ARAB DI-NATIONALISM

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Abstract
This paper presents a new conception of "Arab nationalism," which conventionally means pan-Arab nationalism and defines an Arab as an Arabic speaker. Yet the term "Arabic" is elusive, as is the generic "Arabic speaker." Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), derived from the Koran, is the official language of Arab League states, but is nobody's mother tongue, or spoken language for that matter. Arabic vernaculars are deemed low status and are distinct from MSA. The division of "High" and "Low" languages between formal and informal spheres is called diglossia ("divided tongues"). This renders an ethnolinguistic situation in Arab states with unique social and political consequences. Arab-defined citizens are born into unique ethnolinguistic communities that are not state-supported, and are indoctrinated instead with a pan-Arab "national" identity shared by many states. I call this phenomenon Arab dinationalism.

Without school or book, the making of a nation is in modern times inconceivable.
George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 1938

The literature on Arab nationalism, however defined, is very broad, very deep, and very muddy. Much of it is dedicated to the singular problem of defining "Arab" and consequently "Arab nationalism." Some of this work developed from the study of nationalism and some of this work developed from the study of Arabs, yet the two tracks do not frequently converge. Terminology is a principal reason why much of the research on Arab nationalism is muddled. What are the precise distinctions separating Arab nationalism, pan-Arab nationalism (*qawmiyya*), and Arab patriotism (*wataniyya*)? In the context of specific countries, what is the difference, for example, between Egyptian nationalism and Egyptian patriotism? Or Egyptian nationalism and pan-Arab nationalism?

From the perspective of nations and nationalism scholarship, Ernest Gellner offers the most influential answer to this set of questions. His general model of nationalism argues the structural effects of modernization (urbanization, industrialization, communication, education) compel states to create nations even where none existed previously.[1] This

[1] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

process homogenizes a population by assimilating separate Low cultures into a single shared High culture with a standardized High (formal and standardized) language that is maintained by the state, or in this case a *nation*-state. An alternate model is the civic nation, typically a settler state such as the United States or Australia, which unites many ethnicities with a shared ideology and patriotic sentiment, as well as an agreement to share the same language (e.g. English, French, Spanish). However, imagined civic nations frequently betray ethnic affinities when challenged by internal rivals, leading to such phenomena as the "English only" movement in the United States (spawned by anti-immigration activists) or a new requirement for civil servants in Bolivia to speak Quecha or Aymara following the election of that country's first indigenous president, Evo Morales, in 2005.

Civic nations are distinct from ethnic nations in their origins and composition, but their states follow the same logic of cultural unity, i.e. a fusion of Low and High into a ubiquitous national culture that enjoys official status. Low cultures inexorably disappear as a consequence of modernity; disparate vernaculars are supplanted by a shared mother tongue, i.e. the national language. The exception to this modernist paradigm of nation formation is found in the Islamic faith, which is not only a religion, but is in itself also a High culture with a High language all its own: Arabic. Thus, for Muslims, Islam is arguably a societal blueprint that precludes the evolution and assimilation of disparate Low cultures into a national High culture.[2] Low cultures and their languages remain low status and distinct, but are not absorbed. Thus, Muslim societies are exceptionally resistant to ethnolinguistic nationalism. This is not to say there could not be some identification with a state, e.g. Algerian patriotism, but for Gellner a term like "Algerian nation" is a misnomer.

For somewhat different reasons that hinge on Islamic political thought, some historians have also come to this conclusion, including Bernard Lewis and Adrian Hastings.[3] Other important contributions on Arabs from scholars of nationalism include those by Elie and Sylvia Kedourie, as well as John Breuilly, who argues Arab nationalism emerged first as a "sort of modern anti-colonial nationalism" against the Ottomans, catalyzed when imperial administrators in Arab lands started acting less like Ottomans and more like Turks.[4]

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[2] *Muslim Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). See also *Islamic Dilemmas: Reformers, Nationalists, Industrialization* (Berlin ; New York: Mouton Publishers, 1985); *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1992); *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1994).
[3] Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1990; *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998); Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*, Wiles lectures; 1996 ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
[4] Elie Kedourie, *Democracy and Arab Political Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1992), Sylvia Kedourie, *Arab Nationalism and a Wider World* (New York: American Academic Association for Peace in the Middle East, 1971), John

There is much more, however, written from the perspective of Arab and/or Middle East studies. Because the story is so complex, and because there are many competing interpretations of key events, most monographs are histories that trace a narrative lasting at least a century.[5] More focused work tends to examine the role of nationalism in a specific territory over time, particularly Lebanon, Palestine, and especially Syria, the site of the Great Revolt that erupted between the end of rule by the Ottomans and the beginning of French rule.[6] The importance of this violent event is not in doubt, as "there is common agreement among scholars of Arab nationalism that Greater Syria was the main arena in the development and promotion of this Arab nationalist ideology and movement."[7] Nonetheless, most of this work accepts the existence of "the Arabs" as prima facie, holistically a collective that is somehow greater than the sum of its heterogeneous parts.[8]

Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 2nd ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993 [1982]), p. 149-51.

[5] Fouad Ajami, *The Dream Palace of the Arabs: A Generation's Odyssey*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), Youssef M. Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism - a History: Nation and State in the Arab World* (Oxford; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Pub., 2000), A. I. Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), Keith David Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

[6] K. M. Firro, "Lebanese Nationalism Versus Arabism: From Bulus Nujaym to Michel Chiha," *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 5 (2004), James L. Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), Basheer M. Nafi, *Arabism, Islamism and the Palestine Question, 1908-1941: A Political History* (London: Ithaca Press, 1998), Michael Provence, *The Great Syrian Revolt and the Rise of Arab Nationalism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005). Important and influential collections addressing a range of cases include: Derek Hopwood, ed., *Arab Nation, Arab Nationalism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), James P. Jankowski and I. Gershoni, *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Philip S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus, 1860-1920*, Cambridge Middle East Library (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920-1945*, Princeton Studies on the near East (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987).

[7] Yasir Suleiman, *The Arabic Language and National Identity: A Study in Ideology* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2003), p. 70.

[8] On this point, Gelvin is an important exception. Recounting events in post-Ottoman Syria, the historian showed "the presumption that there existed a singular and undifferentiated

Central players in the formative years of Arab nationalism debated questions about who is an Arab and what is the Arab nation. Considering the symbiosis of Islam and Arab culture (the faith springs from Arabia, the language of the faith is Arabic, and the great majority of Arabs are Muslim,) it seems paradoxical that many pioneering theorists of Arab nationalism were not Muslim. Instead, those who had the most to lose under a faith-based definition of Arab identity, i.e. the minority of "ethnic Arabs" who were non-Muslims, advanced a secular and ethnic interpretation of Arab identity that eschewed Islam as a necessary condition of being Arab.

George Antonius (1891-1941,) the author of *The Arab Awakening* (1938,) was a Christian of Lebanese and Egyptian heritage born in what was then the British Mandate of Palestine.[9] Michel Aflaq (1910-1989,) the ideological founder of the Baath ("revival") Party, was a Greek Orthodox Christian from Damascus. This is explicable, however, because pan-Arab nationalism was crafted to unite a region of disparate peoples adhering to multiple beliefs, so the doctrine was pragmatically *secular*, and accentuated "Arabness" (*uruba*) rather than Islam. Aflaq's "spiritual guide" was the "prophet of Arab nationalism," Sati al-Husri, a former schoolteacher educated in Istanbul who later infused the educational systems of Syria, Iraq and Egypt with his ideas about the Arab people.[10] Chief among these ideas was who qualified as an Arab: "Every Arab-speaking people is an Arab people. Every individual belonging to one of these Arabic-speaking peoples is an Arab."[11] Ay, there's the rub: what precisely is spoken Arabic? Remarkably, this simple question belies an impassioned debate.

