H. Al-Abdullah, "The influence of sectarian and tribal discourse in newspapers readers' online comments about freedom of expression, censorship and national unity in Kuwait," *Telematics and Informatics* 32 (2015): 245–253.

on 715 subjects—analyses strands of sectarian and tribal discourse in newspaper readers' online comments and came to the conclusion that all minorities, the Shiites, the lower ranked social groups and the Bedouins (*badū*[94]) are identified as disloyal to Kuwait, backward and uncivilized by the "original Kuwaitis". This fragmented society is the result of the citizenship regulations of the country. In fact, in 1948 members of families that inhabited Kuwait since 1899 and children born in Kuwait to non-Kuwaitis were defined as citizens while Arabs or Muslims living in the region for minimum ten years could apply for citizenship. However, as the 1957 census revealed that the foreigners present in the country already constituted 45% of the population[95], the Nationality Law of 1959 removed the options of citizenship by birth and long-term residency and shaped the Emirate's identity by considering first class nationals the only settled population (*al-muwaṭṭinūn fī al-kuwayt*), thus linking citizenry to a narrow urban understanding of the territory. "Original Kuwaiti" were the *ḥaḍar*, "those who could prove [and obviously tribesman who were not permanently settled in the area could not], their uninterrupted presence in the territory of the Emirate since 1920[96], yet this refers to the town itself (and oases) since the 'national' territory was ironically not yet bounded"[97], hence Kuwait is often referred to as a mere city-state[98].

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[94] *Ḥaḍar* are the settled people while *Badū* are those who lived a nomadic life. However, these terms are used by some in everyday language nowadays to mean respectively 'civilized' and 'uncivilized'. See Anh Nga Longva, "Nationalism in Pre-Modern Guise: The Discourse on Hadhar and Bedu in Kuwait," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38 (2006): 171-187.

[95] Farah Al-Nakib, "Revisiting *ḥaḍar* and *badū* in Kuwait: Citizenship, housing and the construction of a dichotomy," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 46 (2014): 11, 12.

[96] Notably, on October 10, 1920 the *Iḫwān* of Ibn Saʿūd attacked the village of Jahra. After the battle the Kuwaitis built a wall (*sūr*) to safeguard the town; this wall later became "the socio-spatial boundary for original Kuwaiti identity" (Al-Nakib, p. 12); often the *ḥaḍar* define themselves as *ahl al-sūr*, the people of the wall.

[97] Beaugrand (2017), op. cit, 11.

[98] Casey, op. cit., 2.

Between 1959 and 1965, three Committees were asked to grant nationality according to such parameters that fail to embrace the whole territory of the internationally recognized state: the desert began to be perceived as a far, undefined reality and then became a ghetto for expatriates and stateless people. Nowadays, an "original Kuwaiti" can easily spend his whole life without ever having been in Jahra[99], which is only 32 km from Kuwait City. On this point, Aseel al-Ragam (2017) and Farah al-Nakib (2014) underline the role that the housing programs in Kuwait had in constructing such a polarized society, contributing also to the *ḥaḍar/badū* divide:

> […] state housing policies divided the population into discrete social residential zones and, through the provision of different and unequal standards and facilities within these different districts, created a "hierarchy of spaces" associated with particular social groups[100].

Following an ideal time line, Kuwait gained independence in 1961 and in the same year the Arab League—over violent protests of the Iraqi government which still questioned the Emirate's very sovereignty—welcomed it into the organization, thus legitimizing it among all the other Arab nations. Two years later, on November 11, 1962, a new constitution was written and ratified and full elections were held and in 1963 Kuwait became member of the United Nations. Moreover, in May 1981, Kuwait joined with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE in the newly formed Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

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[99] Indeed, while I was in Kuwait City in Spring 2017 I asked my 30 years old Kuwaiti friend to bring me in Jahra by car for making an interview and he had to use the car GPS to get there.

[100] Al-Nakib op. cit., 8. See also Asseel Al-Ragam, "Negotiating the Politics of Exclusion: Georges Candilis, Housing and the Kuwaiti Welfare State", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (2017): 235-250.

However, this brief overview won't be complete without mentioning the Iraqi invasion and occupation (2 August 1990 – 28 February 1991), not only because of its obvious significance in the country's history but especially because it can be read as the biggest outcome of the sovereignty and legitimacy crisis experienced by the country from its very formation. Besides, such traumatic event strengthened the Kuwaiti national identity while the Arab brotherhood gradually lost all its value.

The Gulf War (2 August 1990-28 February 1991)

On August 2, 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait. The reasons[101] behind the Iraqi government's action are several and deep-rooted in the countries' history. In fact, tribalism and more specifically its transnational element[102] tied Southern Iraq and Kuwait over time. They experienced a degree of social mobility greater than any other Arab provinces, not to mention the common cultural heritage and historical memory that their people share. Besides, before the discovery of oil in Kuwait, there was a strong current of opinion in favour of unity with Iraq, especially in the mid-Thirties, following Iraq's independence and the relative prosperity it had achieved from oil revenues. Iraq, for many

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[101] Interestingly, Muslim scholars make a distinction between two categories of "reasons": *sabab*, the remote factor that initiates a fact before it becomes a more complicated issue, and *illa*, the immediate factor that precipitates an action. Majid Khadduri and Edmund Ghareeb, *War in the Gulf, 1990-91: The Iraq-Kuwait Conflict and Its Implications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 9. About the distinction between *illa* and *sabab* see also Izzi Dien Mawzil, *Islamic Law. From Historical foundations to contemporary practice* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 100.

[102] These cross-border tribal kinship ties still exist today, as the nomads kept their tribal affiliations, and cultural lifestyle; tribes are seen to have allegiances to areas that have now become other countries, or no allegiance at all to a state. Citizens of other nations –being part of the same transnational tribe- still attend the tribal primary election meetings in Kuwait, thus deciding and influencing local Kuwaiti politics and law. Uri Davis, "Conceptions of Citizenship in the Middle East," in *Citizenship and the state in the Middle East: approaches and applications* ed. Butenschon Nils, Uri Davis and Manuel Hassassian (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 49–69.

Kuwaiti citizens was an example to follow, the ideal progressive Arab country. Moreover, there was the issue of the borders. Ever since it came in existence, Iraq inherited unresolved frontier problems with Iran (namely the dispute was over the control of Šaṭṭ al-ʿArab, the major waterway connecting the Persian Gulf with the Iranian ports of Khorramshahr and Abadan, and the Iraqi port of Baṣra) and Kuwait and its adjacent islands of Warba and Būbiyān[103].

It is within such context that, in July 1990, Saddam Hussayn (Ṣaddām Ḥusayn ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Tikrītī, 1937-2006) delivered a speech in which he accused the Emirate of siphoning crude oil from the al-Rumayla oil fields located along the two countries' common border. He insisted that Kuwait and Saudi Arabia cancel his country's 30 billion dollar debt and accused them of conspiring to keep oil prices low thus siding with the Western oil-buying nations[104]. Then, he begun to gather Iraqi troops on the Kuwaiti border. The Egyptian President at the time Hosni Mubarak (Muḥammad Ḥusni Sayyid Ibrāhīm Mubārak, b. 1928) initiated negotiations between Iraq and Kuwait trying to avoid foreign interventions but Hussayn broke off the negotiations after only two hours, and on August 2, 1990 ordered the invasion of Kuwait. Two-thirds of the 21 members of the Arab League condemned Iraq's act of aggression, and Saudi Arabia's King Fahd (Fahd ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Saʿūd, 1921-2005), along with Kuwait's government-in-exile, turned to the United States and other members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization for support. U.S. President George H.W. Bush, the

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[103] Khadduri and Ghareeb, op. cit., 9-10.

[104] During the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s, Kuwait was allied with Iraq, largely looking for Iraqi protection from Islamic Iran. After the war, Iraq was extremely indebted to several Arab countries, including a $14 billion debt to Kuwait. Iraq hoped to repay its debts by raising the price of oil through OPEC oil production cuts, but instead, Kuwait increased production, lowering prices, in an attempt to leverage a better resolution of their border dispute. In addition, greatly antagonizing Iraq, Kuwait had taken advantage of the Iran-Iraq War and had begun illegal slant drilling for oil into Iraqi reserves, and had built military outposts on Iraqi soil near Kuwait.

governments of Britain and the Soviet Union immediately condemned the invasion and on August 3, the United Nations Security Council called for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. As Saddam accused the Saudis of being illegitimate and unworthy guardians of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, President Bush quickly announced that the U.S. would launch a "wholly defensive" mission to prevent Iraq from invading Saudi Arabia under the code name "Operation Desert Shield"[105]. Operation Desert Shield began on August 7, 1990 but quickly lost its "wholly defensive" character when, on August 8, the Iraqi government formally annexed Kuwait naming it the Iraqi "19th province". On November 29, 1990, the U.N. Security Council authorized the use of "all necessary means" of force against Iraq if it did not withdraw from Kuwait by the following January 15, 1991[106]. The U.S.-led coalition force against Iraq numbered about 750,000 units, including 540,000 U.S. personnel and smaller forces from Britain, France, Germany, the Soviet Union, Japan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Iraq, for its part, had the support of Jordan, Algeria, Sudan, Yemen, Tunisia and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). By February 27, most of the Iraqi forces were defeated and Bush declared a ceasefire on February 28, 1991, ending the First Gulf War. According to the peace terms that Saddam Hussayn subsequently accepted, Iraq recognized Kuwait's sovereignty. In all, an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 Iraqi forces were

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[105] See Bill Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and Gregory S. Kavka, "Was the Gulf War a just war?," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 22, no. 1 (March 1991): 20-29.

[106] Interestingly, on January 17, 1991 the Jordanian government decided to close all the schools in order to reduce the risk of manifestations. Francesca Maria Corrao, "Rassegna della stampa araba 15 gennaio-31 marzo 1991. Guerra del Golfo," *Oriente Moderno* 1991.

killed, in comparison with 300 coalition troops[107]. In September 1991, Kuwait signed a 10-years defense pact with the United States: "the Arab state system failed to give Kuwait security in its time of need, and since 1990, Gulf security has been in the firm hands of the United States and its allies"[108].

<u>The Kuwaiti political system</u>

In conclusion, it must be stressed that, despite the above mentioned criticalities, the political system of Kuwait is the most open among the other states of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Kuwait in fact is an imperfect constitutional monarchy[109] classified as "partly free" by Freedom House[110]. Its constitution states that Kuwait's national sovereignty resides in the people, who are also described as the source of all ruling authority. Besides, its Parliament or National Assembly (*Maǧlis al-Umma*) is composed of 50 members elected on a district basis every four years (unless the Emir decides to dissolve the Parliament before the expected date according to articles 80-4 of the Kuwaiti Constitution) and this assembly, unlike other representative authorities of the Persian Gulf Countries, does have real powers. It has the power to declare results of elections invalid (Article 95); the power to dismiss and to impeach a minister, including the Prime Minister (Articles 101-102); the power to reject laws proposed by the government (Article 66) and to propose laws and regulations autonomously and independently (even though the law has to be

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[107] Donna Miller, "15 Years After Desert Storm, U.S. Commitment to Region Continues", *American Forces Press Service* (Feb. 22, 2006), http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=14792
[108] Ibrahim Abu-Rabi', *Contemporary Arab Thought: Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 5.
[109] See Doron Shultziner and Mary Ann Tétreault, "Representation and Democratic Progress in Kuwait" *Representation* 48, no. 3 (2012): 281-293.
[110] Freedoom House, "Freedom in the World 2018. Kuwait Profile" (2018), https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2018/kuwait

approved by the Emir in order to enter into force). The Kuwaiti Prime Minister is nominated by the monarch and the key-ministries are assigned to members of the large Āl Ṣabāḥ dynasty. Although the setting-up of political parties is not permitted, different organized political groups quite often support or ally with parliamentary candidates. The opposition has frequently called the legitimacy of the Government and its ministries into question. Thus, even though democratization still has a long way to go, constructive economic competition has supported the creation of a new social élite, offering hope for more active community participation and better representation[111].

