

International Journal of History Research (IJHR)

A Study of the Jordanian and Iraqi Positions on Arab Unity Projects: "Greater Syria Project 1939 and Fertile Crescent Project 1942 as Case Studies"

Dr. Abd-Al Razzak Mahmoud Al-Maani and Dr.Hussein Raja Al-Shuqairat



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¹*Dr. Abd-Al Razzak Mahmoud Al-Maani
History Department, Faculty of Arts, Al Hussein
Bin Talal University



²Dr. Hussein Raja Al-Shuqairat
Department of History, Al Hussein Bin Talal
University, College of Arts, Jordan

Article History

Received 11th December 2024

Received in Revised Form 9th January 2025

Accepted 7th February 2025



How to cite in APA format:

Al-Maani, A.-A., & Al-Shuqairat, H. (2025). A Study of the Jordanian and Iraqi Positions on Arab Unity Projects: "Greater Syria Project 1939 and Fertile Crescent Project 1942 as Case Studies". *International Journal of History Research*, 5(1), 1–13.
<https://doi.org/10.47604/ijhr.3217>

Abstract

Purpose: This study examines the Jordanian and Iraqi positions on two significant Arab unity projects: the Greater Syria Project of 1939, proposed by Prince Abdullah bin Hussein, and the Fertile Crescent Project of 1942, introduced by Nuri al-Said, the Prime Minister of Iraq. The Hashemite initiative for unification, rooted in nationalist principles and lofty Arab ideals, was intended as a foundational stage for future Arab unity, without the pursuit of a monarchy or throne, as outlined by King Abdullah bin Hussein in his memoirs. Additionally, the study explores the Fertile Crescent Project, which aimed to establish unity among Iraq, Syria, eastern Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine.

Methodology: The paper elucidates the Arab and international reactions that led to the rejection of both projects, focusing on the positions of various Arab and foreign countries.

Findings: On the Arab front, the projects faced substantial opposition from ruling leaderships, who prioritized personal interests over collective Arab welfare. Internationally, the projects were opposed to prevent the formation of a potent and cohesive Arab unity, thereby maintaining external control over the resources and wealth of the Arab states.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Arab leaders' personal interests and the strategic ambitions of colonial powers like Britain, France, and the United States converged to prevent the establishment of a unified and potent Arab entity. These projects, although visionary in their pursuit of Arab unity, ultimately fell victim to the complex interplay of internal rivalries and external geopolitical interests that have long shaped the Middle Eastern political landscape.

Keywords: *Project, Greater Syria, Iraq, Fertile Crescent*

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INTRODUCTION

Prince Abdullah bin Hussein's vision of Syrian unity was fundamentally influenced by the overarching ideals of the Great Arab Revolt. He envisaged a unified Syria with borders extending from the Taurus Mountains in the north to the Egyptian frontier in the south, from the eastern boundaries of Iraq to the Mediterranean Sea in the west, asserting that existing divisions were the result of the Sykes-Picot Agreement (Al-Lisasmah, 2001, p. 90). In a statement to Al-Ahad magazine, Prince Abdullah underscored that the Great Arab Revolt originated from Syria's collective decision, along with its free inhabitants, to seek liberation from the oppressive rule of Jamal Pasha. This decision led to a public declaration of the revolution, with the English promising assistance under the leadership of Sharif Hussein bin Ali and committing to refrain from negotiating peace with Germany and Turkey until the Arabs were liberated. Syria sought singular independence and unity, a fact that Prince Abdullah emphasized must be remembered and not obscured. He reminded the Syrian people of their pivotal role in the Syrian Conference, their Arab kingdom, and their king, reinforcing their central role in the call for Arab revolution and independence. Consequently, East Jordan aimed to annex or unite with Syria, as documented by Al-Bukhait and others (1994, pp. 47-49).

Prince Abdullah's consistent advocacy for unifying natural Syria was deeply rooted in the Arab national awakening sparked by the Great Arab Revolt. The Syrian General Conference of 1920 marked an initial experience of unity. His vision extended beyond Syria to include Lebanon, East Jordan, and Palestine, intending to use this unity as a foundation for broader Arab cooperation.