In the sections that follow, this paper addresses the methods and meanings of determining the demographics of the Arab world, the sociolinguistics of Arabic, the remarkably thorny relationship of language and nationalism in the Arab world, and finally the direction of Arabic language policies and politics as evidenced in recent literature on education in Arab states. As to whether there is evidence of ethnolinguistic nationalism in the Arab world, I argue that there is not one, but two varieties of ethnolinguistic identification. They are separated under the conditions of a sociolinguistic phenomenon called *diglossia*, a term that literally means two tongues. The parallel languages are variously positioned as High

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"Arab nationalism" and "Arab nationalist movement" is not borne out by the evidence." Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire*, p. 287.

[9] George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1938).

[10] The original is "prophète du nationalisme intégral arabe des années 1930 et guide spirituel de Michel Aflak, ideologue-en-chef et fondateur du fameux parti Baas." Franck Salameh, "Vous Êtes Arabes Puisque Je Vous Le Dis!," *Journal d'étude des relations internationales au Moyen-Orient* 1, no. 1 (2006): p. 52.

[11] Citation and translation from Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, p. 72.

versus Low, pure versus impure, cultured versus common. In the case of Arabic, I argue that the High language, Modern Standard Arabic, is positioned above dozens of common Low varieties often called dialects but which are defined here by what I call *demotic Arabic*. Correspondingly, citizens of Arab states incorporate parallel but politically incompatible varieties of ethnolinguistic identification, a condition that I call *Arab dinationalism*.

ARABS AND MUSLIMS, RULES AND EXCEPTIONS

If Arab societies are exceptionally resistant to ethnolinguistic nationalism, then there should be scant evidence of Arab-defined minorities agitating for autonomy or independence from other Arabs. Yes, there *are* Muslim minorities politically mobilized within Arab states—Berbers in Morocco, Kurds in Iraq—but an "Arab ethnic" minority in a state with an "ethnic Arab" majority is a logical impossibility, a paradox, if they belong to the same ethnic group.[12] Certainly within any Arab population there will be subcultures and socioeconomic divides just as there are in any non-Arab society, but if there is but one Arab people united by an ethnonational bond, then an ethnic minority in an Arab population is possible only if they are not Arab. To put it another way, an ethnic Russian in Russia cannot be an ethnic minority in Russia.

It is this paradox that is at the heart of the matter of Arab nationalism and therefore the focus of this paper.

If the argument that Muslims, including Arabs, are exceptionally resistant to ethnic mobilization in pursuit of national self-determination, which in turn means a state with borders that are contiguous with the distribution of a unique people, what are we to make of twenty-one Arab states? Muslim exceptionalism anticipates such a fractionalized collection because a nation-state is antithetical to the Islamic conception of *ummah*, i.e. a united community of believers who declare there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is the messenger of God. Though the concept is by no means fixed, the *ummah* conventionally represents "the essential unity and theoretical equality of Muslims from diverse cultural and geographical settings."[13] As a principle of regime legitimacy, a state should therefore be united as a community of co-believers rather than a community of co-nationals. Thus, in the words of Islamist organizer Kalim Saddiqui, the founder of the

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[12] There is, of course, a most famous example of an Arab population fighting for self-rule: Palestinians. Yet this case is nothing if not problematic. If adhering strictly to international law, the population of Palestine is stateless. Therefore, they are not a minority of any state. They are also distinct from the Arab minority within the state of Israel. There are also Palestinians in Jordan, who are a minority in that state, but this again raises the paradox of an ethnic Arab minority in an ethnic Arab state.

[13] John L. Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 327.

Muslim Parliament in Britain, "the path of the Ummah and that of the Islamic movement within the Ummah is blocked by the nation-states."[14]

A common explanation for the relative abundance of Arab states is the shared legacy of Ottoman, French and British imperialism: borders were approved in Istanbul, Paris and London irrespective of demographic facts on the ground in the Sahara or Sahel, Maghreb or Hejaz. Exogenous forces forged new states, and the so-called international (more properly inter-state) system sustained these entities by recognizing their sovereignty, entering into treaties, forging military alliances, and establishing economic ties. Yet the modernist paradigm of ethnonational mobilization and modularity expects states to *create nations* even where none existed. In one formulation, pan-Arab nationalism, this would be a single Arab state, extending famously "from the Gulf to the Ocean," that is home to a single Arab nation. In another formulation (for the time being consider it *mono*-Arab nationalism), separate post-colonial Arab states would engender the growth of ethnonational identities loyal to their own flag, their own nation-state. In this case, the unique national languages and cultures of distinct peoples (Lebanese, Egyptian, etc.) would be promoted, protected, and recreated by the institutions of separate states.[15] This disconnect begs the question "who is an Arab?"

ARAB DEMOGRAPHICS

For the same reasons that defining *nation* is a thankless task, defining *Arab* is a job for Sisyphus. Who is or is not an *Arab*? Does *Arab* define a culture, an ethnicity, a nation, or a civilization? Does the term *Arab* qualify for all, some or none of these categories? Identifying an Arab *state*, at least, is a simpler affair, since there is a precise count of 21 voluntary states (and the Palestinian Territories) that are members of the *League of Arab States* (hereafter shortened to the conventional *Arab League*). Each member of the League shares two things in common: 1) Islam is the faith of the majority; 2) Arabic is (one of) the official language(s) of the state.

It may be suggested that an Arab person, therefore, is an Arabic-speaking Muslim, yet this is problematic. If a Palestinian Christian speaks Arabic but is not a Muslim, is he then not an Arab? If a Berber Muslim in Algeria cannot speak Arabic, is he not an Arab? What exactly is meant by the term Arabic, whether ancient or modern, written or spoken? These issues surface time and again (and again and again) in statistics attempting to measure Arab populations. The CIA World Factbook, for example, often attaches tortured qualifications to the term "Arab." In the case of Algeria, for example, it records that ninety-nine percent of

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[14] Kalim Siddiqui, "Nation-States as Obstacles to the Total Transformation of the Ummah," in *The Impact of Nationalism on the Muslim World*, ed. M. Ghayasuddin (London: The Open Press and Al-Hoda Publishers, 1986), 4.

[15] A Moroccan, for example, would be a member of the Moroccan nation, while his Arab heritage would be much removed and studied as a topic of history, not politics.

the population are hybridized "Arab-Berber," but adds "almost all Algerians are Berber in origin, not Arab; the minority who identify themselves as Berber live mostly in the mountainous region of Kabylie east of Algiers; the Berbers are also Muslim but identify with their Berber rather than Arab cultural heritage."

This categorization would indicate "Arab" is at once an *ethnicity*, i.e. a unique people distinct from another *ethnos*, Berber, and a politically salient *identity,* and a *culture* with a distinguished pedigree. This is not helpful. An alternate source for aggregate ethnicity data is the *Demographic Yearbook* issued by the UNESCO. The reference compiles census data on separate ethnic populations that is furnished by member countries: it is very detailed but entirely incomplete. Of all the members of the Arab League, only Yemen and the Occupied Palestinian Territories are represented.[16] A third and often overlooked (but eminently useful) collection of state-level statistics is available from Britannica World Data, a division of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* that annually estimates statistics based on its own collections of government publications, as well as public and private reports gauging social and economic indicators for 214 countries.[17] Estimates for ethnic composition—defined as the "ethnic, racial, or linguistic composition" of a country's population—are both detailed and complete.[18] In contrast with the CIA estimate for Algeria, which fudges with 99 per cent "Arab-Berber," the Britannica statisticians estimate the following: "Algerian Arab 59.1%; Berber 26.2%, of which Arabized Berber 3.0%; Bedouin Arab 14.5%; other 0.2%."[19] By compiling data from both sources, including current estimates of state populations and ethnic compositions, it appears that from twenty-one states in the Arab League, the aggregate population of Arabs is just under two hundred and fifty million. Thus, if the global Muslim population is 1.3 billion, this means the "Arab world" represents nineteen percent of the "Muslim world," or not quite one in five.

