

**Sixty-fourth anniversary of the establishment of the United
Arab Republic (1958 – 1961)**

Prof. Dr. Moustafa El-Abdallah Al Kafry

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**Fifty-ninth anniversary of the United Arab Republic
(1958 – 1961)**

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Introduction:

Arab unity was and still is a dream for most Arab citizens, and the Egyptian-Syrian unity came in response to the desires of the Egyptian and Syrian peoples, within the framework of the pressing international atmosphere, and the events that took place in the Arab world, from the nationalization of the Suez Canal, the tripartite aggression against Egypt, the Turkish military build-up on the Syrian border, to the establishment of the Baghdad Pact, and the increase in conspiracies and intrigues in the Arab region. Since the days of the government of Sabri al-Asali in Syria, Michel Aflaq, one of the leaders of the Arab Socialist Baath Party, insisted the ministerial statement of the government should include a call for Syrian-Egyptian unity, which was supported by the Syrian parliament. The unity between Egypt and Syria "gave hope to the Arab citizen who could seek comprehensive unity, and was at that time the decisive response to the conspiracies targeting Syria, Egypt, Lebanon and the rest of the Arab countries..."¹

The United Arab Republic is the official name of the unity state that was established between Egypt and Syria during the period (1958-1961). The establishment of a unity state was proclaimed on February 22, 1958 with the signing of the Charter of the United Republic by Syrian President Shukri al-Quwatli and Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Gamal Abdel Nasser was then chosen as president and Cairo became the capital of the United Arab Republic.

¹ - According to the following: Attorney Ghalib Yaghi Secretary The secret of the country leadership of the Arab Socialist Baath Party in Lebanon during that era.

The unification was ended by a military coup in Damascus on 28 September 1961, and Syria declared its secession from Egypt to become the "Syrian Arab Republic", while Egypt retained the name "United Arab Republic" until 1970. Syria's secession from Egypt was carried out by a group of Syrian military personnel driven by Western parties and supported by Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

1 - Motives and drivers of the unit:

The Egyptian-Syrian unity, which was declared on February 22, 1958, was the result of the constant demand of a group of Syrian officers, at a time when the leaders of the Arab Socialist Baath Party had campaigned for union with Egypt. President Gamal Abdel Nasser was not enthusiastic about a merger union with Syria, nor did he aspire to manage Syria's internal affairs and problems. He advocated "Arab solidarity" in which Arabs would stand with him against the great powers, and he particularly needed to control Syria's foreign policy in order to fight his Western and Arab enemies. President Nasser's idea was different from the Arab Socialist Baath Party's unitary program of abolishing borders between Arab states. So, the Syrians pushed him to agree to the establishment of the United Arab Republic." ²

Since mid-1954 and early 1955, the masses in Syria have shown special interest in the Egyptian revolution: especially with regard to the agreement to nationalize the Suez Canal, the resistance to alliances, the crystallization of the Arab idea among the leaders of the Egyptian revolution, the Zionist pressure on Egypt represented by the campaign on Gaza in early 1956, the Bandung Conference, the arms deal with the Soviet Union, and illustrate the social direction of the revolution and its serious fight against feudalism, all of which earned the Egyptian revolution and its leader, President Gamal Abdel Nasser, great respect in progressive and democratic

² - As the journalist sees frenchman Patrick Seale.

circles in If we add to all that the weight that Egypt represents in the Arab world: humanly, culturally and geographically, it becomes clear that the polarization of the Nasserist leadership to the Arab masses in the second half of the fifties was inevitable. 3

Confronting the Baghdad Pact and the election of Shukri al-Quwatli as President of the Syrian Republic:

In 1955, the revolutionary government in Egypt, led by the late leader Gamal Abdel Nas, put forward the slogan of pursuing an independent Arab foreign policy, within the scope of the Arab League, and strengthening the Arab collective guarantee charter to confront the Baghdad Pact. This slogan was highly appreciated by the nationalist and national forces in Syria, so a new Syrian government was formed in which representatives of the Arab Socialist Baath Party participated. The nationalist and unitary Baath Party began calling for unity between Egypt and Syria because they are the two most liberal Arab states. 4

In 1955, Shukri al-Quwatli was elected president of the Syrian Republic, thus resolving the situation in favor of the nationalist unitary current calling for unity with Egypt, and the two countries (Egypt and Syria) agreed to establish a unified military command based in Damascus, and external factors played their first role in promoting rapprochement between the two countries, as the Soviet Union began in 1956 with a broad diplomatic campaign to gain the

³ - According to Dr. George Jabbour.

