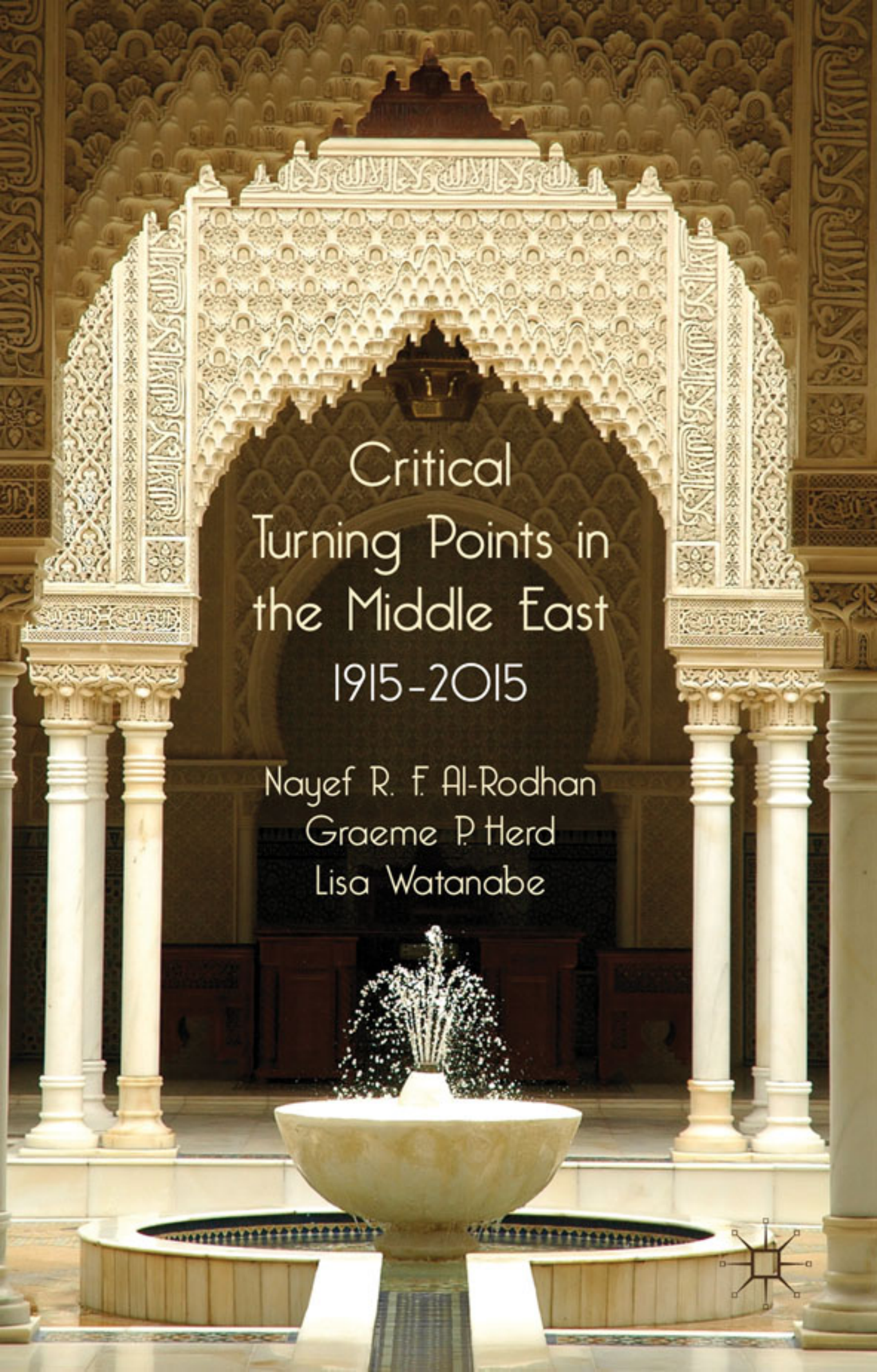

Critical Turning Points in the Middle East 1915–2015

Nayef R. F. Al-Rodhan
Graeme P. Herd
Lisa Watanabe

Critical Turning Points in the Middle East

Also by Nayef R. F. Al-Rodhan

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and
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First published 2011 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

ISBN 978–0–230–25150–2 hardback

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Al-Rodhan, Nayef R. F.
Critical turning points in the Middle East : 1915–2015 / Nayef R.F. Al-Rodhan, Graeme Herd, Lisa Watanabe.
p. cm.
Includes index.
Summary: "This book takes a novel look at the modern Middle East through the prisms of six cascading negative critical turning points. It identifies the seeds of a potential seventh in the collective dignity deficits generated by poor governance paradigms and exacerbated by geopolitical competition for the region's natural resources"— Provided by publisher.
ISBN 978–0–230–25150–2 (hardback)
1. Middle East—Politics and government—1945– 2. Middle East—Politics and government—1914–1945. I. Herd, Graeme P. II. Watanabe, Lisa, 1974– III. Title.
DS63.1.A375 2011
956.04—dc22 2011004879

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham and Eastbourne

Contents

List of Maps

List of Tables

List of Figures

Foreword

Given the current troubled state of much of the Middle East, it is tempting and indeed instructive to try to look back and see how it got to this point. After all, in 1900, the region was largely at peace, much of it still under the relatively light and ineffective rule of the Ottoman Turks. True there was pressure from grasping European powers and the first stirrings of nationalist movements. Oil, with its mixed blessings, was only just starting to be exploited. Yet the populations of the Middle East enjoyed a degree of harmony and stability that seems a distant memory today.