TABLE I: The Arab World – *Arabs in Arab League Member States 2006*

Arab League Member	***State Population*** [a]	***Arab (%)*** [b]	***Arab Population***
Egypt	78,887,007	91.6	72,260,498
Algeria	32,930,091	76.6	25,224,450

[16] See "Table 4: Population by national and or ethnic group, sex, urban/rural residence and percentage: each census, 1985-2002" (first release: 1 September 2005, current version: 30 June 2006) in United Nations, "Demographic Yearbook Special Census Topics," unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/DYBcensus/V2_Table4.pdf.
[17] Encyclopaedia Britannica inc., *Britannica Book of the Year* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2006).
[18] Ibid., p. 503.
[19] "Algeria" in Ibid.

Saudi Arabia	27,019,731	88.1	23,804,383
Morocco	33,241,259	68.0	22,604,056
Yemen	21,456,188	92.8	19,911,342
Iraq	26,783,383	64.7	17,328,849
Syria	18,881,361	86.2	16,275,733
Sudan	41,236,378	39.0	16,082,187
Tunisia	10,175,014	98.2	9,991,864
Jordan	5,906,760	97.8	5,776,811
Libya	5,900,754	87.1	5,139,557
Palestine	3,889,249	89.0	3,461,432
Lebanon	3,874,050	84.5	3,273,572
Mauritania	3,177,388	70.0	2,224,172
Kuwait	2,418,393	74.0	1,789,611
Oman	3,102,229	55.3	1,715,533
United Arab Emirates	2,602,713	48.1	1,251,905
Qatar	885,359	52.5	464,813
Bahrain	698,585	63.9	446,396
Somalia	8,863,338	2.2	194,993
Djibouti	486,530	11.0	53,518
Comoros	690,948	0.1	691
TOTAL	**333,106,708**		**249,276,367**

Adapted by the author from the CIA World Factbook (2006) and Britannica World Data (2006).

[a] *Population estimates from CIA World Factbook for July 2006.*

[b] *Ethnic composition estimates are from Britannica World Data for the year 2000.*

[c] *Ethnic composition estimate for Occupied Palestinian Territories is from CIA World Factbook for July 2006.*

In the example cited in TABLE I, the categorization "Algeria Arab" indicates there are sufficiently delineated *species* of the *genus* Arab to require the qualifier "Algerian" and thereby distinguish this population from any other Arab population, such as "Sudanese" or "Saudi" Arab. It rejects the notion of a single Arab ethnicity while suggesting *acculturation* can "Arabize" an ethnolinguistic minority, the Berber. The qualifier is a linguistic tag: an "Arabized Berber" is a Berber who speaks Arabic. This begs the question "what is Arabic?"

ARABIC LINGUISTICS AND SOCIOLINGUISTICS

In the pages of *Foreign Affairs*, regular readers may notice an advertisement for language training materials offered by the Connecticut-based company Audio Forum. For those hoping to learn Arabic for professional reasons, including practitioners of international affairs, security specialists and journalists, those who read the ad immediately confront a

difficult question: *which one*? Because the company sensibly develops courses that emphasize "learning to speak and to understand the spoken language" of a given country, the company offers courses in Iraqi Arabic, Levantine Arabic, and Saudi Arabic, but not "Arabic." There is also a course in "Modern Written Arabic," though conspicuous by its absence is a course called "Modern Spoken Arabic."[20]

An immediate objection here is that these are not different languages but rather different *dialects, vernaculars, colloquials*, or some other denomination of subordinate status to a single, superior, bona fide Arabic *language*. Yet the distinction between a subordinate and dominant language variety is determined by subjective social status rather than objective empirical philology. In other words, in the maxim most often attributed to Max Weinreich, a language is a dialect with an army and a navy. At one point, for example, there was a language called *Hindustani* that incorporated dialects spoken by different Hindu and Muslim communities: these dialects are now considered separate languages, Hindi and Urdu. More recently, there was in Europe a language called Serbo-Croatian: no longer. Serbs and Croats can, however, communicate, and in this regard some varieties of Arabic (though by no means all) are more or less mutually intelligible. Yet to downgrade anyone's mother tongue as a minor "dialect" rather than a "language" is an exercise of power, not analysis.

Making more precise determinations of *how different* one language is from another language, or the relative levels of comprehension among speakers of different Arabics, is a challenge not yet met by linguistics. As for the difference between naturally spoken Arabics and what is called "Modern Standard Arabic" or MSA (more on this term in a moment), Harvard linguist Wheeler M. Thackston Jr., tellingly titled "Professor of the Practice of Persian and other Near Eastern Languages," famously told a reporter for *The Christian Science Monitor* that, even for Arabs, MSA "resembles what they grow up speaking at home as much as Latin resembles English."[21] This may be an overstatement, but his point is clear all the same.

Linguists produce abundant research on the structure and substance of many different spoken Arabic languages. While little is known about pre-Islamic Arabic,[22] the advent of Islam and the resulting fixity of fourteen centuries means *written* Arabic has an exceptionally rich, well-documented heritage and a clear trajectory from the seventh

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[20] The company's website (www.audioforum.com, accessed February 8, 2013) claims many of its courses "were developed by the Foreign Service Institute of the US Department of State for diplomatic personnel."
[21] Samar Farah, "So You'd Like to Learn Arabic. Got a Decade or So?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 17 2002.
[22] An interesting exception is Mary Catherine Bateson, *Structural Continuity in Poetry; a Linguistic Study of Five Pre-Islamic Arabic Odes* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970).

century until today. But there is also a large and growing body of research on many varieties of organic *spoken* Arabic vernaculars. Most of this research is possible only through extensive fieldwork, a methodology exemplified by linguists such as Clive Holes, a renowned specialist in Gulf Arabic.[23] Recent years (since 2000) have seen the publication of detailed new works on the grammar and lexicons of Iraqi, Algerian, Gulf, Sudanese, and Palestinian Arabics.[24]

Languages, like people, are conventionally sorted according to ancestry and their membership in a particular family. Language classifications use a Linnaean taxonomy to identify the lineage and relations of distinct ethnolinguistic populations. The standard reference for these classifications is appropriately called *Ethnologue*.[25] Now in its fifteenth edition, it identifies 108 language families from which all other living languages—the current figure of "known languages" is 6,912—are descended. Some of the families are very large, such as the 449 members of the Indo-European clan, or the staggering 1,514 of the Niger-Congo family, while others live in near isolation: the Basque family has but three surviving members. Each language is assigned a unique three-letter code in a system managed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the Geneva-based body that determines global standards for everything from the distance between threads on sheet-metal screws to the coding of transmission signals for radio and television broadcasts. In the case of languages, the relevant body of standards is labeled ISO 639. This body is now in its third incarnation, ISO 639-3: the suffix indicates a system of three-letter coding rather than two-letters as in ISO 639-2.

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[23] Clive Holes, *Colloquial Arabic of the Gulf and Saudi Arabia* (London; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), ———, *Language Variation and Change in a Modernising Arab State: The Case of Bahrain*, Library of Arabic Linguistics; Monograph No. 7 (London; New York: Kegan Paul International, 1987), ———, *Gulf Arabic*, Croom Helm Descriptive Grammars Series (London; New York: Routledge, 1990), ———, *Dialect, Culture, and Society in Eastern Arabia* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2001), ———, *Modern Arabic: Structures, Functions, and Varieties*, Rev. ed., Georgetown Classics in Arabic Language and Linguistics (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004).

[24] Yasin M. Al-Khalesi, *Modern Iraqi Arabic* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2006), Elizabeth M. Bergman, *Spoken Algerian Arabic* (Springfield, VA: Dunwoody Press, 2005), Habaka J. Feghali, *Gulf Arabic: The Dialects of Riyadh and Eastern Saudi Arabic: Grammar, Dialogues, and Lexicon* (Springfield, VA: Dunwoody Press, 2004), Elizabeth M. Bergman, *Spoken Sudanese Arabic: Grammar, Dialogues, and Glossary* (Springfield, VA: Dunwoody Press, 2002), Mohammad A. Mohammad, *Word Order, Agreement, and Pronominalization in Standard and Palestinian Arabic*, Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science. (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: J. Benjamins Pub. Co., 2000).

