

SOCIOLOGY OF FAILURE IN THE
CONTEMPORARY ARAB THOUGHT
(READING ON SYAUQĪ JALĀL'S WORK ON
THE ARAB LEFT)

By Yoyo Yoyo

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**SOCIOLOGY OF FAILURE IN THE CONTEMPORARY ARAB
THOUGHT (READING ON SYAUQĪ JALĀL'S WORK
ON THE ARAB LEFT)**

YOYO 

Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (Indonesia)

E-mail: yoyo@bsa.uad.ac.id

Abstract: *The Arab world continues to show new social, cultural, and political dynamics. Post the Arab Spring era, Arab countries with a republican system and having a historical memory of pan-Arab nationalism, are still faced with crucial national issues such as political injustice, social welfare, religious conflict, and other critical matters. From the perspective of the Arab intellectuals, the following severe question arises: why the Arab thought since the modern to the contemporary period does not have any significant effects on the progress of the Arab world. Internal and external problems constantly plague the Arab world. One of the crucial causes is the lack of a clear direction for the future projection of the Arab world indicated by the ideological divisions. The non-success of Arab thought since the Nahda era, which culminated in a painful defeat in the six-day Arab-Israeli war in 1967, followed by another Arab crisis such as the Arab Spring, all shows the inflexibility of the Arab intellectual elite. It seems there is no relation between idea and reality. On that basis, Syauqī Jalāl, an Egyptian thinker, tried to reflect and to call into question why did the Arab thought face a dead end. What is the leading cause, and can the Arab thought provide a real solution to the Arab crisis? The paper seeks to answer these questions by exploring the perspectives of Syauqī Jalāl on the Arab thought by taking the leftist Arab wing movement as his analysis.*

Keywords: *Sociology, Thought failure, Arab thought, Arab Spring, Leftist movement, Syauqī Jalāl.*

Rezumat: *Sociologia eșecului în gândirea arabă contemporană (citind lucrările lui Syauqī Jalāl despre stânga arabă). Lumea arabă continuă să prezinte noi dinamici sociale, culturale și politice. După epoca Primăverii Arabe, țările arabe cu un sistem republican și având o memorie istorică a naționalismului pan-arab, se confruntă încă cu probleme naționale cruciale precum nedreptatea politică, bunăstarea socială, conflictul religios și alte chestiuni critice. Din perspectiva intelectualilor arabi se ridică următoarea întrebare serioasă: de ce gândirea arabă, din perioada modernă până în cea contemporană, nu are urmări semnificative asupra progresului lumii arabe. Problemele interne și externe îmbolnăvesc*

constant lumea arabă. Una dintre cauzele cruciale o reprezintă lipsa unei direcții clare pe care fracțiunile ideologice să o indice pentru viitoarea proiecție a lumii arabe. Insuccesul gândirii arabe începând cu epoca Nahda, care a culminat cu o înfrângere dureroasă în războiul arabo-israelian de șase zile din 1967, urmată de o altă criză precum Primăvara Arabă, toate arată inflexibilitatea elitei intelectuale arabe. E ca și cum n-ar exista nicio relație între idee și realitate. Pe acest temei, Syauqī Jalāl, un gânditor egiptean, a încercat să reflecteze și să readucă în discuție motivul pentru care gândirea arabă a ajuns într-un punct mort. Care este cauza principală a acestui eșec și oare poate gândirea arabă să ofere o soluție reală la criza arabă? Lucrarea încearcă să răspundă la aceste întrebări, explorând perspectivele lui Syauqī Jalāl asupra gândirii arabe prin analiza aripii stângi a mișcării arabe.

INTRODUCTION

After the 1967 Arab defeat, popularly known as the defeatism or *al-Nakba*, the progressive Arab writers and thinkers did not see the West anymore as the leading cause of the decline of the Arab World. Instead, they take a look at the problems caused by internal factors. This awareness and effort to criticize internal issues is known as self-criticism or self-examination.¹ According to the Arabs thinkers, the Arab world faced the internal crisis caused by the failure of Arab modernism projects. It seems that the projections of modern Arab thought initiated by Islam modernist such as Muhammad 'Abduh, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Qasim Amin, and others did not have any substantial influence in overcoming the mindset and mentality of the Arabs. It did not only fall into false modernism but even worse, it created a new form of traditionalism.