So what were the key turning points which shaped the Middle East, for better or worse, of today? Anyone who knows the recent history of the region will have his or her own choice. Perhaps we should start with the rise of the Young Turks whose attempts to revive the Ottoman Empire and strengthen the central government stimulated Arab and other nationalisms. What about the First World War and all those sets of incompatible promises made by the Allies that first roused Arab resentment of the West? Were the new states created out of the wreckage of the Ottoman Empire unworkable? Where do we rank the Second World War, which hastened the end of European influence in the Middle East and saw the rise of the two superpowers? And then, of course, there are the events, following in rapid succession after 1945, from the establishment of the state of Israel, through the revolutions of the 1950s, the wars of the 1960s and 1970s, the Khomeini Revolution in Iran and through more wars and revolutions up to the present. There is much, perhaps too much, to choose from.

And we should not forget the role of outside powers, Britain and France before the Second World War, and afterwards the two super powers. The Soviet Union has vanished and its successor Russia no longer has the will or even the capacity to meddle. The US though is still very much present, with its military forces and its economic power. Is it possible that the election of Barack Obama will signal a new fresh approach by the Americans to the Middle East?

The fate of the Middle East has also been shaped, not just by wars and political events, but by momentous social and economic changes: the Nasserite revolution in Egypt, the lure of pan-Arabism, the discovery of oil, of course, and the growing economic power of the Gulf states, the

spread of urbanization, explosive population growth, widespread economic stagnation and the spread of Islamist movements.

Nayef Al-Rodhan and his colleagues are at once pessimistic and optimistic. They are all too aware of the stormy recent history and the great problems facing the Middle East of today. Yet they also urge us not to be fatalistic and to assume that the region is incapable of change. They remind us, rightly, of the more distant past with the story of Arab dynamism and achievement. In this retelling of the history of the past 100 years they illustrate how there were critical turning points where real choices and paths were taken or not taken. They argue that it was never foreordained that Middle Eastern societies would fall under authoritarian and often corrupt regimes, that oil wealth would be squandered or that nations would struggle against each other rather than work together co-operatively.

The authors single out six key moments and argue persuasively for their importance as critical turning points. The first is the period during and just after the First World War when the Ottoman Empire collapsed and the British and French empires stepped in to scoop up what they could. It was a period which produced the foundations of the state of Israel and the corresponding sense of betrayal and resentment towards the West on the part of the Arabs. They then jump ahead to the aftermath of the Second World War which saw the establishment of the state of Israel despite the efforts of some, at least, Arabs to prevent it. Turning point three is Israel's stunning victory over its Arab neighbours in 1967 which left the prospect of peace between the two sides further away than ever. Then, and it is hard to argue with this choice, they choose the fateful year of 1979 when Khomeini seized power in Iran and the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. At the end of the 1980s, their fifth turning point, the Soviets left Afghanistan and the dreadful war between Iran and Iraq ended, but those relatively hopeful signs were soon overshadowed by the First Gulf War. The authors end this list with the period that started with 9/11 and which has left Western forces bogged down in Afghanistan.

It does not make a happy story but still they end on a relatively hopeful note. Perhaps, just perhaps, the continuing crisis of the Middle East and its peoples will produce new thinking and new willingness to try new solutions to old problems. Nayef Al-Rodhan and his colleagues come up with a set of prescriptions for the problems afflicting the Middle East. The key to a successful cure, they argue forcefully, is good governance. Let us hope that they are right and that the inhabitants of the region themselves will see the need to take their fate in their own

hands and move beyond the destructive cycles of blame, retribution and political cynicism. This book is Nayef Al-Rodhan and his colleagues' contribution to that vitally important process.

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Acknowledgements

Dr. Nayef Al-Rodhan would like to take this opportunity to thank a number of people who assisted in the production of this book. He is grateful for the commentary received by his colleagues at St Antony's College at Oxford University, most notably, the Warden of St Antony's, Professor Margaret MacMillan who also kindly provided the foreword for this book; Dr. Eugene Rogan, Director of the Middle East Centre; Professor Avi Shlaim, St Antony's Fellow and Professor of International Relations; and Dr. Philip Robins, Faculty Fellow and University Reader in the Politics of the Middle East. He is grateful to Sir Adam Roberts of Oxford University and President of the British Academy. He would also like to thank Ambassador Fred Tanner, Director of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy for his continued support. Finally, the authors express their gratitude to Flore-Anne Bourgeois and Pavel Tokaraev for their research assistance on an early draft of the manuscript.

Please note that the views expressed in this book are entirely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), St Antony's College or Oxford University.