[25] Raymond G. Gordon, Jr., ed., *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Fifteenth ed. (Dallas: SIL International, 2005).

Arabic, like Hebrew, is a member of the Semitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic family. Unlike living Hebrew, which is now the unique mother tongue of some five million people, virtually all in the Jewish nation-state Israel, Arabic is fractured into thirty-five varieties dispersed across dozens of countries. All of the varieties are mother tongues, except one. The outlier, wonderfully, *is* Arabic, i.e. *[Modern] Standard Arabic*. The formal classification is explicit on this point:

> *Arabic, Standard*
> *246,000,000 second-language speakers of all Arabic varieties. Not a first language. Used for education, official purposes, written materials, and formal speeches. Classical Arabic is used for religion and ceremonial purposes, having archaic vocabulary. Modern Standard Arabic is a modernized variety of Classical Arabic. In most Arab countries only the well educated have adequate proficiency in Standard Arabic, while over 100,500,000 do not.*[26]

Thus, if we apply *linguistic* criteria to the current question "who is or is not an Arab?" we must accept that an Arab is a native *speaker* of one of the thirty-four living *vernaculars* that are members of the linguistic branch: *Afro-Asiatic / Semitic / Central / South / Arabic*.

TABLE II: The Arabic World - *Distribution of Arabic*

Arabic Languages[27]	*Primary State(s)*	*Speakers: Primary State*	*Speakers: Global*
Egyptian	Egypt	44,406,000	46,321,000
Algerian	Algeria	21,097,000	21,097,000
Moroccan	Morocco	18,800,000	19,480,600
Sudanese [a]	Sudan	15,000,000	18,986,000
Saidi	Egypt (Southern)	18,900,000	18,900,000

[26] Ibid.

[27] [a] Also known as Khartoum Arabic; [b] Also known as Western Egyptian Bedawi Spoken; [c] Also known as Hasanya, Hassani, Hassaniya; [d] Also known as Levantine Bedawi Spoken; [e] Also known as Shuwa Arabic; [f] The living Judeo- varieties of Arabic are spoke by remnants of Jewish émigrés to Israel originating from separate language communities long resident in Morocco, Iraq, Yemen, Tunisia and Libya, respectively.

Mesopotamian	Iraq	11,500,000	15,100,000
North Levantine	Syria, Lebanon	8,800,000	14,309,537
Najdi	Saudi Arabia	8,000,000	9,863,520
Tunisian	Tunisia	9,000,000	9,247,800
Sanaani	Yemen	7,600,000	7,600,000
Ta'izzi-Adeni	Yemen	6,760,000	6,869,000
N. Mesopotamian	Iraq	5,400,000	6,300,000
South Levantine	Jordan, Palestine	3,500,000	6,145,000
Hejazi	Saudi Arabia	6,000,000	6,000,000
Libyan [b]	Libya	4,200,000	4,505,000
Hassaniyya [c]	Mauritania	2,475,000	2,787,625
Gulf	Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar	744,000	2,338,600
E. Egyptian Bedawi [d]	Egypt	780,000	1,610,000
Chadian [e]	Chad	754,590	986,190
Omani	Oman	720,000	815,000
Hadrami	Yemen	300,000	410,000
Maltese	Malta	300,000	371,900
Baharna	Bahrain	300,000	310,000
Judeo-Moroccan [f]	Israel	250,000	258,925
Algerian Saharan	Algeria	110,000	110,000
Judeo-Iraqi [f]	Israel	100,000	100,100
Hoary	Oman	70,000	70,000
Judeo-Yemeni [f]	Israel	50,000	51,000
Judeo-Tunisian [f]	Israel	45,000	45,000
Judeo-Tripolitanian [f]	Israel	30,000	35,000
Shihhi	UAE	5,000	27,000
Tajiki	Afghanistan	5,000	6,000
Cypriot	Cyprus	1,300	1,300
Uzbeki	Uzbekistan	700	700
Total Speakers, Arabic Languages - First Language			**221,058,797**
Standard Arabic - Second Language (including Arabs but also Berbers, Jews, Kurds, Persians, Turkmen, etc.):	*Proficient*	*Not Proficient*	*Total*

Arabic, Standard	**131,000,000**	**105,000,000**	**246,000,000**
Total Speakers, Standard Arabic - Second Language			

Adapted by the author from Raymond G. Gordon, Jr., ed., *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Fifteenth ed. (Dallas: SIL International, 2005).

With High Arabic as the only official language, it could be assumed that the other thirty-four species are *dialects*, a speech variety that may be "functionally intelligible to each other's speakers because of linguistic similarity" to one common language called Modern Standard Arabic.[28] This is not the case. While some Arabic varieties are, as dyads, more similar than others, especially those nearer geographically, the thirty-four living varieties of Arabic are often distinguished easily because many are *not* functionally intelligible. Why is this case? Like ancient Hebrew writings, Arabic texts maintained a remarkable consistency over the centuries as the classical language was protected from the vagaries of time and territory. Unlike liturgical Hebrew and unlike liturgical Arabic, living spoken Arabic continued to evolve, naturally, along ethnic and regional lines. For a traveller on the road from Marrakech to Muscat, asking for directions grows more difficult with each passing kilometer as vernaculars diverge across a language continuum.

Classical Arabic is essentially the language of the Quran, though not necessarily identical as the holy text employs a number of specific stylizations and formulations that are distinct from non-liturgical texts. Moreover, the Islamic doctrine of *ijaz*, or divine inimitability, prohibits attempted imitation of the sacred text of the holy book, as well as the *sirfa* principle, which stipulates that even exceptional persons who may successfully imitate the language invite the wrath of God. This language calls itself *fusha,* a term that "designates the ideas of purity, clarity, eloquence, chastity and freedom from speech impediments." As such, this term is much more than a classification: it is a normative label that reflects a number of "moral dimensions."[29] In practice (and, obviously, in English), this written and rationalized form of the language is called Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) or sometimes simply Standard Arabic (SA). Because there is no necessary translation of MSA or SA in High Arabic, *fusha* is actually the right term, but the abbreviation MSA is most conventional and employed here.

As for the unmodified word "Arabic" this, depending on context, may either be shorthand for Classical Arabic or Standard Arabic or refer to *all* Arabics. Arabic is classified by ISO 639-3 as a *macrolanguage*. In this case, each language is assigned a three-letter code—for

[28] Gordon, ed., *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*.
[29] Yasir Suleiman, *A War of Words: Language and Conflict in the Middle East*, Cambridge Middle East Studies; 19 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 58.

example, Algerian Arabic is ARQ and Egyptian Arabic is ARZ—but the Arabics *in toto* are also assigned a generic code as a macrolanguage, i.e. ARA.[30] Another good example of a macrolanguage is Chinese: while most varieties share the same writing system, different languages such as Cantonese, Shanghainese and Taiwanese (Hakka) are not mutually intelligible. In any case, whether considered *fusha*, Classical, SA or MSA, this language—in both its written and spoken forms—must be acquired through years of formal education.

If Arabic is a macrolanguage, then it may be suggested that the dozens of other Arabic tongues are microlanguages. This is not only misleading and unhelpful, but also silly. At least one in four Arabs is a native speaker of Egyptian Arabic. Moreover, there is nothing microscopic about Algerian Arabic (25.2 million) or Moroccan Arabic (22.6 million). Though the term "microlanguage" is not useful here, there is still a need to parse precisely what more specific language labels mean. In the case of Morocco, we may say that Moroccan Arabic is a genetic descendant of the Arabic family and a living member of the macrolanguage Arabic. But as for the general classification of Arabic mother tongues across multiple states, there are a number of unequal and competing terms. In MSA, the term for non-MSA spoken Arabic is *ammiyya* or "common" language.[31] In linguistics and sociolinguistics, there are a number of potentially appropriate terms, including dialect, colloquial, vernacular, and demotic. While *dialect* is often used in reference to *ammiyya*, this is (again) a socially subjective evaluation of status. *Colloquial*, from the Latin word for "speaking" (*loquium*), describes quotidian conversation, neither formal nor informal but ordinary and pedestrian.