⁴ - From members The Syrian military delegation that arrived at Cairo inferior Syrian Government Flag Demanding immediate unity Lieutenant Colonel Bashir Sadiq, Lieutenant Colonel Jado Ezz El-Din, Major General Afif Alseed, Lieutenant Colonel Tohme Al-Awda Allah, Lieutenant Colonel Hussein Hadda, Lieutenant Colonel Yassin Ferjani, Lieutenant Colonel Mohammed Al-Nisr, Lieutenant Colonel Jamal Al-Sufi, Lieutenant Colonel Mustafa Hamdoun, Lieutenant Colonel Ahmed Henedy, Colonel A. ح. Abdul Mohsen Abu Al-Nour. President Gamal Abdel Nasser and Abdel Hakim Amer negotiated Throughout January 13-16, 1958, the mission culminated in an agreement on unity. To complete the mission, Syrian Foreign Minister Salah al-Din al-Bitar arrived on January 16 to initialize a charter. Unit between Syria and Egypt.

affection of the countries of the Middle East and increase its influence in this region, and both Syria and Egypt concluded deals in the same year to buy Soviet weapons, At the same time, the Baghdad Pact was threatening Syrian territory with the support of Britain.

When the tripartite aggression against Egypt took place in October 1956, the Syrian government declared a state of emergency in its territory and units of its forces went to Transjordan after disrupting the pipeline of the Iraqi oil tanker Al-Taplin Company to the Lebanese coast and from there to Europe. These units were forced to withdraw from Jordan in April 1957 after the United States threatened to intervene against them. The Syrian government can no longer back down from its new policy as it has felt a degree of isolation before the alliance Baghdad, Iraqi politics and even Israeli aggression. In October 1957, a treaty of economic cooperation was concluded with the Soviet Union. 5

2 - Establishment of the United Arab Republic:

On 18 October 1957, the Syrian Parliament and the Egyptian Parliament met in joint session and unanimously issued a statement inviting the Governments of the two countries to meet and report on the union between the two States. In this direction, the Presidents of the two countries and the staff of their governments met and issued a statement on 22 February 1958 in which they declared the unification of the two countries into a single State in the United Arab Republic, whose presidential system was to be democratic. Indeed, a popular referendum on unity was held and Gamal Abdel Nasser was elected President of the Republic. United Arab States

⁵ - Dr. Ahmed Serhal. See also: Lebanese newspaper An-Nahar, Al-Sarraj 7.8 March 2005 - By Sobhi Munther Yaghi 7,8 March 2005.

consisting of the Northern Territory (Syria) and the Southern Territory (Egypt).⁶

On 5 March 1958, a new interim constitution of the United Arab Republic was drafted. The Constitution vests executive power to the President of the Republic, who exercises it effectively with the assistance of the Vice-Presidents and the ministers he appoints and dismisses himself, and they are exclusively accountable to him.

In addition to the central Government of the United Arab Republic, two regional executive councils were created: the Egyptian Executive Council and the Syrian Executive Council, each headed by a central minister, while legislative power was assumed by the National Assembly, consisting of deputies, half of whom were appointed by the President of the Republic and the other half chosen by him from among former members of the House of Representatives in Syria and Egypt. Thus, the regime maintained its strict presidential nature, especially since some members of the Council were appointed by the president, which contradicts and exceeds the nature of the presidential system based in principle on the separation of powers." President Gamal Abdel Nasser delivered a speech from the residence of President Shukri al-Quwatli shortly after the declaration of unity, in which he said:

(Fellow citizens:

Peace and mercy of God be upon you.

I feel now that I am among you the happiest moment of my life, as I have always looked at Damascus, you and Syria and I look forward to the day when I meet you. Today, I visit Syria, the beating heart of Arabism. Syria that has always carried the banner of Arab nationalism. Syria that has always called for Arab nationalism. Syria that has always interacted wholeheartedly with Arabs everywhere.

⁶ - Declared unity and granted the Syrian President of thanks Quwatli title "The First Arab Citizen".