In patriarchal cultures, for example, when Arabs entered and adopted modern ideas, they no longer applied a system of patriarchy in their social order. However, Arab countries, in general, have created a new patriarchal or neo-patriarchy culture in the form of authoritarianism, pseudo modernism, and distribution of power based on kinship.² The impact of this fact caused the decline of the Arab world and reached its peak during the Arab Spring.

¹ Ibrahim M Abu-Rabi', *Contemporary Arab Thought: Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History*, London, Pluto Press, 2004, p. 43-48; Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Societies*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 111; Yoyo (coord.), *Tren Pemikiran Intelektual Muslim Kontemporer di Timur Tengah Pasca Diftisme 1967* [Trend of Contemporary Muslim Intellectual Thought after the Arab Defeat of 1967], in "Kawistara: The Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities", 2012, Vol. 2, no. 3, p. 229.

² Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy...*, p. 94-99; Yoyo, *Neo-Patriarchy and the Problem of the Arab Crisis: A Critical Study on Hisham Sharabi's Works*, in "QIJIS: Qudus International Journal

One exciting and questionable thing for researchers related to the Arab Spring is why the Arab Spring emerged without being driven by any ideas or ideologies. It was as if there was a disconnect between the ideas of previous Arab thinkers and the realities. Therefore, the Arab Spring became an assertion that Arab thought did not succeed in carrying out the Arab social transformation. In particular, the paper tries to see why the Arab thought has always failed in the process of transforming Arab society. This paper seeks to explore the ideas of Syauqī Jalāl on the causes of failure of the Arab thought by focusing on the Arab left group. Syauqī Jalāl saw the Arab leftist or Arab Marxist as one of the representations of Arab social groups who promoted some solutions to the Arab crisis.

Syauqī Jalāl Ustman was born on October 30, 1931, in Cairo. He earned his bachelor's degree at Cairo University in 1956, majoring in Philosophy and Psychology, Faculty of Humanities. Syauqī Jalāl was a well-known translator and won an award in 2003 for his translation work entitled *al-Tarjamah fi al-'Ālam al-'Arabī: al-Waqi' wa al-Tahaddī*. This book was of great importance to the history of translation in the Arab World. Compared to other Egyptian thinkers during his period, such as Hassan Hanafi and Nasser Hamid Abu Zaid, the popularity of Syauqī Jalāl in the study of Arab thought in the Indonesian context, in particular, was notably lacking. Many factors led to his reputation not being well known; namely, Syauqi was not an academic activist. Besides, the idea of Syauqi Jalal, in general, did not focus on Islamic studies in a specific way. However, Syauqi's survey of the Arab left is significant and important. Among other things, he examines the Arab left thought in the relationship between thought and social context. He seeks to measure the extent to which the conformity between ideas and social reality matches. According to him, the success of a thought depends on people's acceptance of the concept.

The paper, in general, divided into two main discussions. First, it discusses the Arab left group briefly from its historical background and its intellectual representation. Secondly, it explores Syauqi Jalal's ideas about the Arab left group and the causes of their failure as an alternative solution for the future of the Arab World. To achieve this goal, the paper in particular analyses Jalal's book entitled "*al-Fikr al-'Arabī wa Sūsiyūlūjiā al-Fasyīl* [The Arab Thought and Sociology of Failure]." Methodologically, the paper attempts to reconstruct and analyse the text into a new interpreted version.³

of Islamic Studies", 2018, Vol. 6, no. 2, p. 259–260.

³ Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Textual Analysis for Social Research*, London, Routledge, 2003, pp. 21, 39.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE ARAB LEFT

Tracing the roots of leftist Arab ideas and movements is not easy, because this movement is considered alien and not popular among Arabs. Nonetheless, the end of Ottoman Turkish rule was seen as an era where the ideas of Marxism appeared. Yet, the Arab left or the new Arab left emerged in 1960 and culminated after the defeat of the Arab-Israeli war in 1967.⁴ It marked a significant change in the arena of Arab ideology. The doctrine of Nasserism or Pan-Arabism is seen as an empty slogan and has shown the Arab military weakness against Israel. The Arab leftists came to the fore after the 1967 defeat, marked by the emergence of the Palestine Liberation Organization that acted not only as a national aspiration of the Palestinian people but also as an expression of regional politics. Other left organizations have emerged, such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), the Communist Party-Political Bureau in Syria, and the Organization of Communist Action in Lebanon. The Arab left sees that conservative nationalist figures can no longer be expected; they must be replaced by leaders who are more open and have the vision to build a modern Arab country.⁵