During his governance in East Jordan, Prince Abdullah pursued three main objectives, as outlined by Saleh (1990, p. 223):

1. Establishing a Unified Throne of Syria in line with the family program developed during the Arab Revolution.
2. Unifying the Throne of Iraq with East Jordan, envisioning a future emirate, contingent on achieving the initial goal.
3. Reclaiming the Throne of the Hejaz and his birthplace, Mecca.

In the early 1940s, Arab unity became a propaganda tool used by both the Allies and the Axis powers to garner Arab support by appealing to their nationalist aspirations for unity and independence (Al-Abdallat, 1993, p. 18). In response to Axis propaganda, Britain countered with statements like that of Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden on May 29, 1941: "His government sympathizes with Syria's aspirations for independence and supports any plan by the Arabs to strengthen cultural, economic, and even political ties among Arab countries. His government will provide absolute support for any project in this regard that receives Arab approval" (Frye, 1969, p. 139; Shwadran, 1959, p. 223).

Eden's statement, however, did not receive uniformly positive reactions in the Arab world, with only the Hashemites showing enthusiasm. Prince Abdullah welcomed the statement and received telegrams from various groups urging him to implement its contents, considering him the heir to the Arab renaissance (Jordanian White Paper, 1947, pp. 23-24). Iraq, on the other hand, hesitated to respond until the Allies' victory at the Battle of El Alamein in October 1942, delayed by internal preoccupations, particularly the trial of those involved in the May 1941 revolution (Turbin, 1959, p. 242). It becomes evident that Prince Abdullah's call for Syrian unity was not driven by personal motives or external directives but was rooted in the Syrian

people's belief in the necessity of achieving unity and independence for Arab countries, particularly Syria. This sense of unity continued to grow and solidify within the Greater Syria region.

The goals that Prince Abdullah sought through the realization of Greater Syria's unity were aimed at securing this unity as a preliminary step towards broader Arab unity, which he deemed crucial for the future of the Arab world. Additionally, he believed that resisting Zionist ambitions was unattainable with divided Arab countries. Therefore, he aimed for Greater Syria to become a strong, large state capable of thwarting Jewish aspirations and stopping the Zionist threat to Palestine and neighboring Arab lands (Afif, 1991, p. 7; Al-Hussein, 1979, p. 203).

First: Prince Abdullah's Efforts in Achieving the Greater Syria Project

Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, revitalized hopes for long-standing unity projects with his statement supporting Arab independence and unity. Prince Abdullah bin Hussein embraced the Greater Syria Project, while Nuri al-Said supported the Fertile Crescent Project. Since his arrival in Oman, Prince Abdullah viewed East Jordan as the southern part of Syria and aimed to unify Syria, Lebanon, East Jordan, and Palestine into Greater Syria, considering East Jordan the initial step in this unity endeavor (Al-Abdallat, 1993, p. 19).

Prince Abdullah's Correspondence with British Officials: Prince Abdullah persistently communicated with British officials to advocate for the unity of Greater Syria. However, these messages initially received little attention. A significant turning point came with Rashid Ali al-Kaylani's coup in Iraq in 1941. On the eve of the coup's suppression, Anthony Eden delivered a notable speech in London on May 29, 1941, emphasizing Britain's longstanding friendship with the Arabs and expressing strong sympathy for Syrian independence and unity.

Prince Abdullah's relentless efforts to actualize the Greater Syria Project were significantly influenced by Eden's statement and the evolving geopolitical landscape in Iraq. Despite initial British indifference, the shifting political situation prompted a more favorable response. Eden's speech highlighted the historical ties between Britain and the Arabs, fostering optimism for Syrian independence and unity. The post-war period saw the Arab world making substantial strides, with many Arab intellectuals advocating for greater unity. They believed this unity could be achieved with Britain's assistance, anticipating positive responses to any Arab endeavor in this regard. Strengthening cultural, economic, and political ties among Arab countries was seen as both natural and just. The British government was expected to support any unity project that gained unanimous approval from the involved parties (Mahafza, 1973, p. 113; Jordanian White Paper, 1947, p. 23; Afif, 1991, pp. 17-19). Eden's statement, while supportive, was crafted with cautious ambiguity, making its exact intention challenging to discern. It promised support for unity projects that received unanimous Arab approval, allowing for wide-ranging political maneuvers. Britain maintained the freedom to act in this matter, knowing that internal Arab disagreements and colonial policies by Britain and France had deepened conflicts among Arab nations.