The episode regarding the succession to the 13th dynasty ruler Ğābir al-Aḥmad Āl Ṣabāḥ in charge since 1977 to 2005 reveals the actual power of the Parliament. The death in December 2005 of the long-standing Emir, *šayḫ* Ğābir al-Aḥmad, gave the parliament the courage to take unprecedented steps in asserting itself over Kuwaiti political life. As crown prince, the elderly *šayḫ* Saʿd al-ʿAbd Allāh al-Sālim Āl Ṣabāḥ (1930-2008) initially became Emir upon the death of *šayḫ* Ğābir. However, his advanced age and poor state of health led to public doubts emerging in the parliament over his suitability. Here the parliament asserted itself by voting (unanimously) to overthrow the new Emir on the grounds of poor health, thus he remained in power less than a year, since January 15, 2006 to January 29, 2006. This was the first time within any of the GCC states that an elected body had overruled a ruling tribe's candidate for Emir[112].

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[111] See Riad al-Khouri, "Kuwait: Rentierism Revisited," *Arab Reform Bulletin* (September 2008), http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/21948
[112] Steven Wright and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "Political Change in the Arab Oil Monarchies: From Liberalization to Enfranchisement", *International Affairs* 83, no. 5 (2007): 924-926.

3.1 The expatriates

The population of Kuwait, mostly Muslim (70% Sunnis, 30% Shiites), is estimated at 4.206.000[113]: 1.300.000 are Kuwaiti citizens while the remaining 2.906.000 include the expatriates and the stateless people. Non Kuwaitis account for about 70% of Kuwait's population thus Kuwaiti citizens are a minority group within their own country. How can the Emirate control so many foreign nationals within its territory? Will they be loyal to their host state? According to Baaklini, their presence has weakened the Kuwaiti tribal legitimacy but strengthened tribal solidarity against the "other"[114].

Kuwait has a long history with foreign labor force; even before the discovery of the oil there were many non-national workers in the country but from the Forties their number started to gradually increase on a yearly basis and by 1965 they outnumbered the Kuwaiti citizens representing already the 60% of the total population. The non-citizen employees, mostly Asian and Arab unskilled laborers performed practically all the manual work and filled all the essential service occupations: Kuwait's entire economic infrastructure would have collapsed without them[115].

Notably, the presence of foreigners proved to be one of the major difficulties of the country when Kuwait faced Iraqi invasion in 1990. At the outset of the invasion only around a quarter of the Kuwaiti army was composed of Kuwaiti citizens. Besides, many Kuwaiti Shiites, suspected of being disloyal, had already been removed from the military forces during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88). The remaining members of the Kuwaiti troops (three-quarters) were non-nationals, the

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[113] World Population Review, Kuwait Population 2018,
http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/kuwait-population/
[114] Baaklini, op. cit, 361.
[115] Casey, op. cit., 10.

majority coming from Palestine, Pakistan, India, Egypt, and the Philippines. Indeed, in the mid-Eighties Palestinians were the biggest community of expatriates in Kuwait but when the PLO officially backed the Iraqi invasion and thousands of Palestinian and Jordanian workers demonstrated in support of the Iraqi Arabism, the government took its measures. A Palestinian man, born in Kuwait to a Palestinian father and an Egyptian mother stressed how his life worsened after the war:

> […] *Whoever supported Iraq at that time, it was hell for them, especially Palestinians, because Palestinians from Iraq... came along with the Saddam army. So this started to ravage Kuwait, they started to do so many bad stuff... but the Palestinians people in Kuwait didn't do anything. They put the blame on us, my father* […] *lost everything, he couldn't go anywhere because he didn't have a passport from Palestine, he has a passport which is from Egypt, it's not allowing him to go anywhere, unless he got visa* […]. *And most of them they don't accept him because there's no embassy in that country, so here's the life changing from... my father was here from 1972, so he started to make all his life in Kuwait, this is my home now, I'm not going anywhere. After the war, hell. We started to get, like racism... Palestinian you are a traitor, you are sh*t, you are like this... I used to hear it from all my friends, even as a joke or serious. So many people hate us...*<u>*oh, you're Palestinian? You're a traitor*</u>, *you're like this, you're the worst people.*

Many Palestinians were deported and the frontiers were closed to those who fled Kuwait during the war, the majority of which settled in Jordan, as noted before. Moreover, after the war the Emir imposed the martial law then replaced in 1992 by the Special State Security Court in charge until 1995. The position of non-Kuwaitis was indeed particularly fragile as they were perceived as traitors of the country: about 300, mostly Palestinians and Syrians, were tried for collaboration

in the security court and many more were kept in custody for more than a year awaiting trial. Amnesty International documented several human rights abuses such as torture, imprisonment and unlawful arrests[116].

The government adopted several measures over time in order to change the unbalanced landscape that saw Kuwaiti nationals as a minority as it undermined the domestic sovereignty of the Emirate. For example, in 1975 an Amendment to the Residence Law introduced the legal obligation of *kafāla* (sponsorship): every foreigner willing to start any kind of business in the Emirate henceforth needs a Kuwaiti sponsor (*kāfil*) who in exchange for his guarantee role gets the 51% of the business in question. Thus, the separation between nationals and non-nationals progressively widened, the expatriates could not organize strikes or participate in working unions' affairs and the (male) naturalized Kuwaitis obtained the right to vote only in 1996[117], the same year in which second-class citizens born in Kuwait (those who settled between 1921 and 1959, according to the 1959 Nationality Law) were finally equalized to the first-class citizens, thus gaining full political rights[118]. Moreover, in 1992, a legislation was enacted to keep the presence of non-Kuwaiti workers at less than 50% of the total population. At the same time, it was decided that every foreign nationality shouldn't exceed the 10% of the Kuwaiti total population.

Finally, very recently (August 26, 2018), the Kuwaiti government "has cancelled the contracts of 3,140 foreigners working in

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[116] As for the Palestinians' strategies of survival in Kuwait and the significance of the family as cross-national entity even before the first Gulf War, see Shafeeq Ghabra, "Palestinians in Kuwait: The family and the Politics of Survival," *Journal of Palestinian Studies* 17, no. 2 (winter 1988): 62-83.

[117] Bacik, op. cit., 230.

[118] Claire Beaugrand, "Statelessness & Administrative Violence: *Bidūn*'s Survival Strategies in Kuwait," *The Muslim World* 101 (2011): 237.

the public sector as part of the state policy to replace expatriates with Kuwaitis in public offices"[119].

To conclude, it is important to stress how, regardless of their field of work, foreigners do not have complete access to the Kuwaiti welfare system, especially education and health. Regarding this, Sylvie, a Syrian girl resident in Kuwait for 21 years when asked if she ever felt to be Kuwaiti said:

> *Ah no, never. Because the ones that weren't born here… like you never feel you belong to Kuwait* […] *they will not give you any kind of precedence, health, job, education, everything is for them... you are always under threat... they will always treat you as a foreigner, not like a Kuwaiti.*

Moreover, Kuwait lacks of a fixed minimum wage in the private sector and physical and emotional abuse of female domestic servants are very common and frequent: "A total of 196 Filipino workers died in Kuwait since 2016 – almost 79% of the victims died due to physical abuse, according to an Overseas Workers Welfare Administration officer (OWWA)[120]".

3.2 The bidūn

As noted, in Kuwait and more generally in the Gulf region the concept of citizenship began to be discussed only in the Fifties while previously tribal membership was the only bonding criteria within the communities and there was no connection whatsoever with a state entity. Accordingly, the *bidūn* in Kuwait are only one manifestation of

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[119] Antonino Occhiuto, "Gulf in Review: 26- 30 August," *The Euro Gulf Information Centre* (2011), https://www.egic.info/gulf-bulletins-august-2018-egic

[120] Thai PBS, "196 Filipino domestic workers died in Kuwait since 2016" (February 22, 2018), http://englishnews.thaipbs.or.th/196-filipino-domestic-workers-died-kuwait-since-2016/; see also Gulf Labour Markets and Migration (GLMM), "A Note on Syrian Refugees in the Gulf: Attempting to Assess Data and Policies" no. 11 (2015), http://gulfmigration.org/media/pubs/exno/GLMM_EN_2015_11.pdf

a regional problem, with 500,000 people believed to be in their same situation across the Gulf region[121].

The *bidūn ǧinsiyya*, literally "without citizenship", are the stateless people of Kuwait and make up about 30% of the country's total population[122]. Socially integrated and economically and legally discriminated at the same time (social integration actually being an important survival strategy for them), they did not emerge as a problem until the promulgation of the 1959 Nationality Law and more clearly after the achievement of Independence in 1961. Notably, the first *Human Rights Watch* report specifically dedicated to the stateless people in the Emirate (*The Bedoons of Kuwait: "Citizens without citizenship"*) and that contributed to raise awareness about their status is dated 1995. Moreover, the politicization of the issue emerged only in the 2000s when Kuwaiti human rights activists[123] along with "liberal" figures of the Kuwaiti scene demonstrated in support of the *bidūn*'s cause, thus becoming a *wāsṭa*, an intermediary, between them and the government. However, the *bidūn*'s voices have been heard for the first time only in 2006 during an event organized by the Kuwaiti Association for Human Rights and indeed entitled *al-bidūn yataḥaddatūna* (the *bidūn* speak)[124]; finally, new generations of *bidūn* leaders led the protests in 2011, protests defined by Beaugrand (2017) as an "act of

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[121] Minority right group international, "Kuwait. Bidoon", http://minorityrights.org/minorities/bidoon/
[122] The number of *bidūn* varied over the years: in 1984, according to the Kuwaiti government they were about 200,000 while before the Iraqi invasion they reached the 300, 000 units for *Human Rights Watch*. Then after the war they heavily decreased, being only 122,000 in 1995. In 2016, again according to the government there were approximately 112,000 *bidūn* in the country while *Human Rights Watch* in the World Report 2016 stated that "at least 105,702 *bidūn* residents of Kuwait remain stateless". Moreover, some *bidūn* activists affirmed that their real number in Kuwait is closer to 240,000. See The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI), "Country Information and Guidance Kuwait: Bidoons" (2016), http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5853da784.pdf and Beaugrand (2011) op. cit., 229.
[123] In 1992 the Parliament created a committee for the Defense of Human Rights.
[124] Beaugrand (2011) op. cit., 246, 247.

citizenship" through which they managed to "assert their right to have rights"[125].

The different terms used by the government to define them are quite revealing of how their status progressively worsened over time: in the Sixties they were labelled as "Semi-desert" or "Desert People" while the term *bidūn* appeared only in the Seventies. Since the Eighties the government addressed them with increasingly derogatory terms that placed them outside the legal citizenship canons, such as "non-Kuwaiti" (NK), "of unidentified nationality" and "of unknown identity" (respectively before and after the Iraqi invasion[126]). Today and since 1993 the only term used is "illegal residents"[127] that equates them to third-country citizens resident in Kuwait without a valid permit of stay. Perhaps a punishment, among other reasons, for having joined the Popular Army of Saddam during the 1990-91 invasion, following the order of the Iraqi authorities that imposed to all the non-Kuwaitis to enroll.

The *bidūn* were among the nomadic tribes who, depending on the season and availability of resources, moved from one place to another within the area of the present-day states of Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan and Syria. Some of them began to move nearer to the Kuwaiti urban settlements around the 1920s, attracted by earning opportunities around the port and a more sedentary lifestyle. Then, after the oil discovery in the Thirties the Emir invited the tribes to settle near the city walls or future oil fields and a new wave of Bedouins decided to abandon their nomadic life-style for tempting promises such as a

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[125] Claire Beaugrand, "The Bidun Protest Movement as an Act of Citizenship," in *The Crisis of Citizenship in the Arab World* ed. Roel Meijer and Nils Butenschøn (London: Brill, 2017), 448-511.

[126] Before the Iraqi invasion they were estimated to be 225,000 while after liberation almost half of them left the country. Bacik, op. cit., 133.

[127] Al-Hajeri, op. cit., 18.

secure job in the energy sector (and afterwards in the public and military sphere), housing programs and government subsidies.