The primary purpose of the Arab left is to oppose racial, political, and patriarchal domination and economic exploitation. The Arab left sought the need for direct action by confronting any established powers, whether it was a state or social authorities. The response should be taken in a revolutionary movement conducted from the bottom-up, occupy any public spaces, and create alternative life forms.⁶

The glory of the Arab left ideology was between the 1950s and 1970s, after which this ideology was no longer significant because its position replaced by the emergence of Islamic politics as the next dominant ideology.⁷ Although no longer dominant, the Arab left in the politics and practice is not dead. The Arab Left became more inclined as an intellectual movement, especially those of the Arab gen-

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⁴ Sune Haugbolle, Manfred Sing, *New Approaches to Arab Left Histories*, in "Arab Studies Journal", 2016, Vol. 24, no. 1, p. 90-97.

⁵ Joel Beinin, *Criticism and Defeat: An Introduction to George Hawi*, in "MERIP Reports", 1983, Vol. 118, p. 16-18.

⁶ Sune Haugbolle, *The New Arab Left and 1967*, in "British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies", 2017, Vol. 44, no. 4, p. 500.

⁷ Haugbolle, Sing, *New Approaches...*, p. 92-93; Michaëlle Browers, *Political Ideology in the Arab World: Accommodation and Transformation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 7.

eration born around the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, as an era of post-Marxism.⁸

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On June 5, 1967, Israel attacked and destroyed the Egyptian air force. A few days later, Israel even succeeded in occupying Sinai as well as Suez, Jerusalem, and West Bank and Golan Heights. The defeat of the Arab-Israeli War in 1967, called the Six-Day War, was seen by Arab-Muslim thinkers as not only a defeat of technology and strategy but also a moral defeat.⁹ For the Marxist / Arab Left (*al-Fikr al-Mārkisī / al-Yasār al-'Arabī*), the 1967 tragedy was not only a result of the practices of corruption and authoritarianism of the Arab regime, but more than that was "backwardness" (*takhalluf*) and "ignorance" (*jahl*) of the Arab community itself. More specifically, they concluded, that Arab society had failed to decide on traditional and conservative tendencies, thus preventing them from internalizing the spirit of modernity in a positive, humanistic, and even revolutionary form.¹⁰

Marxist / Left Arab intellectuals advocated total modernization in line with the revolutionary line and breaking up from traditions. They criticized the contemporary Arab revolution as not entirely and only partially.¹¹ The representative intellectuals of the Arab Marxist / Arab Left are Hussain Muruwwa, Mahdi 'Amil, Fawwaz Tarabulsi, and Karim Muruwwa from Lebanon; Yassin al-Hafiz, Elias Murqus, Sadek Jalal al-mAmm, Tayyib Tizini, and Adonis from Syria; Hisham Sharabi from Palestine; Samir Amin, Lutfi al-Khuli, Ibrahim Sabri 'Abdallah, Fu'ad Mursi, Rif'at al-Sa'id, Ahmad Sadiq Sa'd, Ghali Syukri, from Egypt; Abdallah Laroui from Morocco; Talal Asad from Saudi Arabia; and Hadi al-Ulwi from Iraq.¹²

In an interview in 1997, Sadek Jalal al-zAzm, a representative of Arab Marxist / Arab left intellectuals as well as a philosopher from Damascus, with a doctorate earned from Yale University, stated: "Naturally, the defeat of June 1967 interrupted all plans and revealed the fragility of the modern Arab intellectual Renaissance on which the Arab liberation movement based its hopes. Most of

⁸ Haugbolle, Sing, *New Approaches...*, p. 95.

⁹ Albert Hourani, *A History of The Arab Peoples*, New York, Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 412; Yoyo (coord.) *Tren Pemikiran...*, p. 77.

¹⁰ Stephen Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2004, p. 3.

¹¹ Ali E Hillal Dessouki, *Arab Intellectuals and Al-Nakba: The Search for Fundamentalism*, in "Middle Eastern Studies", 1973, Vol. 9, no. 2, p. 187-195.

