

failure of the arab league

[Parts of the World](#), [Africa](#)



In the wake of any great conflict, states will try and assemble a system that is based on unity and prevention of further conflict, there are several aspects usually addressed, including the economy and the international relations. In the wake of World War 2 the UN assembled to form the new world order (Pinfari, 1.) In the Middle East, 6 founding members (Egypt, Transjordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq) formed the Arab League, an organization founded upon a common sense of Arabism with a goal of Arab unity (Pinfari, 2.)

In the wake of the Cold War, Africa found itself at a political disadvantage because of the fragmented politics of the continent, they were at a geographical advantage and wanted to make use of that, so they formed the African Union to address inner-conflicts and the mayhem caused by the remains of colonialism after the Cold War (Dersso, 13-14.) On the other side of things the European Union formed in the late 1990's with a different mission in mind when compared to the two aforementioned organizations.

The Arab League and the African Union's missions were more ambitious than those of other political organizations such as the EU and the UN, due to many reasons why this paper will focus on discussing their economy, their judiciary and the effect of pan-Arabism and a pan-African perspective. When nations group under one banner as is the case in the examples mentioned, the issue of their individual political sovereignty is brought into the foreground as countries value their autonomy.

The European Union is more of a " union" in the judiciary sense than the Arab League: while the Arab League clearly states in its charter that the

League has no right to intervene in the internal affairs of a member country unless their overall safety is compromised, this then makes way for dictators like Qaddafi to rule for years in what certain scholars would view as a tyrannical manner.

The judiciary of each country is separate from the Arab League which isn't the case with the EU, whereby the Court of Justice of the European Union has the right to supersede any national court of law (Wallace, 484), by so doing maintaining peace in a more efficient way. How does this make the Arab League's mission more ambitious, is that they are seeking peace and unity based on a sense of Arabism rather than an effective judicial system (Reiser, 1), and it is ambitious to assume that this will prevail.

When discussing the Organization of African Unity (OAU), their mission can also be seen as more ambitious than that of the EU, the OAU's mission was to establish widespread security and unity between African members of this union through the ideal of "African Solutions for African problems," but like the Arab League, their mission contains certain clauses that are emphasized in discourse, yet not much is done to re-enforce them (Dersso, 13), and often the governments of individual states will do as they please, as is the case with the Rwanda genocide in 1994, with no higher judicial force to intervene, and that is where they fail (Tavares, 23.)

Africa however should not be grouped with the Arab League, even though they are comparable, because after the Cold War, Africa had been depleted because of their division into pro-USA forces and pro-Soviet forces during the Cold War, as they underwent a number of proxy wars for the USA and the Soviet Union. After having served their purpose Africa was then disregarded

and faced with “ indifference” from forces that had had an increasing interest in it before (Dersso, 15.)

When discussing the economy there are also rather ambitious initiatives on the AL and the OAU's parts, in their missions they strive for unity, but one of the main constituents of said unity, is economic unity, whereby member states implement policies that will be beneficial to one another's economies as is the case with the EU, they have a unified currency and an open market, whereby, goods, services and people are not taxed when traded between members.

The EU is the only Regional Institution with a separate monetary system which makes , “ the EU has become greater than merely an arena of inter-state co-operation and has taken on many state-like powers” (Bradbury 18). This however does not work with the Arab League, because of the lack of a policy which dictates the existence of such a market but also because of the division in wealth in the Middle East, oil-rich states such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar control the capital and give money to the poorer members such as Egypt, in exchange for one thing that Egypt has in abundance: labor and cheap labor at that (Korany, 279.)

Also how can the Arab League hope to achieve such unity when travelling between member states still requires visas and there are still taxes on products traded between member states? Again, the mission is ambitious with no real actions taken to implement. As for the OAU, the member states are still very much in conflict as is evident by Africa's human rights violations and constant violence. After all , Africa is simply too large and divided to ever fit under one banner.

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After all, overcoming colonialism is not simple; North Africa is an attest to that, with French being a prominent language, even though it was the tongue of their colonizers. In the Arab League's charter there is a clause which dictates that states in aggression shall be forced into deliberations by the League itself and shall receive a majority vote on what they are expected to do, " the league's decision shall then be effective and obligatory."

This however, did not seem like a viable clause as there have been many conflicts between states in the Arab League and interventions were long and tedious and ultimately rendered useless, when there are clauses and no way to implement them, then it is ambitious to place them in the charter in the first place. The importance of pan-Arabism and pan-Africanism is also noteworthy.

Pan-Arabism started in the Middle East with leaders like Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser and his nationalistic sentiment; it is a concept which dictates that Arab nations should unite because of a shared Arab identity (Reiser, 1983.) Ever since pan-Arabism was introduced, Arabs have been asking themselves what it stands for and what is it based on (Reiser, 1983), it was the leaders ambition, one that was evidently misplaced as the citizens of member states don't see each other as Arab, rather, Egyptian, Syrian, Lebanese etc.

One also begins to ponder the role of colonialism here; different nations have colonized the members of the Arab League, for example: Egypt was colonized Britain and France, Libya by Italy, North Africa by France and Jordan by Britain, there are remnants of these " cultures" in these countries, and hence there is a difference in psyche and a difference in identity.

Pan-Arabism and pan-Africanism are both supposedly built on an “identitarian” principle yet Hall argues that identity get created through discourse, it’s not a stable entity but a process that is incomplete and is reproduced through process (Hall 16). This same problem exists in Africa and pan-Africanism has the same logical holes in it, African states were and still are very much divided (as I have mentioned previously), so how can they all exist under one African umbrella? Hence, the Arab League fails (Pinfari, 1.)
The OAU fails.