

The Failure of the Arab Spring

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By

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To H.A.K.

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PREFACE

While I was doing my postgraduate studies in the UK, the Arab Spring was the most dominant issue in nearly all media outlets. I told everyone then that it was not a time to rejoice a democratic triumph, but an occasion to observe and try to understand the political evolution of mankind. Many did not predict the failure of the historic event. Therefore, I thought the presentation of this concise volume will help the reader comprehend why the Arab Spring failed, and how the rise and fall of intolerant political Islam in the region needs us to revisit the understanding of democracy.

A lot has been written about the Arab Spring. Most of which celebrated the event. This book attempts to correctly identify why it all happened, and, why it all failed.

ABBREVIATIONS

EJIL	European Journal of International Law
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDP	National Democratic Party (Egypt)
RCC	Revolution Command Council (Egypt)
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (Egypt)
UN	United Nations

INTRODUCTION

The Arab Spring is perhaps the most important political episode in the twenty-first century. It all started when a young fruit seller, Mohammed Bouazizi, set himself on fire in protest against police brutality.¹ This event launched a revolution throughout Tunisia, reaching the capital, Tunis, and resulting in the autocratic regime of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali being overthrown in January 2011.²

Events did not stop there. The revolution spread to other parts of the Arab World. Ten days later, a similar anti-government movement came to the surface in Egypt. Cairo's Tahrir Square turned into a gathering place full of people calling for the fall of the regime. The raging crowds forced President Mubarak to resign in a matter of days from the start of the uprising. Similar events spread to Yemen, Morocco, Libya and Syria in a domino effect, with a smaller impact in other countries. Each revolution did not have the same outcome; however, they all had more or less the same trends.

Democracy on the world stage spread through a number of *waves*. According to Samuel Huntington, a wave of democratization can be defined as a transition from non-democratic to democratic political regimes in a number of nations through the establishment of democratic institutions.³ The First Wave of democratization was the founding one echoed in the United States constitution and the French Revolution.⁴ A Second Wave in Western Europe followed this in the aftermath of the Second World War, where the Allied Powers promoted democracy in West Germany, Italy and Austria. This was also accompanied by

¹ RF Worth, 'How a Single Match Can Ignite a Revolution' *New York Times* (21 January 2011).

² PJ Schraeder and H Redissi, 'Ben Ali's Fall' (2011) 22 *Journal of Democracy* 5.

³ SP Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1991) 15. For more, see LJ Diamond, 'Is the Third Wave Over?' (1996) 7 *Journal of Democracy* 20; R Rose and DC Shin, 'Democratization Backwards: The Problem of Third-Wave Democracies' (2001) 31 *British Journal of Political Science* 331.

⁴ Huntington, *ibid* 16.

democratic institution building in the Pacific Front, namely in Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia and Korea.⁵

The Carnation Revolution in Portugal triggered the Third Wave of democratization in 1974, which spread to many regions in the world, especially Latin America where democracy was firmly introduced.⁶ The Wave continued until the collapse of the Soviet Union, where many former Soviet Republics in Eastern Europe swiftly transitioned to democracy. An important question arises: could the Arab Spring be seen as a Fourth Wave of democratization? The answer is no. This is because the series of popular uprisings in the region did not establish the foundations of democratic institutions and a democratic society. The conclusion of this book is that it is difficult to establish sustainable democratic governance in a region where the original position is one of political intolerance and religious dominance. Therefore, instead of a Fourth Wave of democratization, events could be seen as a maintained reverse wave where the situation went from non-democratic governance in the form of autocracy to a non-democratic system with limited democratic measures accompanied by a spirit of theocracy.

Why did the Arab Spring fail? The conclusion of this book is that its failure is linked to the rise (and fall) of Islamist political intolerance in the region. For the purpose of this study, the concept of intolerant Islamist actors could be defined as:

Those political actors who use democracy (free and fair elections) as a means to reach power in order to abolish the democratic system and replace it with an alternative one with a theocratic nature. They are intolerant because they are willing to impose their comprehensive doctrines with their distinctive conception of the good in society beyond the democratic pillars of pluralism, toleration and fundamental individual freedoms.

The recent tide of popular uprisings in the region led Islamist parties to come to power in a number of States. This is problematic in the sense that

⁵ Ibid 18-9. For a critique on Asian democracies, see CD Neher, 'Asian Style Democracy' (1994) 34 *Asian Survey* 949.