Prince Abdullah perceived favorable circumstances for realizing the Greater Syria Project, believing that the Emirate of Transjordan's contributions to the Allied war effort would bolster his aspirations. In a telegram to Churchill, the British Colonial Secretary, on June 22, 1941, Prince Abdullah conveyed the immense joy felt by Arabs upon the Allied liberation of Damascus. He reminded Britain of its previous promises and emphasized the Arab expectation that their wartime support would be rewarded with independence and recognition, unlike the unfulfilled promises after World War I (Jordanian White Paper, 1947, pp. 29-30). Given that

Transjordan was historically part of Syrian lands and considering Prince Abdullah's commitment to democratic principles and his active role in the Great War for Arab independence, the government presented its viewpoint to the Prince. It asserted that the present circumstances necessitated uniting the Syrian lands, building confidence in the new situation, and preparing for the responsibilities of independence. Achieving these goals required mutual cooperation, unified efforts, and direct communication among the national governments in the Syrian lands to foster unity and consensus (Jordanian White Paper, 1947, pp. 33-34). During this period, the Jordanian Foreign Minister, Muhammad Al-Sharqi, and the Jordanian Consul in Damascus, Abdul-Munim Al-Rifai, played prominent roles in these communications. Al-Rifai facilitated a visit by Antoine Saadeh, leader of the Syrian National Party, to Amman for discussions with Prince Abdullah. Saadeh presented a memorandum expressing the Syrian National Party's support for Greater Syria's unity, endorsing Prince Abdullah's efforts (Jordanian White Paper, 1947, pp. 53).

The Jordanian government, in its unity proposal, relied on several key factors:

1. Anthony Eden's statement ensured British support for Syrian independence and the efforts of Arab leaders seeking unity.
2. Transjordan's loyalty to Britain and commitment to democratic principles helped establish connections with other Syrian regions and influence Arab public opinion towards national aspirations.
3. Geographically, Syria's resources and natural conditions necessitated a unified entity, as any separation would cause political and economic disturbances (Jordanian White Paper, 1947, p. 35).

These sincere efforts and affirmations by Prince Abdullah and his government underscore their diligent pursuit of Syrian unity, driven by logical and realistic motives. The exchanged messages between Prince Abdullah and Syrian leaders indicate a clear desire for unity, endorsing his efforts in this direction. On February 24, 1943, Anthony Eden stated in the House of Commons that the British government would sympathetically view any Arab movement aiming for economic, cultural, and political unity, emphasizing that such initiatives should come from the Arabs themselves. No project had yet been presented that gained unanimous approval (Governorate, 1973, p. 122). In response to Eden's statement, Prince Abdullah intensified his efforts, calling for a national conference in Amman on March 5-6, 1943. He tasked a committee with developing practical projects to achieve the goals of the national covenant, leading to either the Syrian Union or the Greater Syrian State within the Arab Union framework. The committee proposed two projects for Greater Syria's unity. The first project proposed a unified Arab state within Syria's natural borders (Northern et al.), with special administrations in Lebanon and Palestine, and the reinterpretation of the Balfour Declaration. Prince Abdullah would head the unified Syrian state, forming a confederation with Iraq and inviting other Arab countries to join (Al-Abdallat, 1993, p. 21).

The second project advocated creating a federal state comprising Eastern Jordan, Northern Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, with Damascus as its capital and Prince Abdullah as president. If Lebanon declined to join, a referendum would return Syrian territories annexed to Lebanon. If Palestine joined, a constitutional national government would grant Jews decentralized administration, subject to Jewish Agency approval (Al-Abdallat, 1993, p. 21).

Second: Jordanian and Iraqi Positions on the Greater Syria Project

Jordanian Position on Official and Popular Levels

Since his arrival in Eastern Jordan, Prince Abdullah has embraced the Greater Syria project as the foundation for broader Arab unity, envisaged to be achieved progressively on a more inclusive scale. The establishment of the Emirate and his unwavering support for the Syrians, along with his numerous communications with allies, underscored his commitment to realizing Greater Syrian unity. This commitment was reflected across various official and popular Jordanian positions, which consistently supported and endorsed the project.

