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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eugene Rogan is author of the bestselling *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East, 1914–1920*. He is Professor of Modern Middle Eastern History at the University of Oxford and Director of the Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford.

EUGENE ROGAN

The Arabs

A History

Third Edition



PENGUIN BOOKS

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Introduction

Fayda Hamdy learned of the downfall of Tunisia's autocratic president from her jail cell. The date was January 14, 2011, and Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali had ruled Tunisia for over twenty-three years. Though she didn't dare acknowledge it to her cellmates, Hamdy had played no small part in the dictator's overthrow. A council inspector from the small town of Sidi Bouzid, Hamdy stood accused of humiliating a street vendor whose self-immolation provoked nationwide demonstrations in Tunisia that ultimately sparked the string of popular revolutions across North Africa and the Middle East known as the Arab Spring.

Four weeks earlier, on December 17, 2010, Fayda Hamdy was making the rounds of the vegetable market in her hometown. Sidi Bouzid is one of those provincial small towns in Tunisia neglected by tourists and the government alike. A woman in her forties dressed in an official blue uniform, her authority reinforced by epaulets and stripes, Hamdy was accompanied by two male colleagues. Most of the unlicensed hawkers fled on the inspectors' approach, but Mohamed Bouazizi, a twenty-six-year-old street vendor, refused to budge. Hamdy knew Bouazizi and had already cautioned him against selling fruit in the vicinity of the market without a license. On December 17, Bouazizi stood his ground and accused the inspectors of harassment and corruption. The altercation turned into a shouting match, with Bouazizi defending his cart and the inspectors seizing the young man's wares.

There is no agreement on what precisely happened in the fateful scuffle between the inspectors and Mohamed Bouazizi. The young vendor's friends and family insisted that Fayda Hamdy insulted and slapped Mohamed Bouazizi – 'a grave insult in Middle Eastern societies' – before

ordering her colleagues to confiscate his fruit and scales. Fayda Hamdy denied ever laying a hand on the street vendor, claiming, 'Bouazizi attacked us and cut my finger' when the inspectors went to appropriate his goods. The details matter, for Bouazizi's response was so extreme that both friends and strangers still struggle to explain his subsequent actions.¹

Mohamed Bouazizi emerged from his encounter with the inspectors in a fury. Immediately after the confrontation, Bouazizi first sought justice from the municipal offices of Sidi Bouzid, but instead of a sympathetic hearing he received the humiliation of a further beating. He turned next to the office of the governor, which refused him an audience. At that point, something snapped. His sister, Basma Bouazizi, explained, 'What my brother experienced, from the confiscation of his fruit-cart to being insulted and slapped by a woman . . . was enough to make him lose his mind, especially after all municipal officials refused to meet with him, and he was unable to complain about this abuse.'

It was now midday, and the streets around the governor's office were crowded with townspeople when Mohamed Bouazizi doused his clothes with paint thinner and set himself alight. Bystanders photographed the terrible scene, as others rushed to try to put out the flames that left Bouazizi with burns covering 90 percent of his body. He collapsed and was taken to hospital in the nearby town of Ben Arous.

Bouazizi's desperate act of self-violence left the townspeople of Sidi Bouzid stunned. They shared his sense of injustice, that the government seemed to be working against the common people in their struggle to get by. That same afternoon, a group of Bouazizi's friends and family held an impromptu demonstration outside the governor's office where Mohamed had set himself on fire. They threw coins at the metal gates, shouting, 'Here is your bribe!' The police dispersed the angry crowd with batons, but the demonstrators came back in greater numbers the next day. By the second day, the police were using tear gas and firing into the crowd. Two men shot by the police died of their wounds. Mohamed Bouazizi's condition deteriorated.

News of the protests in Sidi Bouzid reached Tunis, the country's capital, where a restive young population of graduates, professionals, and the educated unemployed spread the word of Bouazizi's ordeal via social media. They appropriated him as one of their own, erroneously

claiming that Bouazizi was an unemployed university graduate (though he never completed high school, Bouazizi helped pay for his sisters to go to university) reduced to selling vegetables to make ends meet. They created a Facebook group, and the story went viral. A journalist working for the Arab satellite TV station Al-Jazeera picked up the story. The state-controlled Tunisian press did not report on the troubles in Sidi Bouzid, but Al-Jazeera did. The story of the underprivileged in Sidi Bouzid standing up for their rights against corruption and abuse began to air nightly on that network, reaching a global Arab audience.

The self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi galvanized public opinion against everything that was wrong in Tunisia under President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali's reign: corruption, abuse of power, indifference to the plight of the ordinary men and women, and an economy that failed to provide opportunities for the young. The Tunisian protest movement electrified citizens familiar with these problems across the Arab world as they followed the story on TV. After twenty-three years in power, Ben Ali had no solutions. Demonstrations spread from Sidi Bouzid to other poor inland towns – Kasserine, Thala, Menzel Bouzaïene – before erupting in Tunis itself.

Escalating tensions in Tunisian cities forced Ben Ali to respond. On December 28, eleven days after Bouazizi's self-immolation, the Tunisian president paid a visit to the dying man in his hospital room. The state-controlled Tunisian media, which had downplayed reports of nationwide demonstrations, gave prime-time coverage to the president's visit, plastering newspapers and television with images of a solicitous Ben Ali consulting with doctors caring for the unconscious Bouazizi, his burned body wrapped in gauze. Ben Ali invited Bouazizi's family to the presidential palace, promising to do all he could to save their son. And he ordered the arrest of Fayda Hamdy, the municipal inspector accused of the slap that provoked Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation.

On January 4, 2011, Mohamed Bouazizi died of his injuries. The Tunisian protesters declared the street vendor a martyr, and the municipal inspector became the Ben Ali regime's scapegoat. She was imprisoned in Gafsa with common criminals, and because the public reviled her widely for her role in Bouazizi's death, lawyers refused to represent her. Hamdy kept her identity a secret from her fellow inmates,

claiming to be a teacher detained 'for slapping a little boy.' 'I was afraid to tell them the truth,' she later admitted.²

In the first two weeks of January, the demonstrations spread to all the major towns and cities of Tunisia. The police responded with violence, leaving two hundred dead and hundreds more wounded. The country's professional army, however, refused to intervene on behalf of Ben Ali's regime. When Ben Ali realized that he no longer commanded the loyalty of the army and that no concessions would mollify the demonstrators, he stunned his nation and the entire Arab world by abdicating and fleeing Tunisia for Saudi Arabia on January 14, 2011. Fayda Hamdy watched the extraordinary events on television with her cellmates. The Tunisian people had achieved the seemingly impossible: through popular protest they had toppled one of the Arab world's deeply entrenched dictators.

The impact of the Tunisian revolution reverberated around the Arab world. Presidents and kings watched nervously as citizens' action unseated one of their peers. As a 'president for life,' Ben Ali was hardly unique. Libya's dictator Muammar al-Qadhafi had been in power since 1969, Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh since 1978, and Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak since 1981, and each was grooming a son to succeed him. Syria, under the Asad family's rule since November 1970, became the first Arab republic to complete a dynastic succession, with the elevation of Bashar al-Asad to the presidency upon the death of his father, Hafiz al-Asad, in 2000. If a deeply entrenched dictator could fall in Tunisia, analysts across the region speculated, it could happen anywhere.³

People living under autocratic regimes across the Arab world shared the Tunisian experience of frustration and repression. The late Samir Kassir, a Lebanese journalist assassinated in June 2005, diagnosed an 'Arab malaise' years before the Arab Spring. 'It's not pleasant being Arab these days,' he observed. 'Feelings of persecution for some, self-hatred for others; a deep disquiet pervades the Arab world.' The unease took root in all layers of society and spread across the Arab world before exploding in the revolutionary year of 2011.⁴

Egyptian citizens had been mobilizing for change years before the outbreak of the Arab Spring revolutions. In 2004, a group of activists formed the Egyptian Movement for Change, better known as Kifaya

(literally, 'Enough!'), to protest the continuation of Mubarak's rule over Egypt and moves to groom his son Gamal to succeed him as president. Also in 2004, Ayman Nour, an independent member of the Egyptian parliament, formed the Ghad ('Tomorrow') Party. His audacity in challenging Mubarak in the 2005 presidential election captured the public's imagination, but Nour paid a high price: he was convicted on dubious charges of election fraud and jailed for over three years. In 2008, younger, computer-literate opponents of the regime established the April 6 Youth Movement, whose Facebook page voiced support for workers' rights. By year's end, the group numbered in the tens of thousands, including many who had never previously engaged in political activity.

Whatever their appeal to a younger generation, prior to 2011 Egypt's grassroots movements were no match for the Mubarak regime. In parliamentary elections concluded in December 2010, the ruling National Democratic Party secured over 80 percent of seats in elections widely condemned as the most corrupt in Egypt's history. The populace widely assumed that the elder Mubarak was paving the way for his son Gamal's succession by rigging a totally compliant parliament. Disenchanted, most Egyptians had opted to boycott elections to deny the new legislature any glimmer of a popular mandate. Yet within two months of the election, the Egyptians shifted from boycott to active calls for the fall of the Mubarak regime.

Inspired by the Tunisian example, Egyptian activists organized a mass demonstration in central Cairo's Tahrir Square on January 25, 2011. Protesters descended on the square in unprecedented numbers, swelling to the hundreds of thousands. Waves of protests known as the January 25 Movement swept through other major cities of Egypt – Alexandria, Suez, Ismailiyya, Mansoura, across the delta and upper Egypt alike – and brought the country to a standstill.

For eighteen days the whole world watched transfixed as Egypt's reform movement challenged the Mubarak regime – and won. The government resorted to dirty tactics. It released convicted prisoners from jail to provoke fear and disorder. Policemen in civilian clothes assaulted the protesters in Tahrir Square, posing as pro-Mubarak counter-demonstrators. The president's men went to theatrical lengths, mounting a horse-and-camel charge against the protesters. Over eight

hundred were killed and thousands wounded in the course of the demonstrations. Yet protesters repelled with determination the Mubarak regime's every attempt at intimidation, and their numbers only grew. Throughout it all, the Egyptian army refused to support the government and declared the protesters' demands legitimate.

Like Ben Ali before him, Mubarak recognized his position was untenable without the army's support. Its reticence was all the more surprising, given that Mubarak was himself a former air force general. On February 11, 2011, the Egyptian president stood down, sparking jubilation in Tahrir Square and nationwide celebrations. After nearly thirty years in power, Hosni Mubarak had seemed unassailable. His fall confirmed that the Arab revolutions of 2011 would spread from Tunisia and Egypt across the Arab world as a whole.

Demonstrations erupted in Benghazi on February 15, marking the beginning of the Libyan revolution against the forty-one-year dictatorship of Muammar al-Qadhafi. That same month, demonstrators massed in Sanaa, Aden, and Ta'iz to call for the fall of Yemeni dictator Ali Abdullah Saleh. On February 14, protesters descended on Manama's Pearl Roundabout, taking the Arab Spring to Bahrain. And in March, nonviolent demonstrations in the southern Syrian town of Deraa provoked violent repression from the brutal regime of President Bashar al-Assad, opening the most tragic chapter of the Arab Spring.

By the time Fayda Hamdy emerged from prison, Tunisia and the Arab world at large had changed beyond recognition. Hamdy finally secured a lawyer – a female relation – and was acquitted of all charges in a single court hearing on April 19, 2011. Her release came as Tunisia moved beyond the tragic events of Mohamed Bouazizi's death to address the hopes and challenges of a new political era following the toppling of the Ben Ali regime. She returned to Sidi Bouzid to work for the municipality, though she no longer patrolled the markets. In place of her uniform and peaked cap, she donned civilian clothes and an Islamic head scarf. In her new dress, she personified an Arab world transformed from military autocracy to a new experiment in Islamic democracy.⁵

The Arab revolutions of 2011 took the world by surprise. After decades of stability under autocratic rulers, a seemingly unprecedented period of

rapid and dramatic change engulfed states across the Arab world. It was as though the tectonic plates of Arab politics had shifted from geological to real time. In the face of an uncertain future, there is no better guide than the past – a simple truth often lost on political analysts. All too often in the West, we discount the current value of history. As political commentator George Will has written, 'When Americans say of something, "That's history," they mean it is irrelevant.'⁶ Nothing could be further from the truth. Western policymakers and intellectuals need to pay far more attention to history if they hope to understand the roots of the Arab Spring and address the terrible challenges confronting the Arab world after 2011.

The Arab peoples in modern times have grappled with major challenges at home and abroad. They have sought to escape the domination of foreign powers and pressed for reforms to make their governments less autocratic and more accountable to their citizens. These are the great themes of modern Arab history, and they have shaped the writing of this book.