¹² Ibrahim M Abu-Rabi', *Contemporary Arab...*, p. 87.

these hopes revolved around the concept of the inspired leader, and when the leader fell, everything crashed with him, leaving nothing behind but emptiness, loss, and confusion. I would not be exaggerating when I say that the defeat hit us like a lightning bolt."¹³

According to him, 1967 defeatism destroyed all projects and hopes of the modern movement and Arab liberation. These hopes depend on the central leadership of the Arab nation (read: Nasser), where when this character is defeated, the projections destroyed and all the ideas about the modern and advanced Arab World. Furthermore, al-'Azm said that: "The 1967 defeat was an exceptional event in every sense of the word, a terrifying explosion which destroyed the foundations of the Arab liberation movement."¹⁴

Most importantly, in his opinion, the defeat of the 1967 Arab Israeli war was a severe blow to the foundations of the Arab liberation movement pioneered, which developed its socialist trends under Nasser's leadership. According to al-Azm, the 1952 Revolution led by Nasser had indeed succeeded in carrying out economic and political transformation by overthrowing the monarchy leader and expanding power utilizing land redistribution and abolishing the feudal system. However, these efforts do not touch the "superstructure" of the essential Arab society, namely: a system of thought, value, and belief. According to him, the defeat of 1967 was a result of the strengthening of conservatism.¹⁵

Another disadvantage in al-Azm's view is that Arab society failed to proclaim the scientific and secular nature of the ideology of socialism. The Arab revolution has not dealt with the fundamental problems of society, such as the future of agriculture, land ownership, secularization, and class relations. The consequence of this ideology vagueness is the birth of the attitude of *wasathiyyah* (middle of the path), as the main character of the Arab revolution so far.¹⁶ Secularism in al-Azm's view is a necessity so that Arab society can advance and compete with other developed countries.

For al-Azm, the same secularism or what he called civil government (*hukūmah madaniyyah*) is a pre-condition for democracy. According to him, secularism is a neutral attitude that must be displayed by the state regarding religion, sect, denomination, and ethnic categories, which are often a problem in society.

¹³ Ghada Talhami, *An Interview with Sadik Al-Azm*, in "Arab Studies Quarterly", 1997, p. 116.

¹⁴ *Ibid...*, p. 119.

¹⁵ Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab, *Contemporary Arab Thought: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2010, p. 74.

¹⁶ Dessouki, *Arab Intellectuals...*, p. 190.

Al-Azm further emphasized that secularism is a historical choice. Islam can accept secularism as long as we can distinguish between a "doctrinaire no" (*allā as-suratiyyah*) and a "historic yes" (*an-na'am at-tārikhiyyah*). The "doctrinaire no" considers that the political system that carried out by the ruler was viewed as not in line with Islam, although in its history, it has been proven to advance of Islam. Meanwhile, the "historic yes" views that Islam, in its historical context, has always been able to adapt to various ideologies that have ever existed.¹⁷

Thus, secularism, as a "historic yes" in modern times, is acceptable to Islam as Islam has succeeded through a series of long histories in interpreting and defining itself. Seen from the doctrine's point of view, Islam will only be compatible with itself, but if Islam is seen as a historical fact, it has been proven to be able to compete in the political, social, and economic organization.

Nevertheless, al-Azm did not agree if religious thinking became the foundation for change. According to him, the religious thinking is only a false consciousness and cannot be in line with an authentic, scientific thinking. This religious thought is perilous because it is sometimes used to support the existing social order and those who are behind it, and to prevent the occurrence of social and political liberation movements.¹⁸ Included in this attitude, al-Azm criticized the position of Adonis or Ali Ahmad Said (born in 1930), as other Marxist intellectuals who tended to sympathize and admire the 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran. According to the author, Adonis was born and grew up in the Shiite tradition, so he greatly praised and glorified the revolution. Again, for al-Azm as the most reliable representation of Arab Marxists, the Arab world will only achieve progress when they dare to place religion at the domestic/personal level and prioritize the scientific revolution as the only way for the Arabs to make the growth.