At the legislative level, the Jordanian Legislative Council articulated a clear stance towards the Greater Syria project following Anthony Eden's statement on February 24, 1943. This statement highlighted the British government's sympathy for Arab unity and independence, which bolstered the Legislative Council's supportive position. During its session on November 18, 1943, the council praised Prince Abdullah's efforts to unify the Levantine regions, aligning with the throne's speech. The council expressed appreciation, gratitude, and loyalty for the prince's endeavors towards Syrian unity. It acknowledged his guidance to the Syrian group regarding their unity and federation, considering him a dedicated advocate for the welfare and safety of Arab countries, and recognized the Hashemite family's historical and contemporary contributions to the Arab cause (Jordanian et al., 1943, p. 48). In this session, members of the Legislative Council emphasized the necessity of Arab unity in general, and Syrian unity in particular. Member Isa Awad affirmed that Arab unity, aimed at consolidating efforts and strengths, was at the forefront of the nation's aspirations. He described Syria as a natural, geographic, and economic entity, noting that despite the fragmentation imposed by foreign powers after World War I, each part of Syria still longed for reunification. The people of Syria continuously anticipated the day they would be reunited. According to Awad, the time had come for a complete Syria to return to a free, unified, and independent existence, taking its rightful place in the larger Arab group (Jordanian et al., 1943, p. 51). The Legislative Council reiterated its commitment to the principle of Syrian unity in response to the throne speech in 1946. It expressed confidence in Prince Abdullah's declarations to its representatives and the entire population. The Hashemites were perceived as calling for unity not for monarchy or throne, but as representatives of the nation's aspirations. This unity aimed to eradicate division, eliminate fragmentation, secure the homeland's safety, and strengthen its internal front against any danger. The Arabs, including those from earlier generations, would not accept any call other than this successful leadership's call for unity (Jordanian et al., 1946, p. 51). These responses and positions adopted by the Legislative Council demonstrate its approval and support for the Hashemite approach to the Greater Syria project.

At the party level, the Arab Renaissance Party (Al-Nahda) made relentless efforts to achieve Syrian unity. In the face of attacks from certain Arab leaders against the call for Syrian unity, the party, led by Hashem Khair, strongly defended the Jordanian perspective. In August 1947, when the Saudi government condemned the Greater Syria project, Hashem Khair, the party's president, made a statement to Arab journalists defending the Jordanian viewpoint. He criticized Saudi intervention in an issue that concerned the Syrian people alone (Al-Madi & Moussa, 1959, p. 435). Clubs and unions also played a prominent role in supporting the Greater Syria project. These entities clearly expressed their stance in celebrations held at the Petra Cinema Hall in July 1946 and February 1947. Leaders from popular sectors, national organizations, and tribal leaders participated in these events, delivering speeches that emphasized the Jordanian people's commitment to Syrian unity despite the imposed fragmentation on the Levant. They stressed the need for Syrian political leaders to abandon

personal interests for the public good, adhere to the principles of the Great Arab Revolution, and support Abdullah bin Hussein's call for Syrian unity (Al-Jazeera Newspaper, 1946, p. 1647). A comprehensive study of the Jordanian stance on the Greater Syria project, both at popular and official levels, reveals unanimous agreement. This perspective is based on the belief that the natural borders of the Levant constitute a unified entity that inherently rejects fragmentation. This belief is grounded in the rights of natural territories, national agreements, and the general public will. The reaffirmation of Prince Abdullah's support for his efforts to unify the Syrian regions is a common thread in this stance.