The Arabs are immensely proud of their history, particularly the first five centuries after the emergence of Islam, spanning the seventh to the twelfth centuries of the Current Era. This was the age of the great Islamic empires based in Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, and Cordoba that dominated world affairs. You could argue that the early Islamic centuries defined the Arabs as a people who shared a language (Arabic), ethnic origins among the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula, and, for the majority, a common faith in Sunni Islam. All Arabs look back on the early Islamic period as a bygone age when the Arabs were the dominant power in the world; it resonates particularly, however, with Islamists, who argue that the Arabs were greatest when they adhered most closely to their Muslim faith.

Starting at the end of the eleventh century, foreign invaders laid waste to Islamic lands. In 1099 the Crusaders seized Jerusalem after a bloody siege, initiating two centuries of foreign rule by Crusader kingdoms. In 1258 the Mongols sacked Baghdad, the seat of the Abbasid caliphate, and the Tigris flowed red with the blood of its inhabitants. In 1492, the Catholic Reconquista expelled the last of the Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula. Yet still Cairo held out as a seat of Islamic power under the Mamluk sultanate (1250–1517), ruling over all of modern Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, and the Red Sea provinces of Saudi Arabia.

Only after the sixteenth-century Ottoman conquests did the Arabs come to be ruled from a foreign capital. Since Mehmed the Conqueror seized the Byzantine capital Constantinople in 1453, the Ottoman Turks had governed their growing empire from the city they renamed Istanbul. Straddling the straits of the Bosphorus, Istanbul spans Europe and Asia, with city quarters on both continents. Though the seat of a Sunni Muslim empire, Ottoman Istanbul was far from Arab lands – 1,500 kilometers (940 miles) from Damascus, 2,200 kilometers (1,375 miles) from Baghdad, and 3,800 kilometers (2,375 miles) overland from Cairo. Moreover, the administrative language of the Ottoman Empire was Turkish, not Arabic. The Arabs began navigating the modern age by other people's rules.

The Ottomans ruled the Arabs for four of the past five centuries. Over this expanse of time the empire changed, and the rules changed accordingly. In the first century after the conquest, the Ottoman rules were none too demanding: the Arabs had to recognize the authority of the sultan and respect both his laws and God's (sharia, or Islamic law). Non-Muslim minorities could organize their own affairs, under their own communal leadership and religious laws, in return for payment of a poll tax to the state. All in all, most Arabs seemed to view their place in the dominant world empire of the age with equanimity, as Muslims in a great Muslim empire.

In the eighteenth century, the rules changed significantly. The Ottoman Empire had reached its zenith during the seventeenth century but in 1699 suffered its first loss of territory – Croatia, Hungary, Transylvania, and Podolia, in the Ukraine – to its European rivals. The cash-strapped empire began to auction both state offices and provincial agricultural properties as tax farms to generate revenues. This allowed powerful men in remote provinces to amass vast territories through which they accumulated sufficient wealth and power to challenge the authority of the Ottoman government. In the second half of the eighteenth century, a string of such local leaders posed a grave challenge to Ottoman rule in Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Arabia.

By the nineteenth century the Ottomans had initiated a period of major reforms intended to quell the challenges from within the empire and to hold at bay the threats of their European neighbors. This age of reforms gave rise to a new set of rules, reflecting novel ideas of citizen-

ship imported from Europe. The Ottoman reforms tried to establish full equality of rights and responsibilities for all Ottoman subjects – Turks and Arabs alike – in such areas as administration, military service, and taxes. They promoted a new identity, Ottomanism, which sought to transcend the different ethnic and religious divides in Ottoman society. The reforms failed to protect the Ottomans from European encroachment but did allow the empire to reinforce its hold over the Arab provinces, which took on greater importance as nationalism eroded the Ottoman position in the Balkans.

Yet the same ideas that inspired the Ottoman reforms gave rise to new ideas of nation and community, which generated dissatisfaction among some in the Arab world with their position in the Ottoman Empire. They began to chafe against Ottoman rules, increasingly blaming them for the relative backwardness of the Arabs at the start of the twentieth century. Contrasting past greatness with present subordination within an Ottoman Empire that was retreating before stronger European neighbors, many in the Arab world called for reforms within their own societies and aspired to Arab independence.

The fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 at the end of World War I seemed to many in the Arab world like the threshold of a new age of independence and national greatness. They hoped to resurrect a greater Arab kingdom from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire and took heart from U.S. president Woodrow Wilson's call for national self-determination as set out in his famous Fourteen Points. They were to be bitterly disappointed, as they found that the new world order rested on European rather than Wilsonian rules.⁷

The British and French used the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 to apply the modern state system to the Arab world, with all Arab lands, bar central and southern Arabia, falling under some form of colonial rule. In Syria and Lebanon, newly emerging from Ottoman rule, the French gave their colonies a republican form of government. The British, in contrast, endowed their Arab possessions in Iraq and Transjordan with the trappings of the Westminster model of constitutional monarchy. Palestine was the exception, where the promise to create a Jewish national home against the opposition of the indigenous population undermined all efforts to form a national government.

The colonial powers gave each new Arab state a national capital, which served as the seat of government, and pressed rulers to draft constitutions and create parliaments elected by the people. Borders, in many cases quite artificial, were negotiated between neighboring states, often with some acrimony. Many Arab nationalists opposed these measures, which they believed divided and weakened an Arab people that could only regain its rightful status as a respected world power through broader Arab unity. Yet, in keeping with the European rules, only recognized nation-states, no matter how imperial their origins, were legitimate political actors.

An enduring legacy of the colonial period is the tension between nation-state nationalism (e.g., Egyptian or Iraqi nationalism) and pan-Arab nationalist ideologies. By the time the Arab states began to secure their independence from colonial rule in the 1940s and 1950s, the divisions between them had become permanent. The problem was that most Arab citizens believed smaller nationalisms based around colonial creations were fundamentally illegitimate. For those who aspired to Arab greatness in the twentieth century, only the broader Arab nationalist movement offered the prospect of achieving the critical mass and unity of purpose necessary to restore the Arabs to their rightful place among the powers of the day. The colonial experience left the Arabs as a community of nations rather than a national community, and the Arabs remain disappointed by the results.

World War II shattered European influence in world affairs. The postwar years were a period of decolonization as the states of Asia and Africa secured independence from their colonial rulers, often by force of arms. The United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the dominant powers in the second half of the twentieth century, and the rivalry between them, which came to be called the Cold War, defined the new age.

Moscow and Washington entered into an intense competition for global dominance. As the United States and the USSR attempted to integrate the Arab world into their respective spheres of influence, the Middle East became one of several arenas of superpower rivalry. Even in that age of national independence, the Arab world found its room to maneuver constrained by foreign rules – the rules of the Cold War – for nearly half a century (from 1945 to 1990).

The rules of the Cold War were straightforward: a country could be an ally of the United States or of the Soviet Union but could not have good relations with both. The Arab people generally had no interest in American anticommunism or Soviet dialectical materialism. Their governments tried to pursue an intermediate path through the Non-Aligned Movement – to no avail. Eventually, every state in the Arab world was forced to take sides.

Those Arab states that entered into the Soviet sphere of influence called themselves ‘progressives,’ but the West described them as ‘radical.’ This group included every Arab country that had undergone a revolution in the second half of the twentieth century: Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Algeria, Yemen, and Libya. Those Arab states that sided with the West – the liberal republics of Tunisia and Lebanon and the conservative monarchies such as Morocco, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf states – were dubbed ‘reactionaries’ by the progressive Arab states but considered ‘moderates’ in the West. The result was patron-client relations between the superpowers and the Arabs, in which Arab states secured from their respective superpower patrons arms for their militaries and development aid for their economies.

So long as there were two superpowers, the system contained checks and balances. Neither the Soviets nor the Americans could afford to take unilateral action in the region, for fear of provoking a hostile reaction from the other superpower. Government officials in Washington and Moscow lived in fear of a third world war and worked day and night to prevent the Middle East from sparking such a conflagration. Arab leaders also learned how to play the superpowers off each other by using the threat of defection to the other side to secure more arms or development aid from their patron state. Even so, by the end of the Cold War the Arabs well understood that they were no closer to achieving the degree of independence, development, and respect they had aspired to at the start of the era. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Arab world entered a new age – on even less favorable terms.

The Cold War came to an end shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. For the Arab world, the new unipolar age began with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. When the Soviet Union voted in favor of

a UN Security Council resolution authorizing a U.S.-led war against the Kremlin's old ally Iraq, the writing was on the wall. The certainties of the Cold War era had given way to an age of unconstrained American power, and many in the region feared the worst.

American policies toward the Middle East have been highly inconsistent in the post-Cold War era. U.S. presidents have pursued very different policies since the 1990s. For President George H. W. Bush, who was in office as the Soviet Union collapsed, the end of the Cold War marked the beginning of a new world order. Under Bill Clinton, internationalism and engagement remained the hallmarks of U.S. policy. With the rise of the neoconservatives to power following the election of George W. Bush in 2000, the United States turned to unilateralism. In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States, the Bush administration's foreign policies had a devastating impact on the region as a whole, leading to a war on terrorism that focused on the Muslim world, with Arabs as prime suspects. Barack Obama sought to reverse many of the Bush administration's policies and reduce America's military presence in the region – lessening American influence in the process.

The rules of the unipolar age of American dominance have proved the most disadvantageous to the Arab world in modern times. With no alternate power to constrain American action, Arab governments found themselves facing actual invasion and the threat of regime change. It would be no exaggeration to describe the years since the 9/11 attacks as the worst in Arab history, with the Arab Spring serving as a brief if tragic hiatus. What Samir Kassir observed in 2004 holds ever truer today: 'It's not pleasant being Arab these days.'

For most of the past two centuries the Arabs have struggled for their independence from foreign powers. At the same time, the Arab peoples have sought to constrain the autocratic power of their rulers at home. The Arab Spring revolutions represent the latest chapter in a century-old struggle for accountable government and the rule of law.

Until the end of the eighteenth century, absolutism was the norm in Europe and the Mediterranean world. Only Great Britain and the Dutch Republic had subordinated the powers of the monarch to an elected body before the French Revolution in 1789. After that date, constitu-

tions began to proliferate across the West – in the United States in 1789, in Poland and France in 1791, in Norway in 1814, and in Belgium in 1831. A new political order was emerging in which law constrained rulers' powers and subjects attained the higher legal status of citizens.

Arab visitors to Europe in the first quarter of the nineteenth century returned captivated by the novel political ideas they encountered in Paris and London. The Egyptian cleric Rifa'a al-Tahtawi translated all seventy-four articles of the French Charter of 1814 into Arabic upon his return from Paris in 1831. Living under the autocratic rule of Egyptian governor Muhammad 'Ali, Tahtawi marveled at the constraints the French constitution imposed on its king and the protections it extended to its citizens. Tunisian reformer Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi, inspired by Tahtawi's writings, advocated for a constitution to contain the arbitrary rule of the Tunisian governors. Perhaps uncoincidentally, the first two Arab states to introduce constitutions – Tunisia in 1861 and Egypt in 1882 – were the first to undergo Arab Spring revolutions.

The next wave of constitutional reform coincided with the introduction of European colonial rule in the aftermath of World War I. The Egyptian Constitution of 1923, the Iraqi Constitution of 1925, the Lebanese Constitution of 1926, and the Syrian Charter of 1930 each expressed the Arab struggle for independence from European colonial powers on the basis of legitimate government and the rule of law. While these constitutions endowed Arab states with elected multiparty legislatures, the colonial authorities did their utmost to undermine Arab sovereignty. Liberal constitutional government became compromised as an extension of European colonial rule.

The rejection of Arab liberalism followed defeat in the 1948 Palestine War, when the Israeli army trounced the Arab states to secure 78 percent of Mandate Palestine for the new Jewish state. The lack of military preparedness alienated patriotic officers from their kings and presidents, and defeat at the hands of the armed forces of the new state of Israel, dismissed in Arab propaganda as mere 'Jewish gangs,' undermined citizen confidence in the newly independent governments of the Arab nations. The Arab world entered a new revolutionary age with military coups in Syria (1949), Egypt (1952), Iraq (1958), Yemen (1962), and Libya (1969) that brought decisive men of action to power

at the head of technocratic governments. Intensely nationalist, and Arab nationalist, the military regimes promised a new age of social justice, economic development, military strength, and independence from outside influence. The new military rulers demanded only total obedience from their citizens in return. It was a social contract of sorts, and for over half a century Arab citizens willingly suspended their efforts to constrain autocratic rule in return for governments that promised to provide for their needs.

By the start of the twentieth-first century, the old Arab social contract was broken. By 2000, all but the oil rich states had proved incapable of living up to their promises. Increasingly only a narrow band of friends and family of the region's rulers benefited from any economic opportunities. The level of inequality between rich and poor rose alarmingly. Rather than address their citizens' legitimate grievances, Arab states responded to growing discontent by becoming ever more repressive. Worse, these repressive regimes actively sought to preserve their families' control over politics by dynastic succession, as aging presidents groomed their sons to follow them into office. Not only was the Arab social contract broken, but these failing regimes threatened to perpetuate themselves.