List of Abbreviations

AHC	The Arab Higher Committee (Palestine)
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANDS	Afghan National Development Strategy
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
BMENAI	Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative
CENTO	Central Treaty Organization
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (United States)
CUP	Committee of Union and Progress (Ottoman Empire)
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GMEI	Greater Middle East Initiative
GSPC	Salafist Group for Call and Combat
GWOT	Global War on Terror
IDF	Israeli Defense Forces
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NWFP	North-West Frontier Province (Pakistan)
OIC	Organisation of The Islamic Conference
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PA	Palestinian Authority
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
RCC	Revolutionary Command Council (Islamic Republic of Iran)
SAVAK	Iranian National Intelligence and Security Organization
TFG	Transitional Federal Government (Somalia)
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAR	United Arab Republic
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEF	United Nations Emergency Force
UNL	Unified National Leadership (Palestinian occupied territories)

UNMOVIC	UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Committee
UNSCOP	United Nations Special Committee on Palestine
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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1
Introduction

Failures of governance, the lack of resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and perceived anti-Arab and anti-Islamic policies of Western powers threaten to form a combustible combination of factors that will have grave consequences for the Middle East, unless a new approach to managing change that addresses numerous dignity deficits in the region is adopted. Infringements of dignity usually mean that fundamental human needs, such as physical security, a sense of belonging and a positive personal and collective identity, are not being met,[1] often with terrible consequences. Current assessments concerning stability in the Middle East are almost uniformly pessimistic and gloomy. They predict greater tension and stress, uncertainty and ambivalence in the future. Such an understanding can be attributed to at least three key factors. First, the shattering of unrealistic external expectations arising from the Iraq debacle and the failure of domino democratization to unfold as an inevitable consequence. Second, a wholly partial and fatalistic reading of current trends and dynamics in the region, with little thought given to the durability and depth of such trends, or policies and actions that might divert or reverse them. Third, a belief in the enduring power of the 'Arab predicament', which suggests that the status quo is fixed, certain and immutable.

While addressing the National Endowment for Democracy on 6 November 2003, former United States (US) president George W. Bush argued that the progression of liberty was 'a powerful trend' and that the Middle East had reached a 'great turning point – and the resolve we show will shape the next stage of the world democratic movement'. He continued: 'In many nations of the Middle East – countries of great strategic importance – democracy has not yet taken root. And the questions arise: Are the peoples of the Middle East somehow beyond the reach of liberty?

Are millions of men and women and children condemned by history or culture to live in despotism? … I, for one, do not believe it. I believe every person has the ability and the right to be free.'[2] It was assumed that victory in Iraq would transform the 'freedom deficit' in the Middle East. The administration of George W. Bush argued that the strategic implication of regime change in Iraq would be threefold. The intervention would rid the country of Saddam Hussein's Baa'thist regime, rendering Iraq free and democratic, and no longer a threat to its neighbours. It would also serve to deter other 'axis of evil' states from attempting to gain Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and supporting terrorists. And, it would create a domino democratization effect throughout the Middle East.[3]

The capacity for compromise demonstrated in the formation of the Iraqi government in April 2005 following the 'Purple Revolution' (the 30 January 2005 elections) was interpreted as the setting free of a democratic spirit throughout the Middle East. The 'Cedar Revolution' in Lebanon, the expansion of women's rights in Gulf states (the appointment of a female cabinet minister in Kuwait in June 2005), reforms in Egypt under President Hosni Mubarak, the February–April 2005 municipal elections in Saudi Arabia and Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in August–September 2005 were all perceived as supporting this contention. Even as late as 2006 former US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice spoke of a 'new Middle East' emerging, in which the Shiite radical group Hezbollah would be destroyed as a military force and its political wing co-opted into mainstream Lebanese politics. Lebanon would emerge as truly sovereign, in control of its territory and certain that Hezbollah could not return to politics as an armed faction.

By early 2008, analysts and policymakers were much more sanguine about prospects for stability and progress in the region, placing Lebanon within a cyclical context of raised then dashed expectations, a particularly Middle Eastern variant of one step forward, two steps back:

> After Iraq's military defeat in 1991, many in the West and in Arab states hoped that changes in the world and region would produce a new Middle East of pragmatism, reform, democracy, and peace … But, increasingly, they['ve] show[n] they have not. The euphoria of the 1990's – in light of Saddam's defeat in Kuwait, the Oslo process, and the growth of Arab civil society – was short-lived. For much of the current decade, events have pointed to a backward trend.[4]

Now the focus was on the potential confluence between formerly disparate sources of insecurity in the region. The possibility of civil war in

Lebanon following the November 2006 assassination of key anti-Syrian Cabinet Minister Pierre Gemayel became higher. Lieutenant General David Richards, head of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) international security force in Afghanistan, warned that the state was 'close to anarchy'.[5] Iraq was experiencing a civil war, characterized by terrorism, lawlessness and crime, which undercut all state-building efforts. For many analysts, US Iraq policy was heading towards strategic defeat, anarchy and failed state status marked by civil war, ethnic sectarianism and militias. However, a precipitous withdrawal of US troops from Iraq, according to Hoshyar Zebari, foreign minister, would speed up disintegration and precipitate a wider regional conflict: 'The division of the country would become a fact … Iraq would be a free-for-all. And because of the polarization between Shia and Sunni, the removal of the multinational forces would lead to regional war'.[6] The removal of Saddam Hussein and the fragile Iraqi state that emerged in his wake undoubtedly strengthened Iran in military, intelligence and ideological terms.