Today, fellow citizens, God has fulfilled this hope and anticipation, and I meet with you on this eternal day, after the United Arab Republic has been achieved. ⁷

3 - The beginning of the breakdown and failure:

Since the establishment of the United Arab Republic, "dictatorship" practices began on the part of President Nasser, who set two conditions for the establishment of this unity, the first of which was that officers refrain from practicing political work, and that political parties in Syria, including the Arab Socialist Baath Party, were dissolved. In Patrick Seale's view, Baath Party leaders expected to become the ideological teachers of the Arab Republic. united and to provide Nasser with an integrated doctrine, and to teach Arabism to Egypt itself. But all of it was nothing but daydreaming. Instead of the ready-made party life that existed in Syria, Gamal Abdel Nasser created a political grouping that was at the same time authoritarian and dismembered: the National Union. All decisions were made in Cairo, where he was staffed by a small group of officers and security personnel. His dependence in Damascus was on a security man Samout Colonel Abdul Hamid al-Sarraj, who raised him and appointed him Minister of Interior. ⁸

The policy followed towards Syria lost its control over its internal and external affairs, and the lack of political life in it, to be confined to the hands of Egyptian officials, and Damascus was no longer only a governorate center, and President Gamal Abdel Nasser established a central government that included: Akram Al-Hourani, and Salah al-Din al-Bitar, and Egyptian and Syrian affairs were the competence of two local executive councils. In November 1959,

⁷ -Who is it President Gamal Abdel Nasser's speech in Damascus February 24, 1958 after the establishment of the United Arab Republic.

⁸ - Ghalib Yaghi, Opponents of the unity project and followers of this historical period also affirmed.

President Gamal Abdel Nasser sent his most prominent aide, Field Marshal Abdel Hakim Amer, to rule Syria, which he called the Northern Province. Southern Territory.

Because the unity did not come as the Syrians had hoped, a number of them began to express their rejection and feelings, especially because of the Egyptian interventions in the stray and incoming, and because of the marginalization of the role of Syrian leaders and leaders, even those who were in government positions, including Akram al-Hourani, who expressed his disappointment "... Al-Hourani left Cairo after shaking his hands back to the town of Hama amid complete disappointment with the experience of unity with Egypt..."

After the escalation of disputes between representatives of the Baath Party and Abdul Hakim Amer, the Baathist ministers resigned on December 30, 1959, the Baathist ministers from the central government of the United Arab Republic and the Executive Council of the Northern Territory, Akram al-Hourani, vice president and minister of justice in the central government, Salah al-Din al-Bitar, minister of culture and national guidance in the central government, Mustafa Hamdoun, minister of agrarian reform, and Abdul Ghani Qunoot, minister Social Affairs and Labor in the Executive Council. Four days later, Minister of Economy Khalil al-Kallas was relieved of his position on the Executive Council.

Those who lived through that period remember how the process of beating communist opponents began in the first place, after which the Baathists were extended, and Lieutenant Colonel Abdul Hamid al-Sarraj played the role of executioner, throwing a number of opponents into prison, and many of these were subjected to the most heinous types of physical and psychological torture and brutal methods.

4 - Reasons for separation and failure of the unit:

The fraught political atmosphere played a major role in the separation and the failure of unity, in addition to Arab and foreign interventions. MP Sami al-Khatib does not deny that "internal causes played their role in the separation, in addition to the role played by Western embassies, which were from the very beginning against this unity."

Sami Sharaf said that there were internal issues affecting the situation and mechanisms of governance in both Syria and Egypt that created a good ground for the success of the separatists. "... There were foreign fingers playing to break this unity out of fear of the unitary extent that would have had an impact on the entire Arab region, led to changes in it, and prevented Israel from achieving its expansionist goals."

Many reasons led to the separation and the collapse of the unit, the most important of which are: ⁹

- The lack of geographical contiguity and interdependence on the ground between Syria and Egypt, which makes the control of the central government limited, in addition to the presence of an entity that is very hostile to the Arabs and to Egypt and Syria in particular, Israel.
- Keeping the army away from interfering in politics, a thorny and complex issue in Syria in particular, as Syrian officers have been interfering in politics to the core, since 1949.
- The single political organization, the National Union, which was applied in Egypt, was not accepted by the Arab Socialist Baath Party in particular... The result of the elections for the National Union in Syria was seen as a defeat for the Baathists and a victory for Abdul Hamid al-Sarraj.

⁹ - Sami Sharaf, Minister of State and Secretary to President Gamal Abdel Nasser.

- It was difficult to complete the unification of laws between Egypt and Syria, especially those governing the movement of people and trade and the removal of barriers between the two regions.
- Domination of the Syrian army by Egyptian officers.
- President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized private banks, factories, and major industrial companies that were thriving, especially the textile and cement industries.
- The arrival of many Egyptian workers to the cities of the Northern Territory, and the imbalance of the labor force. And talk about the displacement of one million Egyptian farmers to the Syrian Jazira region.
- Authoritarian policies by the government in the southern region contributed to the discomfort of Syrians who boasted of political pluralism, which Nasser conditioned its abolition on accepting unity. The intelligence service played an influential role in stoking the fire of division among citizens.
- The Arab region was subjected to many conspiracies from various parties, which made the unity unstable, and nothing would have stopped its repercussions, and perhaps there was no authority in the Arab neighborhood that wanted it to continue.