In 2011, the Arab peoples rose up in popular movements seeking to reimpose checks on their rulers. 'The people should not fear their government,' read a placard in Cairo's central Tahrir Square. 'Governments should fear their people.' For one brief moment, the Arab Spring revolutions succeeded in making Arab rulers fear their citizens. Unfortunately, the moment did not last, as revolution gave way to counter revolution and strongmen returned to power – except in Tunisia, where the movement first erupted with the fateful confrontation between Fayda Hamdy and Mohamed Bouazizi in December 2010. It is too early to know if the fragile constitutional order that has since emerged in that country will prove a harbinger of a future Arab social order or the unique success story of the Arab Spring.

It would be wrong to emphasize the tensions in Arab history to the detriment of all that makes the Arab world so fascinating. As a lifelong student of the Middle East, I was drawn to Arab history because it is so rich and diverse. Following my childhood in Beirut and Cairo, I took

my interests in the Middle East to university in the United States, where I studied Arabic and Turkish so that I could read the primary sources of Arab history. Perusing court records and chronicles, archival documents and manuscripts, diaries and memoirs, I was equally struck by the familiar and the exotic in Arab history.

So much of what the Arab world has undergone in the past five centuries is common to human experience around the globe. Nationalism, imperialism, revolution, industrialization, rural-urban migration, the struggle for women's rights – all the great themes of human history in the modern age have played out in the Arab world. Yet much distinguishes the Arabs: the shape of their cities, their music and poetry, their special position as the chosen people of Islam (the Qur'an stresses no fewer than ten times that God bestowed his final revelation on humankind in Arabic), and their notion of a national community stretching from Morocco through Arabia.

Bound by a common identity grounded in language and history, the Arabs are all the more fascinating for their diversity. They are at once one people and many peoples. As the traveler moves across North Africa from Morocco to Egypt, the dialect, calligraphy, landscape, architecture, and cuisine, as well as the forms of government and types of economic activity, transform kaleidoscopically. If the traveler continues through the Sinai Peninsula into the Fertile Crescent, similar differences arise between Palestine and Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, and Iraq. Moving south from Iraq to the Gulf states, the Arab world shows the influences of nearby Iran. Oman and Yemen reflect the influences of East Africa and South Asia. All these peoples have distinct histories, but all see themselves bound by a common Arab history.

In writing this book, I have tried to do justice to the diversity of Arab history by balancing the experiences of North Africa, Egypt and the Fertile Crescent, and the Arabian Peninsula. At the same time, I have tried to show the linkages between the histories of these regions – for example, how French rule in Morocco influenced French rule in Syria, and how rebellion against French rule in Morocco influenced rebellion against French rule in Syria. Inevitably, some countries take up more than their fair share of the narrative, and others are woefully neglected, which I regret.

I have drawn on a wide range of Arab sources, using eyewitness accounts of those who lived through the tumultuous years of Arab history: chroniclers in the earlier periods give way to a wide range of intellectuals, journalists, politicians, poets, and novelists, men and women famous and infamous. It has seemed only natural to me to privilege Arab sources in writing a history of the Arabs, much as one might privilege Russian sources to write a history of the Russians. The authoritative foreigners – statesmen, diplomats, missionaries, and travelers – have valuable insights to share on Arab history. But I believe Western readers would view Arab history differently were they to see it through the eyes of Arab men and women who described the times through which they lived.

I

From Cairo to Istanbul

The hot summer sun beat down upon al-Ashraf Qansuh al-Ghawri, forty-ninth sultan of the Mamluk dynasty, as he reviewed his troops for battle. Since the founding of the dynasty in 1250, the Mamluks had ruled over the oldest and most powerful Islamic state of its day. The Cairo-based empire spanned Egypt, Syria, and Arabia. Qansuh, a man in his seventies, had ruled the empire for fifteen years. He was now in Marj Dabiq, a field outside the Syrian city of Aleppo, at the northernmost limits of his empire, to confront the greatest danger the Mamluks had ever faced. He would fail, and his failure would set in motion the demise of his empire, paving the way for the conquest of the Arab lands by the Ottoman Turks. The date was August 24, 1516.

Qansuh wore a light turban to protect his head from the burning sun of the Syrian desert. He wore a regal blue mantle over his shoulders, on which he rested a battle axe, as he rode his Arabian charger to review his forces. When a Mamluk sultan went to war, he personally led the troops in battle and took most of his government with him. It was as if an American president took half his cabinet, leaders of both houses of Congress, Supreme Court justices, and a synod of bishops and rabbis, all dressed for battle alongside the officers and soldiers.

The commanders of the Mamluk army and the four chief justices stood beneath the sultan's red banner. To their right stood the spiritual head of the empire, the caliph al-Mutawakkil III, under his own banner. He too was dressed in a light turban and mantle, with a battle axe resting on his shoulder. Qansuh was surrounded by forty descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, who wore copies of the Qur'an enveloped in yellow silk cases wrapped around their heads. The descendants were

George W. Bush preserved Clinton's policies to contain Iraq and the WMD threat it was believed to pose to the United States.

The American intelligence community was far more concerned about the deepening conflict with Osama bin Ladin's al-Qaida network than any threat from Iraq. Bin Ladin had invested a great deal of time and energy in al-Qaida's stated goals of driving the United States out of Saudi Arabia and the Muslim world more broadly. In August 1998 the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya were targeted by simultaneous suicide bombings that left over 220 dead and hundreds more wounded – nearly all of them local citizens (only twelve of the fatalities were American citizens). For his role in the embassy bombings, Bin Ladin was placed on the FBI list of ten most wanted criminals. In October 2000, a suicide bomb attack on the USS *Cole* in the Yemeni port of Aden left seventeen American sailors dead and thirty-nine wounded.

Al-Qaida's ability to strike at vulnerable points in America's armor had raised real concerns in White House circles. CIA Director Tenet warned Bush in January 2001 that Bin Ladin and his network posed a 'tremendous threat' to the U.S. that was 'immediate.' However, unlike Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Bin Ladin was a mobile and elusive threat. It was not clear what policy measures the president might authorize to address the Bin Ladin threat.

Bush entered the Oval Office convinced that the threat of Iraqi WMD had been contained, and seems not to have been particularly concerned by the terror threat posed by Bin Ladin and his network. In his first nine months in office Bush made China his top priority.

Extraordinary events on September 11, 2001, would change Bush's priorities, opening a period of the greatest American engagement with the Middle East in its modern history. It would also prove the moment of greatest tension in modern Arab history.

The Arabs in the Twenty-First Century

For many in the Arab world, the opening decades of the third millennium felt like a century in their own right. In the previous century, the major turning points occurred once in a lifetime: World War I from 1914 to 1918, marking the end of the Ottoman age and the introduction of the modern state system under European imperialism; the Palestine War in 1948, initiating both the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Cold War in the Middle East; and the 1991 Gulf War, ushering in the end of the Cold War and a new era of American hegemony.

The new millennium has already witnessed two transformative moments in the Middle East: the September 11, 2001, attacks, initiating an American-led war on terror, and the Arab Spring revolutions of 2011. These two milestones have come to define the Middle East in the twenty-first century. We are living with their consequences still. Between the pressures of the war on terror and the Arab Spring, the claim that the years since September 11, 2001, have been the worst in modern Arab history would be no exaggeration.

On the morning of Tuesday, September 11, 2001, terrorist teams commandeered four jetliners departing from airports in Boston, Washington, D.C., and Newark, New Jersey. Within forty minutes, they had flown two aircraft into the Twin Towers of Manhattan's World Trade Center and a third into the Pentagon, in precisely planned suicide attacks. A fourth jet, believed to have been intended for the U.S. Capitol or the White House, crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. In all, besides the nineteen hijackers, some 2,974 people perished in the four attacks: 2,603 in the World Trade Center, 125 in the Pentagon, and all 246 passengers and crew on the four planes.

The terrorists gave no warning and made no demands. They aimed to inflict maximum damage on the United States and to set change in motion. Though no organization claimed credit for the attacks, the U.S. intelligence services suspected Osama bin Ladin's al-Qaida group from the outset. Within days of 9/11, the Federal Bureau of Investigation had identified the nineteen hijackers. All were Muslim Arab men – fifteen from Saudi Arabia, two from the United Arab Emirates, one from Egypt, and one from Lebanon – with connections to al-Qaida. We can only surmise from subsequent statements by that organization what kinds of changes the suicide hijackers had in mind: to drive America from the Muslim world and to destabilize pro-Western regimes there and replace them with an Islamic state.

The United States responded to the worst attack on American soil since the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor in 1941 by declaring war on a largely unknown enemy. In a televised address to a joint session of Congress on September 20, 2001, President George W. Bush declared a 'war on terror' beginning with al-Qaida and continuing 'until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.' He prepared Americans for a long and unconventional conflict and promised them that America would prevail.

The September 11 attacks and the war on terror placed the United States and the Arab world on a collision course. Many – certainly not all, but many – in the Arab world were glad to see America suffer. To Arab observers, the United States seemed indifferent to Arab suffering – the plight of Palestinians under Israeli occupation or of Iraqis under a decade of stringent sanctions. In his public pronouncements, Osama bin Ladin played on this Arab anger. 'What the United States tastes today is a very small thing compared to what we have tasted for tens of years,' bin Ladin claimed in October 2001. 'Our nation has been tasting this humiliation and contempt for more than 80 years.'

Bin Ladin's statements from his clandestine Afghan mountain stronghold added greatly to Arab-American tensions. Admiration for the al-Qaida leader was widespread throughout the Arab and Muslim world. People were impressed by al-Qaida's ingenuity in striking such a devastating blow against the United States on its own soil. Bin Ladin became an overnight cult symbol, the stencil of his face an icon of

Islamic resistance to American domination. Americans found such views incomprehensible and reviled bin Ladin as a figure of unqualified evil.

Frightened, confused, and extremely angry after the September 11 attacks, the American people felt threatened at home and unsafe abroad. They demanded that their government strike back swiftly and decisively against their enemies. The Bush administration responded with covert action against jihadi terror networks and by taking America into two wars of choice that confirmed the impression in the Arab world that the war on terror was a war against Islam.

America's war in Afghanistan began on October 7, 2001, backed by a UN-sanctioned and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-supported coalition. Its aims were to topple the rigid Islamist Taliban regime, which had hosted bin Ladin and his organization, and to arrest al-Qaida's leadership and destroy its training facilities in Afghanistan. The war was quick and largely successful – the Afghan Northern Alliance and its American allies drove the Taliban from the capital, Kabul, by mid-November, and the last Taliban and al-Qaida strongholds fell by mid-December 2001 – and involved a minimum of U.S. ground troops.

Despite its operational successes, key failures marred the Afghanistan War and exacerbated the war on terror. Most immediately, Osama bin Ladin and Taliban leader Mullah Omar eluded capture. Both men escaped from Afghanistan to regroup their forces and resume their fight against the United States from neighboring Pakistan. For bin Ladin's supporters, survival against the Americans was victory enough.

Other al-Qaida members, captured in the course of the Afghanistan War, were designated 'enemy combatants' and denied both their rights as prisoners of war under the Geneva Conventions and due process under the U.S. legal system. They were incarcerated in an extraterritorial U.S. military facility on Cuba known as the Guantánamo Bay Detention Camp. Beginning in October 2001, nearly 800 detainees would be sent to Guantánamo, all of them Muslim. Over the years, most of the detainees have been released without charge – by January 2017 the number was down to forty-two – and returned home to tell of their experiences. Ranging from humiliation to torture, the mistreatment of Guantánamo detainees provoked international condemnation and outrage in the Arab world.

Within Afghanistan, the Americans worked with local leaders to create a new political structure for the war-torn country that had suffered over twenty years of conflict since the Soviet invasion in 1979. However, the Americans needed to invest a great deal in economic development and state-building to ensure the stability of President Hamid Karzai's new government. Instead, by 2002 the Bush administration had diverted its energies and resources to planning the Iraq War, leaving the fragile Afghan state vulnerable to reconquest by the Taliban. As a result, a war that began in October 2001 with a handful of foreign ground forces expanded into a major conflict involving over 120,000 Western troops fighting the Taliban at its peak in 2011. The Americans and their coalition allies only declared their combat operations at an end in December 2014, by which time over 100,000 civilians had been killed in the fighting and millions displaced. The Afghan people, innocent of al-Qaida's crimes, paid a heavy price for 9/11.

Most Arab states were uncomfortable with an expanded U.S. military presence in the Muslim world. Their lukewarm support for America's war on terror made the United States doubt a number of its longtime allies in the region – none more so than Saudi Arabia. The fact that bin Ladin and fifteen of the suicide hijackers in the September 11 attacks were Saudi citizens and that private Saudi funds had bankrolled al-Qaida only worsened relations between the Saudis and the Americans. Other countries came under new scrutiny as well. Washington saw Egypt as soft on terror, labeled Iran and Iraq as part of an 'axis of evil,' and moved Syria to the top of its list of countries supporting terrorism.