The majority of these nomads could have obtained citizenship automatically or through naturalization but that did not happen for several reasons and they ended up as stateless persons. First of all, as already noted the concept of citizenship was entirely new for the Gulf and before the 1948 decree on citizenship of *šayḫ* al-Ğābir a declaration of loyalty to the Emir was practically the sole requisite for obtaining citizenship. Also, the Special Committee created by Emir al-Sālim (1913-1977) soon after the independence and charged with the task of registering residents was unable to define clear parameters and the necessary requirements for obtaining citizenship, and proceeded instead on the basis of informal criteria. Besides, until the 1900s the desert nomads had never been connected to any particular place and many of them, mostly illiterates, did not understand the importance of having a document. On the contrary, they had always been averse to any kind of registration, for fear of being taxed or simply traced; as Beaugrand (2011) pointed out, before the discovery of oil "the border was a horizon rather than a fence for the diasporic *bidūn*[128]" and they considered the *musābila*—"codified" journeys undertaken for "bringing camels for sale and to purchase food"[129]—a sufficient proof of their presence in the Arabian Peninsula and the Fertile Crescent. Thus unsurprisingly, the registration process found them completely unprepared and the Committee did not consider the need to educate them about the benefits that would ensue with citizenship. As a consequence, after the first registration process only a third of the resident population was effectively considered part of Kuwait, while another third was granted

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[128] Beaugrand (2011), op. cit., 232.
[129] *Musābila* comes from the word *sabīl*, indeed "path". See Toth, op. cit., 152.

partial citizenship and the remainder were defined as "potential citizens" and issued temporary passports. Quoting al-Hajeri:

> […] shortening the period of the announcement on the request of the Kuwaiti citizenship, and the weakness of the campaign for awareness of the importance of acquiring citizenship at that time, especially among the population living outside the city after 1959, were significant reasons for the loss of the rights of many. Moreover, the requirement of residency in Kuwait between 1920 and 1950 as a condition for citizenship of various degrees may have contributed to the increase of the problem for this group[130].

However, the *bidūn* condition worsened between 1962 and 1967 as the number of migrants started to increase exponentially. At that time, many immigrants entered the country both legally and illegally and the non-nationals outnumbered the Kuwaiti citizens, unbalancing the demography of the state. Therefore, the Ministry of the Interior after having repetedly promised over the years an imminent process of mass naturalization[131] to the *bidūn*, especially during times of major crisis in the country, in 1970 officially reversed its position. Having taken note of the great number of stateless persons, the Ministry started to accuse them of having hidden their true passports aiming to acquire the benefits that the Kuwaiti citizenship would bring them, a narrative now widely spread within the Kuwaiti society; for example Kinān, a Syrian engineer who lived in Kuwait City most of his life, when addressed about the issue said:

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[130] Al-Hajeri, op. cit., 23.

[131] Besides, the naturalization process have been blocked in the Sixties following the conflict of interests busted out between the urban educated elite, that wanted to progressively naturalize Arab workers, and the royal family willing to maintain the *status quo*. In parallel, the Āl Ṣabāḥ proceeded with extra-legal incorporation of tribesmen, starting with Saudi tribes. Beaugrand (2011), op. cit., 234.

Actually this people [the bidūn] *are crazy. They had passports before, they had identities, the government here know where they come from, they are lying.*

Furthermore, between the 1960s and 1980s the National Law was continually amended. In December 1986, a ministerial committee formulated a classified twelve-point decree (made public only in 2003 by the opposition newspaper *Al-Ṭalī'a*, *The Vanguard*) that initiated a repressive policy toward the *bidūn*: their gradual replacement from the armed forces became a priority; in fact, many *bidūn* were part of the army and that contributed to raise sympathy for their cause among the Kuwaiti nationals through the nationalist *topos* of "dying for the nation". Moreover, they started to be subjected to the Law on the Residence of Aliens (17/1959) from which they had been exempted until then as *afrād al-'ašā'ir* (tribesmen), meaning that they were required to pay an annual tax of KD 200 (about 540 Euros) just like the other foreign residents working in Kuwait and they were given six months to produce the documents necessary to regularize their position in the country[132]. Basically, they were equated to the migrants, yet unlike them, the *bidūn* did not have another identity to claim to nor an alternative sense of belonging with which to replace the Kuwaiti one.

In 1987, the Ministry of the Interior forbade the renewal of driving licences and car ownership documents for all *bidūn*; moreover, they could not purchase new cars or any kind of real estate[133]. A further obstacle was introduced in education: public schools started to refuse *bidūn* children and private ones raised tuition costs to exclude those who could not afford the fees. The University of Kuwait adopted a

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[132] Ibid., 234, 235.
[133] For more information on the concept of property in Kuwait, see also: Sharifa Al-Shalfan, "The right to housing in Kuwait: An urban injustice in a socially just system", *Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States* n. 28 (2013), http://www.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre/kuwait/documents/The-right-to-housing-in-Kuwait.pdf

similar policy and started to reject the applications made by the stateless persons for whom enrolment in foreign universities was not an option, as leaving the country without guarantees proved to be too risky.

Moreover, the *bidūn* were expelled by all associations and professional organizations—such as those of lawyers and doctors—which had received clear orders from both the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Social Affairs. Also, carrying a *biṭāqa madaniyya* (civil ID) became mandatory for every resident and many everyday life activities such as opening a bank account or buying a SIM card became precluded to non-holders. The *bidūn* got instead a temporary card that needs to be annually renewed and that guarantees only a limited access to the life of the country.

In 2001, the Law no. 22 supposedly enacted to modify the National Law thus making the process of naturalization more accessible, added instead new and increasingly strict requirements (such as demonstrating ties to the country previous to 1965, completion of high school studies in Kuwait and an unblemished criminal record) that prevented many *bidūn* from applying for citizenship. Along with the new law, a provision was introduced permitting those who declare their citizenship (real or presumed) to acquire a residency permit valid for five years. While on the one hand, this provision gives the *bidūn* a way to legalize their presence in Kuwait, on the other hand, if they decide to do so they will definitively be barred from acquiring Kuwaiti citizenship in the future, something that generally they cannot accept as they consider Kuwait to be their only and true homeland:

Honestly, I feel to be Kuwaiti, I do not belong to anywhere else and when you love a place and you identify with it is not possible to get away from it[134].

For this same reason, when in 2007 the government decided to issue temporary driving licensees to the *bidūn*, many refused to register as the licenses' "nationality" field labelled them as *muqīm bi-ṣūra ġayr qānūniya* (illegal residents).

The impossibility of obtaining any kind of document—birth, marriage and death certificates, passport, licences—and the burden of the illegal status ('*ayr qanūnī*) imposed upon them by the government, forced the *bidūn* into a dramatic condition. Such process of rights deprivation is defined by Beaugrand (2011) as an "administrative" violence, one of the three layers of violence perpetrated by the government against the stateless people along with the "systemic violence" (meaning the forced integration of the country into the international system made of sovereign Nation-States that radically re-defined its society) and the "structural violence" (linked to the definition of citizenship). In many cases (the only exception being the holders of the "passport-article 17" valid also to travel for studies and medical treatment) they are even denied the right to travel to Mecca to perform the *ḥaǧǧ*, the ritual pilgrimage that every Muslim must make at least once in his lifetime, a source of great frustration and suffering that alongside the many other restrictions listed above led them to emigration (mostly in Australia, Canada or Scandinavia), passport-forgery or even to buy the citizenship of other countries such as Columbia, Liberia, Dominican Republic and lately Comoro Islands.

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[134] Taken from an interview made by the author with a *bidūn* girl (26 years old) in Kuwait City, March 2017. The interview was made in Arabic, here in the English translation.

Indeed, in 2001 the Dominican Republic was a destination for many stateless persons who had purchased their "freedom" for 1,000 Kuwaiti *dinār*. While around 2008, Comoro Islands launched a plan with the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait to sell an "economic citizenship" to stateless people in those countries, in return for cash to help develop the Indian Ocean archipelago[135]. Nevertheless, such citizenship sales (4, 600 euro per passport) have stopped in 2016 due to suspicious missing revenues.

To conclude, the government's refusal to grant citizenship and civil rights to such large segment of the society represents a threat to the state sovereignty and national identity. Indeed, Hanna Arendt in the *Origin of Totalitarianism* (1951) while reflecting on the condition of the stateless person (a condition in which she found herself as a Jewish refugee) realized that in a world that conceives of humanity as a group of states and equates human beings with citizens, the stateless people who are removed from their countries, without a homeland and citizenship, are in fact excluded from humanity itself: they end up losing not only their legal and social identity, but also that of human beings, for whom universal rights should apply. Although it may seem paradoxical, it is only by committing a crime that stateless persons are recognized by law and can assert some rights.

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[135] See for example the following articles:
"The bizarre scheme to transform a remote island into the new Dubai," *The Guardian* (November 25, 2011), https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/11/the-bizarre-scheme-to-transform-a-remote-island-into-new-dubai-comoros
"The controversial plan to give Kuwait's stateless people citizenship of a tiny, poor African island," *The Washington Post* (May 17, 2017), https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/05/17/the-controversial-plan-to-give-kuwaits-stateless-people-citizenship-of-a-tiny-poor-african-island/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.e928d7b33c92
 "Comoros passports abused by 'mafia' networks," *Al Jazeera* (March 24, 2018), https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/03/comoros-passports-abused-mafia-networks-180324143250205.html;

4. The interviews' findings

This last section is dedicated to the data analysis. The open semi-structured interviews made in Jordan and in Kuwait are to be discussed within four conceptual dimensions ("national belonging", "Islamic identity", "arabhood" and "hybridity, tribal affiliations and clientelism") perceived to be the most significant and revealing as far as the study subject is concerned. Each paragraph starts with a brief outline of the specified dimension. The interviews' findings are then discussed by stressing similarities and differences between the case countries' societies and also between the sub-categories that have been individuated within them such as Jordanians/Jordanians of Palestinian origin and Kuwaiti/ Expats (either born in Kuwait or long-term residents); excerpts of the interviews are reported (in the English translation when originally in Arabic) when particularly interesting and significant. As stated before, the interviewees' (first) names are mentioned only when they have agreed to it, otherwise they will be referred to as "interviewees" or "participants" (while **I** stands for interviewer). Moreover, gender, age range, faith, level of education and/or occupation will be always reported. Finally, the following abbreviations have been used:

JJ "Jordanian-Jordanian" (or "Purely Jordanian")

PJ Palestinian Jordanian

K Kuwaiti citizen

E (Arab) expat in Kuwait; the country of origin will be specified for each case.

4.1 National belonging

The first identified dimension is national belonging[136] and its perception within an Arab-Muslim context. Which role does it play on a social, cultural and political level? How deeply is it rooted within the case countries' societies and on which foundations does it lie?

This dimension has been investigated through the following questions, asked to verify both the level of the respondents' political awareness and their attachment to the country in which they live, by testing their basic knowledge of their countries' political history:

[Kuwait]

> *2. You said that you are Kuwaiti. Can you explain to me better what being Kuwaiti represents to you? Are you proud to be Kuwaiti?*
>
> *4. What can you tell me about the State you live in? Are you interested in the history of Kuwait? For example, could you tell me in which year it gained its independence?*

[Jordan]

> *2. You said that you are* [Jordanian/Palestinian] *(referred to Q1 "where are you from"). Can you explain me better why do you feel to be* [Jordanian/Palestinian] *and what this represents to you?*
>
> *6. What can you tell me about the State you live in? Are you interested in its history and foundation? Do you know the historical and political process that made it as it is nowadays?*

As stressed since the very beginning of the study, national belonging revealed to be the first and the strongest identity criterion both in Jordan and in Kuwait. Thus, this section aims to highlight its peculiar nature rather than to confirm its self-expressed and undeniable

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[136] Notably, in the Arabic version national belonging has been translated with *šu'ūr bi al-intimā' al-waṭanī*, literally "feelings of national belonging".

significance. Concepts such as legitimacy, sovereignty and citizenship in an Arab-Muslim context have been analyzed in the first chapter that also retraced the faith of the Nation-State in the MENA region, its meanings and its inner contradictions through the ideas of the very thinkers who contributed to asserting its leading role in the area. Moreover, in this chapter the nation and state building processes of the case countries have been detailed giving particular attention to the constituencies of both societies with the aim of understanding how political stability is guaranteed and "national unity" maintained. With these tools, it is now possible to analyze the empirical data (being aware of the methodological specificities discussed in the second chapter) and investigate the multilayered nature of the Jordanian and Kuwaiti national identities.