Another prominent exponent of the Arab left is Abdallah Laroui. Born in Azmour, Morocco, he attended elementary and secondary school in Rabat, then graduated from Sorbonne, Paris, earning a BA in political sciences in 1956. Subsequently, in 1958 he completed his master's degree and obtained a diploma in Islamic studies in 1963. In 1976, he managed to defend his dissertation for his Ph.D., with the title *The Social and Cultural Base of the Moroccan nation: 1830-1912*. Moreover, Laroui devoted himself as a professor at the faculty of literature in Rabat, Morocco.¹⁹ Laroui began publishing his work in 1964 with the nickname

¹⁷ Abu Fakhir, *Trends in Arab Thought: An Interview with Sadek Jalal Al-Azm*, in "Journal of Palestine Studies", 1998, Vol. 27, no. 2, p. 68-80.

¹⁸ Albert Hourani, *A History...*, p. 444.

¹⁹ Yoyo, *Pemikiran Arab: Dinamika Intelektual, Ideologi, dan Gerakan* [Arab Thought, Ide-

Abdallah Alrafedy, when he wrote a Roman drama entitled *The Man of Memory*, for a new magazine, "Aqlam". His intellectual works included studies of ideological criticism, the history of ideas and system, and some novels. He collaborated with journals such as "Aqlam" (Rabat), "Mawaqif" (Beirut), "Arabic Studies" (Beirut), "Les Temps modernes", and "Diogène" (Paris).²⁰

The defeat of 1967 marked the maturity of his thought. In that year, his book entitled *Contemporary Arab Ideology* signified the birth of his philosophical project. In 1970, its translation into Arabic appeared through the publisher of Al-Haqeqa. Since then, Abdallah Laroui's name has become essential in the arena of Arab thinkers. The book was intended as a sharp criticism of the dominant Arab thought in his era.²¹

Living in France, in the mid 1950s, he began to study the works of Egyptian thinkers, from Muhammad Abduh to Ali Abdelrazeq, from Rifa'ah Badawi Al Tahtawi to Qasim Amin, from Afghani to Lutfi Al Sayyid, Salama Mousa, and Taha Husein. After he reviewed their perspectives, enriched with an in-depth reading of the Moroccan National Movement literature (such as Allal Al Fassi and Mohmmad Hassan), Laroui's works were born, which were very comprehensive and critical. He analysed the reality and facts of the Arabs in intellectual, political, and cultural aspects, by studying and offering alternatives. His intellectual project became more evident after 1973, when he published the book "Arab Nation and History of Thought," followed by the book "Arab Intellectual Crisis". The work was written in French, in 1974. Followed later with a series of writings on "various concepts" from the year 1980 to 1996.²²

In particular, Laroui saw the future of the Arabs as dependent on their ability to adopt the Western Modernist thinking with its main categories, namely Rationalism, Criticism, Progress, and Responsibility for humans at the theoretical level, and Secularism, the Marxist social system, and the Centrality of the state, on a practical scale. The mechanism for implementing the transformation model as above is by doing 'epistemological break' or epistemological disconnection from classical Arab / Islamic heritage. The disconnect is the breakdown of the thinking model of the method used in the history of Arab / Islamic culture and replaces it with methods and models of contemporary thought. This idea is at the core of

²³ ology, and Movement], Yogyakarta, Sociality, 2017, p. 92-93.

²⁰ *Ibid...*, p. 93.

²¹ *Ibid...*, p. 94-95.

²² Said Mentak, *Review Essay: Abdallah Laroui's New Conception of Interpreting Islam*, in "Contemporary Islam", 2010, Vol. 4, no. 2, p. 239-245.

Laroui's thinking, which can be found in his entire works.²³

In his famous books, *The Crisis of the Arab Intelligentsia* (1976), Laroui saw that the setbacks faced by Muslims, especially in the context of Arab society, were a reflection of the failure of Arab intellectuals in carrying out the social transformation. According to him, this failure is because Arab intellectuals trapped in two models of thinking, namely traditional (*salafi*), and eclecticism. According to Laroui, these two models of thought fail to see reality because they ignore history. The conventional thinking model trapped in the mindset of medievalism, and the early Islamic era was considered the most ideal. Meanwhile, the second group is too dependent on outsiders. Dependence is not just a loss of independence and pride in the country, but far more dangerous than that is the continuing decline of history.²⁴