The Iraqi Position on the Greater Syria Project

The Iraqi stance on the Greater Syria project fluctuated significantly over time, moving from initial support to subsequent neutrality, disassociation, and ultimately covert opposition. Initially, Iraq aligned its foreign policy with Jordan, particularly following a memorandum sent by Prince Abdullah to the Iraqi government in 1943. This memorandum emphasized the roles of East Jordan and Iraq in pursuing a unified Hashemite policy, aiming to consolidate efforts to eliminate those deviating from the principles of the First Renaissance. This alignment solidified through consensus among Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, and the roles of East Jordan and Iraq in reintroducing the Hashemite call to these regions (Ibn Al-Hussein, 1973, pp. 198-204). As a result of this memorandum, representatives from East Jordan and Iraq expressed similar views during the Alexandria talks in 1944 and the Cairo Conference in 1945. Preliminary consultations revealed a trend favoring the unity of Greater Syria under Prince Abdullah's leadership. Iraq supported this direction, viewing any gain achieved by East Jordan as a future gain for Iraq (Frye, 1969, p. 151). Prince Abdullah also instructed his representative at the unity talks, Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda, to support the efforts of Egypt and Iraq, emphasizing that these nations should strive for the unity or federation of Syria before any other Arab union. He noted, "Let your excellency's memoirs be with Rafat - referring to Nahas Pasha - on this basis" (Ibn Al-Hussein, 1973, p. 209). Over subsequent years, visits were exchanged to unify Hashemite nationalist efforts, with both East Jordan and Iraq adhering to the principles of the Arab revolution.

However, as soon as East Jordan gained its independence in May 1946, King Abdullah initiated another call for the establishment of Greater Syria. Tawfiq Al-Suwaidi, the Prime Minister of Iraq, quickly declared that Iraq had no concern for Jordan's policy, asserting that Iraq had a responsibility towards Arab countries and dismissing any other involvement as baseless (Al-Suwaidi, 1969, pp. 431-432). Despite this, King Abdullah did not stop at merely extending the invitation. On November 11, 1946, in the Jordanian Throne Speech, he declared that the "Greater Syria project is a fundamental principle in Jordan's foreign policy" (Jordanian White Paper, 1947, pp. 250-265; Frye, 1969, pp. 145-146). This announcement provoked anger from Arab countries, especially Syria and Lebanon, which launched a media campaign against Jordan and King Abdullah, accusing Iraq of supporting Jordan's expansionist policy. Consequently, Iraq disassociated itself from the project and even opposed it.

In November 1946, Nuri al-Said, the Prime Minister of Iraq, stated, "...As an Iraqi, I have no involvement in this matter, nor am I the author of the idea. The Syrian people have their own interests, and I reiterate that the Greater Syria project concerns the Syrian people themselves. We must judge based on the desires of this people, not the desires of individuals" (Al-Rossan, 1979, p. 161; Al-Islah Newspaper, 1946). Nuri al-Said did not settle for this statement alone but reiterated the same position on December 26, 1946, saying, "The Greater Syria project, as I told you, is a matter for the Syrians themselves. However, some newspapers continue to

address it. Ironically, these newspapers address East Jordan and its connection with Iraq when we talk about the Greater Syria project." He denied Iraq's connection to the project, stating, "I do not know the relationship between the issue of East Jordan and Iraq in the Greater Syria project, which, if implemented, concerns East Jordan by its nature. Regarding his opinion on the Greater Syria project, he stated that he was one of the advocates of Arab unity and did not oppose any step leading to unity. His wish was to see a single border and a single flag" (Publicity Directorate, 1947, pp. 50-51).

The Iraqi government maintained this approach. On August 24, 1949, Nuri al-Said issued a statement completely denying claims that Iraq had aspirations to achieve the Greater Syria project. He added that Iraq would not be the cause of weakening the political entity of any Arab country wishing to cooperate with another Arab country through treaties or agreements (Al-Urdun Newspaper, 1949).

Arab Countries' Stance on the Project

The Greater Syria project encountered significant opposition from various Arab countries. Syrian rulers, particularly after the victory of the National Bloc in the 1943 elections and the election of Shukri al-Quwatli as president, resisted the project. Al-Quwatli criticized the project, arguing that it conflicted with Syrian nationalism, stating, "If Jordan truly desires unity, let it join Syria as a free republic" (Al-Abdallat, 1993, p. 22). Syrian opposition persisted following the coup by Husni al-Zaim, who aligned with the Riyadh-Cairo axis opposing the project. During a visit to Egypt on April 29, 1949, al-Zaim attacked Jordan and Iraq, declaring, "The Syrian Republic does not want Greater Syria and the Fertile Crescent," and claimed to have received British confirmations supporting the current situation (Frye, 1969, pp. 155-167; Al-Abdallat, 1993, p. 22).