⁶ The Carnation Revolution of 1974 was a military coup in Lisbon staged by the Movimento das Forças Armadas against authoritarian rule in Portugal and its African colonies. The Revolution later inspired democracy movements in Latin America where the Third Wave of democratization first spread. See RM Fishman, 'Democratic Practice after the Revolution: The Case of Portugal and Beyond' (2011) 39 *Politics & Society* 233.

such actors see religion as a comprehensive political doctrine with its own conception of the good that challenges democracy, which is a comprehensive doctrine in its own right.

The Muslim Brotherhood, Salafist Movement and Shiite Fundamentalists became leading political actors in the region after a long history of non-democratic governance. The Ennahda Movement came to power in Tunisia; the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and other factions of political Islam had a smaller but significant piece of the cake in most Arab Spring States in the form of parliamentary seats. Tunisia's firmly established secularism died, and the rest of the region witnessed increasing Islamization measures. A Shiite axis between Iran, Hezbollah and the Syrian regime responded to the popular uprising against al-Assad, in the region's most violent sectarian episode. The main texts of the ideological components of the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafist Movement and Shiite Fundamentalism propose an alternative form of government. Whether this is in the form of a Caliphate or an Iran-like theocracy, the outcome of the Arab Spring does not merit a description as a victory for democracy and human rights.

The Muslim Brotherhood's Mohammed Morsi's short presidency of Egypt (June 2012 to July 2013) is a clear example of how the Arab Spring cannot be described as a triumph for democracy. Just a few months after being democratically elected and sworn into office, Morsi initiated a number of autocratic measures. The most provocative one was the November 2012 Constitutional Declaration, which gave him unrestricted power to 'protect the revolution' above judicial interference.⁷ The Declaration also made the work of the Muslim Brotherhood-dominated Constituent Assembly not subject to judicial review. The events outraged the masses that went back to Tahrir Square to oust the new president and his intolerant party from power. The army responded in a very controversial *coup d'état*, which it saw as necessary to protect the democratic transition.

Therefore, democratic transition in the Arab World failed, and history will only remember these events as a period of instability. There are indeed no grounds to celebrate *The End of History* and the reaching of the final stage

⁷ E Trager, 'Egypt's Looming Competitive Theocracy' (2013) 14 *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 27, 28.

of political evolution – as was expressed in the view of Francis Fukuyama.⁸

Chapter One of this book will discuss the First Arab Revolt and its democratic consequences. It will provide a detailed historical analysis of the revolt initiated by the Amir of Mecca and the complexities that followed the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The Sykes-Picot Agreement led to major results in the Arab political arena, and fueled anti-Western rhetoric. This all – indirectly at least – contributed to the introduction of pan-Arabist discourse.

Chapter Two will assess the ideology and background of radical pan-Arabism, in the forms of Nasserism and Arab Ba'athism. It is important to assess such dogmas in order to comprehend the failure of the Arab Spring, since these two political schools of Arab nationalism have systematically endorsed non-democratic means of governance, where political suppression was common, with a lack of true and noteworthy opposition.

The era that followed this witnessed a stable period of authoritarianism. In Chapter Three, the focus will be on this era, on how radical nationalist leaders were succeeded by less charismatic individuals, who did not clearly reflect a desire to pursue Arab unity or a commitment to democracy.

All of these factors contributed collectively in the strengthening of intolerant political Islamic rhetoric in underground politics. The pressure on moderate liberal opposition by the aforementioned regimes led to their practical non-existence at the grassroots level. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that such actors gained remarkable success in the Arab Spring.

Chapter Four will provide an analysis of the etymology of the term 'Arab Spring', and how the term is misleading. The inaccurate comparison of events in the Arab World with other pro-democracy occurrences in mainland Europe is ambiguous and deceptive. Therefore, a detailed critique of the term is of vital necessity in order to provide a critical assessment of the whole event.

⁸ F Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Free Press, 1992). For a critique on this controversial declaration, see S Marks, 'The End of History-Reflections on Some International Legal Theses' (1997) 8 *EJIL* 449.

Chapter Five will provide a comprehensive description of the Arab Spring. It will present a chronological portrayal of events in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen. The main conclusion is that these uprisings could not have succeeded without the interference of external powers, whether in the form of direct or indirect foreign intervention, or the explicit or implied assistance of the military in relevant nations. The choice of States for discussion is restricted to those in which the uprisings have succeeded in the complete overthrow of the existing government. Therefore, the analysis will not extend to other parts of the Arab World which are considered in some accounts as part of the Arab Spring.