Some believe that President Gamal Abdel Nasser's decision to abolish all political parties led to a stalemate in the Syrian political movement, and that the nationalization movement affected some members of the middle class who struggled for years to build their small personal wealth, but many of their rights were digested during the broad nationalization movement at the time.

5 - Breakup occurrence:

On September 28, 1961, a group of Syrian officers led by Lieutenant Colonel Abdul Karim al-Nahlawi staged a military coup,

with Jordanian-Saudi support, and with the support of Syrian businessmen disgruntled with nationalization decisions, in a tense atmosphere in all respects. President Gamal Abdel Nasser was surprised by the news of the Syrian rebellion and ordered a force of two thousand Egyptian paratroopers to Syria to be sent to Syria to eliminate the rebellion. But the pro-rebel stances of Latakia army leaders prompted Nasser to reverse his decision, given that the Egyptian vanguard of 120 paratroopers had announced their surrender after landing. Abdel Hakim Amer had left Damascus for Cairo at around three o'clock in the afternoon on the day of the coup. Among the Syrian politicians who supported the secession were Akram al-Hourani and Salah al-Din al-Bitar, and among the signatories of the secession document on 2 October 1961. The United States officially recognized the secessionist government in Syria just 12 days after the coup. The military that overthrew the Syrian-Egyptian unity. ¹⁰

In the early hours of the morning of September 28, 1961, people in different parts of the Syrian capital Damascus and other cities woke up to an exchange of bullets, and armored vehicles and tracked Badia forces began to surround the official departments and roam the main streets of Damascus. The Syrian radio in Damascus began its programs with a broadcast of the Holy Quran, and at about half past seven in the morning issued statement No. 1 of the Supreme Arab Revolutionary Command of the Armed Forces, which reads:

(Your army, which has always been and will always remain a solid national pillar, has risen to preserve the homeland, its safety, freedom and dignity, has risen to remove corruption and tyranny, and to restore the legitimate rights of the people, and we declare that this uprising has nothing to do with a specific person or group, but

¹⁰ - Lieutenant Colonel Abd El , Karim Nahlawi, manager Office of Field Marshal Abdel Hakim Amer.

rather a movement aimed at correcting the illegal situation. O Arab people, trust in your army, we are strong with God's help and strength.

We knocked on every door of reform before we exploded, and we found only force to restore the freedom of the people and the dignity of the army. We will no longer accept the banner of Arabism as a headquarters except for the tasks of victory, and this is our blood with which we write that we have fulfilled the covenant and our father to live except for dignity, and pride for the Arabs).

6 - Results of separation:

Some believe that the separation was the cause of the setback in 1967, but others believe that it was the separation that protected Syria from a greater loss during that war, as perhaps the poor administrative organization that dominated the unification phase would have caused greater exploitation by Israel of the poor conditions and the occupation of more space on both fronts. On the other hand, unity could have changed the political conditions significantly if the Syrians had borne its burdens for a period of time, and the political conditions at the time supported it until the balance between the two wings of unity stabilized.

Despite the lack of success of the unity experiment and the continuation for a long time, many researchers and critics disagree about the evaluation of this first unitary experience in the contemporary history of the Arabs, and opinions vary strongly between those who describe it as a success and those who describe it as a failure, and each has its logic and arguments, while the unionists argue the economic achievements that have been achieved in the era of unity in Syria, especially social justice and the beginning of the Euphrates Dam project, which was in the eyes of President Gamal Abdel Nasser parallel to the High Dam project in Aswan, and the movement In addition to protecting Syria from the

threats of the alliances that were waiting for it, especially the Baghdad Pact, which was the main reason behind the establishment of the unity state (the United Arab Republic).

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Flag of the United Arab Republic

It is still a flag of the Syrian Arab Republic and the two stars mean Egypt and Syria

Hoping that the stars will increase with the accession of other Arab countries to the unity state



Map of the United Arab Republic



President Gamal Abdel Nasser and President Shukri al-Quwatli sign unity



A warm reception for President Gamal Abdel Nasser during his visit to Syrian cities



Newspapers write about the reception of President Jamal in the Syrian city of Aleppo