Lebanon's stance mirrored Syria's position. Lebanese Foreign Minister Fuad Najjar stated on November 13 and 22, 1946, that Lebanon's position was clear: "We do not want Greater Syria, with or without Lebanon." He emphasized that Lebanon's participation in the Arab League was based on its present boundaries and the independence of all League member states (Jordanian White Paper, 1947, pp. 250, 255; Frye, 1969, pp. 145-146). Saudi Arabia also opposed the project due to traditional animosity between the Hashemite and Saudi families and the fear of the Hashemites attempting to reclaim their throne in the Hijaz (Al-Abdallat, 1993, p. 22; Muhafazah, 1973, p. 116). Egypt, too, opposed the project to safeguard its position among Arab nations and its aspiration for leadership. Egypt viewed the project as creating an equal center of power and influence, challenging its own standing in the region (Shwadran, 1959, p. 226). The British stance on the project was diplomatically supportive, expressing willingness to back it to secure British interests in the region. However, when the Greater Syria project started being perceived as a British initiative, Britain promptly issued an official denial. On July 14, 1947, the British Foreign Ministry requested its representatives in the Arab world to declare the government's position as one of complete neutrality (Muhafazah, 1972, p. 61). Kirkbride notes that Britain never favored the Greater Syria project, stating that His Majesty's government never endorsed it (Kirkbride, 1976, p. 57). Ultimately, Britain, France, and the United States brought a decisive end to the Hashemite border projects. In a joint statement on May 25, 1950, they declared that their governments would not allow the violation of borders or cease-fire lines (Muhafazah, 1972, pp. 61-62).

In conclusion, the failure of the Greater Syria project can be attributed to both Arab and international opposition. At the Arab level, the project faced strong resistance from ruling Arab

leaderships concerned with their personal interests over broader Arab interests. Internationally, opposition from Britain, France, and the United States was driven by colonial ambitions, the desire to maintain political balance in the Middle East, and the establishment of amicable relations with Arab governments that served their colonial interests and later accommodated Zionist interests in Palestine (Al-Lissasema, 2000, p. 139).

Project Fertile Crescent in 1942

After suppressing Rashid Ali al-Gaylani's coup in Iraq on May 29, 1941, Anthony Eden delivered a speech reaffirming Britain's support for Arab unity projects that gained approval from all Arab nations (Muhafazah, 1973, p. 110). This statement by the British Foreign Secretary aimed to alleviate tension and dissatisfaction among the Arab public towards Britain's policies in the region. It came at a time when Axis powers had achieved some early victories in World War II, prompting Britain to assure Arabs of its commitment to their national and nationalist aspirations post-war, allowing for broad political maneuvering and autonomy.

Nuri al-Said capitalized on Eden's statement to present his ideas for unity, which influenced his acceptance of the position of Commissioner of Iraq in Egypt on June 11, 1941 (Al-Sayegh, 1966, p. 307). Nuri's activities intensified after his return to the prime minister's post. In December 1942, he held private talks with Syrian, Lebanese, and Jordanian nationalists. He also visited Cairo with Prince Abdul Ilah, presenting the idea of unity among Fertile Crescent countries to Egyptian Prime Minister Mustafa Nahhas. However, Nahhas did not show significant interest in the proposal (Mohammed, 1988, p. 249). Simultaneously, Nuri al-Said met with Richard Casey, the British State Secretary in the Middle East, conducting negotiations on the future of Arab countries based on Eden's 1941 statements and Britain's exclusive role in the Arab East, particularly after France's fall. Nuri believed that Britain, as a friend to the Arabs, bore the responsibility for realizing their aspirations for unity and independence. This meeting had a noticeable impact on Nuri al-Said's subsequent political moves in Arab affairs (Al-Lissasema, 2000, pp. 145-146).

Initially termed the "Arab Commonwealth," Nuri al-Said's federal union project was later renamed the "Fertile Crescent." Experts in Hashemite unity projects note that the latter name aimed to placate those wary of Arab unity in Iraq and Lebanon. According to Nuri al-Said himself, it also addressed the concerns of factions not desiring unity (Al-Sayegh, 1966, p. 308). In his memorandum to the British minister, Nuri al-Said expressed concerns about the Allies' unfulfilled promises to the Arabs, criticizing extensive Zionist activities in both Britain and the United States, which received clear encouragement in contrast to an unfriendly attitude towards the Arabs (Al-Said, 1943, pp. 1-2).