RELIGION, SCIENCE, AND ARAB IDENTITY

Syauqī Jalāl's first step in studying the Arab left and the causes of its failure began with his general analysis of the relationship between religion and science as the cause of the retreat of the glory of Islam. Syauqī questioned why primary sciences, which had been developed by Al-Biruni, al-Khawarizmi, and Ibn Rusyd, disappeared in Arab or Islamic countries and developed or globalized in Europe. The ideas of these Muslim scholars became the foundation for the European progress.²⁵ According to Syauqī, it often happens when the Arab world faced with a crisis; they lose their creative minds and the strengthening of emotive power.²⁶ In contrast to the Arab world, Europe, when faced with a dilemma due to World War II – which have triggered the birth of two schools of philosophy, namely the philosophy of doubt (*syak*) and philosophy of the will (*irādah*) – decided to develop a philosophy of intention for its future development. In the Muslim world, the critical role of reason as a driver for the progress of *ummah* has already been introduced by Muslim thinkers such as Ibn Rushd, Ibn Khaldun, and Afghani and Abduh.²⁷ However, this era of rationalism must end with the emergence of people who attack reason and establish religion as the primary source of knowledge and

²³ Abdallah Laroui, *The Crisis of the Arab Intelligentsia: Traditionalism or Historicism*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976.

²⁴ Abdallah Laroui, *The Crisis of the Arab...*, p. 154.

²⁵ Syauqī Jalāl, *Al-Fikr Al-'Arabī Wa Sūsiyūlūjiā Al-Fasyīl* [The Arab Thought and the Sociology of Failure], al-Qāhirah, Maktabah Madbuli, 2002, p. 11.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 25

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26-31.

truth. This type of thinking begins with the era of Asyariyah, Wahabi, and also Abul A'la Maududi. The modern era in the Arab World precisely characterized by strengthening the flow of Islamism, which negates the role of reason in providing solutions to problems faced by the *ummah*.²⁸

Therefore, Syauqī noted that the reform movement in the Arab World should not always be based on the foundation of religion. When religion considered the main element of identity, it is a false identity. Why is that?, because if there is an Islamic identity, then which Islam is meant? What schools of religion are adopted? Islam with a thinker or Imam who should follow? Identity, therefore, is the existence of an active and creative society that develops dynamically based on a particular place and time. Identity is an expression of certain civilizations as a result of natural social interaction. Religion is only one element that develops in identity. Therefore, identity, in general, cannot be attributed to any particular religion.²⁹

Through the above perspective, Syauqī Jalāl's thoughts on social identity are similar to the ideas proposed by Hassan Hanafi (an Egyptian and Arab leftist scholar) that identity, in general, is very much tied to particular contexts and times.³⁰ This view is a reference for Syauqī Jalāl in looking at Arab movements and thoughts in general by emphasizing the sociological aspects of society's acceptance of an idea.

THE FAILURE OF THE ARAB LEFT

The Arab left, according to Syauqī Jalāl, is any movement of critics who wanted a rapid change of social, political, and economics. However, this group, in his opinion, does not have any historical roots in the Arab tradition³¹. The Arab left is seen as not having the capacity as a movement of criticism because, in general, the Arab left does not have full awareness of the crisis faced by the *ummah*. As a movement, it tends to be an individual movement rather than as a massive social movement. Thus, it is a marginal group that cannot freely integrate with the community.³² Besides, most of the Arab countries except Morocco, ideological and political parties, such as the Arab left, did not have a tradition of

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 36-39.

³⁰ Hasan Hanafi, *Al-Huwiyyah* [The Identity], al-Qāhirah, al-Majlis al-A'lā li al-Tsaqāfah, 2012.

³¹ Syauqī Jalāl, *Al-Fikr Al-'Arabī...*, p. 78.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 83.

any political party activities.³³ Therefore, political parties in the Arab world have minimal support bases amongst those they want to represent.³⁴ Besides, the Arab left theoretically is a dialectical movement between thought and reality. Since the beginning, the Arab left was more ideological rather than as a social movement. The Arab left is not a representation of a combination of theory and comprehensive action. Fundamentally, there are epistemological breaks between the Arab left and the historical reality of the Arab tradition.³⁵