This is appropriate insofar as *ammiyya* Arabics are spoken but rarely written, yet this term is often interpreted in the same sense as *slang*, typically understood to describe the style of a word or phrase rather than an entire language.[32] *Vernacular*, from the Latin for native or indigenous (*vernaculus*) certainly *is* appropriate as all ammiyya are mother tongues learned organically by children from their parents and family. However, because *vernacular* can also describe spoken languages that are "characteristic of non-dominant

[30] Judeo-Arabic languages are noted in this paper as varieties of "Arabic" because they are classified genetically under the branch *Afro-Asiatic/Semitic/Central/South/Arabic*. They are not, however, included among the thirty languages incorporated into the macrolanguage Arabic [ARA]. Instead, they are aggregated under a separate macrolanguage code, Judeo-Arabic [JRB].
[31] Alternate transliterations from Arabic include *'amiya* and *'amiyya*. The language may also be called by the name of the people who speak it, such as *Masri*, meaning "Egyptian."
[32] Rather exceptionally, the Egyptian ammiyya of Cairo is written if the context is informal, such as advertising, cartoon captions, song lyrics, etc.

groups or classes" this is politically problematic in the case of Arabic.[33] In all Arab-defined states, *all* Arabs—dominant or non-dominant—are native speakers of a particular vernacular Arabic. In certain contexts, one vernacular may be more dominant politically than another. In Jordan, for example, speakers of the native Bedouin or urbane Medani vernaculars rank higher than the Fallahi variety, which is associated particularly with Palestinian refugees ejected from their homes in 1948 and 1967.[34] But *all* these vernaculars are considered impure when compared with Modern Standard Arabic. Though MSA is now the vernacular of nobody, it remains the language of a great High culture heritage and a most sacred book, the Quran. In other words, in *contrast* to *fusha*, all *ammiyya* are stigmatized. This does not, however, mean that all *ammiyya* are of equal status: Cairenes make fun of Saidi speakers from Upper Egypt, Gulf Arabs deride Lebanese speech as effeminate, the Lebanese find Gulf Arabic harsh, etc.

This leaves the term *demotic*, a term immediately recognizable for sharing the same classical Greek root as democracy, *demos*, meaning "the people." Linguists, however, more often associate the term demotic with Modern Greek. Before 1976, the official language of Greece was *Katharevousa* (pure) Greek, a written from standardized in Athens following the (Russian-aided) ejection of the Ottoman Turks in 1828. Seeking to purge foreign elements from the language, this literary form drew heavily on the classical language to the exclusion of the vernacular(s). Like Standard Arabic, Katharevousa Greek existed only in the context of education, while the *demos* continued to speak their Demotic Greek. The two varieties, called "High" and "Low" forms respectively, came into conflict in the 1880's when a modernizing "bourgeois movement" fought for "spoken Greek in the name of economic progress, social reforms, education for all, and the assimilation of linguistic minorities."[35] Despite decades of sociolinguistic tension, Katharevousa remained the official language of Greece until 1976, when a recently established (1974) democratic regime elevated Demotic Greek with the imprimatur of the state. The national language of Greece is now considered a combination of these forms known as *Koini Neoelliniki* (Pan-Hellenic Demotic Greek) or, more simply, Standard Greek. It is in this context that I adopt the term *demotic Arabic* to describe spoken Arabic languages in general. This is especially appropriate because Greek and Arabic share the rare experience of modern *diglossia*, i.e. the stable, simultaneous, and parallel existence of High and Low language varieties separated by social status and

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[33] Peter H. Matthews, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). Cf. William Labov, *Language in the Inner City; Studies in the Black English Vernacular* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972).
[34] See Chapter 4 - "When dialects collide: language and conflict in Jordan" - of Suleiman, *A War of Words: Language and Conflict in the Middle East*.
[35] Anna Frangoudaki, "Greek Societal Bilingualism of More Than a Century," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 157 (2002): p. 101.

political context.[36] What makes diglossia distinct from a language/dialect scenario, wherein the High form of the language is also the mother tongue of an economically, culturally, or politically dominant group, the High form of a diglossic language must be acquired "through education" and is not necessarily a vernacular anywhere.[37]

The effects of diglossia in contemporary Egypt are illustrated vividly in Niloofar Haeri's *Sacred Language, Ordinary People* (2003). With exacting terminology, she observes that Egyptian Arabic "unquestionably defines an Egyptian identity and a national identity" yet is paradoxically trivialized by the state.[38] She asks questions that are stunning in their simplicity: "Why isn't Egyptian Arabic the medium of education? ... Why is citizenship in part defined in relation to a language that is no one's mother tongue? What does it mean to have a divine language as the official language of a state?"[39] These are current questions so fundamental to the study of society and politics in the Arab world that it is unfathomable how they remain largely unasked (and unanswered) in political science especially; in fact, the silence is deafening.[40] This is not to say that outside Anglophone academia many Egyptian and Arab writers do not engage such questions—they do, frequently and vociferously—but these authors remain in the margins.[41]

ARABIC AND NATIONALISM

Within the Arab world, the debate over the role of demotic versus Classical Arabic began in earnest in the nineteenth century. But first it must be asked why separate Arabic vernaculars had not developed into literate forms in the same fashion as separate Germanic and Romance languages had developed in Europe or Turkic languages had developed in Anatolia and beyond. On this point, there is much agreement, even among scholars who may otherwise find little in common: Classical Arabic, i.e. *fusha*, is sacred. Hence, the status of its contemporary form, Modern Standard Arabic, is supreme.

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[36] A third example is Tamil. The seminal work on Tamil diglossia, including a foreword by Charles A. Ferguson, is Francis Britto, *Diglossia: A Study of the Theory with Application to Tamil* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1986).

[37] Matthews, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics*.

[38] Niloofar Haeri, *Sacred Language, Ordinary People: Dilemmas of Culture and Politics in Egypt* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 37.

[39] Ibid., p. x.

[40] In what is now a standard reference on the subject of Arab nationalism, Jankowski and Gershoni's collection of fourteen essays includes a mention of language as a political problematic in the states of the region, though it is nothing if not brief, and even this aside reduces to diglossia to nothing more than "a sore spot of Arabism in the past." Emmanual Sivan, "Arab Nationalism in the Age of the Islamic Resurgence," in *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, ed. James P. Jankowski and Israel Gershoni (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 210.

[41] Haeri, *Sacred Language, Ordinary People: Dilemmas of Culture and Politics in Egypt*, p. xii.

Yasir Suleiman, a native Palestinian and Arabic linguist at Cambridge University, puts it this way:

> *The fact that the Qur'an, Islam's primary sacral text, was in Arabic acted as a centripetal force of internal cohesion on the linguistic front, unlike in Europe where the Latin Bible was the source of centrifugal vernacularization. Furthermore, whereas the Latin Bible, in spite of its antiquity and textual authority, was essentially a translation, the Qur'an is not. The fact that the Qur'an is seen as the word of God verbatim meant that it was (is) considered untranslatable.*[42]

Because Latin was the language of the Bible and of the Catholic Church, its *status* was unmatched until the advent of commercial printing and market demand for books written in a language many more people could understand, viz. their own language. Yet this is not to say that Latin was ever considered divine. The Christian Bible is explicit on this point. It is the message that matters more than the medium. In many ways, for observant Arab Muslims past and present, the medium is inseparable from the message. While there is no debate on the exquisite sophistication and eloquence of Classical Arabic, its immutability and exclusivity in the public sphere is often considered a liability—a competitive disadvantage—in an age of industrialization, modernization, and globalization. Not surprisingly, Bernard Lewis shares this view: "unlike the peoples of Western Europe, who threw off the bonds of bad Latin and raised their vernaculars to the level of literary languages, the peoples of the Middle East are still hampered by the constraints of diglossy [*sic*] and of an increasingly archaic and artificial medium of communication."[43]