The focus of the book will then shift to the groups which contributed to the failure of the Arab Spring. Intolerant Islamist actors led to the miscarriage of democracy. This is because they have their own conception of the good founded on a comprehensive religious doctrine with an alternative form of government. This will be the focus of Chapter Six. Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine will assess the ideologies of the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafism and Shiite Fundamentalism, and how they are incompatible with democracy.

The book concludes with key lessons on why the Arab Spring failed, and how it certainly cannot be seen as a wave of democratization. Although the Arab Spring is arguably continuing, this book's assessment of events focuses on the major incidents that occurred, mainly up to 2014. Thus, recent developments have not been included, but this does not affect the final conclusion, that the Arab Spring should be seen in history as a reverse wave of democratization.

CHAPTER I

THE ARAB REVOLT AND ITS DEMOCRATIC CONSEQUENCES

The Arab World – defined as members of the League of Arab States – has recently witnessed a series of popular uprisings, collectively known as the Arab Spring. This led many to assume that the region was heading towards a democratic awakening, after long years of authoritarian rule. Ever since the First Arab Revolution at the beginning of the twentieth century, the region had failed to achieve a period of sustainable democratic governance. Therefore, an important question arises as to whether or not the post-Arab Spring phase will actually lead to democratic transition.

In order to answer this question, this chapter will provide a detailed case study of the conditions in the Arab World and their relation to democracy following the First World War. This study will focus on establishing whether or not the most influential political ideologies and comprehensive doctrines are compatible with democracy. This will be achieved by first observing the democratic history of the region.

The Arab Revolt against Ottoman rule and the events that followed which led to the death of the Arab ‘nation-state’ will be the starting point of this study. This is because it is these events that led to the formation of intolerant political thought in the form of radical nationalism, as echoed in Nasserism and Arab Ba’ath Socialism, which was at the center of events for many decades.

Following this was an era of governance with common tendencies of authoritarianism throughout the region. This delayed the political evolution process, through the failure to form a democratic society based on the pillars of pluralism, tolerance and political liberalism. These conditions were an indirect reason for the formation of modern political Islam, with its intolerant attitude towards democratic participation, echoed in its alternative conceptual understanding of governance.

This chapter will assess the Arab Revolt and the events that followed it, and the questions of identity and democracy. This will be followed by an overview of the period of radical Arab politics in light of the pan-Arab nationalist rhetoric, and the period that followed, of steady authoritarianism. This will be achieved through analyzing the original texts associated with each political ideology involved. The method will be applied selectively in relation to those key Arab States in which the various intolerant discourses originated and had the most effect.

Before the recent wave of popular uprisings in the Arab World, the region went through a revolution that dramatically changed the course of history. Sharif Husayn ibn Ali, the Amir of Mecca at the beginning of the twentieth century, led his Arab people in a strong rebellion against the Ottoman Empire. This event was not followed by rejoicing or celebration, but rather the occupiers were replaced with others as a result of an imperial agreement behind closed doors, and the region never enjoyed the fruits of that revolution. Instead, it was subject to a mandate system, followed by an era of radical nationalism. Democracy was certainly not achieved over a period lasting for nearly a century.

In addition to discussing in some detail the Arab Revolt of 1916, this chapter will also present the results of the rebellion and its outcome, through examining the Sykes-Picot Agreement and its historical significance to events, in terms of its elimination of the nation-state. This will be followed by a brief discussion of the region's struggle for independence, which resulted in the radical nationalist movements that have come to power ever since the 1950s. The chapter will close with a critical analysis of how the Arab Revolt and its outcome shaped the region, and where democracy stands in relation to such events.

Europe went through a Great War at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1914, Archduke Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated in Sarajevo.¹ This event triggered the First World War. The whole continent was at war as a result of Austria's invasion of Serbia. The Ottomans took

¹ On 28 June 1914, a Serbian Nationalist assassinated Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo. This event eventually started World War I. See generally CF Hermann and MG Hermann, 'An Attempt to Simulate the Outbreak of World War I' (1967) 61 *The American Political Science Review* 400; SR Williamson, Jr. 'The Origins of World War I' (1988) 18 *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 795; L Lafore, *The Long Fuse: An Interpretation of the Origins of World War I* (2nd edn, Waveland Press, 1997); HH Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary 1914-1918* (2nd edn, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

this opportunity to launch an assault on their traditional enemy, Russia.² The Ottoman Caliph, Mehmed V, called for *jihad* against the Triple Entente.³ In the meantime, the ambitious Amir of Mecca, Sharif Husayn ibn Ali, was watching the outcome of events and their impact on Istanbul with interest. He believed that the Ottoman administration in the Arab territories was suppressive.⁴ Of course, nearly all minorities in the Empire wanted separation from Istanbul for various reasons.⁵ The Arabs were no exception.