In Jordan, the leftist wing group represented by the National Socialist Party of Sulayman al-Nabulsi, which emerged in 1957, failed to gain broad public support. Thus, opposition groups, including the leftist wing, always experience failures not only due to its difficulties in obtaining mass support. but also because of repression of the ruling regime. Left-wing groups have a problem in conveying their political aspirations through official parties. The pause of the life of political parties in the Arab world fatally occurred in the late 1990s.³⁶ It was also affected by the collapse of the Soviet Union by the early 1990s.³⁷

In Egypt, The 'Tajammu' or *Hizb Tajammu' al-Watani al-Taqaddumi al-Wahdawi* (National Progressive Unionist Party) is an official left-wing party founded in 1976. The program of Tajammu' is to reject the policy program of *infitah* [economic and political openness of Egyptian to the West] run by President Sadat and emphasize the importance of rapid economic growth. The Tajammu' party failed to compete with the government party due to allegations that the party was a communist and an atheist organization as the worst devils of the Nasser period. Also, a fundamental factor of the weakness of the leftist movement in Egypt is the absence of political networks or mass support from the countryside.³⁸

In Syria, during the Arab Spring, there is a daily newspaper run by left-wing nationalist activists: *Al-Akhbar*. The split began when a revolutionary wave broke out in Syria in March 2011. The managing editor of *Al-Akhbar* left the paper because of *Al-Akhbar's* content considered to be a lack of support for the

³³ Shadi Hamid, *Political Party Development before and after the Arab Spring*, in Mehran Kamrava (Ed.), *Beyond the Arab Spring: The Evolving Ruling Bargain in the Middle East*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 132.

³⁴ Vincent Durac, *Protest Movements and Political Change: An Analysis of the 'Arab Uprisings*, in "Journal of Contemporary African Studies", 2013, Vo. 31, no. 2, p. 183.

³⁵ Syauqī Jalāl, *Al-Fikr Al-'Arabi...*, p. 89-90.

³⁶ Shadi Hamid, *Political Party...*, p. 132-133

³⁷ Haugbolle, Sing, *New Approaches...*, p. 93.

³⁸ Bertus Hendriks, *The Legal Left in Egypt*, in "Arab Studies Quarterly", 1983, Vol. 5, no. 3, p. 262-270.

revolutionary movement. On the other hand, in the name of the struggle against Israel and resistance to imperialism, some preferred to remain behind the regime. The main fear of the nationalist left is the vacuum and post-Assad reconciliation that will bring the country closer to a coalition with the US or the Gulf Arab States.

In general, the nationalist left wings, both "revolutionary" and "progressive," want a gradual transition caused by the fear of an uncertain future.³⁹ Another one, the leftist nationalists, saw that the Arab Spring had paved the way for the hegemony of Islamist groups such as happened in Tunisia and Egypt.⁴⁰ Therefore, the failure of the left caused by the weak elements of this group. Besides, from their inner side, they prefer to choose political stability rather than revolutionary actions due to the uncertain future of the political, social, and economic projections of the Arab world.

CONCLUSIONS

Arab thought generally failed due to elitism shown by the Arab intellectuals. Thoughts and criticisms of Arab reality are difficult to be implemented in the real Arab social and political contexts. In particular, according to Syauqī Jalāl, the Arab left became a marginal Arab group because this movement, in its essence, was radical and revolutionary. It means that the Arab left mainly driven by particular individuals rather than public or massive support. Besides, there is a distance or epistemological break of the Arabic left with the real Arab reality. That is, the Arab left has no historical roots in Arab societies because it was imported from the West.

The tendency to deny the Arab "tradition" and prefer to choose revolutionary steps with various consequences is considered dangerous. Therefore, sociologically, the Arab left as a representation of contemporary Arab thought is always faced with the deadlock and has not yet become a solution and accepted as a significant Arab social and intellectual movement. In the new political context, they are also facing the dilemma between standing behind the regime in the name of political stability or supporting the revolutionary action that will pave the way for religious movements to be dominant ideology.

³⁹ Nicolas Dot-Pouillard, *Syria Divides the Arab left*, in "Le Monde Diplomatique (English edition)", 2012, p.4.

⁴⁰ Nathan J. Brown, *Tracking the "Arab Spring": Egypt's Failed Transition*, in "Journal of Democracy", 2013, Vol. 24, no. 4, p. 50-53; Asef Bayat, *The Arab Spring and Its Surprises*, in "Development and Change", 2013, Vol. 44, no. 3, p. 595.

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