As for the Arabs, the ideology of pan-Arabism formulated by a principal nationalist progenitor, Sati al-Husri (1879-1967), ultimately cemented the place of Classical Arabic in Arab states. When stating, "every Arab-speaking people is an Arab people," Arabic for al-Husri simply meant Classical Arabic. This is ironic considering his explicit point about "Arabic-speaking" which would necessarily mean a demotic Arabic. In his view, naturally spoken Arabic languages were dismissed as "so-called nation-state dialects," and considered corruptions to be corrected.[44] In spite of the obvious hurdle that few people could actually speak, read or write Classical Arabic, the language(s) of "Arab-speaking people" was "not living Arabic; it was just incorrect Arabic." Clearly, there was an immediate and obvious political need to stifle any and all challenges to Classical Arabic: "If the Egyptians, the Syrians, the Iraqis and the rest were to develop their vernaculars into national languages, as the Spaniards, the Italians and the rest had done in Europe, then all

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[42] Suleiman, *The Arabic Language and National Identity: A Study in Ideology*, p. 35.
[43] Bernard Lewis, *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998), p. 51.
[44] Suleiman, *The Arabic Language and National Identity: A Study in Ideology*, p. 142.

hope of a greater Arab unity would be finally lost."[45] This is not to say, however, that the public use of distinct vernaculars has no political utility. In an analysis of speeches by Egypt's Nasser, Iraq's Saddam Hussein and Libya's Muammar Qaddafi, Nathalie Mazraani, a Cambridge-trained Arabic linguist, observed that Classical Arabic was employed consistently when "constructing an abstract argument, recalling historical events, expanding new political ideas and axioms" but that vernacular Arabic proved useful when a leader explained the details of "his political program, his conversations with various leaders, or his personal experience."[46]

Yet the selective use of vernacular Arabic by a head of state is a far cry from state support. Moreover, the endorsement of High Arabic cut across social and political cleavages, uniting secular pan-Arab nationalists with all manner of imams. To separate Arab peoples by their many demotic languages would mean to separate the Arabs from their one divine language:

> *since it is not possible to achieve this separation without causing a rupture within Islam, the basis of the religious identity of the majority of Arabic-speakers, any attempt to replace the standard by the colloquial as the marker of a particular territorial nationalism is inevitably met with religious opposition*.[47]

This is not to say attempts were not made: there were many. Suleiman's *Arabic Language and National Identity*, a detailed history of Arabic language politics, shows that proponents of language reform rejected Standard Arabic for two reasons: either the language was seen as an impediment to modernization or as an impediment to an ethnonational identity (or both).[48] Early proposed solutions to the perceived predicament included scrapping Arabic in favor of some other language of education and commerce (usually English), updating Classical Arabic with more contemporary vocabulary and simplified grammar, or simply standardizing the vernacular.

At the extreme, Classical Arabic was seen to not only impede the development of a country and its people, but to degrade them. This was the view of Egyptian (and Coptic) writer Salama Musa (1887-1958). Because the orthodox language was "steeped in the desert ethos," he argued, this "was responsible for many of the uncivilized practices found in Egyptian society, including the so-called 'honor killings' of women for pre-marital sex." Moreover, the duality of *fusha* and *ammiyya* was viewed as a kind of cognitive pathology: "the existence of diglossia in Arabic is said to create a kind of linguistic schizophrenia,

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[45] Lewis, *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East*, p. 52.
[46] Nathalie Mazraani, *Aspects of Language Variation in Arabic Political Speech-Making* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1997), p. 189.
[47] Suleiman, *The Arabic Language and National Identity: A Study in Ideology*, p. 10.
[48] See Chapter 2 "Language, power and conflict in the Middle East" in Suleiman, *A War of Words: Language and Conflict in the Middle East*.

whereby Arabic speakers think in one medium (the colloquial) and encode their thoughts in another (the standard). The pursuit of ornate style in Arabic is said to encourage excellence in form at the expense of excellence in content."[49]

In terms of artistic expression, another Egyptian Copt, poet Lewis Awad, argued Classical Arabic is "foreign to Egypt" and that this explains "the inability of the Egyptians to produce great poetry in the language."[50] As a leading advocate of writing in demotic Arabic, he puts himself in the company of both Mark Twain—in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* the words of his characters are transcribed from the vernacular, i.e. "yellow" is "yaller" and "licorice" is "lickrish"—and the Quebecois playwright Michel Tremblay.[51] In the same way, Egyptian novelists, poets, lyricists, cartoonists, and marketers can print text in Cairene Arabic. Indeed, the first novel written in Egyptian Arabic, *Zaynab*, was published in 1913, though it is telling that the author, Mohammad Husayn Haykal (1888-1956), adopted a *nom de plume*.

A century later, the premier *status* of MSA is unmatched. Even though most people "rarely use it in everyday speech" this does not "undermine the symbolic status of the language for most Arabic-speakers."[52] High Arabic continues to function as the sole language of modern communication for public, political, and commercial affairs in the Arab Middle East. Outside the Arab region, the role of High Arabic in Muslim-majority countries is easier to understand: normally it is neither the official tongue of the state nor the national tongue (viz. the mother tongue) of the population. As such, Classical Arabic remains a liturgical language of little use in a non-Arab society, even if that society also adheres to Islam. Even instrumental attempts to unite disparate Muslims by promoting the language failed. Pakistan considered endorsing the sacred language of Muslims, Arabic, to unite the polyglot populations of what was then (pre-1971) East and West Pakistan. The idea was dropped when the government of Pakistan "realized the impracticability of *using* Arabic as an official or national language because nobody, not even the religious scholars, could actually use it."[53] Correspondingly, Arabic is *not* an official language in any of the non-Arab countries where most Muslims live, including Indonesia (Bahasa Indonesia), Bangladesh

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[49] Ibid., p. 43.
[50] Ibid., p. 79.
[51] Tremblay's first play, *Les Belles-Sœurs* (1965), introduced a broader public to the spoken language of Québec. Named *joual* after the vernacular pronunciation of the French word *cheval* (horse), the celebration of Tremblay's work heightened the sense of Québécois national identity that bloomed in the Quiet Revolution (*Révolution Tranquille*) of the 1960s.
[52] Yasir Suleiman, *The Arabic Language and National Identity: a study in ideology* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2003), p. 10.
[53] Tariq Rahman, *Language, Ideology and Power: Language Learning among the Muslims of Pakistan and North India* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 92-3.

(Bengali), Pakistan (Urdu), Turkey (Turkish), and Iran (Persian).[54] In fact, the only non-Arab-majority countries to endorse Arabic as an official language are Comoros and Israel.

ARAB DIGLOSSIA AND ARAB DINATIONALISM

It is a tantalizing thought experiment to imagine the condition of the contemporary Arab world if the peoples of the region had dispersed socially in the same manner as "Occidental" Europeans after Gutenberg, or the "Orientals" following the dissolution of the Ottoman empire. In this imagined scenario, each separate state would have based its sovereignty *and its borders* on the doctrine of national self-determination: a state is legitimate because it exists to protect and promote a nation, i.e. a unique people demanding self-rule. Instead, there exists a conglomeration of autocratic states nominally sharing the same "pan-Arab" nationality and its language, High Arabic. It is this link of pan-Arab nationalism and an acquired language—a medium of literacy, High culture, and social mobility—that is central to understanding the predicament of erstwhile Arab nation-states. The sanctity and corresponding status of High Arabic is the principal impediment to the elevation, reformation, and standardization of demotic Arabics. This, in turn, retards the growth of separate ethnolinguistic identities and stymies the emergence of distinct ethnonational communities that claim sovereignty over a titular and unique nation-state. Instead, these communities are citizens of ill-defined "Arab" states.