Emphasizing the inclusiveness of his unity project, Nuri al-Said envisioned the unity of Syria, Iraq, Palestine, and Eastern Jordan. Despite being Ottoman provinces linked by strong linguistic, nationalist, religious, and economic ties, these regions were divided into different states and subjected to different laws. Years of suppressed Arab aspirations had strengthened the desire for independence. Nuri argued that Arab cooperation with the Allies during the early years of World War II was based on repeated assurances given, especially to Hussein bin Ali. However, Arab hopes were dashed when their victorious allies broke their promises, secretly partitioning their lands and assuming mandates over them, leading to Arab protests and rejection of this policy (Al-Said, 1943, pp. 4-6).

Nuri al-Said then discussed Iraq's stance on proposed projects for Arab reunification. He highlighted Iraq's deep connection with these regions through linguistic, nationalist, religious,

and economic ties. He argued that achieving Arab unity required the genuine independence of all Arab nations. Regarding Palestine, Nuri proposed its integration into Syria, believing this would help establish either a united state or a federal system comprising Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Eastern Jordan (Al-Said, 1943, p. 10). Nuri al-Said exerted significant efforts to convince relevant parties of his ideas presented in the memorandum. As a first step, he sought to appease Britain by declaring war against the Axis powers two days after submitting the memorandum. It was not coincidental that Nuri al-Said justified his recent actions before the parliament by emphasizing the desire to fulfill the Arab nations' hopes of establishing an Arab union under Hashemite leadership. Simultaneously, he sought to entice Britain and its allies by confirming the necessity of providing everything needed for transporting Iraqi oil to various parts of the world during this period (Mohammed, 1988, p. 259). At the same time, Nuri al-Said attempted to persuade Arab governments of his views. In March 1943, he sent a delegation led by Jamil al-Madfai to Syria, Eastern Jordan, and Egypt to consult with their rulers and convene a conference for this purpose. However, the delegation's efforts yielded no results. Syrians cited preoccupation with elections, Egyptian Prime Minister Mustafa al-Nahhas objected to the participation of popular bodies proposed by Iraq in the conference, suggesting it should be restricted to government representatives alone. Palestinians faced difficulties due to scattered leadership, and Prince Abdullah of Jordan showed no response to the Iraqi project, perceiving it as competition to his own plans. This was particularly evident after Nuri al-Said attempted to persuade him shortly before the war to relinquish his claims to the throne of Syria in favor of King Faisal II (Mohammed, 1988, pp. 259-260).

The proposal of the Fertile Crescent project by Nuri al-Said coincided with Prince Abdullah's efforts to realize his vision for the greater unity of Syria. The reconciliation process between the two projects was marked by periods of acceptance and doubt, especially on Nuri al-Said's part.

Prince Abdullah sent a letter to the consulate of the Emirate in Baghdad, confirming the rising fervor for Arab unity. The speeches of Eden, along with the plans for Arab unity by Nuri al-Said and Mustafa al-Nahhas, fueled and intensified this fervor. The political entities working with his father and brother Faisal concluded that Syria's dispersed opinions and disconnected parts necessitated the establishment of Syrian unity or federation. They drafted two projects for review by the regent of the Iraqi throne, Prince Abdul Ilah, and Nuri al-Said, with instructions to disseminate the information to the Iraqi public through radio and newspapers and provide an urgent response. Nuri al-Said's response emphasized that Arab unity was within reach, with Arab countries interested in foreign affairs, defense, economic issues, and cultural affairs through the establishment of a central council discussing the unity of Syrian territories as an integral part of the Arab group, and the principles on which the Arab country union is based (Al-Bukhait et al., 1994, p. 439).