The Arab states found themselves under irreconcilable pressures after 9/11. If they opposed America's war on terror, they risked sanctions that might range from economic isolation to outright calls for regime change by the world's sole superpower. If they took America's side, they opened their own territories to the threat of attacks by local jihadi cells inspired by bin Ladin's example. Between May and November 2003, multiple bomb attacks by domestic Islamists rocked cities in Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Turkey, leaving 125 dead and nearly 1,000 wounded. In November 2005, coordinated bombs ripped apart three hotels in Amman, Jordan, killing fifty-seven and wounding hundreds – nearly all

of them Jordanians. The Arab world faced tremendously difficult choices as it managed its relations with the United States.

The same pressures that drove America and the Arabs apart drew Israel and America closer. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon persuaded President George W. Bush that the United States and Israel faced a common war on terror. The Second Intifada, which erupted in September 2000, had grown increasingly violent by the time of the 9/11 attacks. The use of suicide bombings by Islamist groups to target Israeli civilians convinced President Bush that the United States and the Jewish state were fighting the same enemy. The United States then turned a blind eye to Israeli actions against both its Islamist foes – Islamic Jihad and Hamas in Palestine and Hizbullah in Lebanon – and the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority. Israel took full advantage of American complacency to unleash disproportionate attacks against the Palestinian government and society that heightened tensions in the Arab world enormously.

In June 2002, Prime Minister Sharon ordered the reoccupation of the West Bank. Though he justified the measure in terms of assuring Israel's security from terror attacks, Sharon clearly intended to isolate Yasser Arafat and weaken the Palestinian Authority. As Israeli forces seized Palestinian cities under self-rule since the Oslo Accords – Bethlehem, Jenin, Ramallah, Nablus, Tulkarm, and Qalqiliya – they stepped up attacks against the Palestinian resistance. In total, some 3,200 Palestinians and 950 Israelis met violent deaths in the course of the Second Intifada (September 2000–February 2005).²

As the Israeli military struggled to contain the Second Intifada, the Sharon government exacerbated tensions with the Palestinians through measures designed to seize more territory in the West Bank. Israeli settlements expanded in the Occupied Territories. And in June 2002 the Israeli government began construction of a 720-kilometer (450-mile) wall, ostensibly to insulate Israel from Palestinian terror attacks. The Separation Barrier (dubbed the Apartheid Wall by Palestinians) cuts a path deep into the West Bank and represents a de facto annexation of nearly 9 percent of the Palestinian territory in the West Bank, adversely affecting the lives and livelihoods of nearly 500,000 Palestinians.³

Israel's repression of the Second Intifada proved a clear liability to America's war on terror. The images of Palestinian suffering, broadcast live via Arab satellite television, provoked fury across the Middle East. Israeli actions and U.S. inaction served as valuable recruiting devices for al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations. The Bush administration found it necessary to engage in Palestinian-Israeli peacemaking to try to defuse regional tensions.

George W. Bush became the first American president to support a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In a major White House address delivered on June 24, 2002, Bush held out a vision of a Palestinian state 'living side by side in peace and security' with Israel. However, the Bush vision required the Palestinians to 'elect new leaders, leaders not compromised by terror' – a deliberate swipe at the democratically elected president of the Palestinian Authority, Yasser Arafat.

To advance the goal of securing a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Bush administration entered into partnership with Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations. This new grouping, known as the Middle East Quartet, sought to shape an international consensus on resolving the conflict. Crucially, Palestinians saw the Quartet as a way to counterbalance America's support for Israel with states and organizations historically more sympathetic to Palestinian aspirations – Russia and the United Nations in particular.

In April 2003, the Quartet published a 'road map to peace in the Middle East' to give direction to the Bush vision of a two-state solution. The road map laid out an ambitious three-phase plan that called for an end to violence between Palestinians and Israelis, leading to the creation of a provisional Palestinian state within temporary borders, followed by a third and final stage in which the Israelis and Palestinians would resolve the most complex issues of borders, the future of Jerusalem, the status of refugees, and the future of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. By the end of 2005 the states of Israel and Palestine were to exchange recognition and declare their conflict at an end.

Yet people in the Arab world remained skeptical about America's intentions and the road map's likelihood of leading to a just and enduring peace between Israel and the Palestinians. For in the months between

Bush's speech and the publication of the road map, the United States had invaded Iraq in March 2003.

The United States presented its case against Iraq in terms of the global war on terror. The Bush administration alleged that Saddam Hussein's government had amassed a large arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological agents, and precursors for a nuclear weapon. British prime minister Tony Blair echoed Bush's concerns and aligned the United Kingdom with America's stance on Iraq. The White House also suggested that Hussein's government had connections to Osama bin Ladin's al-Qaida that might see weapons of mass destruction transferred to the terror organization. The Bush administration argued for a preemptive war against Iraq to prevent the most dangerous weapons from falling into the hands of the most dangerous terrorists.⁴

The Arab world was unconvinced by President Bush's accusations. Arab governments believed – erroneously – that Saddam Hussein probably did hold an arsenal of chemical and biological agents. After all, he had used chemical weapons against both the Iranians and the Iraqi Kurds in the 1980s. Even the United Nations' top weapons inspector, Dr. Hans Blix, believed Iraq held such weapons. However, the Arab states knew that Iraq had played no role in the September 11 attacks and strongly doubted any connection between the Islamist al-Qaida movement and the secular Iraqi Ba'ath party. Saddam Hussein headed precisely the type of government that Osama bin Ladin sought to overturn. The Arab world simply did not accept what the Bush administration was saying and suspected the United States of ulterior motives – of coveting Iraq's oil and seeking to extend its domination over the oil-rich Persian Gulf.

The invasion of Iraq, which began on March 20, 2003, met with wide condemnation internationally and across the Arab world. The United States, seconded by Great Britain, had invaded an Arab state without provocation or UN sanction. Saddam Hussein remained defiant in the face of superior Western forces, and, as it had during the Gulf War in 1991, his stance generated widespread Arab public support. All twenty-two members of the Arab League except Kuwait supported a

resolution condemning the invasion as a violation of the UN Charter and demanding a complete withdrawal of all U.S. and British troops from Iraqi soil on March 23. Yet no one seriously expected the Bush administration to pay heed to the concerns of the United Nations, let alone of the Arab world.

Though the Iraqis put up stiff resistance, superior British and American forces, enjoying unchallenged control of the skies over Iraq, completely overpowered them. On April 9, the Americans secured Baghdad, signaling the fall of Saddam Hussein's government within three weeks of the start of hostilities. The Iraqi people had mixed feelings, celebrating the overthrow of a reviled dictator while resenting the Americans and British for invading their country.

The overthrow of Hussein's government left the United States in control of Iraq. The Bush administration established a governing body called the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Two early decisions by the CPA in May 2003 transformed the chaos of postwar Iraq into an armed insurgency against American rule. The first outlawed Saddam Hussein's Iraqi Ba'th party, barring former Ba'th members from public office. The second disbanded the 500,000-member Iraqi military and intelligence services. Taken together, these measures came to be known as 'de-Ba'thification.'

The American authorities pursued de-Ba'thification to purge Iraq of Saddam Hussein's malign influence. They took their inspiration from the denazification policies pursued by the Allied occupation authorities in Germany after World War II. They hoped by these measures to enjoy a free hand to build up a new, democratic Iraqi state that would respect human rights. In fact, the CPA had made a great number of well-armed men unemployed and stripped Iraq's Sunni Muslim political elites of any interest in cooperating with America's new democratic Iraq, which became increasingly dominated by the country's Shiite Muslim majority. An insurgency against the American occupation and sectarian conflict between Iraqi communities ensued.

Iraq quickly became a recruiting ground for anti-American and anti-Western activists. New organizations emerged, such as al-Qaida in Iraq, a jihadist group with only nominal ties to Osama bin Laden's organization, which deployed suicide bombers against foreign and domestic targets.

Al-Qaida in Iraq drove the United Nations to close its offices in Baghdad after targeted bombings killed the senior UN envoy to Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and over twenty of his staff on August 19, 2003. Westerners were taken hostage, and many were brutally murdered. Military patrols became the target of increasingly sophisticated attacks. A war with remarkably few British and American casualties gave way to an occupation in which the allies suffered heavy losses. By the final American withdrawal in 2011, the insurgents had killed nearly 4,500 Americans and over 170 Britons and wounded over 32,000 foreign soldiers.⁵

The spread of democracy was a recurrent theme in America's war on terror. President Bush and his neoconservative advisors believed that democratic values and participatory politics were incompatible with terrorism. A key advocate of these views was Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz. In a speech to a foreign policy forum in California in May 2002, Wolfowitz asserted, 'To win the war against terrorism . . . we must speak to the hundreds of millions of moderate and tolerant people in the Muslim world . . . who aspire to enjoy the blessings of freedom and democracy and free enterprise.'⁶ Secretary of State Colin Powell launched his own stillborn Middle East Partnership Initiative in December 2002 to bring 'democracy and free markets' to the Middle East.⁷ The Bush administration argued that a democratic Iraq would prove a beacon to the rest of the Arab states and set off a wave of democratization that would sweep the Arab world.

Iraq was already deeply divided by the time its citizens went to the polls in January 2005 to elect a national assembly to draft a new constitution. Composing between 50 and 60 percent of the total population of Iraq, the Shiites were the prime beneficiaries of the new democratic system and turned out to vote in strength, with Shiite areas reporting up to 80 percent turnout. The Kurds, a non-Arab ethnic group and a minority in Iraq as a whole, hold an outright majority in their own provinces and were yet more enthusiastic supporters of Iraq's new democratic system, with up to 90 percent turnout. The Sunni Arab population, the prime target of de-Ba'thification, largely boycotted elections. Turnout among Sunnis in Mosul was as low as 10 percent.⁸

The December 2005 elections, held under the terms of the new

constitution, confirmed the new political realities in Iraq. The United Iraqi Alliance, the leading Shiite bloc, secured a plurality of 128 seats in the 275-seat national assembly. The Kurdish list emerged as the second largest bloc with fifty-three seats. The Iraqi Accord Front, a coalition of Sunni politicians, came in third with forty-four seats. The Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani was named president of Iraq, and the Shiite politician Nouri al-Maliki was appointed prime minister. After centuries of dominating Iraqi politics, the Sunni Arab elites were out of power and, given their relative demographic weight, would never return through the ballot box. Where they couldn't win by democratic means, Sunni militants turned to violence. Insurgent groups shifted their target from the occupation forces to their Shiite fellow citizens as Iraq descended into a devastating sectarian conflict.

The Iraqi security forces and the American military were powerless to contain the communal violence. Suicide bombers wrought daily carnage in the markets and mosques of Iraq's cities. Satellite TV broadcast graphic images of death and devastation across the Arab world. Though the casualty figures for Iraqi civilians since the invasion are widely disputed, the Iraqi government estimated that between 100,000 and 150,000 civilians perished between 2003 and 2011. As in Afghanistan, Iraqi civilians bore the true cost of the war on terror, their security, values, and way of life shattered by the invasion and its violent aftermath.⁹

The rise of the Shiites to power in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein also transformed the regional balance of power in the Arab world. Until 2003, Iraq stood as one of the most powerful Sunni Arab states and a buffer to contain the perceived threat of the Islamic Republic of Iran. After 2003, Iraq under its Shiite-led government came to be perceived as an ally of Iran. Neighboring Sunni states, led by Saudi Arabia and Jordan, spoke ominously of a 'Shiite Crescent' extending from Iran through Iraq to Syria (an Iranian ally since 1980) and Lebanon, where the Shiite militias Amal and Hizbullah had come to play a dominant role in national politics. New tensions emerged between Sunnis and Shiites that would grow to destabilize the Arab world as a whole.

The Bush administration's initiatives to promote democracy met with no more success in the rest of the Arab world than they did in Iraq.

Popular resentment of its neoconservative foreign policy made Islamist parties advocating resistance to America more attractive to voters than moderates seeking accommodation with the West. Elections in Lebanon in 2005 and in the Palestinian territories in 2006 demonstrated an inconvenient truth about democracy in the Arab world: in any free and fair election, those parties most hostile to the United States were most likely to win.

On November 11, 2004, Yasser Arafat, the historic leader of the Palestinian national struggle and besieged president of the Palestinian Authority, died of medical complications in a Paris hospital. The Bush administration insisted that, though the Palestinians mourned Arafat, his death opened opportunities for them to elect new leaders 'not compromised by terror.' On January 9, 2005, the Palestinians voted for a new president. Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas won an outright majority of 63 percent to succeed Arafat. The Bush administration applauded the result and declared Abbas a man it could work with. Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon, on the other hand, refused to deal with him.