The above, of course, is a generalization. Detailing the particulars of each people and each state is the mandate of dedicated area experts. Yet the general demise of pan-Arab nationalism has spurred a number of authors to pen obituaries of a failed ideology, eulogies for the death of Nasser's dream, begging the question what can, should, or will take its place? In 2003, political scientist Adeed Dawisha, a native of Iraq, described the trajectory of Arab nationalism "from triumph to despair."[55] Some academics view this analysis as a hostile "demonization" of a "profoundly important and evolving political force," while others may claim vindication.[56] Franck Salameh, writing in the first French issue of *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, equates the origins of pan-Arabism with the Aryan ideals of Nazis in the 1930s, "*engouements desquels s'étaient imprégnés Sati al-Housri, Michel Aflak et tous leurs compagnons de route arabisants*" [whose passions had impregnated Sati al-Housri, Michel Aflak and all their Arabist traveling companions.][57]

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[54] For a thorough examination of ethnolinguistic identity in Iran, see Shahrokh Meskoob and John R. Perry, *Iranian Nationality and the Persian Language*, ed. John R. Perry, trans. Ali Banuazizi (Washington, D.C.: Mage Publishers, 1992). Cf. Kaveh Farokh, "Book Review: Iranian Nationality and the Persian Language," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 148 (2001).

[55] A. I. Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[56] R. M. Coury, "The Demonisation of Pan-Arab Nationalism," *Race & Class* 46, no. 4 (2005).

[57] Salameh, "Vous Êtes Arabes Puisque Je Vous Le Dis!," p. 52.

In the decades since the 1959 introduction of Ferguson's diglossia, the duality of MSA as a High language and demotic Arabics as devalued Low languages has been the focus of anthropological, sociological and linguistic research, but generally not a topic of interest in political science. The grand exception to this rule is Ernest Gellner, and his specific argument, first suggested in 1964 and later developed at length, that High culture in the Arab world means Islam. In this view, the perpetuity of a sacred language means the Arab world (or in Gellner's broad-brush application the entire Muslim world) is stuck with an immutable and effectively pre-modern society:

> *A Muslim lawyer-theologian, literate in written Arabic, or a medieval clerk with his Latin, is employable, and substitutable for another, throughout the region of his religion. Inside the religious zones, there are no significant obstacles to the freedom of trade in intellect: what later become 'national' boundaries, present no serious obstacles. If the clerk is competent in the written language, say Latin or classical Arabic, his vernacular of origin is of little interest.*[58]

Gellner, despite "a number of grand and unexamined assertions about Islam,"[59] nonetheless emphasizes the role of High Arabic—and its exclusive claim on High culture in the state institutions of modern Arab states—as the principal agent smothering the development of ethnic nationalism in the Arab world. In this regard, he is in accord with the anthropologists, linguists and sociolinguists discussed in this paper who detail the mechanisms by which demotic Arabics are socially marginalized and politically gelded. Diglossia in Arab states is exceptionally effective in halting the evolution of ethnolinguistic identities and ethnonational movements.

How then does this account for the (one-time) sincerity of pan-Arab nationalism, the sustained pre-eminent status of Classical Arabic among both elites and non-elites across the Arab world, or the current ascension of the language in the transnational public sphere of satellite broadcasting? Why are demotic Arabics perpetually disdained publicly as impure, corrupt, vulgar, and illegitimate, even though privately they are the mother tongues of all Arabs in the region? If demotic Arabics are prevented from evolving as High culture languages, and Classical Arabic remains an acquired language shared only by the well-educated minority of disparate states that are not defined by specific ethnicities or cultures, what is the *nationality* of an Arab citizen in an Arab state?

I propose here that ethnic Arab *citizens* of Arab states are *dinational*, a political condition stemming from diglossia. I offer this term to describe a population comprised of persons

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[58] Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change*, The Nature of Human Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 161.
[59] Haeri, "Form and Ideology: Arabic Sociolinguistics and Beyond," p. 79.

who identify politically, internally, and simultaneously, with a pair of parallel communities. One identity is ethnic: local, organic, and tactile. The other identity is supra-ethnic: extraterritorial, synthetic, and abstract. A native of Marrakech, for example, is raised in a distinct culture, with a distinct language (demotic Moroccan) and distinct social practices that easily distinguish his from natives of Alexandria or Amman. At the same time, a native of Marrakech is also taught, in public schools, to read and write a second language, High Arabic. His mother tongue is neither written nor read. His own language is not in his textbooks and it affords no benefits of social mobility, but does afford the benefit of belonging to a distinct society. Doctrinally, his state is not a nation-state because Arab citizens of Morocco are members of the "Arab nation," conceptually one people, an imagined community linked by Classical Arabic and (usually) Islam, but spread across a vast terrain and well over a dozen states. Nonetheless, as a member of the "Arab nation," he may identify with pan-Arab concerns and share some common historical or political beliefs with other members of the "Arab nation" who are nonetheless citizens of other Arab states. A citizen of Morocco may be patriotic, loyal to his own government or his country's Olympic teams, but cannot be an ethnolinguistic nationalist in the same vein as a Catalan or Basque because his ethnicity and first language are not linked to his nationality. He is at once divided linguistically, culturally, cognitively, and politically between Moroccan and Arab. This division is dinational.

The term dinational is not to be confused with the term binational. A binational state, such as Canada (Anglophone/Francophone) or Belgium (Flemish/Walloon), is a state that is home to a separate pair of distinct societies, most often (but not always) characterized as ethnolinguistic nations. In this case, the term "binational" describes both the population—comprised of two national communities—but also describes the state, which represents both nations in public institutions. A state may be binational, or even multinational, but not dinational. The two parts of a citizen's dinational identity may be incorporated simultaneously. In contrast, the state anthem of bi-national Canada may be sung in either French *or* English, but not in French *and* English *at the same time*.

Doubters should raise the objection of Greece. Here is (or was) a diglossic population of Greeks who experienced the sociolinguistic reality of diglossia between *Katharevousa* and Demotic Greek, yet the state was (and is) a nation-state, a territory made sovereign by the express wishes of a unique people who were protected and reproduced by the institutions of a state of their own. What distinguishes Arab states from Greece is that no *one* Arab state can claim to be *a* nation-state when the "Arab nation" is divided among many individual states. Each Arab state is sovereign because it is recognized by other states, and also because the regimes in each maintain (more or less) a monopoly on the use of force, but no single Arab state can claim legitimacy resting on the doctrine of national self-determination. This, sensibly, is why the dream of pan-Arab nationalism was a single entity "from the Gulf to the Ocean."

A dinational individual identifies with both the shared culture of ethnolinguistic kin and the extended culture of a supra-ethnic collective. In Huntington's usage this collective is a civilization, the "highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species." He explicitly lists the "Arab" civilization alongside the Western, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and (possibly) African civilizations. (Tellingly, and incorrectly, he follows Bernard Lewis by interchanging the term "Arab civilization" with the terms "Islamic civilization" and even "Arab Islamic civilization.")[60] Yet a civilization—however else defined—is not only supra-ethnic but also supra-national: there may be any number of nation-states that are all members of the same civilization. Even if one accepts the existence of a single Arab civilization, this is not the same thing as a single Arab nation. Following the doctrine of national self-determination, a nation needs a state of its own and a state is legitimate because it represents its own nation. A civilization needs neither: in Huntington's usage "a civilization is a cultural entity."[61] A strictly cultural entity does not necessarily mobilize for self-rule. Unlike a state, a cultural entity does not enter into treaties, build armies, issue passports, or require recognition from other cultural entities.