By mid-2010, the situation in Iraq looked somewhat more hopeful. The withdrawal of US combat troops from the country represented a milestone. However, insurgency, sectarian friction and a weak government continue to form part of the Iraqi security constellation. Following intensified insurgency in Afghanistan during 2009 and allegations of fraud in the 2009 presidential elections, US troop presence in the country as well as Western pressure to bring corruption under control have increased. In Lebanon, a positive development has taken place with the establishment of a national unity government following the June 2009 elections in which a Hezbollah-led coalition was successful. Iran's position is, however, now more precarious. Iranian efforts to exploit Shia-Sunni tensions in the country have not proved particularly successful. The Syria–Iran–Hezbollah axis in which Iran had engaged in cooperation, held joint training exercises and conducted joint experiments was undercut with the creation of a national unity government. In addition to the nuclear issue, Iran's support of Huthi rebels in Yemen – feared to be the next Afghanistan – is placing it on a collision course with both regional and global powers. The Iranian President believes that as US forces are already stretched thin between Iraq and Afghanistan, it is powerless to strike against Iran. Along with Yemen, Pakistan is advancing amid chaos. Some stability has been restored since the assassination of Benazir Bhutto on 27 December 2007. The February 2008 election restored a civilian government to power that forced Musharraf's resignation. Yet, the government faces significant

insurgency, with attacks being increasingly launched on major cities, including Islamabad. This confluence of interests and actors does not make for an optimistic prognosis over the longer term.

However, the election of Barack Obama in November 2008 has prompted a shift in tone of US Middle East policy and brought hope to the Middle East. The Obama Administration was quick to invest efforts in mending the US crisis of credibility in the region that stems from the War in Iraq, unilateralism and double-standards regarding democracy promotion.[7] Obama has demonstrated his intention to engage in dialogue with the Arab-Islamic world, developed an exit strategy from Iraq, withdrawing combat troops in the summer of 2010, and to some extent engaged Iran on the nuclear issue. The US administration is also attempting to address the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. These developments are certainly promising. However, whether there will be a policy shift in terms of engaging with Islamist parties remains to be seen. Continuing to exclude them from the diplomatic process is unlikely to contribute to reforms that respond to the region's needs.

Some geopolitical thinkers looking to 2050 do not view the Middle East as a 'gateway region', but rather a 'shatterbelt', where the role of competing external actors has greater effect and power to shape stability than internal dynamics to consolidate and regulate intra and interstate relations. A less pessimistic characterization of the region has been put forward by Nayef Al-Rodhan in Neo-*statecraft and* Meta-*geopoltics: Reconciliation of Power, Interests and Justice in the 21st Century*.[8] Rather than a 'shatterbelt', the Middle East is conceived as a geopolitical pivot within a 'Tripwire Pivotal Corridor' (TPC) that identifies the current geostrategic relevance of the region to global peace.

Too strong a belief in the enduring and controlling power and influence of the 'Arab predicament' assumes a blinkered and self-defeating approach and understanding of the historical evolution of the region over three millennia of human existence. This book seeks to contribute to rectifying ethnocentric understandings of the Middle East that assume persistent stagnation. It recognizes that the Middle East cannot be treated as a monolith – the very use of the term 'region' as a concept assumes some solidarity which betrays actual fragmentation on the ground: its diversity of ethnicity (including Arab, Persian, Turkic, Urdu), religion, opinion and experience must be acknowledged. When we deploy the term 'Arab-Islamic', we do so as a shorthand, but also in support of our contention that the collective Arab experience does represent one central and default challenge to regional stability.

The Arab-Islamic civilization emerged in the eighth century and reached its apogee between ninth and thirteenth centuries. During the golden age of the Arab-Islamic world, Arab-Islamic regimes were ascendant and played a significant role in enabling the European Enlightenment and Scientific Revolution. The first pre-Islamic knowledge in astronomy, geometry, mathematics and other fields (for example, that of Euclid and Ptolemy) was recovered from this region. Arab scholars acted as cultural and scientific intermediaries, preserving and disseminating the thoughts and ideas of classical and Hellenistic philosophers, such as Aristotle and Plato. These scholars did not just limit themselves to the recovery, synthesis, improvement and transmission of past knowledge, but also developed new methods and approaches to understanding spiritual and temporal matters, natural and supernatural phenomena.

Great names of scientists and thinkers emerged during this period in many fields: Abū Bakr Al-Rāzi, known in the West as Rhazes, made foundational contributions to medicine, alchemy and philosophy, and was the first to describe the symptoms of the measles and smallpox; Ibn Sīnā, or Avicenna as he was known in Europe, was a Muslim astronomer, chemist, logician and mathematician, physicist and scientist, poet, soldier and statesman, theologian, and the most celebrated physician and philosopher of his time; Ibn Rushd, known in the Latin West as Averroes was an influential philosopher, jurist and physician; and Al-Khwārizmī, the father of algebra whose translated work introduced the decimal positional number system to the West; the philosopher Ibn Tufayl; and the geographer Al-Idrisi to name but a few.[9]

Muslim conquest did not lead to a uniformity of cultural practice and one dominant all-encompassing belief system, but rather the emergence of a varied, multiethnic conglomeration (Arabs, Berber, Persian, Turkic), with marked disparities between rural and urban regions, and between religions. The Arabs were able to learn from earlier civilizations and incorporate their science, culture and learning into their own. Although the geocultural domain was profoundly based on Islam, non-Muslims participated in intellectual, cultural and commercial activities. Moreover, as the Arabs advanced in the early days of Islam, local administrative practices and sometimes even bureaucracies were retained in the territories they conquered.[10] Indeed, the Arab-Islamic world was successful because it was generally open, tolerant and self-confident. The ability of this region to adapt, evolve and be at the vanguard of human endeavour is thus evidenced by the historical record. Why, then, given

the region's history of progressive critical thinking, inclusion and influence, is it in disarray today?

The state of the Middle East?