In 2005, Sharon announced his intention to withdraw all Israeli troops and settlers from the Gaza Strip. Israel's position in Gaza was untenable, with thousands of soldiers providing security for 8,000 settlers within a hostile population of 1.4 million Palestinians. Withdrawal from Gaza was popular with the Israeli army and voters. It also allowed Sharon greater freedom to ignore the Road Map, claiming to be pursuing his own peace initiative with the Palestinians. Yet Sharon refused to negotiate with the Palestinian Authority to ensure a smooth handover in Gaza. As a result, when the Israelis completed their withdrawal in August 2005, they created a dangerous power vacuum in the strip and handed Hamas an important victory. The Islamist party naturally took credit for driving Israel from Gaza through its years of resistance.

The true extent of Hamas's gains only emerged in the January 2006 elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). The two leading parties were Arafat's Fatah, under Mahmoud Abbas's leadership, and Hamas, led by Ismail Haniya. The press and policymakers in the West fully expected Hamas to gain strong support and reduce Fatah's major-

ity in the PLC. However, the magnitude of Hamas's victory shocked Palestinians and foreign observers alike. Hamas gained an outright majority with 74 of the 132 seats in the PLC; Fatah managed to retain only 45 seats. The Palestinian territories, divided between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, came under a divided authority, with a Fatah executive and a Hamas parliament. To further complicate matters, a party officially boycotted by the United States and the European Union as a terrorist organization, having won an election deemed free and fair by international monitors, formed the next government of Palestine. It was a shattering reversal for America's war on terror. And the Palestinian people would pay the price.

The new Hamas government of Prime Minister Haniya openly rejected the Quartet's policies. Haniya refused to recognize Israel, to end armed resistance, or to accept the terms of the Road Map. Consequently, the Quartet cut all assistance to the Palestinian Authority. Until Hamas proved willing to 'renounce terror' in the West's terms, neither the European Union nor the United States would support a Hamas-led Palestinian Authority – even a democratically elected one.

In Lebanon, the Islamist Hizbullah party also proved its appeal to voters for its politics of resistance against Israel and the United States. Hizbullah's strength came as a surprise to the Bush administration, which upheld Lebanon as an example of citizens' successfully preserving their democratic rights – in this case from Syrian oppression.

The assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri on February 14, 2005, stirred Lebanon's democracy movement to action. Having resigned his office just four months earlier in protest of Syrian interference in Lebanon's politics, Hariri was a marked man. Yet the intense violence of his murder shocked even the war-calloused Lebanese. Assassins detonated a one-ton car bomb as Hariri's motorcade passed through the waterfront hotel district on his daily drive home from the parliament. Twenty-one people died with Hariri – politicians, bodyguards, and drivers, along with innocent bystanders.

Hariri's son Saad led the nation in mourning and made clear his belief that Syria was responsible for his father's violent death. The assassination set off waves of mass demonstrations that brought poli-

tics in Lebanon to a standstill. On March 14, 1 million Lebanese descended on downtown Beirut to demand Syria's complete withdrawal from Lebanon. It was the first instance of the popular mass demonstrations that would come to be associated with the Arab Spring revolutions six years later. The movement met with the full support of the United States, which accused Syria of sponsoring terrorism. Under intense international pressure, the Syrian government agreed to withdraw its soldiers and intelligence forces from Lebanon after an occupation that had lasted nearly three decades. The last Syrian troops crossed out of Lebanon on April 26.

In May and June 2005, the Lebanese public voted to elect a new parliament. The Bush administration lauded the elections as a vindication of America's policies promoting democracy in the Arab world. The anti-Syrian coalition, headed by Saad Hariri, won 72 of the 128 seats in the parliament. However, the political wing of the Shi'ite militia Hizbullah won a solid bloc of fourteen parliamentary seats and, combined with a group of pro-Syrian parties, emerged as a powerful opposition force in Lebanese politics. Even in Lebanon, parties explicitly hostile to the United States fared well at the polls.

For Islamist parties, resistance against Israel paid political dividends. Indeed, so long as they persisted in striking boldly against the Jewish state, Hamas in Palestine and Hizbullah in Lebanon could count on broad-based political support. They also believed that fighting against Israel to liberate Muslim lands was a religious duty. In the summer of 2006, both parties escalated their attacks on Israel – with disastrous consequences for both the Gaza Strip and Lebanon.

On June 25, 2006, a group of Hamas activists crossed from Gaza to Israel through a tunnel near the Egyptian frontier and attacked an Israeli army post. They killed two soldiers and wounded four others before escaping back to Gaza with a young conscript named Gilad Shalit as their prisoner. On June 28 Israeli soldiers entered Gaza and the next day arrested sixty-four Hamas officials, including eight members of the Palestinian cabinet and twenty democratically elected members of the PLC. Hamas responded by firing homemade rockets into Israel, and the Israelis in turn deployed their air force to bomb

Palestinian targets. Eleven Israelis and more than 400 Palestinians died before a cease-fire in November 2006.

Hizbullah's war with Israel provoked a massively disproportionate response against Lebanon. On July 12, 2006, a group of Hizbullah fighters crossed into Israel and attacked two jeeps patrolling the border with Lebanon. They killed three soldiers, wounded two, and took two others prisoner. This unprovoked attack set off a thirty-four-day conflict in which Israeli ground forces invaded South Lebanon. The Israeli air force bombed key infrastructure and leveled whole neighborhoods in the Shiite southern suburbs of Beirut, displacing an estimated 1 million civilians. Hizbullah fighters fought fierce battles with Israeli troops in the hills of South Lebanon and kept up a constant barrage of missiles fired into Israel, forcing thousands of Israelis to evacuate the conflict zone.

The Lebanese government turned to the United States for assistance. After all, the Bush administration had touted democratic Lebanon as an example to the Middle East and had given its full support to Lebanese demands for Syria to withdraw in 2005. Yet America was unwilling to intervene with the Israelis even to call for a cease-fire in 2006. Because Israel was fighting against Hizbullah, which the United States had branded a terrorist organization, the Bush administration refused to restrain its Israeli ally. In fact, the U.S. government resupplied the Israelis with laser-guided weapons and cluster bombs as the intensive bombing campaign against Lebanon depleted the Israeli arsenal. By the end of the thirty-four-day conflict on August 14, over 1,100 Lebanese and 43 Israeli civilians had died under the aerial bombardment. Among combatants, the United Nations estimated 500 Hizbullah militiamen killed, and the Israeli army reported 117 of its soldiers dead.

The summer conflicts in 2006 demonstrated the limits of America's support for Arab democracy and its unlimited support for Israel. In effect, the Bush administration would only recognize election results that brought pro-Western parties to power. And the United States would support any Israeli action, no matter how disproportionate, against parties it associated with terrorism. The very fact that America and Israel condemned Hamas and Hizbullah further strengthened the parties' domestic standing. Far from facing censure for provoking devastating wars with Israel, the Islamic resistance movements enjoyed even

greater support at home and across the Arab world for standing up against Bush, Israel, and the U.S.-led war on terror.

With the election of Barack Obama in November 2008, the United States entered a new era of constructive engagement with the Arab and Islamic world. In his first 100 days, the new president initiated a number of policies intended to reduce the regional tensions generated by seven years of the war on terror. President Obama set in motion the reduction of the U.S. troop presence in Iraq. He signaled that the Palestinian-Israeli peace process was a first-term priority. He renewed engagement with states shunned by the Bush administration, such as Syria and Iran.

The clearest expression of this new policy of constructive engagement with the Arab and Islamic world came in Obama's address to Cairo University in June 2009: 'I have come here to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect,' Obama told his attentive audience. 'There must be a sustained effort to listen to each other; to learn from each other; to respect one another; and to seek common ground.' While many in the Arab world reserved judgment, waiting to see if Obama's actions lived up to his rhetoric, his message nonetheless came as a welcome relief to a region that had suffered years of strain at the epicenter of the war on terror.

Though awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009, Obama remained at war in the Muslim world throughout his eight years in office. While drawing down troop numbers in Iraq – the last American units departed Baghdad in December 2011 – he stepped up the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan to peak at 100,000 and only declared an end of operations there in 2014, making Afghanistan (2001–2014) the longest war in America's history. Most controversially, Obama stepped up the use of lethal drone attacks in Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen, and Libya. Whereas President Bush had authorized some 50 drone strikes, killing 296 combatants and 195 civilians, Obama approved over 500 drone attacks that claimed the lives of 3,040 combatants and hundreds of civilians.¹⁰ The most significant targeted killing authorized by the Obama White House came on May 2, 2011, when U.S. commandos shot Osama bin Ladin dead in his secret compound in Abbotabad, Pakistan, and buried

his body at sea. After the 9/11 attacks President Bush had invoked the justice of the Wild West and claimed he wanted bin Ladin 'dead or alive.' The Nobel Peace laureate succeeded where the architect of the war on terror had failed.

The Arab world's response to bin Ladin's killing was remarkably muted, given the prominence the al-Qaida leader had attained in his conflict with the West. Events across the region in 2011 had eclipsed that conflict and the significance of the West. For, with the fall of Tunisian president Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali and Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, the Arab world had entered a transformative moment of hope and danger that came to be known in the West as the Arab Spring.

The revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, in January and February 2011, created the Arab Spring. They provided a language and strategy of popular revolt that inspired copycat movements across the Arab world. The same slogans first deployed in Tunisia were repeated in Egypt, followed by Libya, Bahrain, Yemen, and Syria: the imperative 'Go!' directed at autocratic rulers who had outlasted their utility and the ubiquitous 'The people want the fall of the regime!' The strategy included mass mobilization via social networking websites that allowed organizers to circumvent security forces and enabled demonstrators to occupy central urban public spaces, like Tunis's Avenue Bourguiba and Cairo's Tahrir Square, and mount round-the-clock protests until the fall of the dictator. The size of the demonstrations gave Arab citizens the confidence to sustain their challenge against repressive autocrats. Protestors in capitals across the Arab world insisted they no longer feared their governments. The assumption was that every country that mounted an Arab Spring uprising could repeat the success achieved by protestors in Tunisia and Egypt.

The notion that all Arab states were homogeneous and that one revolutionary template would fit them all proved the fallacy of the Arab Spring. It soon became apparent that Muammar al-Qadhafi's Libya, with its near total absence of state institutions, differed completely from Bahrain, with its Sunni-Shiite sectarian issues, which differed again from Yemen with its long history of regionalism, which bore no resemblance to Syria under the minority rule of its Alawite community. Domestic constraints and intervention by regional powers led to very

different outcomes in each of the six countries that experienced revolutions in 2011: counterrevolution, civil war, regional conflict, and the emergence of a transnational caliphate. What began as a liberation movement rapidly degenerated into the worst political and humanitarian crisis to afflict the Middle East in modern times.

Within weeks of the successful revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, the forces of counterrevolution had turned back the Arab Spring in Bahrain.

Young Bahrainis followed developments in Tunisia and Egypt with mounting excitement. They interacted on Bahrain Online, a social media website that provided a virtual meeting place for the safe, anonymous exchange of political views. By 2011, Bahrain Online had hundreds of thousands of followers. On January 26, 2011, the day after Egyptians massed in Tahrir Square, a contributor to Bahrain Online posted a suggestion: 'Let's choose a specific day to begin the popular revolution in Bahrain.' The obvious choice, readers concurred, was February 14, a date associated with both heightened expectations and dashed hopes in the island kingdom.¹¹

Ten years earlier, on February 14, 2001, the government of Bahrain had held a referendum on a National Action Charter to resolve years of political protest with the promise of reforms. The charter pledged to restore Bahrain's elected parliament, reinforce the country's 1973 constitution, and endow Bahrain with the higher level of democracy associated with a constitutional monarchy. Many in Bahrain took its approval by 98.4 percent of voters to demonstrate a high degree of unity between the kingdom's Shiite and Sunni communities.

The high hopes raised by the National Action Charter were betrayed exactly one year later. On February 14, 2002, the ruler, Shaykh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa (r. 1999-), approved by decree a repressive new constitution that established an appointed upper chamber and a virtually powerless elected chamber. The new constitution transformed the state of Bahrain into a monarchy, and its ruler became a king. The opposition condemned the move as a constitutional coup imposing the will of the ruling Al Khalifa family on the people.

Tensions built in Bahrain between 2002 and 2011. Though there are no official figures for the island kingdom's population by religion,

the Shiites are widely believed to represent an outright majority of 60 percent or more, with the Sunnis accounting for the balance of the country's 600,000 citizens (over half of the 1.3 million population of Bahrain consists of foreigners). Many in Bahrain saw the new constitutional order as bringing disproportionate benefit to the ruling Sunni minority. Growing inequality and repression of political dissent engendered mounting opposition to the new monarchical regime.