In a final attempt to secure a settlement for the future governance of the Levant, Nuri al-Said visited Cairo in response to Mustafa al-Nahhas's invitation in July 1943. During his meetings with the Eastern Counselor of the British Embassy and the Deputy Secretary of State, he encountered an unsupportive response. Consequently, he abandoned his invitation and engaged in unity consultations, affirming the independence and sovereignty of Arab countries according to existing political borders. Collaborating with East Jordan during the unity consultations, he succeeded in formulating Article 9 of the Charter, allowing closer collaboration between any two countries of the Union. Several factors led Nuri al-Said to abandon the invitation for his Fertile Crescent project, including British pressure and continuous efforts by Prince Abdullah

to achieve the Greater Syria project. Advocacy for his project would have implicated collaboration with Prince Abdullah and endorsement of his unitary policy, which faced strong opposition. Nuri al-Said's stance on the Greater Syria project remains ambiguous. Did he support it as a prelude to the Fertile Crescent project, or did he oppose it to distance himself from any alignment with Prince Abdullah?

The ambiguity in Nuri al-Said's position towards the Greater Syria project seems driven by his preference for Greater Syria's unity as a prelude to the Fertile Crescent's unity. His abandonment of the Fertile Crescent project and lack of support for the Greater Syria project were influenced by the lack of approval from Arab countries and Britain, as well as the need for popular acceptance of the Greater Syria project. Additionally, there was a desire for Prince Abdullah to lead this unity, hindering Nuri al-Said's ambition for Prince Abdul Ilah to assume the throne of Syria. In summary, the Fertile Crescent project, like the Greater Syria project, did not receive support from Arab countries. Egypt and Saudi Arabia opposed both projects, fearing the strengthening of the Hashemites and competition for leadership. Syria and Lebanon viewed the projects as threats to their sovereignty and independence. The international stance, represented by Britain, France, and the United States, rejected the project to prevent the establishment of an effective and powerful Arab unity, which would hinder their control over the Arab nations' resources and wealth. Facing these Arab and international rejections, Nuri al-Said was forced to abandon his call for Fertile Crescent unity and engage in Arab unity consultations to establish the Arab League (Al-Lissamah, 2000, pp. 159-160).

Conclusion

The pursuit of Syrian unity through the Greater Syria project, championed by Prince Abdullah bin Hussein, was fundamentally rooted in the ideals of the Great Arab Revolt. This initiative, the first significant Hashemite effort towards Arab unity, was driven by Prince Abdullah's unwavering belief in the collective national will and the higher aspirations of the Arab people. His vision sought to transcend regional divisions and establish a unified Arab entity that could serve as a foundation for broader regional cooperation and independence. However, the project encountered substantial opposition at both Arab and international levels. Within the Arab world, ruling leaderships resisted the Greater Syria project due to concerns that it would threaten their personal and political interests. This resistance was rooted in the fear that a unified Syria under Hashemite leadership would diminish their power and influence, prioritizing collective Arab interests over their own. This internal opposition highlighted the fragmented nature of Arab politics, where personal and nationalistic rivalries often took precedence over broader unity and cooperation. Internationally, the project faced significant resistance from colonial powers such as Britain, France, and the United States. These countries had vested interests in maintaining political control and balance in the Middle East, which would be jeopardized by a strong, unified Arab state. Their opposition was driven by colonial ambitions to exploit the region's resources and foster relations with compliant Arab governments that would serve their strategic interests. Additionally, accommodating Zionist ambitions in Palestine further complicated their stance against the Greater Syria project.

Simultaneously, another federal project, the Fertile Crescent, emerged under the leadership of Nuri al-Said, the Prime Minister of Iraq, in 1942. This project, developed during Abdul Ilah's regency following King Ghazi's death, sought to achieve similar goals of Arab unity and independence. Despite sharing a common framework with the Greater Syria project, differences in their approaches and detailed execution led to distinct paths for these initiatives. The Fertile Crescent project faced similar Arab and international opposition, as ruling Arab

leaders were concerned about the implications for their power, while colonial powers remained wary of any significant shift in the region's political dynamics. In conclusion, the failure of both the Greater Syria and Fertile Crescent projects can be attributed to multifaceted opposition. Arab leaders' personal interests and the strategic ambitions of colonial powers like Britain, France, and the United States converged to prevent the establishment of a unified and potent Arab entity. These projects, although visionary in their pursuit of Arab unity, ultimately fell victim to the complex interplay of internal rivalries and external geopolitical interests that have long shaped the Middle Eastern political landscape.

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