Many of the current narratives or explanations for the state of the contemporary Middle East are only partial. This stems in part from the creation of an Oriental 'Other' against the construction of a European identity, a process through which the achievements of the Arab-Islamic world were marginalized, if not written out of the main narrative of history altogether. This has led to a misrepresentation of the Middle East that continues to plague contemporary analyses of the region. What has been inscribed onto history leads to a demeaning, misleading and historically inaccurate interpretation of the nature of the Middle East.

The Orient as a category became a field of scholarly study and entered popular discourse in Europe in the nineteenth century. The production of knowledge about the Orient therefore coincided with European colonialism. Knowledge about the Orient during this period developed in conjunction with Europe's direct political domination of Arab-Islamic lands. The emergence and growth of Western knowledge about the Orient and the expansion of Western power in these territories were therefore connected, albeit in very complex ways.[11] Indeed, as Edward Said contended, the projection of knowledge about the Orient in the West has been deeply implicated in cultural hegemony of the West, due to the political context in which this knowledge was produced. As such, orientalism represented a political vision of the Orient constructed on the basis of specific experiences, such as the Crusades and colonial encounters,[12] European power struggles and economic material interests.[13]

The Oriental 'Other' has been imbued with fatalism, an incapacity for rationality and a lack of understanding of the meaning of self-government. These characteristics stood in sharp opposition to those associated with the West, resulting in an ascribed incommensurability between the two imagined geocultural entities. Imagined they may be, but such representations have very real repercussions. The weaknesses attributed to the Orient-fed pretensions to ownership of the region and attendant intervention.

This is no less the case today through representations of 'the Arabs'[14] out of which 'the Arab predicament' and accompanying pessimism partly stems. Caricatures about the Arab mindset or Islam, however inaccurate, continue to inform a great deal of thinking about the

Middle East. These, as Said suggested, are ideological portraits that usually serve to create a false dichotomy between 'us' and 'them', 'Arabs' being conceived as either people to be feared or controlled.[15] This way of thinking has tended to encourage inappropriate responses to the region's problems and contributed to instability in the Middle East.

Even the most acclaimed 'experts' on the Middle East, such as Bernard Lewis, offer ideological interpretations of the Middle East. His 2002 book *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* is one of the most influential books on the predicament of the region. In it, Ottoman imperial decline and fall appears to be attributed to the lack of capacity to absorb Western ideas and institutional forms. Middle Easterners are depicted as a people who are incapable of learning how to modernize from more advanced Westerners. Progress appears to be associated with a Western form of modernization, and Islamic values are held responsible for the present state of the Middle East and its historical decline.[16]

More recently, in *What's Really Wrong with the Middle East*, Brian Whitaker similarly holds an 'Arab malaise' partly responsible for the ills of the Middle East. However, while societal and political structures are believed to be a significant source of the region's woes, they are not perceived as immutable. Moreover, the impact of the West's relations with the region, particularly the priority that has been given by Western powers to the promotion of stability over change is also highlighted. While Whitaker maintains that durable change must come from within, he, nevertheless, seems to assume that societal changes will resemble those that took place in the West with increased modernization and that resistance to those changes is merely a rearguard action without taking on board the seriousness of these challenges.[17] A similar thesis has been put forward by David Gardner in *Last Chance: The Middle East in the Balance*.[18] Gardner argues that unless the Middle East can escape from autocracy, which implies transformation from within as well as an end to support of autocratic regimes from without, the Middle East and the peoples of the region will be doomed to continue the spiral of anger, despair and humiliation.

M. Umer Chapra has also carried out a more rigorous analysis of decline and stagnation in the Arab-Islamic world. His work is informed by the fourteenth-century scholar Ibn Khaldun's study of the rise and fall of civilizations to understand the historical roots of the contemporary crisis and to recommend a strategy for reform. Chapra argues that the great contributions and successes of the Arab-Islamic world owed much to Islam and discards the notion that Islam is responsible for

decline. Instead, Chapra attributes the decline to an imbalance between values/spirituality and material/technological bases. Lack of political accountability and authoritarian rule are believed to have played a large part in the downward spiral and eventual decline of the Arab-Islamic world. Greater justice, socio-economic and political, is thought to be required to reverse the negative spiral.[19]

This book also aims to characterize the state or condition of the Middle East by offering an analysis that stresses the weight that history brings to bear on contemporary security politics and how it shapes future expectations. Yet the approach adopted is less focused on the political economy of the Arab-Islamic world than Chapra's account. The interplay between external and internal factors forms an explicit part of the analysis. It also looks to possible future pathways that can help rejuvenate the region, while being true to its religious identity and local traditions. We do not insist on only one set of policy prescriptions for all countries in the region: differences and nuances abound. However, capturing all of the specificities of experience in the region is beyond the scope of this book. Instead, we highlight some general tendencies and common denominators that apply across the region.

We suggest that it is possible to read the history of the Middle East over the past one hundred years as being punctuated by a series of critical turning points. While we demonstrate that cumulative setbacks contributing to the weakening of the region pre-date the Ottoman period, the focus of the book is the modern Middle East. We believe that the period from 1915 is worthy of our attention in seeking to understand the current difficulties of the region, because it demonstrates the extent to which Middle Eastern states have been shaped by the influence of external powers and the strains created by attempts to reconcile this with the consolidation of state legitimacy and identity. Thus, the first twentieth-century-critical turning point identified in the book occurred between 1915 and 22 with the McMahon-Hussein correspondence, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the Arab Revolt, the Balfour Declaration, the Ottoman defeat during the First World War and the eventual partition of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the French and British mandates. The second critical turning point occurred in 1948 with the UN partition plan of Palestine and the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, which left Syria, Egypt and Jordan defeated. The third critical turning point occurred with major defeat of the Arab armies in the Arab-Israeli War of 1967. The fourth critical turning point occurred in 1979 with the Iranian Revolution; the Israel–Egypt Peace Treaty; the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia; the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan; and

the sending of troops to help the Afghans. The fifth critical turning point occurred between 1987 and 1991 with the First Palestinian Intifada, the end of the Iran–Iraq War, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the First Gulf War and the posting of US troops in the region and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The sixth began with 9/11, the invasion of Afghanistan, the Iraq War and support for US strategic partners – Pakistan, Uzbekistan – in the Global War on Terror (GWOT).