By January 2011, the list of Bahraini dissidents' grievances was long: an unaccountable government that played on sectarianism to divide Bahrainis; corruption, the plunder of the nation's wealth by the ruling elite, and the expropriation of land; brutal repression of dissent, censorship, and constraints on free expression; and the use of foreign security forces against citizens (Shiites did not serve in the security forces). 'Anger and frustration is boiling amongst us all,' a contributor wrote in a post to Bahrain Online, as February 14 was declared a 'day of rage' for popular protest of the ills of the regime. The organizers called themselves the February 14 Youth Movement.

Bahraini protestors took to the streets for the day of rage just two days after Husni Mubarak abdicated power in Egypt. Security forces fired tear gas and live gunfire to disperse the crowds, killing one demonstrator and wounding many more. The funeral for the fallen demonstrator the following day provoked renewed protests, which led to another death. The crowds began to march from surrounding suburbs and villages onto the capital city, Manama, toward a location designated by contributors to Bahrain Online as ideally placed to serve as Bahrain's Tahrir Square: the Pearl Roundabout.

The Pearl Roundabout was a monument created to mark the 1982 meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) hosted by Bahrain. The monument consisted of six arcing sails, one for each of the member states of the GCC (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates), upon whose mastheads rested a massive pearl that hearkened back to the country's pearl-diving economy from pre-oil times. Given the roundabout's accessibility, centrality, and proximity to villages neighboring Manama, Pearl was the natural meeting point for Bahrain's protestors.

The demonstrators flooded into Pearl Roundabout on February 15,

shouting, 'Peaceful! Peaceful!' to discourage the police from firing on them. 'The people and the land are furious,' they chanted. 'Our demand is a binding constitution.'¹² For two days they camped in Pearl before the security forces moved in to expel the demonstrators by force on February 17, killing four and wounding scores more. The growing death toll only fed the fury of the protestors, who flooded back to Pearl immediately after the security forces had withdrawn on February 19. They knew that scores had died in Tunisia and hundreds in Egypt before their movements succeeded, and they believed that through their sacrifice they too would secure their legitimate political rights. But the government's repression led to a hardening of the protestors' demands. No longer satisfied with reforms, the people began to demand the king's abdication – the fall of the regime.

For over three weeks Pearl Roundabout served as the nerve center of Bahrain's popular uprising. The protestors had raised tents, screens, makeshift kitchens, medical centers, and a stage for speakers. A media office was opened to feed the international press's insatiable demand for Arab Spring stories. Crowds continued to gather at Pearl, bringing together men and women, Sunnis and Shiites, veteran opposition politicians and the February 14 Youth Movement. However, the carnival atmosphere did little to mask the threat to the monarchy. According to the Arab Spring playbook, this sort of public occupation of a central meeting place only ended in the fall of the regime.

King Hamad and his government were divided on how to respond. Hard-liners led by the prime minister, Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa (who, holding the post continuously since 1970, is the world's longest-serving unelected head of government), wanted to clamp down. The crown prince, Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, engaged in secret negotiations with the seven recognized opposition movements to propose constitutional reforms that might satisfy the protestors and resolve the crisis.¹³ Bahrain's Gulf neighbors sided with the prime minister. For Saudi leaders, the uprising in Bahrain posed existential threats to their own ruling orders. They believed a revolution in any one of the conservative Gulf monarchies would threaten the political stability of all, and they saw Iran's malign influence in a largely Shiite Muslim protest movement. Were Iran to succeed in Bahrain, the Saudis reasoned, they would inevitably rouse the Shiite population of the oil-rich Eastern Province

of Saudi Arabia to rise in rebellion. The Saudis were determined to contain and eliminate the dual threats of revolution and Iranian influence in Bahrain before they could take root and spread.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates led the intervention to put down the Pearl Roundabout revolution. On March 14, operating under the banner of the GCC Peninsula Shield Force, a joint force based in Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states sent 2,000 troops and 150 armored cars across the 25-kilometer (15-mile) causeway linking Saudi Arabia to Bahrain. The Saudis and their allies justified the intervention in terms that reflected their own fears: they claimed to be protecting Bahraini sovereignty from Iranian influence. King Hamad declared a 'State of National Safety,' which gave the Bahraini authorities powers to 'evacuate or isolate certain areas to maintain security and public order' and to search, arrest, withdraw citizenship, and deport aliens deemed a threat to public security.¹⁴

Reinforced by their Gulf allies, the Bahraini security forces set about dismantling the demonstrators' camp at Pearl Roundabout. Not only did they tear down the temporary structures erected at Pearl, but the authorities demolished the monument itself, the sails and concrete pearl crushed into rubble and trucked away. The Bahraini foreign minister, Khalid bin Ahmad Al Khalifa, described the operation as the 'removal of a bad memory.'¹⁵ Then followed a crackdown on all those associated with the protest movement that included mass arrests, allegations of torture, trials by special security courts, and the handing out of harsh prison sentences. The regime took full advantage of the measures decreed by the State of National Safety.

King Hamad's one concession to international criticism of the crackdown was to authorize an independent commission of inquiry into the Bahraini uprising and its suppression. Headed by a distinguished Egyptian American law professor, Cherif Bassiouni, the commission subjected the Gulf state to an unprecedented degree of legal scrutiny. Its detailed, 500-page report, published in November 2011, documented hundreds of unjust convictions and disproportionate sentences, allegations of 'forced disappearances' in which detainees were denied access to their families or lawyers for weeks, sixty accounts of torture, and the deaths of five detainees under torture.¹⁶ The king promised to punish those

responsible for the abuses, to implement reforms, and to work for national reconciliation after the deeply divisive events of 2011. Ultimately, the recommendations of the Bassiouni Report have gone unfulfilled, the regime resorting to repression to avoid reforms.

The government's victory over the Pearl Roundabout protesters in Bahrain marked the end of the Arab Spring as conceived in Tunisia and Egypt. It would no longer be enough for the people to mass in sufficient numbers to secure the fall of the regime, and the triumph of the people was no longer inevitable. The small Gulf state demonstrated how the regime could survive a revolution if its armed forces remained loyal to the ruler and willing to fire on demonstrators. The counterrevolution began in Bahrain in March 2011 and would culminate in Egypt in July 2013. If the Arab Spring was about citizens losing their fear of governments, the counterrevolution was all about the use of violence to restore fear. It would turn all subsequent uprisings – in Libya, Yemen, and Syria – into bloodbaths.

The Arab Spring came to Libya days after the outbreak of the Bahraini uprising. Muammar al-Qadhafi, Libya's self-styled 'Brother Leader' since 1969 (he always rejected the title 'president'), had survived in power through brutal repression rather than the consent of the Libyan people. Inspired by the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, Libyans rose in rebellion against their dictator of forty-one years, opening a violent new chapter in the Arab awakening of 2011.

Demonstrations erupted in the eastern city of Benghazi on February 15 and were met with force by security agents, who beat demonstrators and wounded dozens. Following the example of Egyptian and Bahraini organizers, Libyan activists called for a 'day of rage' on February 17. Protests spread across the country and reached the Libyan capital, Tripoli. Angry crowds set fire to government buildings and police stations. Security forces used live ammunition against the demonstrators, killing over eighty of them. The dictator's son and presumed successor, Seif al-Islam Qadhafi, took to the airwaves in a TV broadcast on February 20 to threaten the Libyan rebels. 'Instead of crying over eighty-four deaths,' he said with contempt, wagging his finger at the camera, 'you will be crying over hundreds of thousands of deaths. There

will be rivers of blood.' He spoke of Libya as if it were his family's private property. 'This country belongs to us.'¹⁷

The situation rapidly spun out of government control. Opponents of the Qadhafi regime made Libya's second city, Benghazi, their home base and established their ruling National Transitional Council (NTC) there on February 27. Members of the armed forces and security services in the eastern half of the country rebelled against the Libyan government and joined an increasingly organized insurgency seeking the overthrow of Qadhafi. However, that left a large part of the armed forces loyal to the regime. The Libyan revolution, armed from the start, quickly took on the appearance of a civil war.

In the early days of the rebellion, the insurgents were on the ascendant. They consolidated their position in Benghazi and the eastern coastal regions of Libya, under the prerevolutionary Libyan flag in red, black, and green with a white Islamic star and crescent. Thousands of civilian volunteers, with enthusiasm in inverse proportion to their discipline and training, reinforced the ranks of dissident soldiers. Driving customized pickup trucks armed with heavy machine guns, they pressed forward from their base in Benghazi to occupy key coastal cities, including the refinery ports of Brega and Ras Lanuf. By the end of February, the insurgents had extended their hold over the entire coast to the east of Benghazi and over major towns near Tripoli such as Misurata. Defiant billboards posted around Benghazi proclaimed 'No foreign intervention' in bold red letters surrounded by stark stencils of the instruments of war. 'Libyan people can do it alone.' Yet predictions that Qadhafi looked set to follow Ben Ali and Mubarak into retirement proved premature.

The Libyan dictator showed anger but no fear at the growing challenge to his rule. He imposed a total clampdown in Tripoli. The regime organized pro-Qadhafi rallies in central Green Square, where thousands of Libyans chanted their support for the Brother Leader and defiance against the rebels. Qadhafi retained control over the best-armed and best-trained units in his army. On February 22 he gave a long and rambling speech that dismissed the rebels as 'rats and cockroaches' and vowed to hunt them down 'inch by inch, room by room, house by house, alley by alley.' It was the beginning of Qadhafi's counterrevolution.

Government forces engaged and defeated the rebels in a number of decisive engagements in the first weeks of March. As Qadhafi's troops approached the rebel stronghold in Benghazi, the international community feared a massacre was imminent. Gone was the defiance of February, as rebel fighters openly called on the international community to intervene. On March 12, the Arab League took the extraordinary decision to support the insurgents against the recognized government by requesting that the United Nations authorize a no-fly zone over rebel-held regions of Libya. On the basis of the Arab League decision, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1973 on March 17, imposing a no-fly zone over all of Libya and authorizing 'all necessary measures' to protect Libyan civilians.

The UN resolution internationalized the Libyan revolution. Almost immediately, a NATO-led intervention force struck key targets in the country, with France, Britain, and the United States taking the lead. Qadhafi's troops were forced back from Benghazi under lethal fire from NATO aircraft, backed by Arab air force units from Jordan, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. The initiative had shifted from Libyan to Western hands, and the mission crept from creating a no-fly zone to provoking the fall of Qadhafi. For the first time in the Arab Spring uprisings, it was the international community that pursued the fall of the regime.

Through the spring and summer of 2011, Qadhafi retained his grip on power despite thousands of NATO sorties. The breakthrough for the opposition came in a major offensive on August 20 that breached Qadhafi's defenses in Tripoli. By August 23, the Libyan dictator and his sons had fled the capital as the insurgents celebrated victory. The NTC gained international recognition as the provisional government of Libya and promised a quick transition to constitutional government. Fireworks lit public celebrations as Libyans marked the liberation of Tripoli.

Yet the war continued after the fall of the capital. Qadhafi loyalists continued to fight against NTC forces in the fallen leader's hometown of Sirte and the loyalist stronghold of Bani Walid. After a prolonged siege, Sirte fell to NTC forces on October 20, 2011, where Qadhafi and his son Mutassim were captured and lynched. Horrific videos of

Qadhafi's death were posted to the Internet, and his body was put on public display in the city of Misurata, which had suffered for months under government siege, to demonstrate to Libyans that the tyrant was truly dead – the latest casualty in a conflict estimated to have claimed over 15,000 lives.

The fall of the regime created a power vacuum rather than leading to a new democratic order. Qadhafi had bequeathed to his people a peculiarly institution-free form of government, which had allowed him to rule for years without checks or balances to his power. When many of Libya's best-educated and worldliest citizens returned home from exile to help rebuild their nation, they found a dangerous chaos, for men with guns fill power vacuums more easily than people with ideas.

The transition to democracy began with promise in Libya. On July 7, 2012, some 2.8 million Libyan citizens turned out enthusiastically to elect a 200-seat General National Congress to replace the National Transitional Council. Yet, from the start, factional divisions between Islamists and secularists, together with tribal and regional cleavages that made politics in Libya very local, hindered the work of the congress. Elected politicians in Tripoli had no control over provinces ruled by tribal militias. By August 2013, armed conflict had broken out between rival militias, which wrested whole towns, port cities, and oil facilities from government control.

In 2014, Libya snapped in two under the pressure of irreconcilable political forces. Islamist factions that had come to dominate the General National Congress secured control over the national capital, Tripoli, and all of western Libya. The House of Representatives, the newly elected parliament created to replace the General National Congress, and the recognized government of Libya, headed by Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thinni, were driven into exile in eastern Libya. The Libyan National Army, headed by one of Qadhafi's former generals, Khalifa Haftar, threw its support behind the House of Representatives in eastern Libya, while powerful militias reinforced the Islamist-dominated General National Congress in western Libya.

The war in Libya has had a devastating impact on the country. Between 2011 and 2015, the conflict killed an estimated 25,000 people and drove over 100,000 from their homes. In terms of human misery

and political division, the Libyan revolution has most in common with Yemen's experiences since 2011.