Sharif Husayn's position as Amir of Mecca, to which many Muslims go on pilgrimage every year, and his claim to be a descendent of Muhammad, gave him an advantageous religious and social position amongst his people.⁶ In 1915, he started corresponding with Sir Henry McMahon, the British high commissioner in Cairo.⁷ Sharif Husayn offered McMahon a promise to revolt against the Ottomans and to enter into an alliance with Britain, in exchange for the latter's recognition of an independent Arab State in Hedjaz, Iraq, Basra, Greater Syria and Palestine.⁸ McMahon responded with his nation's full support of the rebellion and its welcoming of an alliance with Sharif Husayn. However, in terms of the extent and the

² WL Cleveland and M Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (4th edn, Westview Press, 2009) 149.

³ Ibid 153. The Triple Entente was comprised of Britain, France and Russia.

⁴ The Ottoman suppression was in its peak during the war in Greater Syria, especially by the Turkish governor, Jamal Pasha. See Cleveland (n 2) 153-7; F Zachs, 'Transformations of a Memory of Tyranny in Syria: From Jamal Pasha to 'Id al-Shuhada'' (2012) 48 *Middle Eastern Studies* 73-88.

⁵ Greek, Armenian and other nationalist movements emerged in the Ottoman Empire in around the same period. See FM Göçek, 'The Decline of the Ottoman Empire and the Emergence of Greek, Armenian, Turkish and Arab Nationalisms' in FM Göçek (ed.) *Social Constructions of Nationalism* (State University of New York Press, 2002).

⁶ Cleveland (n 2) 157.

⁷ Ibid 157-8. The Husayn-McMahon correspondence and its interpretation is one of the most controversial issues in the region's modern history. See generally Sir Henry McMahon to Sharif Husayn, October 24, 1915, in JC Hurewitz (ed.) *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record, vol. 2, British-French Supremacy, 1914-1915* (2nd edn, New Haven, 1979); I Friedman, 'The McMahon-Hussien Correspondence and the Question of Palestine' (1970) 5 *The Journal of Contemporary History* 83; E Kedourie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth: The McMahon-Husayn Correspondence and its Interpretation 1914-1939* (Cambridge University Press, 1976).

⁸ Ibid 159, 160.

borders of the proposed Arab State, McMahon's language was 'ambiguous and so vague that it has given rise to widely conflicting interpretations'.⁹

Nevertheless, Britain provided the Amir of Mecca with the arms and weapons necessary for a wide-scale rebellion, and Sharif Husayn believed that Britain was willing to recognize his State with him as king.¹⁰

The Arab Revolt officially started in 1916, when Sharif Husayn denounced the Ottoman government, and declared it an 'enemy of Islam'.¹¹ His tribal forces attacked the Ottoman garrisons in the main cities of Hedjaz.¹² This was followed by the capture of strategic posts in the area, notably including the port city of Aqaba.¹³ Major military operations were completed with the capture of the city of Damascus in 1918 under the command of Faysal, the son of Sharif Husayn.¹⁴

However, to the disappointment of Faysal and his father, the Entente powers, namely France and Britain, had already agreed to distribute most of the areas to the east of the Suez territories under what was known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement.¹⁵ France was given direct rule in the Greater Syria region, while Mesopotamia and Transjordan were under British protection.¹⁶ Palestine, on the other hand, was proposed to be under international administration.¹⁷ The agreement was finalized and enforced

⁹ Ibid 160.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Cleveland (n 2) 160. See C Ernest Dawn, 'The Amir of Mecca Al-Husayn Ibn-'Ali and the Origin of the Arab Revolt' (1960) 104 *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 11; D Murphy, *The Arab Revolt 1916-18: Lawrence Sets Arabia Ablaze* (Osprey, 2008); E Karsh and I Karsh, 'Myth in the Desert, or not the Great Arab Revolt' (1997) 33 *Middle Eastern Studies* 267.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ The Sykes-Picot Agreement (also known as the Asia Minor Agreement) was between Great Britain and France. The terms of the Agreement were negotiated between the British diplomat Sir Mark Sykes and his French counterpart François Georges-Picot. See EP Fitzgerald, 'France's Middle Eastern Ambitions, the Sykes-Picot Negotiations, and the Oil Fields of Mosul, 1915-1918' (1994) 66 *The Journal of Modern History* 697.