If current policy approaches continue, there may be a seventh critical turning point in the Middle East within the next one or two decades. It would be the probable outcome of contemporary trends. The seeds of a possible seventh critical turning point are exacerbated by a collective consciousness shaped by a shared experience of humiliation and frustration, held most acutely by societies in the Middle East and driven by extra and intraregional factors. The evidence to support the contention that a collective consciousness marked by frustration and humiliation plays a central role in shaping attitudes towards and expectations about the future is manifold. We can look, for example, to contemporary political leaders and elites within the region, who state this clearly.[20]

Frustrations due to internal factors stem from a deficit of good governance, manifested in inequalities, incompetence, corruption, a lack of progress, adequate education systems and political participation.[21] Democratic efforts have generally failed because they were perceived by elites and publics as synonymous with de-Islamization in a region in which Islam is so central to the totality of people's lives and identity as well as a possible vehicle towards hegemonic geopolitical goals. The association of democratization with de-Islamization has unfortunately been reinforced by the efforts of Western powers to promote democracy, but reluctance to deal with Islamic movements when they are elected through the ballot box, which is understood in the region to be proof positive of an antagonistic attitude towards the Muslim world. External factors feeding frustrations include injustice, double standards, hegemonies and geopolitical interests.

In this book we propose a new narrative for approaching the region – Endogenous Good Governance – and a set of prescriptions aimed at preventing a seventh critical turning point from occurring. It offers a vision for the future based on the premise that the only successful governance paradigms for countries of the Middle East will be those that are gradualist and in keeping with local cultures and traditions of democracy, inclusiveness and tolerance.[22] Such a programme builds sustainability into its design: indigenously generated paradigms are essential for popular legitimacy and, at the same time, ensure that resources

are not squandered on defence against internal and external threats.[23] Governments and populations in the region must not expect solutions from elsewhere. A renewed sense of confidence in past achievements and future aspirations, improved governance, with sustainable regional and international objectives are all necessary goals. Trust-building dialogue and tolerance to minimize the sense of siege is required rather than demonization. At the same time, it is important that blame not be projected onto the region's 'Other'.

Critical turning points

The weakening of the contemporary Middle East can be periodized by a series of negative critical turning points. Turning points are frequently used as conceptual tools to aid our understanding of developments in a variety of areas. In the field of sociology, turning points in a person's life course are frequently identified, for example. National military service is thought to have been a turning point in the life of young underprivileged men, marking the transition from adolescence to young adulthood due to occupational status, job security and economic independence and well-being that it provided.[24] In economics, turning points in a business cycle are often identified. In theology, the Reformation, for instance, marks a critical turning point in the development of Christianity.[25] The split between Sunni and Shia within Islam was similarly a major turning point in the evolution of Islam. In historical analyses, frequently identified turning points tend to be associated with the key drivers – military, political, religious, technological, personalities of leaders, ideological convictions of elites and aspirations of societies.

Why are turning points useful devices with which to analyse historical developments? A number of answers are marshalled in response to this question. John Lewis Gaddis, for example, argues that

> [t]urning points are much beloved by historians, providing as they do convenient instruments with which to structure our understanding of the past. Without them it would be difficult to make up examination questions, know where to begin and end lectures, or choose subjects for articles and books. The potential for exaggeration is vast; with industry and imagination, any event in history can be made into a turning point of one sort or another.[26]

The role that they play in structuring our thinking is important. Yet how they do so is equally critical, for turning points themselves are

conceived in different ways. Turning points are sometimes employed in historical analyses to argue against the validity of historical determinism: If the Spanish Armada had defeated Britain, Protestantism and thus capitalism would not have flourished as it did. However, this kind of counterfactual argument is premised on a single event altering the whole course of history. It is 'analytically particularistic' and highly speculative. How do we know that another Protestant stronghold would not have developed elsewhere? Turning-point arguments based on counterfactual reasoning assume that there are no underlying forces driving history when historical causality actually works through broad-based processes rather than easily stopped or drastically altered by specific events. It is difficult to imagine broad-based processes such as economic, social and cultural change as hinging on a single dramatic event; rather they reflect the 'tide of history'. An individual or event or a series of events help to crystallize a deeper set of processes at work. In addition, Paul Kennedy reminds us that human agency is always 'constrained by time and space, by geography and history', citing Karl Marx's opening paragraphs to his classic *The Eighteenth Brumaire*: 'Men make their own History, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.'[27] In this sense, 'the logic of turning-point arguments does not disprove historical causality but, on the contrary, depends on belief in causality'.[28]

Turning points highlight accumulated trends and numerous ongoing and intertwined causal conditions, rather than a fatal discontinuity with the past. They make underlying trends and tensions explicit, bring them to the surface and put them on view. Thus, turning points may be understood as a rhetorical device that can be used to focus attention on key driving dynamics that shape the flow, speed and volume of change through time.[29] Arnold Toynbee wrote of the events of September 1938: 'They may mark a turning point not only in British history but in world history too.'[30] He was, of course, referring to the signing of the Munich Agreement, which ceded the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia to Hitler as part of Britain's policy of appeasing Nazi Germany. It was not what happened at Munich in 1938 that caused the rise and growing power of Germany on the European Continent, but it did epitomize the reality of German ascendancy as well as contribute to it. Turning points help the analyst to discern initial conditions that lay the foundations for a specific event, as well as the outcomes that may be thought of as paths of political development, established due to cumulative commitments, allocation of resources and norms, for example.