One month after the death of Qadhafi, on November 23, 2011, Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh became the fourth Arab autocrat to fall, after thirty-three years in power.

The revolution in Yemen seemed destined for stalemate almost from the outset. The country was fragmented internally along the lines of the formerly separate states of North and South Yemen (unified in 1990), was host to one of the more active al-Qaida franchises known as al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, and was embroiled in an armed insurgency with the Shi'ite Houthi community in the frontier regions bordering Saudi Arabia. President Ali Abdullah Saleh had ruled over North Yemen from 1978 to 1990 and became president of the united Republic of Yemen in 1990. In keeping with Arab autocratic practice, he was grooming his son Ahmed to succeed him. With the lowest levels of human development in the Arab world, the people of Yemen viewed the prospect of a father-son succession perpetuating Saleh misrule with grave misgivings. Adopting the slogan of the Arab revolutions of 2011, the Yemeni people wanted the fall of their regime.

Large demonstrations numbering in the tens of thousands gathered in Sana'a, Aden, and Ta'iz in February 2011. Democracy activists set up a tent city near the university in Sana'a and called it Change Square on the model of Cairo's Tahrir Square. Emblazoned with banners reading, 'No to Corruption, No to Tyranny, the People Demand the Fall of the Regime,' Change Square 'took on a distinctly Yemeni feel,' New York Times journalist Robert Worth remembered. 'It may have been inspired by Cairo's Tahrir Square, but it was unmistakably different: larger, dirtier, wilder. It stretched on for blocks in several directions, an unbroken mass of canvas tents pitched on the pavement with a big central stage for speeches.'¹⁸

Support for the president began to break down as key military and tribal leaders joined the ranks of the opposition. However, what began as a peaceful protest movement in Yemen turned increasingly violent. On March 18 elements of the army loyal to the president fired on demonstrators, killing over fifty unarmed civilians. Many of the president's supporters resigned from their posts and joined the opposition.

Whole units of the Yemeni army defected to side with the demonstrators. Ali Abdullah Saleh's isolation increased as the international community called on the Yemeni president to step down.

After ten months of political instability, Ali Abdullah Saleh finally signed an agreement brokered by the Gulf Cooperation Council, with the support of the United States and European powers, for the Yemeni president to relinquish power with immediate effect in return for immunity from prosecution. With little advance warning, Saleh transferred power to his vice president, Abed Rabbo Mansour al-Hadi, on November 23. Yet the deal fell well short of protestors' demands for regime change and did little to address the factional rifts that had emerged among Yemen's political elites in the course of the revolution. Activists who wanted to see Ali Abdullah Saleh held responsible for the deaths of demonstrators – nearly 2,000 in all – did not believe he deserved legal immunity. There was little celebration in Yemen when President Ali Abdullah Saleh stood down because the Yemenis remained unconvinced that he had really relinquished power.

Elections were held in Yemen in February 2012, but many Yemenis questioned the point of voting when there was only one name on the ballot: Abed Rabbo Mansour al-Hadi. Yet the 65 percent of voters who did turn out gave President Hadi a mandate to reform the government of Yemen and reconcile the country's fractious communities. His efforts met with some success. The National Dialogue Conference struck agreement on a new federal structure for Yemen and the terms of a new constitution for the country by January 2014. Yet the political transition created instability. The Houthi tribesmen resumed their insurgency in the north of the country, supported by army units formerly loyal to ousted president Ali Abdullah Saleh. Many speculated openly that Saleh was now in league with the same Houthi militants that as president he had sought to crush.

In September 2014 the Houthi militiamen entered the Yemeni capital, Sana'a, unopposed. The Houthis were no strangers to the city. They belong to the Zaydi community, a variant of Shiism whose communal leaders, or imams, had ruled Yemen from Sana'a for centuries until the republican revolution in 1962. Historically, the Zaydis had little contact with mainstream Shiism in Iran and, though a religious minority in Arabia, had never faced sectarian conflict in Yemen. Yet these historic

distinctions are easily overlooked in the virulent sectarianism afflicting the Arab world in the twenty-first century.

After months of uncomfortable cohabitation, the Houthis appointed a ruling council in February 2015 to replace President Hadi, who fled to his hometown of Aden with leading members of his government. Unwilling to transfer power to the Houthis, Hadi remained the internationally recognized leader of Yemen. The Houthis advanced on Aden to silence the exiled president, but Hadi fled to Saudi Arabia to rally support for his fallen government. The Saudis viewed the crisis in Yemen with mounting concern, seeing the hand of Iran behind a Shiite movement destabilizing South Arabia. As in Bahrain, they were determined to act decisively to deny Iran a foothold in the Arabian Peninsula.

In March 2015, the Saudis led a ten-nation coalition to war against the Houthi insurgency in Yemen.¹⁹ The Saudi navy imposed a strict embargo on the coastline to prevent Iran from resupplying the Houthis by sea. As in Libya and Bahrain, what started as an internal uprising had evolved into an international conflict. By September 2015 Yemeni government forces, backed by their Arab allies' airpower, had succeeded in recovering Aden. President Hadi returned to the southern port city to head a powerless government, confirming the division of Yemen into a Houthi-dominated north and Hadi-governed south. All the while, the Arab coalition prosecuted a devastating air campaign, leveling residential buildings and infrastructure in the Arab world's poorest country.

Revolution, war, and naval embargo combined to create a humanitarian crisis in Yemen in the years immediately following 2011. By the end of 2015, the war had internally displaced some 2.5 million Yemenis; by 2017 it had left an estimated 10,000 dead and 40,000 wounded. Those who survived faced the onset of famine as the naval blockade closed Yemen, which imports 90 percent of its food, to international shipping. Worse than a failed state, Yemen had degenerated into two failed states at war with each other.²⁰

Dreadful though developments proved in Libya and Yemen, the most tragic chapter in the history of the Arab Spring unfolded in Syria.

Syria was one of the last Arab countries to face a popular uprising in 2011. When Facebook activists first attempted to mobilize mass

protests in Damascus, the security forces so outnumbered the demonstrators that they were too intimidated to press their case. Moreover, President Bashar al-Asad, who succeeded his late father Hafez al-Asad in 2000, enjoyed a degree of legitimacy and public support that set him apart from other Arab autocrats. He was a relative newcomer after eleven years in power and still had a reputation as a reformer – however undeserved. The regime's spring 2011 arrest and torture of a group of teenagers in the farming town of Deraa, on the Syrian-Jordanian border, shattered that image.

One day in March, a group of rebellious youths painted slogans from the Arab revolutions of 2011 on a wall in Deraa. 'The People Want the Fall of the Regime,' they proclaimed. This small act of defiance, unremarkable in the Arab world in the spring of that year, provoked a response from the regime that would spark a revolution.

Alarmed by developments across the Arab world, the Asad regime refused to tolerate the least expression of dissent. The secret police arrested fifteen boys aged between ten and fifteen for the dissident graffiti. Their desperate parents petitioned the government for their release and then marched in open protest. The security forces responded with live fire, killing demonstrators in Deraa before finally agreeing to free the detained teens to restore calm. When discharged, the boys bore clear marks of torture. Most of their fingernails had been torn out.

Instead of calming the situation, the release of the abused children of Deraa sparked outrage. The townspeople rose up in their thousands to tear down all symbols associated with the Asad regime in mass protests unprecedented in recent Syrian history. The army responded with increased repression, storming a mosque in the town's center that had served as a base for the protesters, killing five. The size of the protests multiplied as crowds gathered to bury the dead. In the last week of March alone, over fifty-five townspeople of Deraa died.

Syrians all across the land followed the events in Deraa closely. Citizens in many economically depressed small towns like Deraa felt forgotten by their government but didn't dare protest for fear of retribution. In the revolutionary atmosphere of the spring of 2011, the Syrian people felt emboldened to express their dissent and demand change. They began to organize protests, giving each day a distinct name. Samar

Yazbek, a single mother in Damascus, began her diary of the Syrian revolution on March 25, 2011 – the 'Friday of Dignity' – and captured the intense violence that accompanied the uprising from the start:

Today, on the Friday of Dignity, the Syrian cities come out to demonstrate. More than two hundred thousand demonstrators mourn their dead in Dar'a. Entire villages outside Dar'a march toward the southern cemetery. Fifteen people are killed. In Homs three are killed. People are killed and wounded in Latakia. . . . Army forces surround Dar'a and open fire on any creature that moves. In al-Sanamayn the military security commits a massacre, killing twenty people.²¹

In hindsight, Yazbek's support for the uprising seems all the more surprising, given that she is a member of President Asad's Alawite religious community. Yet, in the opening months of the revolution, Syrians of all communities – Muslims, Christians, Alawites, and Druzes – made common cause to demand reform. Only when the revolution degenerated into civil war did sectarianism come into play.

In the first phase of the Syrian revolution, the protesters were nonviolent. They called for the repeal of the Emergency Law, in place since 1963, to regain their political and human rights. They rallied under the flag used by Syrian nationalists against the French mandate, with three horizontal bars of green, white, and red and three red stars across the center (the official Syrian flag mirrors that used during the union with Egypt between 1958 and 1961, with three horizontal bars of red, white, and black and two green stars in the center). They started in small towns but urged compatriots in the big cities to take up their banner and demands for reform.

However peaceful the demonstrators, the regime responded from the outset with gunfire. As in the other counterrevolutionary states (Bahrain, Libya, and Yemen), a large part of the army remained loyal to the president and proved willing to fire on fellow citizens. A growing number of dissident soldiers deserted in protest of their commanders' orders to fire on unarmed civilians. In July 2011, a group of military defectors formed the Free Syrian Army to lead an armed insurrection against the regime. The shift from nonviolent to armed protest transformed the revolution into a full-scale civil war.

The death toll of Syria's conflict reflects the full meaning of that transformation. Already by the end of the first year of the war, the United Nations reported over 5,000 dead in Syria. By the end of 2012 the figure had risen to 40,000. The United Nations estimated the death toll at 191,000 by the summer of 2014 and in 2016, after five years of war, put the figure in excess of 400,000. While the death toll is shocking, it reflects only a fraction of total Syrian suffering. By 2016 the conflict had uprooted over half the population of Syria. Some 6.1 million Syrians were internally displaced and another 4.8 million had sought refuge outside Syria's borders – in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and the European Union.²² The Syrian people and the international community have struggled to explain how an Arab Spring revolution could have gone so badly wrong.

The demonstrators and the international community overlooked a number of domestic constraints that prevented the fall of the regime in Syria. However reviled by his opponents, Bashar al-Asad has always enjoyed a large margin of support in Syria. Syria's minority communities – the Alawites, Druze, Ismailis, and Christians – make up some 25 percent of the total population of 22 million. The vast majority of Syrians are Sunni Muslims, estimated to represent 75 percent of the population. Many in the minority communities believe Bashar al-Asad, with his Alawite-dominated government, stands as a bulwark against a conservative Sunni Muslim order that would discriminate against them. Asad also has significant support from more nationalist, secular Sunni Muslims who are members of the ruling Ba'th party. Add to those groups all the members of the army and security forces who have fought for the regime, and Asad's support base appears ever larger, with Syria emerging as far more internally divided than many foreign analysts have acknowledged.

Moreover, the regime has always enjoyed a higher degree of unity than the opposition it is fighting. In the course of the Syrian war, dozens of opposition militias have emerged to challenge the regime, ranging from civil society groups calling for democratic reform to hardline Salafis intent on creating an Islamic state. These rebel groups often work at cross purposes and fight among themselves for territory. The regime, on the other hand, is far more cohesive than the forces it

opposes. The more the regime is threatened, the more its core is reinforced. For the Asad regime and its partisans, victory is a matter of survival. The conflict is not just a matter of winner takes all: it has degenerated into one in which the loser must die. This fear, literally of a genocidal retaliation against the Alawites and Ba'thists and others associated with the Asad regime, goes some way to explaining the grim determination with which the regime retains power and its willingness to lay waste to the country as a whole rather than surrender.

Finally, the Syrian conflict rapidly became internationalized, as regional and global powers intervened to protect their own interests. Iran has enjoyed a special relationship with Syria since 1980 when, at the start of the Iran-Iraq War, the Syrian regime broke Arab ranks to side with Iran. Tehran gave the Asad regime unqualified support from the outset, reinforced by the Lebanese Shiite militia Hizbullah. Iranian Revolutionary Guards and Hizbullah fighters have assisted war-weary Syrian regular soldiers in the multifront conflict in Syria. Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies have sought to diminish Iran's influence by throwing their support behind conservative Sunni Muslim militias, providing them with arms and ammunition. Turkey has provided a base for the Free Syrian Army and Syrian political parties working to bring down the regime, while sending its army across the border into Syria to contain gains made by Syrian Kurdish militias against the Asad regime. The United States and its European allies have provided limited support to a select group of opposition parties and militias, more or less in line with Turkey and the Gulf states.