¹⁶ Cleveland (n 2) 163

¹⁷ Palestine was an exceptional case. In 2 November 1917, the British foreign secretary Arthur James Balfour wrote a letter which was later known as the Balfour Declaration, where he stated that Palestine was to be a Jewish homeland. The Declaration was later incorporated in the Treaty of Sèvres, and as a result

at the San Remo Conference in 1920, which authorized the imperial mandate system in the region.¹⁸ Faysal was deposed from Syria, and the British compensated him and his brother, Abdullah, with the thrones of Iraq and Transjordan going under their protection and influence.¹⁹

In assessing the First Arab Revolution, one may observe that it was an armed nationalist uprising against suppressive imperial rule.²⁰ Interestingly, the leaders of the movement called for an Arab hereditary State, with no mention – not even indirectly – of democracy or public participation. However, it is important to note here that, in that particular period of history, there was certainly no ‘right’ to political participation, since there was no effective system of global governance available, nor was there any codification of universal human rights.

On the other hand, the First Arab Revolution led – indirectly at least – to a number of results that did not help democratic transition in the region and halted the political evolution of the Arab people. The Revolution resulted in the birth of a fragmented region. The Sykes-Picot Agreement and the San Remo Conference which followed it were both results of the Revolution and led to the birth of five States: Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan,²¹ Iraq and arguably, Palestine. Sharif Husayn and his sons aspired for a single nation under their rule. The lack of an Arab nation-state raised a national identity issue, since all of these new States were artificial. Further, although the Ottoman Empire had a Turkish identity, its head of State was a Muslim Caliph. The Caliph was deemed as the highest spiritual and political authority in the nation.²² Sharif Husayn’s bloodline and status as the Amir of Mecca did not fill the spiritual gap, which

Palestine became a British mandate. See M Vereté, ‘The Balfour Declaration and its Makers’ (1970) 6 *Middle Eastern Studies* 48; M Levene, ‘The Balfour Declaration: A Case of Mistaken Identity’ (1992) 107 *The English Historical Review* 54; J Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration: The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010).

¹⁸ See PC Helmreich, *From Paris to Sèvres: The Partition of the Ottoman Empire at the Peace Conference of 1919-1920* (Ohio State University Press, 1974).

¹⁹ See MC Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan* (Cambridge University Press, 1987); C Hunt, *The History of Iraq* (Greenwood, 2005).

²⁰ See MC Wilson, ‘The Hashemites, the Arab Revolt and Arab Nationalism’ in R Khalidi *et al* (ed.) *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (Columbia University Press, 1991).

²¹ Later the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

²² See generally, P Crone and M Hinds, *God’s Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge University Press, 1986).

partially explains the birth of intolerant Islamist movements in the region, as we will see later on in this book. The Caliphate – which was a theocracy – was replaced by an alternative umbrella ideology, that of Arab nationalism. The new ideology was scarcely more democratic than its theocratic predecessor.

CHAPTER II

THE RADICALIZATION OF ARAB POLITICS

The period of French and British direct and indirect rule of the region led to a bloody struggle for independence. The mandates eventually got their independence in the 1930s and 1940s. Constitutions were written, but was democracy really achieved? Egypt and other Arab nations will now be included in this examination, due to their central role in the radicalization of Arab politics. The 1950s and 1960s witnessed a pattern of radical pan-Arab movements coming to power in the region, especially in Egypt, Syria and Iraq. They all shared an economic socialist system, in addition to an anti-Western sentiment which spread beyond their borders. The Arab-Israeli conflict was central to their ideologies, in addition to their system of single-party rule. Political oppression was maintained throughout the period. The focus of this chapter will be on assessing Nasserism and Ba'athism in terms of political ideology and compatibility with democracy.