As noted before, when talking about national belonging in Jordan the Palestinian element is unavoidable. Questions 5 and 8 of the interview outline used in Jordan aimed indeed to investigate the differences, when present, between Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian origin from a legal but especially a social perspective and also to understand why Jordanian citizens born in (Trans) Jordan who lived in the country their whole lives, still define themselves as Palestinians.

> *5. Talking about Jordan, do you think that the personal lives of the citizens can be in some way influenced by their identity (e.g. access to education, work, health services etc.)? If yes in which way according to you? Can you tell me an episode you witnessed?*
> *8. What do you think about the expression "purely Jordanian"* [as opposed to Palestinian Jordanian]*? What does it mean to you?*

By analyzing the empirical data, the Palestinian and the (Trans) Jordanian elements came up as two essential components of the

Jordanian national identity. While only Gazan Palestinians live under limiting legal conditions, each and every Jordanian that I had the chance to address with this (identity) issue contributed, of course from his own perspective (for example, Christian citizens of Palestinian origin, are more inclined toward a "modern" notion of citizenship than Muslims[137]) to create the image of a state that is still adjusting to the marked nationalist narrative that actually distinguishes it. Proof of that is the fact that the label "Jordanian-Jordanian" or "pure/purely Jordanian" as opposed to "Palestinian Jordanian", even though widely criticized is still very common in the country. Accordingly, one interviewee said that such distinction, alongside the religious affiliation is what defines a Jordanian:

> […] *I can just say "I am Jordanian"* […] *but when I go more into detail, in my country... identity for me would be Muslim/Christian, pure Jordanian/Palestinian Jordanian. This is if you go to like very deep in the Jordanian identity*[138].

Moreover, a 25-year-old student (female, Muslim, PJ) affirmed:

> *I am Palestinian, Palestine is my country. I consider Jordan to be my second country, not legally speaking but in my feelings.*

However, it is also true that this division is narrowing generation after generation, a trend confirmed by the increasing number of intermarriages[139], although largely limited to middle and upper socio-economic strata in the capital. Besides, many interviewees stressed the impact that the Syrian crisis and the flux of refugees that followed had

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[137] Notably, the Christian Jordanian identity has not been investigated within the present study if through the absence of a majoritarian Islamic identity. To further analyze such an important dimension see for example Mohanna Haddad, "Christian Identity in the Jordanian Arab Culture: A Case Study of Two Communities in North Jordan", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 20, no. 1 (2000): 137-146.

[138] 18/40 years old, Christian, male, PJ, accountant.

[139] "Some 7,000 Jordanians married Arab nationals in 2017," *The Jordan Times* (July 25, 2018), http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/some-7000-jordanians-married-arab-nationals-2017

on the Jordanians of Palestinian origin. For example, Sulaymān (18/40 years old, Christian, JJ, Freelance) said:

> […] *in comparison with Syrians, Palestinians are now looked at differently, it* [the refugees' flux] *made them more Jordanian, closer... so, yeah, that's something that was positive for the Palestinian-Jordanian relationship, in a way, cause now there's a new enemy*.

Likewise Ḥakīm (18/40 years old, Muslim, student, PJ) affirmed:

> […] *when I'm asked the question "Where are you from?", I answer depending on which people I'm talking to...so when people ask you where you were born, you say Jordan...but when asked by Jordanians where I'm from, I'll say I'm Palestinian. So if you're from outside the country and ask me where I'm from, I'll say I'm from Jordan because I was born in Jordan.* […] *but when I'm in Jordan and asked by Jordanians, or any person in Jordan, I say I'm Palestinian...* […] *Now that you have all of these other foreign people* [Iraqis, Syrians] *in Jordan I feel more Jordanian, I feel more welcome. But I still believe that I am Palestinian.*
> *I: So you think that after Iraqi refugees came and after Syrian refugees came, now with the Syrian crisis, Jordanian society changed?*
> *Ḥ: yeah, they hate the Syrians now. It's moved from Palestinians to Syrians.*

Nevertheless, Rāša (18/40 years old, Christian, JJ) a Jordanian secretary, to the question "Where are you from?" straightforwardly answered:

> *I am Jordanian, pure*[140]. *My father is Jordanian and my mother is Jordanian.*

Notably, intellectuals and generally highly educated interviewees, regardless for their origins and faith, acknowledged but

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[140] Notably, even though the interview has been made completely in Arabic, Rāša said the word "pure" in English, as to underline it.

refused such label. For example, Aḥmad (40+ years old, Muslim, PJ), a writer and Arabic teacher said:

> […] *there is no true as opposed to false. The only true* [Jordanian] *is the one who loves his country, who fears for his country, regardless for his origins. Citizenship for me is to belong to a nation even though I am more than proud of my Palestinian origins.*

On the other side, many "pure Jordanians" criticized the expression accusing the Jordanian citizens of Palestinian origin of disrespecting their only and true nation by always reaffirming their origins. A participant (18/40 years old, Christian, female, JJ) affirmed:

> *Palestinians got the Jordanian nationality but they keep referring at themselves as Palestinians. Even though they live in Jordan since very long time or they were born in Jordan. They would never tell you "I am Jordanian". They say "Palestinian Jordanian or Jordanian of Palestinian origin". I say "Why?"*

Likewise, the already quoted Circassian[141] scholar ʿAlī (18/40 years old, Muslim) said:

> *Palestinians in Jordan do not have a full understanding of nationality as a concept, their understanding is limited, that's why they still define themselves as "West Bankers".* […] *Do you know that the Palestinians call the 1970 civil war black September while we* [Jordanians] *call it white September? Because that was the end of the story.*

Dr. Qāqīš (40+ years old, economist, Christian, PJ)—whose story is particularly interesting as his Palestinian father took his Jordanian mother's surname in order to gain the Jordanian citizenship (when it was still legally possible)—somehow agrees with this narrative:

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[141] This extract is particularly interesting as it also shows the strong national feeling of the Circassian minority, the reasons of which have been detailed above.

My name is Hanna Qāqīš which is a Jordanian family but I was born in Lydda[142], in Palestine. In 1946, we immigrated to Jordan, and we stayed in Jordan till now. So we are immigrants, Palestinian immigrants. But […] we got the Jordanian nationality, and we are now Jordanians, we can't say we are Palestinians. […] I don't know. I don't know. They [referring to the Jordanians of Palestinian origin] *are loyal to Palestine... ok I'm also loyal to Palestine. I'm loyal to Saudi Arabia, I'm loyal to Kuwait* [Dr. Qāqīš worked in both countries for many years]. *But my identity... is Jordanian. The next time, if you meet someone who says that he is originally from Palestine, tell him to prove it.*

Ismāʿīl (18/40 years old, Muslim, Jordanian father and Spanish mother, Spanish/Arabic Teacher at Cervantes) raised an interesting point in this respect. In his opinion, the Palestinian identity in Jordan has been allowed to survive by the very nature of the multifaceted Jordanian national identity that he contraposed to the "violent" Lebanese one:

[…] *The Palestinians who live in Lebanon speak in a Lebanese accent, but here everyone has their own accent because they retain their identity... The Jordanian identity is not as "violent" as the Lebanese one. It doesn't really even out the differences. I think the Jordanian identity can adapt to differences more easily than the Palestinian one, for example, or the Lebanese one, which is really strong. The Lebanese identity sure is strong, but it's not national, it's very fragmented... I could even go as far as to say that there isn't a national identity in Lebanon... they have a sectarian identity based on religion. That's not the case over here in Jordan. Here you can be Jordanian and at the same time you can be of Circassian, Chechen, Armenian, Palestinian, Syrian descent...*

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[142] Lydda is a mixed Jewish-Arab city 15 km southeast of Tel Aviv in the Central District of Israel.

Sulaymān (18/40 years old, Christian, JJ, Freelance) does not deny the coexistence of several constituencies under the "Jordanian national umbrella". However, when asked if there is a common identity that unite them all, he answered as follows:

> *No, there is no common identity in my opinion. I think a common identity does exist only if you take certain places out of the picture […] but I mean, Jordan is very small, it should be more homogenous than this, but it's not.*

Furthermore, as stressed before, the case of the Palestinians from Gaza needs to be discussed separately as it is of course very peculiar for the political and historical reasons discussed in the previous sections. In fact, Gazans are not Jordanian citizens (they do not have the "national number"[143]) and that limits, if not completely negates them access to the welfare, health and educational system and to the job market. The "children of Gaza" call themselves refugees even though they arrived in Jordan when they were just infants. Being refugees for them is indeed an identity criterion itself and many are not willing to give it up as resistance and resilience truly define them. When referring to themselves and their status in the country, along with *lāǧi'ūn* (refugees) or *nāziḥūn* (displaced persons) many also used the word *ḍuyūf* (guests) that both shows the success of the governmental "guesthood" narrative (al-Abed, 2014) rooted in the Islamic, Arab and Bedouin tradition, and well expresses how they still perceive their permanence in the state to be only provisional. Unsurprisingly, they professed gratitude and respect toward their "host country" and its King but they never lost either the hope or the will to go back one day to their

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[143] The *raqm waṭanī* is a civil registration number accorded at birth or upon naturalization which is recorded on national ID cards and on the family registration books issued only to citizens.

true homeland (that the majority have never seen or, if so, do not remember).

Palestinians in Kuwait had a different faith compared to their Gazan brothers but they also live at the margins of society. In fact, because of the PLO official support for Iraq during the First Gulf War, they have seen their social and working position extremely reduced over time. Such a sudden exclusion from the country they once considered their own, has been felt as a profound and even painful injustice by many:

> *I: What is identity for you? If you want to... the first thing that comes to your mind when you think about identity.*
> *P: Nothing, I can't think about any identity. I don't have identity, at all. I am a different person…*
> *I: According to who is in front of you?*
> *P: Yeah, depending who's in front of me, […] I will never show them my real self. I talk to everyone in his accent, so I can communicate with people.*
> *I: So they feel closer to you...*
> *P: Yes! If he's Syrian, I will speak to him in a Syrian accent, if he's Kuwaiti modern* [he means ḥaḍar]*, I will speak to him in Kuwaiti modern accent... like, some people don't know who I am, where I am from. […] I'm Palestinian, I'm not ashamed of my country, I'm so proud, even if I've never been there... but this* [Kuwait] *is my country, that's the thing they don't understand, here I was born, here I was raised, here I lived and I live... but I am nothing to them, that's what hurts me the most, makes me angry[144].*

If an analysis of the Jordanian national identity must take into consideration the Palestinian element as both a threat to its very existence and its integral part, when discussing the Kuwaiti national identity, it is impossible to ignore the majority of the Emirate's

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[144] Male, 18/40 years old, Muslim, unoccupied, E-Palestine.

inhabitants who are forcibly excluded from the national identity. However, their cases will be presented within the last dimension as the perpetual marginalization from the political and social life of 70% of the country's population is undoubtedly an indicator of the state's sovereignty crisis, due to its hybrid nature.
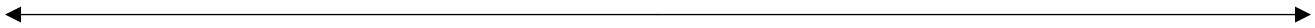
As for the Kuwaiti citizens', age, education[145], gender but especially the belonging to a (originally) Bedouin or settled family play a crucial role in defining both personal and political awareness of the respondents and consequently the nature of their national identity. In fact, the *ḥaḍar/badū* dichotomy is unavoidable when discussing the Kuwaiti identity. As already noted, the *badū* have been alienated from their own nationhood as the townspeople consider themselves the founding fathers of the (city) state, and, even though they do not exist anymore as a distinct, ontological entity they are still considered a sociologically and culturally distinct group.

The scheme below shows the correlation among the above listed indicators by placing the data outcomes on a continuum that sees as the most politically aware a male, highly educated, *ḥaḍar* over forty years old, while as the least politically aware and thus with a poorly articulated conception of national identity, a low educated *badū*, regardless of gender and age range.