We begin by assuming that states are embedded in normative structures that help to shape collective political identities, interests and public policy, as depicted in Figure 1.1. Normative structures comprise both norms and social roles. Norms regulate behaviour according to what people consider important and reflect how people *ought* to behave.[31] Norms not only influence individual behaviour, they also mould the broader social structure and help to expose changes within it.[32] Social identities and interests are informed by normative structures. Within the political realm they help to structure interpretations about the desired goals towards which political actors should be working. Political institutions and government policies may encourage the organization of particular interests by recognizing them as legitimate or by giving government functions to them. The structure of political opportunities may also influence the choice of political strategies and beliefs about the most effective type of political action.[33] Past choices may also play a role in shaping preferences. Disappointment created by past choices can influence future choices, for example. Awareness of other people's preferences as well as resources can also influence choices.[34]

Apart from regulating what ought or ought not be done, norms also establish standards that help to set priorities and what is and is not legitimate.[35] Employing an institutionalist analysis, Michael Barnett explores the relationship between institutions, roles and order in the Arab world.[36] He points out that regime legitimacy can depend on how well leaders and officials conform to what is judged to be appropriate. Regime survival can even depend on acting in an 'appropriate' way. When dominant norms are not conformed to, disapproval and symbolic sanctions may follow. Disillusionment can also arise when there is a gap between norms and practice. Normative structures also contain a vision of the desired regional order. Pan-Arabism, for example, emphasized the importance of unity between Arab states, in part as a means of strengthening their position vis-à-vis the West, although both

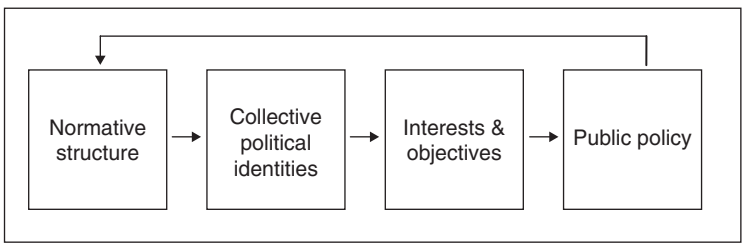


Figure 1.1 Norms and path dependency

minimalist and maximalist interpretations of that regional order existed at any one time. Alliance with the West could (and still can) engender severe criticism from other states and even domestic instability.[37]

Since normative structures are social constructs, they may be reworked. At such times, different political actors may rise to the fore, such as a new generation of leaders or political actors with a different ideological focus. Alliances may also be made. Since they depend upon interpretation, changes in norms may occur when their interpretations are enforced or when sanctions take place. Norm change can also occur when there is conflict over a norm.[38] Thus, under the same set of institutional conditions, political actors can and do make creative decisions about how to go forward: '[f]acing the same set of institutional hurdles, self-reflective actors can make creative decisions about how to proceed. Thus institutions – even in the broadest sense – neither mould human perceptions to such an extent that individuals are incapable of recognizing competing definitions of identity and interest nor do they force human action along a single track'.[39]

We have suggested that the modern Middle East may be understood through a series of critical turning points that have had a cumulative negative impact on the region. How can we conceive of these significant junctures and the ongoing influence of the past on public policy? We suggest that historical institutionalism has some helpful conceptual tools that we may borrow. Critical junctures are a prominent focus of historical institutionalists. During such episodes, contingent events can have an important impact on future events and patterns of change. Such moments help to bring fundamental dimensions of the system into relief. For episodes or crises to qualify as critical junctures, they must involve the selection of one option among several that once chosen is increasingly difficult to reverse.[40]

To represent periods between critical junctures, historical institutionalists employ the idea of path dependency. A key idea behind path dependency is that it is very difficult to reverse a developmental trajectory once it is established. This is what is believed to lend stability to institutional structures.[41] Generally, path dependency is thought to be reinforced by self-reinforcing positive feedback. The literature indicates two kinds of feedback effects. One mechanism focuses on how actors adapt their strategies to existing institutions, thereby reinforcing a particular 'logic'. The other identifies distributional effects of institutions as they pattern and reproduce the distribution of power between political actors.[42] For example, a sufficiently powerful elite who benefits from established institutions can be enough to create persistence even

when a considerable amount of actors wish to see change.[43] As Kathleen Thelen notes, 'the key to understanding institutional evolution and change lies in specifying more precisely the reproduction and feedback mechanisms on which particular institutions rest'.[44]

Figure 1.2 outlines the dimensions of change in the system at critical junctures that we identify. We, first, identify initial conditions, both internal and external to the region, and to discern how they influence responses to contingent events. We then identify the key feedback mechanisms through which specific trajectories and legacies from the past are reproduced. We pay particular attention to the perceptions of political actors, how they represent their interests and how they interpret past decisions. How do particular trajectories feed into the next critical junctures? Since norms are always contested and are the result of political conflict, counter responses to dominant normative structures and political identities and interests are likely to be latent or even manifest within the system. The interactions between dominant and counter responses, and their interaction with the institutional structure in response to contingent events, gives form to critical junctures, or as we refer to them in our analysis, critical turning points.

