

The De-Arabization of the Arab League

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RAMALLAH, August 3, 2006. The Israeli bombardment of Lebanon and Palestine as well as the ongoing U.S. process of abruptly and forcibly delivering to life a lifeless new U.S.-modeled Iraqi regime are crushing the Arab League "system" in a life-or-death test and again pushing it into a collision course with the people.

Almost all the constitutions and basic laws of the Arab League's twenty-two states, including the stateless Palestinian Authority, stipulate that their peoples and countries are an integral part of the "Arab nation" and some explicitly pronounce Pan-Arab unity as a national goal. Yet almost all of them in practice pursue policies that flagrantly violate their constitutional stipulations, enveloping their contradiction in Pan-Arab rhetoric jargon.

The desperate outcries for Pan-Arab help by helpless Palestinian, Iraqi and Lebanese Arabs who are being crushed by the American and Israeli merciless war machines are falling on deaf ears with the Arab League's states, failing to realistically accept the proven fact of life that no help will ever come from the moribund and defunct regional grouping, still floating only thanks to the mercy of the U.S. midwife of the "New Middle East."

And despite the proven and frustrating history of the Arab League "system," Arab masses are time and again turning to this futile regional grouping to look for help in times of crises.

"Where are the Arabs?" "Let the Arabs see!" were yelled with coarse voices to television cameras, sometimes in an Arab Palestinian accent, other times in an Arab Iraqi or Lebanese accents, by the wailing and heart-breaking women, children and men while collecting the live shreds of the bodies of their beloved ones whether in Gaza, southern Lebanon or western Iraq, but their outcries had no echoes in the republican or royal ruling palaces of the member states.

The hope of an "Arab solution" should have faded a long time ago, but the Pan-Arab feeling of affiliation seems to run deep in the hearts and minds of the Arab masses in spite of their religious or cultural diversity and the intensive indoctrination for loyalty to the "nation state" ideology adopted by each and every one of the Arab League member states.

The ruling elites of the "league" states are very well aware of the Pan-Arab bond that fuses the Arab masses in cross-border waves of solidarity in times of crises and have over the time engineered political internal and external mechanisms to pre-empt a tsunami wave that might threaten the nation-state independence.

They have trumpeted "solidarity" among the Arab League states as an alternative to the massive yearning for unity or union, but this solidarity has fallen apart and proved flawed in times of crises.

They promoted the Islamic belief of the overwhelming majority of the Arab masses as an alternative ideology, an orientation that had also listening ears in the western and Israeli corridors of power. However the awakening of the Islamic giant has proved counterproductive and instead cemented further the Pan-Arab bond as a decisive unifying factor.

They have over-trumpeted the “nation-state” ideology and loyalty to the verge of the absurd, that could not convince the cross-border tribal ties, the cross-border sectarian loyalties or the Pan-Arab deep-rooted ideology.

Arab League states individually and as a group failed to mobilize member nations under the Arab League defense pact, could not prevent the Palestinian Nakba in 1947-48, the Israeli occupation of Arab land of four member states in 1967, the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon up to the capital Beirut in 1982, the Iraq-Kuwait crisis in 1990, the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2002, and their helplessness was and is still considered an integral part of all Arab crises, and not part of solutions thereto.

De-Arabization of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) for example was a prerequisite and a precondition to recognize the PLO by the United States and Israel as a partner to the Oslo peace accords. A dozen articles of the PLO National Charter were deleted and 16 amended, mostly dealing with the Pan-Arab affiliation of Palestinians, in 1998.

Another example: Jordanian law for political parties prohibits any cross-border organizational ties.

Other Arab nation-states that adopt Pan-Arabism have realistically subjected their ideology to the dictates of the higher “national security.”

The Arab League was founded by seven Arab states under either British or French mandates on March 22, 1945 to: *Serve the common good of all Arab countries, ensure better conditions for all Arab countries, guarantee the future of all Arab countries and fulfill the hopes and expectations of all Arab countries.*

The British and French colonialists at the time practically sponsored the creation of the league as a guarantee to preempt the realization of the Arab aspiration for unity, but their American inheritors have an expanded plan for the region to incorporate the new reality of ground: i.e. Israel.

The U.S. and Israeli strategists are keen to incorporate Israel as an integral part of the region and because it could not join an “Arab” League they are keen to keep the Arab League floating until their alternative of the “New Middle East” has acquired enough prerequisites to be enforced on the region.

The failure of the Arab League system could logically herald the failure of its member states and in the long run could lead to the fall of both the league and the political “systems” that desperately cling to keep it floating.

This failure has led *realpolitik* ruling elites to seek “foreign solutions” to Pan-Arab crises.

The Arab League was de-Arabized a long time ago.

Replying to a question about closing the Palestinian information office in 1987 and the

creation of a Palestinian state, the former U.S. Secretary of State, Sirus Vance, told an audience of diplomats and journalists at the National Press Club in Washington, that Arabs were never united neither for war nor for peace, that Algeria's former president, Chadli bin Jadid, was the only visiting Arab leader to urge the U.S. Administration to support the creation of a Palestinian state. Had 21 Arab nations closed the offices of the USIA in their capitals, Washington would have opened the PLO information office within days, he said.

Did the Arab League change since 1987? Yes it did, but towards more de-Arabization.

The failure of the Arab leaders to convene an emergency summit meeting on the Israeli offensive on Lebanon has exacerbated the people-state conflict.

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