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[145] The literacy rate in Kuwait is particularly high (total population: 96.2%; male: 96.4%; female: 94.5%), according to UNDP the Emirate's educational system is above the regional average and education is free for all citizens. Therefore, within this reasoning high educated citizens are university graduates (or PhD holders), while low educated are secondary school graduates. See the 2018 Human Development Report of Kuwait http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/KWT

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High educated Male *ḥaḍar* 40+ yrs. old	High educated Male *ḥaḍar* 18/40 yrs. Old	High educated Female *ḥaḍar* -	Low educated Male *ḥaḍar* -	Low educated Female *ḥaḍar* -	High educated Male *badū* 18/40 yrs. old	**High educated Female *badū* 18/40 yrs. old**	High educated - *badū* 40+ yrs. Old	Low educated - *badū* -

The following three interviews' abstracts are exemplary of the third to last category, in bold:

Mahā (University student)

> *Kuwait represents to me the best thing ever, you know, for me it's the best country, and Kuwait for me is like both my son and my father, so I'm nothing without Kuwait, and...I'm super sure that I'm proud to be Kuwaiti, because I think Kuwait provides us with many things... other Arabic rich countries, they don't provide to the people living there as much as Kuwait does.*

Fāṭima (Bank employee)

> […] *Being Kuwaiti is like you feel secure in your country, because our government provides us with a very secure system for retirement, we have a very good welfare system here in Kuwait. Also, for couples they get married, in the future, they can afford a house, so you feel secure in your country.*

Šayma (Unemployed)

> *Kuwait is a very unique country, that is my opinion, Kuwait is very special and unique, although we are a very small country, Kuwait presents many good things. We present hospitality, kindness, generosity, we are fighters, we are people who stand in front of the enemies, and in front of anyone who's trying to put us down, or trying to harm or hurt us in any way. So, yes I am very proud to be Kuwaiti.*

4.2 Islamic identity

Notably, both Jordan and Kuwait have mixed legal system made of civil law, customary law and *šarīʿa* inspired law, and both countries' personal law is fully based on *šarīʿa*. Besides, in Kuwait, in order to be considered effectively part of the community and the beneficiary of rights, an individual must be Muslim. The condition of religious membership was introduced in the country with a specific Law, art.1 of Law 1/1982, which states that only a Muslim can obtain naturalization; if conversion to Islam has occurred, it must have happened at least five years before applying for naturalization[1]. Islam is an intermediate legal entity in the sense that ecclesiastical membership has bearing on political citizenship by making Islam part of the state or with the socialization of *šarīʿa*. Clear evidence of this is the sin of apostasy: some states establish that a person stained with this crime must immediately forfeits his or her citizenship. In Kuwait there was a case of loss of citizenship in 1996 following an accusation of apostasy[2]. In Jordan, as in Kuwait, Islam is the state religion; however, religious freedom is ensured by the Constitution (article 6, chapter 2) and since 2016 new smart IDs no longer indicate the holder's religion[3]. Nevertheless, a big part of the *Banū* Hāšim's legitimacy comes from their lineage from the Arab chieftain Qurayš, the same tribe of Prophet Muḥammad. Accordingly, the constitution (article 28, chapter 4) states

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[1] Gianluca Parolin, *Dimensioni dell'appartenenza e cittadinanza nel mondo arabo* (Napoli: Jovene, 2007), 193-196; 234.

[2] The reference here is to Ḥussaīn ʿAlī Qambar's conversion to Christianity. See also Anh Nga Longva, "The apostasy law in the age of universal human rights and citizenship. Some legal and political implications," in *The Fourth Nordic Conference on Middle Eastern Studies: The Middle East in a Globalizing World,* Oslo (13-16 August 1998), https://org.uib.no/smi/pao/longva.html

[3] "Jordan Removes Religion from New ID Cards," *Mashreq, politics and culture Journal* (July 5, 2016), http://mpc-journal.org/blog/2016/07/05/jordan-removes-religion-from-new-id-cards/

that "no person shall ascend the Throne unless he is a Muslim, mentally sound and born by a legitimate wife and of Muslim parents"[4]. Besides, the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood since its foundation in 1942 ('Abd al-Laṭīf Abū Qūra, 1906-1967) has been very close to the Hashemites for several reasons. In fact, the ruling family needed a powerful ally to gain popular support against the nationalist, anti-monarchic and Nasserist currents that threatened its legitimacy to rule in the Fifties; besides, at that time the two Banks had just been united and the Brotherhood's intention of freeing Palestine from the Zionist invader well matched with the expansionist aims of the Hashemites in the region. Notably, to strengthen this convenient alliance, the Hashemites assigned to the Brotherhood the Ministry of Education, a decision that deeply impacted the school curricula and the textbooks, revised only in 2015 and 2017[5].

The interviews' findings highlight how Islamic identity complete and strengthen the national identity of Muslim citizens rather than substitute it, both in Jordan and in Kuwait. The significance of religiosity and—given the focus on two Muslim-majority countries—specifically of Islam, has been investigated through the following question which required the interviewees to order the listed identity criteria from the most to the least relevant for them:

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[4] Foreign Ministry of Jordan, "Jordanian nationality, how to acquire, relinquish and the relevant instructions", https://jordan.gov.jo/wps/wcm/connect/gov/egov/government+ministries+_+entities/ministry+of+foreign+affairs/services/jordanian+nationality%2C+how+to+acquire%2C+relinquish+and+the+relevant+instructions

[5] Particularly interesting is the case of the text for Islamic studies in Jordanian universities, *al-ṯaqāfa al-Islāmiyya wa qaḍāyā al-'aṣr* (Islamic culture and issues of the era), published by Hamid House and edited by twenty members of the *šarī'a* faculty of the University of Jordan in Amman. In this text, before the 2015 and 2017 revisions modern Jordan did not exist and religious authorities had power over the monarch. See Kirk Sowell H., "Downplaying Jihad in Jordan's Educational Curriculum, 2013-2107," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, no. 6 (December 2017).

9. I will give you some identity criteria, can you order them from the most relevant to the least relevant according to your perception and then justify your decision?

- *Religion*
- *National Belonging*
- *'Arabhood' - Language*
- *Family*
- *Palestinian origins* [only for Jordan]

While not surprisingly, Christian Jordanians chose nationality over religion, Islam proved to be the most relevant identity criterion for the majority of the Muslim interviewees, a data that implicitly confirmed the words of Father Bassām:

> […] *In Jordan we always put our religion at the first place... Yeah, first it comes religion, and after religion "I am Jordanian and I am Palestinian"... And then your home country, as your nationality.* […]. *But I think that in the whole Arab World, religion comes first, then your home country, and then the king[6].*

Likewise, Sulaymān (18/40 years old, Christian, JJ, Freelance) thinks that only Islam has the power of uniting Jordanian people and he references the above mentioned "jordanization" programs of King 'Abd Allāh and his (failed) efforts of proposing a "modern" sense of belonging, based only on citizenship and not on religious affiliations :

> *Well, they didn't work... I'm not sure what the king was trying to base them on* […]. *I like his policies here but... I'm not sure what he did, but I think the only thing that unites people here is religion. Islam is what unites people.*
> *I: But if that is true, why is the government perceived as legitimate by everyone?*
> *S: It's not. It's not perceived as such. It is perceived by some to be legitimate, and the government here is scary, and Jordanians have a tendency not to speak up, not to do anything... Anyway the king started to take religion out of the curriculum in school,*

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[6] Father Bassām (40+ years old, Christian, JJ).

like not forcing...like I was forced to learn all about Islam at school, in Arabic class... so he tried to take that out. And he tried to, for example... something about religion in the books for kids, it used to be represented by a mosque, but now they have changed it to include pictures of a mosque, church and the Buddhist temple.

Besides, among the Christian interviewees in the 18/40 years old age range, many affirmed that living in a Muslim-majority country can be challenging for a young Christian, although not form a legal perspective:

[…] *Our country is driven by... it's a Muslim country, and it's driven by Muslim traditions and customs* […]. *I mean, the law of Jordan, the Jordanian law is pretty ok, it's not too bad, but our society is driven by certain traditions and customs that are very close-minded, it makes everything like... shameful[7].*

As for the Emirate, the majority of Kuwaiti citizens affirmed that only "the Islamic religion leads toward a conscious citizenship", thus equating a good Muslim with a good citizen and reasserting the status of the (Islamic) religion as an integral part of nationhood:

Of course, I am proud of being a Kuwaiti... my national identity to me is my Islamic identity, my religion...because from people's religion you can know who they are, where they really belong to, you know?[8]

To me national identity is religion. I think a person without religion is nothing, cause religion decides who this person is[9].

First comes religion because religion explains you what nationality means, religion explains you the sense of belonging, how to be loyal to the Emir and to the nation[10].

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[7] Interviewee (18/40 years old, Christian, male, PJ, accountant).
[8] Sara (18/40 years old, Muslim, middle school English teacher, K).
[9] Mahā (18/40 years old, Muslim, university student, K).
[10] Female, 18/40 years old, employee of the Ministry of Justice, K.

4.3 Arabhood

According to Webb (2015) "an ethnic identity is both a capricious intellectual construct and a potent force that shapes how people organize themselves and interact with others[11]". As already stressed, Pan-Arabism ceased to be a realistic political objective in the Seventies, with the Arab defeat against Israel in the 1969 and 1973 wars and the death of General Nasser. Notably, according to Eid (2007) Islam has filled the space left empty by its demise:

> The failure of pan-Arabism and Western-type liberalism to provide the principles needed to shape a postcolonial identity triggered a search for new normative grounds that might give meaning to the idea of "Arabness." […] a new religious nationalism emerged within this ideological vacuum, a nationalism asserting a collective identity freed from the remnants of the former "colonized" identity imposed by the West. Islamist discourses and movements became increasingly politicized and militant, advocating for the Islamization of social structures in both public and private domains […]. One can contend that religion became interwoven with national selfhood in the post 1970s Arab world[12].

However, the aim of this query is to gain a deeper understanding of the identity criteria that are perceived as most significant within the case studies' societies, regardless of their actual feasibility. Accordingly, the strength of "Arabness" or better "Arabhood" (as to stress the claimed brotherhood that supposedly unites all Arabs) as a source of identity have been investigated through the interviews. The fact that some respondents claimed to be confident that a sort of "Arab nation" could and should be realized in the future, has been considered

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[11] Peter Webb, "Arab Origins: Identity, History and Islam," *British Academy* (20 July 2015), https://www.britac.ac.uk/blog/arab-origins-identity-history-and-islam
[12] Paul Eid, *Being Arab: Ethnic and Religious Identity Building among Second Generation Youth in Montreal* (Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 14.

an indicator itself, along with the disillusionment expressed by the majority toward an Arab brotherhood perceived as unreal, mainly due to the lack of inter-Arab support, especially but not exclusively from the Gulf countries toward Syrian citizens, following the events of the so-called Arab spring.

Indeed, the majority of the highly educated men over 40 years old both in Jordan and in Kuwait consider Arabhood as one of the most relevant identity criteria, and some of them even placed this ethnic affiliation above the religious one:

> *We are Arabs, we are part of the Arab nation, we belong to this Arab nation, we have the same language, same habit, same culture, same biases, same fears[13].*
> *The real identity to me is the Arab identity. We are Arabs. The Arab identity is more important than the Islamic one. According to me, and I believe that most of the intellectuals would agree, the Arab identity is universal, Christians can have it, Muslims can have it, Shiites and Sunnis, are all Arabs. Then if you want you can talk about the Arab Muslim identity or the Arab Christian identity[14].*

Nevertheless, opposite views are not uncommon, especially in Kuwait where the First Gulf War, the resultant of an aggression by a fellow Arab country, obviously contributed to the end of the (Pan-) Arab narrative, both on a political and personal, emotional level.

> *I: And what do you think about "Arabhood"? Do you believe there is, or not?*
> *P: Not at all. Not at all.*
> *I: It's just a concept.*
> *P: Only a concept, only a concept, and nobody cares about it now. Now we care about our country. We don't care about Egypt for example; we don't care about... Sometimes, sometimes it's*

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[13] Nāṣir (40+ years old, University Professor, Muslim, PJ).
[14] Ǧamāl (40+ years old, writer, intellectual, Muslim, PJ).

good to think of this criteria, but they do not mean anything anymore.