1. Nasserism

In 1952, a group of junior officers in the Egyptian army, known as the Free Officers, staged a bloodless coup against the monarchy, which became known as the July Revolution.¹ The movement was unofficially led by a young colonel, Gamal Abdul Nasser, who eventually became president in 1956.² Nasser established a Revolution Command Council (RCC) which included only Free Officers.³ The Council acted as a supreme executive body.⁴ It banned all political parties and outlawed the Muslim Brotherhood movement, imprisoning thousands of its members.⁵ The RCC introduced a number of populist reforms, such as the abolition of

¹ See FRC Bagley, 'Egypt Under Nasser' (1955) 11 *International Journal* 192.

² WL Cleveland and M Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (4th edn, Westview Press, 2009) 308.

³ *Ibid* 305.

⁴ *Ibid*.

⁵ *Ibid* 306.

all civil titles which had been awarded by the overthrown king, and the confiscation of royal property, in addition to some socialist measures, such as the adoption of land reform legislation, which limited the ownership of agricultural land to 200 *feddans*.⁶ Further, the new Egyptian republic only had a single political party in power, the National Union, which was headed by Nasser himself.⁷ All candidates for the nation's legislative council had to be nominated by the Union.⁸

Nasser's presidency (1956–70) witnessed a number of dramatic events, which made Egypt the center of Arabism. As soon as he came to power, Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, which triggered an Anglo-French-Israeli attack on Egypt, known as the tripartite attack.⁹ The military consequences for Nasser would have been very severe if the parties had not accepted the UN-sponsored ceasefire.¹⁰ The military failure of Nasser's troops in 1956 was interpreted as a triumph against imperialism, and Nasser was seen as a national hero.¹¹ Further, two years later, Nasser undertook another bold nationalist move when he declared the short-lived United Arab Republic between Egypt and Syria.¹² The Republic was formed at the request of a number of Syrian officers who came to power, and Nasser accepted it without hesitation. The union was considered to be one of Nasser's biggest triumphs; however, three years later, another group of officers came to power in Syria and dissolved the union.¹³

Nasser's legacy was badly damaged on 5 June 1967. Israeli troops invaded the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula in what was known as the Six Day War.¹⁴ The impact of the War on the Arab World generally and on Nasser in particular was devastating, and it became known by the Arab media as *al-Naksah* (the setback). Nasser and his regime were under serious scrutiny, since Nasser's army could not

⁶ Bagley (n 1) 197.

⁷ Ibid 196. For more on the National Union, see I Harik, 'The Single Party as a Subordinate Movement: The Case of Egypt' (1973) 26 *World Politics* 80.

⁸ Cleveland (n 2) 308.

⁹ Ibid 311, 312.

¹⁰ Ibid 312.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid 314

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ For more on the Six Day War, see generally IJ Rikhye, *The Sinai Blunder* (Frank Cass Publishers, 1980); R McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952–1967* (Frank Cass Publishers, 2003); R Popp, 'Stumbling Decidedly into the Six-Day War' (2006) 60 *Middle East Journal* 281.

defend Sinai, which had strategic importance in Egypt's eastern front with Israel.

Nasser's period of leftist nationalism was known as Nasserism. The ideological roots of Nasserism are found in his *magnum opus: Egypt's Liberation*.¹⁵ Nasser believed that the Arab nation was always subject to interference from foreign 'devils', which included Zionists, the United States, Britain, and of course, Israel, in addition to the manipulation of Arab governments and landowners in favor of the interests of imperialism.¹⁶ Nasser stated in an article published in *Foreign Affairs*:

For a century and a half the Arab world has been following a negative policy. It has known what it wanted to do away with, but it has not known what it wanted to build. The Western conquest of the Middle East was mental no less than physical. Overwhelmed and unsettled, Eastern minds lost almost all national values, yet could not absorb Western values. Misapplication of Western patterns of government brought a confused mixture of political systems and philosophies. Democracy was only a veil for dictatorship. Constitutions framed in the interest of the people of the Middle East became instruments for their exploitation and domination.¹⁷

The main characteristics of Nasserism were Arab socialism,¹⁸ secularism,¹⁹ republicanism and of course, pan-Arab nationalism.²⁰ Anti-imperialism was central to the Nasserist ideology, and he was one of the

¹⁵ G Abdel Nasser, *Egypt's Liberation: The Philosophy of the Revolution* (Public Affairs Press, 1955).

¹⁶ W Range, 'An Interpretation of Nasserism' (1959) 12 *The Western Political Quarterly* 1005, 1006-8.