In September 2015 Russian deployment of aircraft to support the Asad regime laid bare the limits of Western intervention in the Syrian conflict. Russia had clear interests in Syria and acted decisively to protect them. Syria provides Russia with its only naval base in the eastern Mediterranean and a platform for monitoring signals intelligence in the Middle East. It is also Russia's last ally in the Arab world. Were Asad to fall, Russia would lose all influence in Syria, greatly diminishing its standing in the region.

Russia's airstrikes against opposition positions provided strategic as well as moral support to the Syrian military. The government of Vladimir Putin was serving notice that it would not allow the Asad

regime to fall. The Western powers condemned the Russian intervention, but neither the United States nor the European powers were willing to confront Russia directly; nor would they put their own forces into the Syrian conflict. Western support for the Syrian opposition thus eclipsed, the Asad regime pursued a strategy of fighting with Russia and Iran against its domestic opposition and leaving America and its allies to deal with yet another contender for mastery over Syria – the Islamic State.

The Islamic State emerged in Iraq among Sunni Muslim groups fighting the American occupation after 2003 – particularly al-Qaida in Iraq. Under the leadership of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, al-Qaida in Iraq developed a reputation for extreme violence against both Westerners and Shiites. Following Zarqawi's death in 2006, his successors rebranded the organization as the Islamic State in Iraq. The Islamic State took advantage of the breakdown of government control in both Iraq, where Sunni opposition to the Shiite-dominated government became entrenched, and in Syria, where the beleaguered Asad regime struggled to retain core territory under its control, to pose the greatest challenge to the regional state system in a century.²³

Starting in 2011, the Islamic State in Iraq entered into an alliance with one of the al-Qaida affiliates fighting in the Syrian civil war, which emerged in January 2012 as the Nusra Front. In 2013 the al-Qaida leadership rejected a hostile takeover bid of the Nusra Front by the Islamic State. Undeterred, the Islamic State movement changed its name to the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). Al-Sham is the Arabic word for both the city of Damascus and the Greater Syrian lands (the territory combining the modern states of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Israel/Palestine) dominated by Damascus in early Islam.²⁴ On June 29, 2014, after seizing key Iraqi cities in the Sunni heartland of Anbar Province and Iraq's second city, Mosul, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS, proclaimed himself caliph, or spiritual head of the global community of Sunni Muslims. His forces then drove bulldozers through the border between Iraq and Syria and declared that their caliphate no longer recognized state boundaries. ISIS established its capital in the eastern Syrian city of Raqqa and extended its control over a vast if thinly inhabited expanse of territory straddling Iraq and Syria.

The advent of ISIS further internationalized Syria's civil war. The movement quickly established a reputation for extreme violence against its enemies and those it deemed infidels. Graphic videos of beheadings carried out by ISIS fighters against foreign captives and genocidal measures against the Yezidi minority community horrified the global public. ISIS also proved successful in recruiting to its cause radicalized Muslim activists from around the world, raising security concerns from Washington to Beijing. ISIS began to claim terror attacks conducted in Europe and the United States. ISIS franchises in Asia and Africa began to declare their allegiance to the self-declared caliphate. The West's struggle to contain ISIS opened a whole new chapter in the war on terror, with a central focus on Syria and Iraq.

The territory of Syria was fragmented, coming under the control of the Asad regime, the opposition movements, the Kurds in the northeast, and ISIS. The new enemy also served to divide the warring parties, with America and its European allies concentrating their efforts on defeating ISIS, Turkey increasingly focused on containing the Syrian Kurds, and Russia and Iran working with the regime to defeat its opposition. A convergence of forces explains why Syria emerged as the most violent conflict of the counterrevolution.

The decisive chapter in the counterrevolution against the Arab Spring came in Egypt.

The January 25 Movement, which succeeded in toppling Hosni Mubarak after three decades in power, raised hopes in Egypt and across the Arab world of a new age of citizens' rights and accountable government. No sooner had Mubarak stepped down than Egypt entered a period of feverish political development. The Egyptian military assumed trusteeship over the government, laying out an ambitious six-month timetable to draft constitutional amendments to guide elections for a new government.

The Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's longest-running opposition party, had emerged as the country's most powerful political organization. The youth organizers who had been so effective in mobilizing mass protests had no institutional base and no political experience. They created dozens of political parties, none with any critical mass, leaving the

better-organized Islamist parties to dominate politics in the transitional period. In order not to provoke alarm from more secular Egyptians, who suspected the Muslim Brotherhood of operating as a secretive cabal intent on transforming Egypt into an Islamic state, the leadership of the Brotherhood pledged not to seek a parliamentary majority or to run a candidate for the presidency. On this basis, the other Tahrir Square movements embraced the Muslim Brotherhood as a constructive partner in the political reform of Egypt.

In fact, when Egyptians went to the polls in November 2011, the Muslim Brotherhood emerged with the largest share of seats – 40 percent – followed by the yet more conservative Salafi Islamist ‘Enlightenment Party’ (Hizb al-Nur). With a majority of seats in the elected body going to Islamists, secular Egyptians began to fear that instead of a liberal constitution they would get an Islamist charter that replaced Egypt’s civil laws with Islamic law.

Doubts about the Muslim Brotherhood’s intentions deepened when, in violation of its earlier pledge, Mohamed Morsi stood for the presidency. A long-standing Muslim Brother, Morsi was an American-educated engineer. He stood against former prime minister Ahmed Shafik, a man closely associated with Mubarak. It was the worst possible choice for liberal Egyptians, having to decide between a Muslim Brother and a member of the ancien régime. They chose change over secularism, and on June 30, 2012, Mohamed Morsi was sworn in as Egypt’s fifth president – the first to be democratically elected.

Morsi’s presidency lasted only one year. His increasingly authoritarian tendencies alienated large parts of the Egyptian electorate. In November 2012 Morsi issued a presidential decree granting himself powers above the courts as the self-proclaimed guardian of the Egyptian revolution. He oversaw a constitutional assembly from which Coptic Christians as well as secular and liberal Egyptians withdrew in protest of its illiberal and Islamist tendencies. The remaining members of the Constituent Assembly, who were almost exclusively Islamist men, approved the draft constitution on November 30, 2012, and rushed it through a national referendum for approval between December 15 and 22. Liberal Egyptians called for a boycott of the referendum, which was effective to the extent that only 33 percent turned out. Those

who did approved the constitution with a majority of 64 percent in favor. When President Morsi signed the new constitution into law on December 26, he confirmed the fears of liberal reformers that the Muslim Brotherhood had hijacked their revolution.

Opposition to President Morsi intensified in the early months of 2013. A new movement calling itself Tamarod (‘Rebellion’) had launched a nationwide petition campaign calling on Morsi to step down. Setting itself a target of securing fifteen million signatures by the first anniversary of Morsi’s inauguration, by June 29 it had reportedly exceeded its own ambitions and claimed more than twenty-two million signatories united in demanding Morsi’s resignation. The figure was never confirmed, and news reports quoted some individuals who boasted they had signed the petition twenty times or more. Regardless of potential fraudulence, the petition campaign rallied liberals, who descended on Tahrir Square in a massive demonstration calling for the fall of the Morsi regime.

The Egyptian military seized on the Tamarod movement to intervene in Egypt’s political disorder. Many analysts believe the army was active in instigating the petition campaign. From the Free Officer Revolution in 1952 until Morsi’s election, a military regime had ruled Egypt, and each of its presidents had been a military man: Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar Sadat from the army, Mubarak from the air force. For sixty years, the military had deepened its control over the politics and economy of Egypt. The Morsi administration and its Muslim Brother supporters posed a real threat to the military’s interests, and the top brass moved quickly to reassert control and defend their interests from the chaos of Egypt’s democracy experiment.

The Egyptian military delivered an ultimatum to Morsi to address the legitimate concerns of the Egyptian people within forty-eight hours or face a military intervention. It was an impossible request, which Morsi rejected. On the night of July 3, Minister of Defense General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi went on live TV to announce Morsi’s deposal and the provisional assumption of his duties by the head of the constitutional court, Adly Mansour. Morsi and several of his leading officials were arrested and held in secret locations. It was a classic military coup, though the armed forces and their supporters rejected the label angrily.

In Cairo and across the country, Egyptians came out in mass demonstrations, celebrating the army's actions as a show of respect for the legitimate demands of the people – a second revolution.

The coup of July 3 was in fact the beginning of Egypt's violent counterrevolution. Overnight, the ruling Muslim Brotherhood went from party in government to banned organization, its leaders under arrest or on the run. The Brotherhood's support base in Egypt was vast, and the army's unconstitutional and, in their view, illegitimate seizure of power from a democratically elected president outraged its partisans. They massed in mosque demonstrations in Cairo and Alexandria, applying in vain the Arab Spring formula of holding a central location until the people's wishes were respected.

The army and its supporters simply outnumbered the Brotherhood. The majority of Egyptians were disillusioned by the Brotherhood's failure to respect its preelection pledges and alarmed by Morsi's clumsy authoritarianism. Moreover, the average Egyptian was tired of revolutionary chaos. The people wanted a return to normalcy, they wanted the economy to recover, and they wanted to go back to work and earn a living – all aspects of life disrupted by two years of revolutionary upheaval. The people believed the army could deliver order and placed their trust in the military men.

The most violent chapter in modern Egypt's political history ensued. After six weeks of protests, on August 14, 2013, the military assaulted two Muslim Brother protest sites in Cairo: Rabaa al-Adawiya and al-Nahda Square. Using live fire against civilian demonstrators, the security forces massacred as many as 1,000 supporters of the deposed president in a single day.²⁵ The military authorities declared a state of emergency and imposed a curfew. The law thus suspended, the authorities redoubled their clampdown on the Muslim Brotherhood, arresting thousands. In September the government banned the Muslim Brotherhood and froze its assets, and in December the authorities declared the Brotherhood a terrorist organization. The courts sentenced to death ex-president Mohamed Morsi, Brotherhood supreme guide Mohamed Badie, and hundreds of lower-ranking cadres; more than 20,000 Islamists were arrested and imprisoned.²⁶

While the Egyptian army broke the power of the Muslim Brotherhood, General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the commander in chief, soared in popularity. His admirers compared him to Nasser and encouraged his political ambitions. In March 2014 Sisi resigned his commission, freeing him to run for the presidency. Challenged only by Hamdeen Sabahi, an opposition activist during the Sadat and Mubarak eras, Sisi won the presidential election in May 2014 by a crushing majority of 96 percent of the vote. Though now in civilian clothes, Sisi undoubtedly represented the restoration of the military's control over Egyptian politics.

The counterrevolution in Egypt was complete. For many, it was as though the January 25 Movement in 2011 had never happened. Gone were the demands for citizens' rights and accountable government as the Arab people abandoned their hopes for political freedom in a desperate bid for stability. Against the background of political turmoil in Egypt and Bahrain and the spiral into civil war in Libya, Yemen, and Syria, the price of revolutionary change has proven too high for the Arab people to bear – except in Tunisia, the one surviving Arab Spring success story.

Tunisia is the only Arab state to negotiate a peaceful political transition to a new constitutional order following an Arab Spring revolution. A unity government combining members of the opposition with holdovers from the Ben Ali era assumed power. In October 2011, Tunisians flocked to the polls to elect a constituent assembly to rewrite the Tunisian constitution. The Islamist party Ennahda, banned under Ben Ali, secured the largest share of the vote (41 percent) but, unlike the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, did not attempt to use its power at the polls to dominate Tunisian politics. In Tunisia, the Islamists chose to work in coalition with two centrist and secular parties, preserving a higher degree of national cohesion. The process of drafting a new constitution was lengthy but characterized by consensus building rather than coercion. The new constitution, adopted in January 2014, enshrines the gains of the revolutionary movement in citizen rights and the rule of law.

The transition to a new constitutional era in Tunisia concluded when voters returned to the polls between October and December 2014 to

elect a parliament and president by the new rules governing their country – rules hammered out by Tunisians, elected by Tunisians, rather than imposed by foreign agents; rules that resolved the centuries-old struggle to constrain the autocratic powers of rulers. The election results in 2014 gave grounds for optimism. The secular Nidaa Tounes ('Tunisia's Call') party won a plurality, the Islamist Ennahda coming in second, and the two parties agreed to form a coalition government. Nidaa Tounes's leader, Beji Caid Essebsi, was elected president.

Yet Tunisia's gains are fragile. The country has suffered terror attacks that have crippled the crucial tourist industry, and foreign investors have yet to reward Tunisia with their trust. Until the terror threat is contained and economic growth is restored, Tunisia's postrevolutionary gains will remain at risk. Yet the success of Tunisia's fragile experiment in democracy is in the interest of the Arab world and the world at large. For as the Arab world emerges from the violence and devastation of the 2010s, the Arab peoples will inevitably resume their legitimate demands for accountable government. Tunisia will stand as a beacon of what the Arabs can aspire to in the twenty-first century.

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