On the other hand, younger interviewees like Maḥmūd (18/40 years old, Muslim, Engineer, PJ) believed that *Arab nowadays look for smaller identities* hence the macro Arab identity has lost its value and its power.

Likewise, another Palestinian girl said:

As Palestinian refugee who lives in a camp and who has lived in a very unwelcoming country such as Saudi Arabia, I think that Arab identity lost its meaning.

Particularly interesting is the stand point of Sara, an Egyptian university student resident in Kuwait that completely denies her Arab lineage, a discourse common also among Lebanese people who claim to be descendants of the "Phoenicians", Phoenicianism being in fact a form of Lebanese nationalism[15]. Indeed, as discussed in the first chapter, Egyptian nationalism until the Thirties had Pharaonic or Mediterranean basis:

First of all, to be honest, I do not see me being an Egyptian as me being an Arab, we just happen to speak the same language, but if you go back in history, we're actually not, we're Coptic [Copts; Coptic is the North Africa ethnoreligious group's language]*, we are not Arab. We were not called Egyptians before, we were called Coptics. So, to me, Egypt is not an Arab country... actually, 90 percent of our DNA is pure, it's pure Egyptian... right now, you don't have pure Egyptians, but the percentage of Arab blood in the Egyptians citizens is 17 percent. We are not even related to Arabs. Arabs are not even Lebanese, Arabs are like the Kuwaitis, the Saudi Arabians... these are the Arabs, we are not Arabs, we are Coptics. So, I don't see myself in the* Umma arabiyya [The Arab community]*, I don't see myself as a part of that at all.* […] *The Syrian crisis*

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15 See Asher Kaufman, "Phoenicianism: The Formation of an Identity in Lebanon in 1920. *Middle Eastern Studies* 37" no. 1, (2001): 173-194, https://phoenicia.org/phoeleb.html

showed a lot of the truth, the full truth about what is going on, so it's not...they call us Arabs, they say that the Middle East is Arab, they say that the Middle Eastern should stand by each other, but the Syrian crisis showed that we are nowhere close to that, and it became all political instead of humanitarian... there's no humanity in what's happening right now, people are thinking selfishly.

Nevertheless, despite the detected difference of significance given to the Arab identity depending on the age range, the vast majority of the Jordanian participants, when addressed about the Syrian issue stressed the refugees' belonging to their same ethno-linguistic and in many cases also religious community:

Identity in the bilād al-šām, *that is Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Palestine, is the same. We have very similar customs and traditions, thus the effect of the Syrian refugees* [on Jordan] *stays within the same identity circle. There is no new identity as if the refugees were Turks or Afghans or Europeans*[16].

Moreover, language is an essential part of the Arab identity and interestingly, in both Jordan and Kuwait knowledge of Arabic language is a condition for obtaining naturalization. The linguistic dimension and its undeniable relevance have been already discussed, especially from a methodological perspective in the previous chapter. However, its significance can be reaffirmed once more through the words of Professor Yasir Suleiman:

In spelling out the content of this position, the Arab nationalists adopt as an article of supreme faith the view that language is not just a means of communication, of conveying messages between interlocutors, but a most eloquent symbol of group identity and one whose ultimate strength lies in its ability to provide the cultural and instrumental backbone of the group's legitimate objective of furthering its ethno cultural self-interest[17]

[16] Ğamāl (40+ years old, writer, intellectual, Muslim, PJ).
[17] Samir I. Bitar "Language, Identity, and Arab Nationalism: Case Study of Palestine," *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)* 5, no. 4 (2011): 51.

The significance of the Arabic language has been reasserted by the majority of the interviewees in both countries. The following words of Suhā (18/40 years old, Muslim, employee and university student, E-Palestinian Jordanian born in Kuwait) perfectly show its identity power; in fact, she chooses English over Arabic because such power for her is too difficult to handle:

> *I like speaking English more than other* [languages]. *Because I don't know how to speak my own language, Arabic. There are special criteria, special words that you have to show your identity with, that you can identify yourself with... this is Palestinian, this is Syrian, this is Lebanese, (because they are very close, those three countries, especially), everything is clear when you speak in Arabic, so I prefer English, unfortunately.*

4.4 Hybridity, tribal affiliations and clientelism

Before the spread of the Islamic faith, the spirit that drove the Bedouins to unite and submit to the authority of one family was called *'asabiyya*, a concept which Ibn Ḫaldūn tackles in his work, *al-Muqaddima* and which Mansoor Moaddel (2002) re-proposes, in the meaning of "group solidarity based on blood ties and relations among members of the same tribe which leads them to fight and die for one another"[18]. In the Gulf Region and in Jordan, identity paradigms typical of tribal traditions (membership within the kinship group and the religious community) are embedded in the state structure, thus continue to co-exist today alongside the concept of a modern State. The hybrid nature of the Jordanian and Kuwaiti states has been a sort of guiding

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[18] Mansoor Moaddel, "The Study of Islamic Culture and Politics: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002): 368.

thread since the first chapter and the present section, by investigating this dimension, aims to look at it from an inner perspective.

Even though there were not specific questions in the interview outline aimed to detect such dimension, relevant indicators of the hybridity of the two states somehow permeated all the answers which implicitly highlighted how both countries lack of a full domestic sovereignty mainly because their basic institutions are not always "objective, accountable, predictable and transparent"[19] as the institutions of modern statehood should be but still rely on personal affiliation and tribal allegiances. The following excerpts are very revealing in this regard.

To start, Professor Nāṣir (40+ years old, University Professor, Muslim, PJ) acknowledges and confirms the coexistence of modernity and tradition in Jordan:

> *I also love Jordan because of its still significant Arab culture, <u>a sense of belonging to a tribal society</u>... you know there's been globalization that has taken place in the world... I think you can still feel, in Jordan, that you're still part of a traditional culture that still exists, that is special and has not developed to such an extent where you are influenced by the rush of modernity and globalization, and so forth. So it makes me feel like I'm in a place that is warm... backward but warm.*

While another participant (female, 18/40 years old, PJ born in the Philippines, Muslim, Arabic teacher) affirms that origins and familiar affiliations in Jordan play a big role in defining both the personal and the national identity of people:

> […] *It's just how the culture sees the identity, so...I think origins is a very important thing in our culture, so not what passport you hold, or where you live...it's more where your family comes from. I think that plays a big role in how people see you, and then how you can see yourself, because part of what we identify*

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[19] Bacik, op. cit., 18, 19.

ourselves as is how people see us. […] *Even though I have a passport, and my father is Jordanian, and I speak Arabic. Once people look at me think…"mmm maybe not!" Even if I have nothing to do with it* [Palestine], *even if I've never been there* [Palestine]*…even if…I was born in the Philippines, but I've never been there….it's still a big part of who I am and how people see me.* […] <u>*I think for Jordanian tribes…maybe they feel that they have created Jordan, and hence they can be called Jordanian. But, for other people, I don't know how they identify as Jordanians, because they did not participate in creating Jordan*</u>.

Likewise Tamīm (18/40 years old, Muslim, PJ, Hotel receptionist and university student), points out the difference between Western and Eastern understandings of nationality:

[…] *for example, if you go to government office or anything, you would have a question about where your father was born… regardless of the fact that you hold Jordanian nationality, or nationality number… I think it's not the same way as in the Western culture, as long as you have their nationality, that's fine. They ask where you were born, but they don't ask you about your father, or your mother… where they were born. So, here's different.*

While the episode narrated by Aḥmad (18/40 years old, teacher, non-believer, JJ) actually shows how such difficulties can effect a citizen's daily-life:

I: does someone's life in this country depend on how they identify? Like the way you identify yourself is giving you different opportunities than someone who might identify in another way?
A: yeah, like, I feel like it totally does that. I can give you examples. I don't remember precisely, but I guess if you were stopped by a police officer on the street like in Irbid[20], or like in Petra streets…sometimes when we were in Irbid me and my cousins, we would just go out to smoke cigarettes and drink tea

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[20] Irbid is a city in northern Jordan, the third largest city of the country after Zarqa and Amman.

or coffee...and we were at a gas station we would get stopped by police and they were like Mīn antom? La wen raḥīn? [Who are you? Where are you going?][21]*...we speak the same dialect, then we give him ids* [identity cards]*, oh (last name)! Where are you guys from? Do you guys know Maḥmūd? I worked with him 2 years ago! We were on that traffic light over there, harassing people...and he was like, oh you guys can go, but you must give me a cigarette, give me a cigarette. And basically I was like, "Oh, shit, if I were Syrian I'd be like shi**ing bricks, you know?"*

Notably, Nāṣir (18/40 years old, Arabic Teacher and employee at AICS, Muslim, PJ) describes Jordan as a family headed by a fatherly monarch:

I: So you define yourself as Jordanian. And do you think there is a difference in everyday life, between Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian origin? In the educational system, for the job market access, welfare...
N: So, for me they are equal 100%. But there is an aspect… when you for example... when you go to a public place, a public office... they always look at your surname, and they know you're Palestinian, Jordanian-Palestinian, or you're Jordanian-Jordanian. When you're Jordanian-Jordanian they treat you in a way more ... I do not know, they make things faster.
Identity, like ... it's a difficult question ... I think Jordan is the king and queen, I swear to you. Because all the Jordanians say "ah we are Jordanians, long live <u>King 'Abd Allāh and Queen Rānīā</u>!" So in my opinion ... <u>their family is our family, their family is Jordan and the king is our father</u>.

Ismā'īl (18/40 years old, Muslim, Jordanian father and Spanish mother, Spanish/Arabic Teacher at Cervantes) despite acknowledging the heterogeneity of the Jordanian society, is sure that every constituency has a proper place:

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[21] The interview have been made in English but Aḥmad chose to say that one sentence in Arabic perhaps to confer more authenticity to his story.

Jordanians of Palestinian descent, come from the region east of the Jordan River and owns the private market, they are more into businesses, while us Trans Jordanians have more power in the army, police, government affairs, bureaucracy... then there are the Circassians, who mainly work in the intelligence services and as royal guards... they play a bigger role in state affairs compared with other ethnicities. Then there are the Christians, they're not an ethnicity but they're still a minority group. They generally have very good levels of education, they attend internationals schools, so this helps them get good jobs in international firms, more than any other groups including Muslims, both of Jordanian and Palestinian descent.

And he praised late King Ḥusayn's diplomacy, crucial for Jordan's survival as a sovereign country:

King Ḥusayn, he was a good statesman, but he didn't have an ideology you could easily label. I think he did... he was a very pragmatic man. He went for what worked. This is Jordan's character, it's a very diplomatic country, it doesn't have any serious conflicts with any other country, and has strong allies that assist it. <u>And this is why Jordan has been able to survive</u>. For example, King Ḥusayn was a good ally of the Soviet Union, but he was even a better ally of the United States, and had good relations with the English as well. During the 1990 war against Iraq, he had good relations with Saddam Hussein... he was on his side but also had good ties with Western nations.

Another young interviewee (18/40 years old, Christian, male, PJ, accountant) stressed how Jordanian society is made of many components:

There's the pure Jordanian, Palestinian Jordanian, plus the Muslim and Christian.

And he added that

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[in university] *you would get your papers done more easily if you were a pure Jordanian, if you come from a pure Jordanian... Muslim family... it would make things easier.*

Sulaymān (18/40 years old, Christian, JJ, Freelance) pointed out the *waṣṭa* system (literally "middle", as it has an intermediary role), an institutional part of the Jordanian society since its very creation, a product of the state's tribal origins that, according to Al-Ramahi (2008), "summarizes the personal and collective nature of the Jordanian society and it is also a personal exchange system between members of society that is entrenched in the tribal structure of the country"[22].

> *If someone asked me where you are from, I would answer with where I am... where I was raised, I'm from Amman, I was raised here. But, usually people insist on asking where you are really from and I think the question is... you know, we have these stereotypes that apply to Jordanians, and other stereotypes about Palestinians, and when you meet someone new, you're trying to make those assumptions about that person. I think it's not...I think it's not very practical to do that, it can be judgmental, and... Also it has to do a lot with the* waṣṭa *system, and in some cases if you're purely Jordanian, it helps, and if you're not Jordanian-Jordanian, then no one cares about you... but even the other way around, depending on who's offering the* waṣṭa. […] *Being Jordanian helps like in dealing with the police, for example...*
> *I: It makes it easier?*
> *S: It makes it easier for me, because the police, they're all Jordanians.*
> *I: If you want to apply for a governmental job...*
> *S: that also helps... in the government most of them are Jordanians, so yes it helps.*

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[22] Aseel Al-Ramahi, "Wasta in Jordan: A Distinct Feature of (and Benefit for) Middle Eastern Society," *Arab Law Quarterly* 22 (2008): 36.