¹⁷ G Abdel Nasser, 'The Egyptian Revolution' (1954) 33 *Foreign Affairs* 199.

¹⁸ Arab Socialism was an important ingredient in Nasserism and Ba'athism, and was to a very large extent distinct from other forms of socialism. However, this thesis is only interested in the political context of the ideology of these two groups. For more on Arab Socialism see generally SA Hannah and GH Gardener, *Arab Socialism* (E.J. Brill, 1969); B Hansen, 'Arab Socialism in Egypt' (1975) 3 *World Development*, 201; N Cigar, 'Arab Socialism Revisited: The Yugoslav Roots of its Ideology' (1983) 19 *Middle Eastern Studies* 152.

¹⁹ See J Gordon, 'Secular and Religious Memory in Egypt: Recalling Nasserist Civics' (1997) 87 *The Muslim World* 94.

²⁰ Unlike Europe and elsewhere, pan-Arab nationalism did not focus on an individual nation-state, rather on a wider Arab nation which incorporated all the Arab people spread across a number of States. See B Rubin, 'Pan-Arab Nationalism: The Ideological Dream as Compelling Force' (1991) 26 *Journal of Contemporary History* 535.

main founders of the Non-Alignment Movement.²¹ His secularist measures included the neutralization of the al-Azhar mosque – which was the highest spiritual institution in Sunni Islam – through imposing non-religious education.²² He also controlled Islamic endowments and abolished Shari’ah courts.²³ His secularist measures were, however, softer than those of Atatürk in Turkey.

Nasserism was not a well-written comprehensive ideology. It was essentially built on the conduct of Nasser himself, and his own vision of pan-Arab nationalism. Other aspects such as anti-imperialism were necessary from Nasser’s point of view to establish his nationalist dream. Similarly, the Arab Socialist aspect of the ideology was also necessary to win public support, especially since he was not a democratically elected president. Hence, Nasser was a very pragmatic ideologue.

Nevertheless, Nasserism eventually died after Nasser, and Nasserism is now seen more as a sense of nationalist enthusiasm, fueled by the Arab-Israeli conflict and what Nasser viewed as an imperial injustice in the region. The humiliating defeat of 1967 crushed Nasserism. Even Nasser was less of a Nasserist in the last three years of his life. His focus at that time was on rebuilding Egypt, a far cry from his Arabist ambitions, and on partnership with the imperialist Soviet Union.²⁴

2. The Arab Ba’ath Socialist Party

Parallel to Nasser and his view of pan-Arab nationalism was the well-organized Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party.²⁵ The Party was founded in 1947, by Michel ‘Aflaq, who was a Christian politician from Aleppo. The term ‘Ba’ath’ literally means ‘resurrection’, which reflects the objective of the Party’s ideologues to resurrect Arab nationalism.²⁶ ‘Aflaq and his French-

²¹ Together with Tito and Nehru, Nasser was viewed as one of the founding fathers of the Movement. See I Abraham, ‘From Bandung to NAM: Non-alignment and Indian Foreign Policy’ (2008) 46 *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 195.

²² Cleveland (n 2) 321.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid 344.

²⁵ When the Party was first founded in 1947, it was simply known as The Arab Ba’ath Party, until it was merged with the Arab Socialist Party in 1952, under the Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party. See JF Devlin, ‘The Baath Party: Rise and Metamorphosis’ (1991) 96 *The American Historical Review* 1396, 1399.

²⁶ RA Khan, ‘Religion, Race and Arab Nationalism’ (1979) 34 *International Journal* 353, 359.

educated founding colleagues were clearly inspired by the German concept of *Kulturnation*.²⁷ To them, pan-Arab nationalism was not only a political movement, but also a cultural one. They believed that the Arab nation was built on cultural foundations which made it distinct from all other entities.²⁸ Therefore, the Ba'ath Party slogan was 'One Arab Nation with an Immortal Mission'. On the other hand, its goals (also known as the Ba'athist trinity) were Unity, Freedom and Socialism.²⁹

The structure of the Ba'ath Party was based on a central (national) command, which oversaw regional commands throughout the Arab World.³⁰ The central command was at first in Damascus and then moved to Baghdad when the Party split in 1966. It had regional headquarters in other Arab countries where the Party was established, namely Jordan, Libya, and had other smaller Ba'athist cells elsewhere.³¹