Opening a window on the future of Arabic illuminates the possible political futures of Arab peoples and Arab states. In one of Ferguson's final papers, presented in 1990, he clairvoyantly anticipates the current conundrum of High Arabic as a transnational, extra-territorial, supra-ethnic language community that cannot accommodate the public and civil expressions of specific demotic Arab peoples confined by very real borders in opaque Arab states:

> *Arabic is undergoing standardization on a vast scale and in an unusual language situation. It is not just the fact of diglossia, but that it is a diglossia situation without a center that would be a natural place for the standardizing variety to emerge and spread. In most cases where a diglossia changes into a single standard-with-variation situation there is a center—whether cultural, economic, political, communicative, or a combination of these—that becomes the chief source of the standardizing variety. Another alternative, of course, is for the language eventually to split into several different standards, as happened with Latin and the Romance languages… Now is the time to study these conflicting trends…*[62]

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[60] Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): p. 24.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Charles Albert Ferguson, "Come Forth with a Surah Like It: Arabic as a Measure of Arab Society," in *Structuralist Studies in Arabic Linguistics: Charles A. Ferguson's Papers, 1954-1994*, ed. R. Kirk Belnap and Niloofar Haeri, *Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1997), 270-71. Reprinted from Arabic Linguistic Society, "Perspectives on Arabic Linguistics: Papers from Annual Symposium on Arabic Linguistics,"

Ferguson's challenge was accepted by a number of social sciences, including anthropology, sociology, and linguistics, yet political scientists have not only ignored the specific challenge of studying Arabic language politics, but also neglected the importance of comparative language politics in general. Yet it should be noted that the challenge dovetails a lively and expanding debate over the question of *democratic* Muslim exceptionalism. On one side are authors who point to the peculiar politics of "Arab, Not Muslim, Exceptionalism;"[63] on the other, "The Reality of Muslim Exceptionalism" thesis argues that the politics of not just Arabs, but all Islamic peoples, are essentially problematic.[64]

Yet both of these positions elide a fundamental point: nationalism, while not necessarily liberal, *is conducive to democracy by defining the demos*.[65] It makes plain where to draw borders because the doctrine of national self-determination requires that the limits of the nation be coterminous with the state. Nationalism sets the parameters for who is or is not a citizen, who may or may not vote, and which culture will enjoy the benefits of official status, state support, and dedicated institutions. Again, a nation-state is sovereign because it represents and protects a unique people who claim the right of self-rule. Arab states maintain a shared High language and literate High culture, but exclude demotic Arabics and ethnolinguistic identifications.

This is not to say that separate (demotic) Arab peoples will not emerge one day as separate nations. This temporal caution stems from Walker Connor's warning that "there still exist large numbers of people for whom national identity lies in the future," including the Arabs, "who were among the very earliest non-European peoples to produce an elite that was imbued with national consciousness and dedicated its development to the masses. And yet, after more than a half-century [in 1994] of such efforts, Arab nationalism remains anomalistically weak. The national literati may therefore be a poor guide to the actual level of national consciousness."[66] Thus, gauging the "actual level" of ethnolinguistic

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in *Amsterdam studies in the theory and history of linguistic science.* (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1990). Emphasis added.

[63] Alfred Stepan, and Graeme B. Robertson, "Arab, Not Muslim, Exceptionalism," *Journal of Democracy*, 15 (October 2004), 140-146, p. 146. Burhan Ghalioun, "The Persistence of Arab Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 4 (2004); Iliya Harik, "Democracy, 'Arab Exceptionalism,' and Social Science," *Middle East Journal* 60, no. 4 (2006).

[64] Sanford Lakoff, "The Reality of Muslim Exceptionalism," Ibid., 133-139.Adrian Karatnycky, "Muslim Countries and the Democracy Gap," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 1 (2002).

[65] Ghia Nodia, "Nationalism and Democracy," in *Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict and Democracy*, ed. Larry Diamond and M.F. Plattner (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

[66] Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 79-80.

identification within a specific Arab population would benefit from asking the opinions of under-educated majorities rather than depending solely on the views of highly educated elites who benefit from the status quo.

Arab states are not currently nation-states. While most citizens of Arab states are purportedly members of the "Arab nation," this grants no particular legitimacy to the regimes and institutions of any one state in the Arab world. Current Arab regimes cannot claim to represent a specific nation, e.g. "the Libyan nation" or "the Syrian nation," and instead rely on "centralized and authoritarian states" to stay in power.[67] By logical extension, it is not unreasonable to ask whether the suppression of ethnolinguistic nationalism in Arab states contributes to the suppression of democracy in Arab states. Demonstrating a causal link, of course, would require close inspection of many countries and multiple speech communities; thus, what is considered here is a theory that proposes hypotheses, but does not pretend to offer proof.

The bankrupt leadership of many Arab regimes is often blamed for a political vacuum that invites Islamist ideology into the public sphere. This was illustrated in spectacular fashion by the Arab Spring after the people of Egypt succeeded in overthrowing their autocrat, yet then chose to elect an Islamist government. Failing to respond effectively to a "wide range of social, economic and political problems in the Arab world" has "not only jeopardized the legitimacy of the current regimes, it [has] enabled the Islamists to offer an Islamic alternative."[68] This begs the question, *why* is there no alternative presented by some political entrepreneur rallying people behind their own language, their own unique culture, and promoting instead a demotic Arabic ethnolinguistic nationalism? In the case of the largest Arab state, Haeri's answer is provocative but compelling:

> *Most Egyptians find speaking and writing in classical Arabic difficult, especially given the dire state of pre-college education. The official language thus acts as an obstacle to their participation in the political realm. There is of course no suggestion that here that this is the only reason for the absence of democracy in Egypt. But the language situation makes a strong comment on the nature of politics in that country*.[69]

More than a comment, a recent study of socioeconomic and political patterns among the fifty-seven member states of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (of which twenty-

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[67] Mehran Tamadonfar, "Islamism in Contemporary Arab Politics: Lessons in Authoritarianism and Democratization," in *Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective: The One, the Few, and the Many*, ed. Ted G. Jelen and Clyde Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[68] Ibid.
[69] Haeri, *Sacred Language, Ordinary People: Dilemmas of Culture and Politics in Egypt*, p. 151.

two are members of the Arab League) shows that higher literacy rates in OIC countries significantly "increase the odds of expanded political rights."[70]

CONCLUSION

The positive relationship between literacy and social cohesion is most famously detailed as an effect of what Benedict Anderson called "print capitalism" in the formation of nations.[71] In the study of democracy, Robert Dahl highlighted the relationship between literacy and civil society in his canonical *Polyarchy*.[72] Yet a most eloquent exposition of the consequences of a language barrier is from political philosopher Will Kymlicka. His point of origin is Canada and his conceptual development can be traced to the multi-lingual politics of a bi-national federation. At first glance, there is little overlap between a theorist of multiculturalism and the observations of an Arabic sociolinguist. Yet there is an uncanny correlation between Kymlicka's views on the relationship between language and democracy with Haeri's analysis of Egyptian politics:

> *Democratic politics is politics in the vernacular. The average citizen only feels comfortable debating political issues in their own tongue. As a general rule, it is only elites who have fluency with more than one language, and who have the continual opportunity to maintain and develop these language skills, and who feel comfortable debating political issues in another tongue within multilingual settings. … the more political debate is conducted in the vernacular, the more participatory it will be.*[73]

The politics of Arab states may be described with many terms, but 'participatory' remains problematic. It would seem Arab states exclusively endorse Modern Standard Arabic in an unsuccessful attempt to create Standard Arabs, but Arab states are successful in suppressing the development of ethnic identifications and erstwhile ethnolinguistic mobilizations. As a result, Arab citizens of Arab states exist in a kind of political purgatory, members of *neither* a civic *nor* an ethnic nation, and continue to avoid this and other "dichotomies of choice—such as between religious vs. secular, or national vs. country (*qawmiyya* vs. *wataniyya*)—in forging their political-cultural identities."[74] They are consigned to citizenship in states with no self-evident *raison d'être* and an erstwhile pan-

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[70] B. R. Calfano and E. Sahliyeh, "Determining Democracy in the Organization of the Islamic Conference," *Social Science Quarterly* 89, no. 3 (2008): 763.
[71] Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Editions, 1983).
[72] Robert Alan Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).
[73] Will Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship* (Oxford, UK New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 213-14.
[74] Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Ethnic Conflict and State-Building in the Arab World," *International Social Science Journal* 50, no. 156 (1998): p. 235.

Arab 'nationality' divided perpetually among many states, many peoples, and many mother tongues. This is the state-sanctioned stasis of Arab dinationalism.

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