As for Kuwait, the Arab expatriates, most of which were born in the Emirate, report in the following interviews' excerpts how they have seen their status progressively worsening over the years (especially since the 2000s) and how they are nowadays living under the constant threat of deportation and mistreated both on a professional and personal level. Quoting Bacik (2009):

> The expatriates problem reveals that Kuwait is well short of being a modern nation; instead, it exists as a collection of discrete constituencies. […] <u>citizenship does not function as the basic mechanism of people-state relations</u>. This has created a serious domestic sovereignty crises[23].

Suhā (18/40 years old, Muslim, employee and university student, E-Palestinian Jordanian) used to feel part of the country where she was born but she has now changed her perspective:

> *I: Do you feel to be Kuwaiti somehow?*
> *S: No, I gave up the way I used to love Kuwait. Before I was working in an office, and I had never communicated with Kuwaitis, now I know the reality, the impolite way, the bad behaviors with the people, all the people here, they just treat them, very bad, all the nationalities, especially the Indians and Asians... they underestimate them, they treat them bad, my point of view has completely changed about Kuwait, before I was putting the Kuwaiti flag in my car, I was not putting the Palestinian one or the Jordanian one, or Indian, being married to an Indian. […] I didn't feel to be truly Kuwaiti, but I felt like I belong to this country, I love this country, my blood is Kuwaiti, that's what I thought... When I travelled, and anything wrong happened to the country, I cried. I felt for it, I loved the country... sincerely, seriously, when I spoke about Kuwait, I felt emotional, I don't know what you call this, but if Jordan or any country, played soccer...I supported Kuwait […]. I wanted to be here, now I've changed, I said yes, I can go and leave.*

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[23] Bacik, op. cit., 132, 133.

While another participant of Egyptian origin (18/40 years old, Muslim, Engineer) shares a personal experience that truly shows the climate of injustice and disrespect in which foreign workers live:

> […] *they are treating us like we're just animals who came here to work and to take their money. I think they should treat us like we have lived in this country more than we have lived in our country.* […] *If I saw any check-in in the road...even though in the papers* [documents]*, I don't have any problems...I feel like, if you don't like my face, you will stop me, for any reason, you will take me.* […] *I remember before, I had a sport car, Camaro, and it was just new... and there is a check-in, the police officer told me one thing I cannot forget, they told me "You are Egyptian and you have a Camaro"...I told them "So what?".... "Some Kuwaitis cannot afford for this Camaro" he said... I told them, I'm sorry, you did not pay my car from your money, I'm paying it from my money, so why do you judge me?... because of that, because I said that, they threw me in jail for one night. Then, my father called a lot of people until I went out.* […] *Especially someone like me, born in this country, lived most of his life in this country, this was a very bad experience.* […] *You know that there is there is a Kuwaiti lady, she got in the newspapers, Internet, everywhere... and she said that all the foreigners must pay because they're walking in the streets of Kuwait?*[24]

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[24] He is talking about Ṣafāʾ al-Hāšim (b. 1964), the only woman currently elected to the Kuwaiti Parliament. She has very harsh positions toward expatriate workers. Indeed, in April 2017 she "had proposed to reduce the number of expatriates in the country, stop giving them free medicines at public clinics and hospitals even though they pay annual health insurance and taxing foreigners for walking on the road. She also proposed to charge expatriates for money transfers to their home country". "MP Safaa Al-Hashem targets expats again", *Indians in Kuwait.com* (Monday, April 3, 2017),
http://www.indiansinkuwait.com/ShowArticle.aspx?ID=43748&SECTION=0#ixzz5PgIlF3kQ.
See also "Proposal of MP Safa Al-Hashim 'Expat workers to be deported once their projects are completed' approved," *Arab Times* (25/02/2018), http://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/proposal-of-mp-safa-al-hashim-expat-workers-to-be-deported-once-their-projects-are-completed-approved/; "MP Safaa Al-Hashim: Expats are opportunistic bacteria," *Arab Times* (16/02/2018), http://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/mp-safaa-al-hashim-expats-opportunistic-bacteria/; "MP Safa Al-Hashem: Expats should be banned from hiring maids," *Kuwait*

Likewise Sara (18/40 years old, Muslim, university student, E-Egypt) complains about the unwelcoming environment in which she is forced to live, under the constant threat of deportation:

> *I: So, like, even if you've lived here since you were born, you still feel as an Egyptian, you never feel to be a Kuwaiti.*
> *S: I never felt that, because citizens here, or many of the citizens here, not all of them, make you feel like you're not home. […] They never miss a chance to make you feel like you're not home. Like, this is not your country, you're here on a temporary stay... They never make you forget that, they never give you a chance. Like, for instance, I'm gonna give you one of the easiest examples. When you are walking in a mall and a guy is flirting with you, and you don't give him recognition, you don't give him attention... he starts to tell you "Ok, I'll deport you". Why are you going to deport me, just because I didn't give you attention? And this word, deporting, it's so easy* [commonly used].

Moreover, for the reasons discussed above, Palestinians' condition is even worse:

> *I can't feel home at all, walking in the street, trying to understand why those people hate us, especially expats. Why did they start to hate us? What did we do? We've been so good with them, we eat their food, we live with them, we sleep at their house, we did everything nice, why had everything changed? Especially in the late 2000's. […] The most common thing they say to you, always, always, they have to tell you "we will kick you out of the country if you open your mouth", as a joke... but it's like, any Kuwaiti... talk to him right now, you fight with them, I fight with them normally... there was a car accident, we bumped each other... "You're an expat, I will kick you out of this country!". This is the normal. […] In Europe, or America, or Australia, they treat you as a human... you live there for 5 years, you have their nationality, at that time, they will never tell you "you are an Arab"...they may tell you*

Times (30/08/2018), http://news.kuwaittimes.net/website/mp-safa-al-hashem-expats-banned-hiring-maids/.

you're an Arab Australian, you are a British American, whatever...they will never tell you "I will kick you out". I've lived here 30 years of my life, I was born here, and I know everything. I can speak their language better than them. And after all, what's my nationality? You're an expat. They compare us to animals, we are here to steal their money, we are here to take all their food, their life, and we transfer to our country... we don't have a country [as Palestinians]. *I was before... let's say a decade ago, 10 years ago, I was still having this thought "If anyone attacks this country, I will kick them", now, no[25].*

On the contrary, expats from Saudi Arabia (that in many cases have been naturalized Kuwaiti and even obtained the first class citizenship) and in some degree from Lebanon have a better status in Kuwait:

Šahīd (18/40 years old, Muslim, University student, E-Saudi Arabia)

Well, Kuwait is my first home, as I said I was born and raised here, and I studied here, I have my relatives here and I'm going to work soon here, so it's like, you know, it's my home, and of course I am happy to live here.

Interviewee (female, 18/40 years old, Muslim, English teacher, E-Saudi Arabia)

I've lived in Kuwait all my life, although we are from Saudi Arabia, but both my parents have been living here for years...they were both born here, so you can say that we've been living here since... before the 60s. I really love this country, I feel like I am a Kuwaiti because I've lived here all my life. I'm really happy to be living in Kuwait, I wouldn't see myself living anywhere else, to be quite honest.

Tūfīq (40+ years old, Christian, Business man, E-Lebanese)

I think... of course, <u>if you have a good job, it makes all the difference</u>. But the difference between this country and the other GCC countries like Qatar, here you mingle, you work

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25 Male, 18/40 years old, Muslim, unemployed, E (Palestine).

and interact with the locals a lot. Which makes a big difference, because you get to know their culture, their families, you get into them basically, and you become very good friends after a while. <u>Because we are Lebanese</u>... we are usually well regarded in this country, we have a good relationship with Kuwaitis. [...]

I: Did you ever feel Kuwaiti?

T: No, you never do, because they make sure that you won't feel like that. You are still welcome, you still feel like part of the country professionally, but as far as belonging, identifying with this country...no. Here you keep your identity as Lebanese, because you cannot have the nationality, because of so many cultural differences, so you still identify yourself as Lebanese, but you assimilate, you start understanding the culture here and living it, but you don't become like that.

Conclusions

The quest for legitimacy in Muslim contexts has been defined by the already mentioned Moroccan philosopher Abdou Filali-Ansary as a "four-act tragedy", the four acts being: the birth of Islam and the era of the Rightly Guided caliphs until the Omayyad caliphate; the Sultan model of the Abbasids and the Ottomans; the arrival of the Europeans; the contemporary age. By retracing the evolution of the notion of legitimacy through the ages, Ansary aims to stress the political plurality of the Muslim world characterized by many political languages "certain representing 'a return to service' of words linked to the past (caliphate, *shari'a,* etc.) and others spreading re-appropriations of notions and norms with universal characteristics"[26].

Indeed, the present project begun by investigating the peculiarities of the Islamic *umma*, considered the counterpart of the Western concept of the modern Nation-State and whose ideal boundaries have been unceasingly narrowed and widened by governments, leaders and thinkers according to the necessities of their time and in order to legitimate their standpoints. Then, following a chronological time line, the analysis continues by describing the challenges faced by the Prophet Muḥammad (570-632) who laid the foundations of the *umma* by making allegiance pacts (*bay'a*[27]) with the local communities (the relations among which were regulated by the Charter of Medina, 622), and especially by the Rightly Guided caliphs (632-661) that had to deal with the issue of succession and to guide the community toward a new political and identitarian dimension. In fact, the founding moment of the first act, according to Ansary's

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[26] Abdou Filali-Ansari, op. cit.

[27] For the role of the *bay'a* as the foundation of the Moroccan monarchy, see George Joffé ed., *North Africa. Nation, State and region* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 207-214.

periodization, is *al-fitna al-kubrà*, the great disaccord after which the Islamic community, previously led by religious principles, entered the new era of *mulk* (hereditary sovereignty) where "religion was placed at the service of politics"[28], and not vice versa.

The legitimacy of the Omayyad dynastic caliphate (661-750) was undermined by such profound shift as their aim was not, as it was for their predecessors, the creation of a moral community driven by the Islamic message: in fact, the Omayyads introduced the principle of heredity; the first caliph Muʿāwiya (d. 680) designated his son Yazīd (d. 683) as his successor; besides they launched a centralizing policy and made of Arabic the official language. They based part of their claim to legitimacy on the assertion of the superiority of Arab culture, thus their "Arab kingdom" tended to give preeminence to the ethnic identity element over the religious one. A major issue, the one of the discrimination and marginalization of the non-Arab newly converted (*mawālī*), would be solved by the "Islamic" Abbasid caliphate (750-1258) that built a cosmopolite society around a new political center, Baghdad, founded in 762 by the second caliph al-Manṣūr (d.775)[29].

However, albeit the Abbasids called for religious legitimacy, their dynasty was more monarchic, hereditary and dominated by the interest of the reigning families than the one of their predecessors. As a response, and fearing that a fully legitimate form of power was by then only an illusion, some felt the urge to teach to the people how to follow an Islamic path (*šarīʿa*) independently of those in power: the schools of jurisprudence (*maḏāhib*) were born. The birth of the *maḏāhib* marked a separation between the political and the religious realms, not to be understood as a form of secularization but as a separation of domains:

[28] Filali-Ansari, op. cit., 4.
[29] Francesca Maria Corrao, *Islam, religion and politics* (Rome: LUISS University Press, 2017), 24-26; 37, 38; 46-48.

the political power existed only to maintain public order and defend the community from any external threats while the *šarīʿa* was sacralised, thus becoming a fundamental source of legitimacy.

After the Abbasid caliphate's fragmentation, many dynasties fell and rose, always failing in maintaining the *umma* united but eventually, between the 14th and the 15th centuries, the Ottomans progressively took control over a great part of Southeast Europe, Western Asia and North Africa, again legitimizing their power on Islamic grounds and becoming "the last great expression of the universality of the world of Islam" (Hourani, 1991).