The short democratic phase of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party started in 1954. Seven years after the Party was first established, it became the second largest political party represented in the Syrian parliament.³² This was because the Party leaders were strong advocates of modernization, urbanization, nationalization and worker unions.³³ These progressive measures made the Ba'ath Party very popular at the time, as of course was their pan-Arab ideology, which dominated rival communist and Islamist dogmas. The Ba'ath Party at the time strongly supported the union between Egypt and Syria, and the establishment of the United Arab Republic with Nasser in 1958.³⁴ However, a number of Ba'athist officers

²⁷ U Freitag, 'In Search of "Historical Correctness": The Ba'ath Party in Syria' (1999) 35 *Middle Eastern Studies* 1, 3. The concept of *Kulturnation* was founded by a number of German philosophers, namely Johann Gottfried von Herder who provided that a nation was built on vaguely defined 'cultural' traditions, including language, national heritage and identity. See generally JG von Herder and FM Barnard, *Herder on Social and Political Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 1969).

²⁸ See M Aflaq, *Fi Sabil al-Ba'ath* (Dar il-Tali'a, 1959).

²⁹ NM Kaylani, 'The Rise of the Syrian Ba'ath, 1940-1958: Political Success, Party Failure' (1972) 3 *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 3, 5-6.

³⁰ DD Commins, *Historical Dictionary of Syria* (Scarecrow Press, 2004) 65.

³¹ BS Anderson, *Nationalist Voices in Jordan: The Street and the State* (University of Texas Press, 2005) 136; J Wright, *Libya: A Modern History* (Taylor & Francis, 1981) 277.

³² Devlin (n 25) 1399.

³³ J Jones, *Negotiating Change: The New Politics of the Middle East* (I.B. Tauris, 2007) 97.

³⁴ Devlin (n 25) 1400.

ended the union with Nasser in 1961 in a military coup in Damascus.³⁵ These Ba'athist officers established what was known as the Military Committee, which after a brief period of Syrian transition in the post-United Arab Republic era came to power in a *coup d'état* in 1963, known as the 8th of March Revolution.³⁶ The Ba'ath Party was split between regionalists and unionists. 'Aflaq and notable Party leaders were first jailed and then exiled to Iraq, and the Ba'ath Party was dominated by young army officers, led by Salah Jadid and Hafez al-Assad, who both came from the same Alawite sect of Islam.³⁷ Al-Assad eventually became president in 1970, and continued to rule Syria with an iron fist until his death in 2000. He was succeeded by his son, Bashar, who continued his father's authoritarian rule of the country.

Meanwhile, in Iraq Ba'athism was flourishing. The Iraqi Ba'ath cell was first founded in the country in the early 1950s. When Abdulkarim Qasim overthrew the Hashemite dynasty from power, in what was known as the 14th of July Revolution of 1958, Ba'athists supported him and joined his government, on the condition that Iraq would join the United Arab Republic with Egypt and Syria.³⁸ However, after coming to power, Qasim chose not to join any regional union and this led him to move closer to the Iraqi Communist Party, which was skeptical of Nasser in Egypt, and had no pan-Arab ambitions.³⁹ This angered Iraqi Ba'athists, leading them to attempt to assassinate Qasim the following year. Saddam Hussein – a leading party member who later became President of Iraq – was the actor who executed the failed assassination attempt.⁴⁰

³⁵ Ibid 1400-1.

³⁶ A Perlmutter, 'From Obscurity to Rule: The Syrian Army and the Ba'th Party' (1969) 22 *The Western Political Quarterly* 827, 838. For more on the 8th of March Revolution, see I Rabinovich, *Syria Under the Ba'th 1963-66: The Army-Party Symbiosis* (Israel University Press, 1972); R Hinnebusch, *Syria: Revolution from Above* (Routledge, 2001).

³⁷ See MH Kerr, 'Hafiz Assad and the Changing Patterns of Syrian Politics' (1973) 28 *The Arab States and Israel* 689.

³⁸ J Galvani, 'The Baathi Revolution in Iraq' (1972) 12 *MERIP Reports* 3, 8-9.

³⁹ Qasim advocated for the 'Iraq First Principle', under which the national priority was building Iraq, and unity would have been an obstacle. For more on this and the Qasim era, see generally D Uriel, *Iraq Under Qassem: A Political History* (Praeger, 1969).

⁴⁰ C Coughlin, *Saddam: His Rise and Fall* (Harper Perennial, 2005) 26.