However, when between the 17th and the 18th centuries the Ottoman system started to collapse, the ruling élite understood that a step toward the modernity was necessary for the very survival of the Empire, thus, even if they tried to revitalize the caliphate, they move toward a program of reforms, the *Tanẓīmāt* (1839-1876), aimed to make the Empire a modern centralized State. Its *Vilayet* Law of 1864 divided the Empire into provinces ruled by a governor, which started a process of territorial definition and created the earliest forms of modern and central statehood in the Arab lands.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Ottoman nationality ceased to exist alongside the political unity of the Ottoman rule, and the post-war peace treaties of Sèvres (1920) and Lausanne (1923) completed the partition of the Empire and drew new artificial political boundaries in the region, which entered the colonial phase that led to the codification of the *šarīʿa* into a collection of rules*,* thus its sacralisation as a divine path was transferred to the juridical codes of the 20th century newly formed states.

It is within this historical and political background that a discussion of nationalism gains different meanings and becomes

significant even in the current globalized era, as pointed out by Nasser (2005):

> […] Nationalism can be viewed as an integral process of a previous phase of globalization where cultural imperialism during the era of colonialism forced local cultures to reconfigure their identification after colonial forces drew new boundaries. Alternatively, it could be argued that the past phase of globalization marked by colonialism, disintegrated empires, and differentiated communities has given birth to a new form of identity-nationalism[30].

Moreover, on the impact of colonialism on the nation-ness of "the colonized" Anderson (1991) wrote:

> The expansion of the colonial state […] 'invited' nationals into schools and offices [while] colonial capitalism excluded them form boardrooms [thus] the key spokesman for colonial nationalism were lonely, bilingual intelligentsias unattached to sturdy local bourgeoisies. […] However, they had access to models of nations, nation-ness, and nationalism distilled from the turbulent, chaotic experiences of more than a century of American and European history. These models, in turn, helped to give shape to a thousand of inchoate dreams[31].

Aiming to examine on which identity criteria the legitimacy of the Arab-Muslim States is founded, the present thesis discussed the political, historical and theoretical reasons that made the Nation-State the prevalent political system in the MENA region. The events that occurred since the end of the 19th century are described in the first chapter through the works and the ideas of the Arab thinkers and scholars who experienced the great political and cultural changes of that time. While the first *nahḍa* pioneers still considered Europe as an

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[30] Riad M. Nasser, *Palestinian Identity in Jordan and Israel. The Necessary 'Other' in the Making of a Nation* (New York & London: Routledge, 2005), ix.
[31] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 140.

example to follow and remained to some extent loyal to the Ottoman Empire, the second generation of thinkers (1870-1900 in Hourani's periodization), faced a very different reality and started to see Europe as a threat: al-Afġānī, 'Abduh, al-Kawākibī, ʿAbd al-Rāziq and Riḍā articulated their answers to the challenges of modernity from an Islamic perspective while Qāsim Amīn, al-Ḥuṣrī, Luṭfī al-Sayyīd, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and 'Aflaq did it within a modern Western institutional frame. Moreover, at the end of the Ottoman caliphate (1924) Ḥasan al-Bannā and Abū al-'A'lā al-Mawdūdī (d. 1979) took in consideration the possibility to revitalize the caliphate in modern times.

Over time, Western colonization triggered the Arab National awakening that led to the achievement of independence and then, in the Fifties, took a transnational form based on the (Pan-) Arab identity, as 'Aflaq and then Nasser translated al-Ḥuṣrī's Pan-Arab ideology into political action.

Then, the demise of the Pan-Arab ideology in the late Sixties apparently meant the consolidation of the state in the area, as if the Arab State as such, or its public perception, had become a source of legitimacy for the regimes that managed it. A discussion of the "post-1967 generation" of thinkers—composed by some of the major exponents of the contemporary Arab thought such as Sadeq al-Azm, Laroui, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Arkoun, Hanafi, al-Jabri and Rashid al-Ghannushi—has been essential in order to understand the significance of the Six Days War and its impact on the Arab self both on a political and an intimate level, a shift exemplified by the enthusiastic exclamation "Write down, I am an Arab!" written in 1963 by Mahmoud Darwish (Maḥmūd Darwīsh, 1941- 2008) as opposed to the ending line

of Nizar Qabbani's (Nizār Tawfīq Qabbānī, 1923-1998) poem dated 1998: "Are we Arab one big lie?"[32].

Eventually, to the demise of Pan Arabism followed a post-populist phase, within which Arab regimes managed to incorporate political parties, the press, universities and unions, thus reaching a stability that seemed invulnerable.

Finally, by the Nineties, the Islamic opposition, that the authoritarian regimes had failed to cripple completely, tried to profit from their weakened legitimacy, and the regimes, in turn, being under increasing internal and external pressure to open up political space, proposed the counter-argument that doing so would open the door for radical Islamists[33]. Therefore, they maintained their authoritarian and coercive character, never tied their legitimacy to a genuine popular participation in the political life and thus prevented both a civic society from developing and the establishment of genuine participatory institutions[34].

The Arab regimes have been both product of threats and coercions, underpinned by widespread legitimacy formulas composed of a mix of patrimonialism, nationalism and tribalism, which eventually led to the state crisis and the uprisings of 2011. Such a great upheaval in turn revealed the weaknesses of both Arab states and Arab societies, as in almost all cases a coherent and effective opposition failed to materialize, Tunisia being the only case in which a transition toward democracy is taking shape gradually.

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[32] Martin Kramer, "Reconstructing Nations and States," *Daedalus* 122, no. 3 (summer 1993): 171.

[33] Paul Salem, "The Arab State Assisting or Obstructing Development?," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, paper no. 21, (April 2010): 15.

[34] Issa J. Boullata, *Trends and Issues in Contemporary Arab Thought* (New York: SUNY series in Middle Eastern Studies, 1990), 139-163.

To conclude, the crisis of the Arab States— both a consequence and a cause of the collapsed political legitimacy across the region—has been triggered by many factors, considered of crucial significance by Michael Hudson (2015) when thinking about contemporary Arab statehood. These factors are: the use of social media and New Information Technologies that provided new platforms for public expression; the emergence of the Radical Islamist Ideology that challenged nationalism as regimes' legitimizing principle; the emergence of a non-state (or anti-state, the Kurdish regional government in Iraq, being another example as it holds almost all formal attributes of statehood), such as the so-called Islamic State (ISIS or Daesh), a transnational Islamist network that had deeply shaken the regional state system; and finally the foreign, mainly the American, intervention that destabilized the region even more[35].

Within the present thesis, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the State of Kuwait have been used as exemplary cases of the "hybrid" system (in Bacik's account, 2008), whose historical and conceptual reasons have been previously outlined. The argument of this research is that the two states are the result of the encounter between modern and traditional forms of belonging that came to coexist, thus legitimizing and strengthening one another rather than competing with each other.

After contextual and methodological considerations in the first two chapters, the third chapter focuses on the state and nation-building processes of these two apparently far realities. The two studied countries are small artificial states deeply affected by the British

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[35] "The Crisis of the Arab State Study Group Report", convened by Michael C. Hudson, *Middle East Initiative Kuwait Visiting Scholar* (2015), Harvard Kennedy School, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/CrisisArabState.pdf. Full audio of Professor Hudson's introductory lecture available at: https://soundcloud.com/belfercenter/podcast-the-arab-states-in-crisis-with-michael-c-hudson-february-17-2015?in=belfercenter/sets/rethinking-the-arab-state

occupation that they both experienced, turned into Muslim-majority constitutional hereditary monarchies characterized by a deeply-rooted tribal structure and a rentier economic system; hence an in-depth analysis of the states' communities and especially of their constituents proved to be cucial. Particularly revealing are the Palestinian element in Jordan and the status of the stateless persons in Kuwait as they properly exemplify the hybridity of the two states' institutions and their ongoing legitimacy and domestic sovereignty crises.

Beaugrand (2011) associated the violence perpetrated by the Kuwaiti state against the *bidūn* (the stateless) "with the metaphor of the modern state as Kafkaesque bureaucracy rather than as an Orwellian forcible and repressive security apparatus"[36]. However, even though Kuwait was never a police state and its encounter with the West was quite peaceful, the "spread of the European state system in [its] borderless region"[37] had a dramatic impact and led to a radical re-definition of Kuwaiti society, forced to adopt alien concepts of civil identification in a very short period of time. Nevertheless, this forced adoption failed in eliminating tribalism and tribal identity: before the discovery of oil, sovereignty meant nothing but the control of the inland tribes, their trade routes and their military resources and nowadays many elements of the original tribal model have been maintained. For example, as noted by Maestri (2009), the *diwāniya* and the *maǧlis* (informal meetings) are still spread in the whole Gulf region. In Kuwait, the *diwāniya* has a special significance, as within those weekly meetings, important political decisions are often taken, which deeply

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[36] Beaugrand (2011), 229.
[37] Ibid., 230.

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influence the electoral campaigns and generally speaking the political life of the country[38].

Likewise, the analysis of the Palestinian element in Jordan led to a discussion on the notions of sovereignty and citizenship by adding to it the dimension of temporality, especially when dealing with the Gazan case. Indeed, Feldman (2008) investigates how sovereignty and citizenship have been reconfigured after the end of the mandatory system[39]. Gazan citizenship became latent (both in the Gaza strip and in the present-day Jordan) and extended itself both across the space of the Nation-State and over time, imagining itself in a future where the full sovereignty would be a reality and the citizenship a legal status and not only an experiential category. Moreover, according to Nasser (2005) "national discourses are system of meanings in which identities develop via difference"[40], hence such a crystallization of the Palestinian identity, as still an "other", played a crucial role in the making of the Jordanian national identity.

In this research, the data collected through the empirical work confirmed the plurality stressed by Ansary and emerged at all the levels of the analysis. The open semi-structured interviews made with Jordanians, Palestinian-Jordanians (and Gazans), Kuwaiti citizens, long-term resident Arab expats and stateless persons born in the Emirate reaffirmed the centrality of the national belonging and at the same time revealed its deep-rooted multidimensionality. A profound awareness of the specificity of the context (discussed in the second chapter) made the qualitative method and especially the individual interview particularly effective as it built a bridge between the

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[38] Elena Maestri, *La regione del Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2009), 66, 67.
[39] Feldman (2008), op. cit., 451.
[40] Nasser (2005), op. cit., 78.

interviewer and the interviewees' perspectives. In fact, when dealing with the MENA region there are many factors of due consideration; for the purposes of this study the conception of the self (and its pluralistic nature) and that of time and space, naturally linked to the linguistic dimension, were of particular interest. The distinction between *fuṣḥā* and *'ammiyya* mirrors two different conceptions of time, the first being what Agha (2007) calls "biblical time", opposed to the "evolutionary history" proper to the latter.

In conclusion, national belonging proved to be the most important identity criterion both in Jordan and in Kuwait though it functions as an umbrella that includes many other forms of belonging both modern and traditional, thus forming a hybrid model of Nation-Sate. Besides, not all the constituents of these countries' societies have the same perception of the state they live in: if the Kuwaiti citizenship, enjoyed by a minority of the actual residents in the country, is embodied by the state subsidies, in Jordan the nationals of Palestinian origin, with a few exceptions mostly within the Christian minority, have a double feeling of belonging, while the Gazan non-holders of a national number still define themselves as "refugees" or "guests" of the generous fatherly king.

The Lebanese scholar Amin Maalouf (Amīn Maʿlūf, b. 1949) in *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong* (1996) summarizes the multi-layered nature of the Arab (national) identity. Maalouf is Arab, Lebanese, Christian, Melchite (he belongs to the Greek Catholic Community), a native speaker of Arabic, a fluent French speaker, and all these components are equally important when it comes to defining him. He wrote: "Identity can't be compartmentalized. You can't divide it up into halves or thirds or any other separate segments. I haven't got several identities: I've got just

one, made up of many components"[41]. This may summarize the cases of Jordan and Kuwait as this research has tried to show.

[41] Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 2.

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Chapter 1

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