The importance of periods of change and stability are also highlighted by Barnett, who focuses on the development of the Arab state system. Our concern is similarly with the manner in which norms, political roles and identities have shaped the Middle East. However, we seek to employ our framework to shed light on the challenges the region

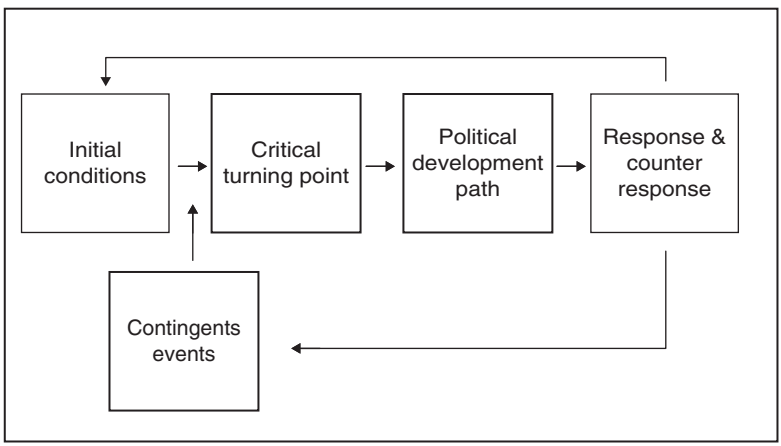


Figure 1.2 Path dependency and critical turning points

faces today and how best they might be addressed. Our framework, we hypothesize, suggests that the biggest challenge facing the region is the collective dignity deficit resulting from inadequate governance paradigms that have developed as a result of the interaction of internal and external factors. The region has been shaped by the interplay between state interest-based politics practised by states external to the region that have pursued narrowly defined interests in the Middle East and societal identity-based politics that are deeply embedded and partly shaped by the actions of external powers in the region, reinforcing collective solidarity based on shared negative emotions, such as frustration and humiliation. Critical turning points represent the moments when the clash of these two competing factors reaches crisis point made visible through responses to contingent events. Successive critical turning points have reinforced this dynamic because external actors continue to compete over interests in the region, while internal actors fail to resolve identity-based and normative disputes. The collective dignity deficit that this process has produced is contributing to growing dissatisfaction and frustration. Alleviating it will require building transparent and accountable state institutions and the inclusion of all opposition forces within the formal political arena (regardless of their views) as well as political, economic and social reforms aimed at achieving more adequate social welfare provisions and management of gender and diversity issues.

Defining the Middle East

Before outlining the structure of the book, let us briefly focus on competing definitions of the region. This task turns out to be more difficult than might first appear. More than a century after the emergence of the term, there is still no widely agreed upon definition. The Middle East remains an indeterminate area, with no defined frontiers. This concept has never been neutral and value free. It is a Western-centric concept – when it was first introduced at the end of the nineteenth century, it clearly reflected the strategic interests, and domination, of European Great Powers, particularly the United Kingdom (UK). The contours of the region actually changed in accordance with these interests. Before the First World War, the concept of the Middle East centred on India, while in the interwar period it had moved westward to Egypt.[45]

During the cold war, a narrower geographical definition focused on what has been called the 'core' Middle East: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, Egypt, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, United Arab Emirates (UAE),

Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Jordan, Palestinian Territories, Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq and Turkey. This definition rested upon the notion that ethnicity and religion are determining factors: the Middle East consists of Arab or Muslim countries. Israel, while it is, in fact, geographically in the Middle East, is considered an outsider.

In the post-cold war era, the geographical reality of the Middle East was extended, stretching from North Africa to Central Asia, from Casablanca to Kabul. This corresponds to the G8 definition of the Greater Middle East.[46] A series of world order paradigms also buttressed the idea that the Middle East could be best understood through its ability to generate and then export strategic dysfunctionality. Before 9/11 Robert D. Kaplan suggested in 1994 that population increase, urbanization and resource depletion undermine fragile governments across the developing world – the resultant 'Age of Anarchy' represented a threat to the developed world.[47] In the new century after 9/11, Thomas Barnett put forward an approach to understanding globalization that would have placed many states in the Middle East outside a 'Functioning Core' benefiting from 'thick globalization' and its attendant sources of stability. According to this paradigm, some countries in the region would be thought of existing within the 'Non-Integrating Gap' being undermined 'from thin globalization' and the insecurities that follow. 'Seam states', such as Pakistan, would lie between the non-integrating gap and the functioning core and their stabilization was, therefore, considered critical to containing and then reducing the 'Non-Integrating Gap'.[48]

In this book, we combine historical, ideational and geographical understandings of the Middle East and conceive of it as including Palestine, Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, the countries of the Persian Gulf and the Maghrib, as well as Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan. When discussing the pre-twentieth-century Arab-Islamic world, we also include Muslim Spain and Sicily.

Structure of the book

This introductory chapter has helped to problematize contemporary issues that challenge stability and security in the Middle East. We are presented with a simple but challenging conundrum. How and why, when the Arab-Islamic Empire was at the forefront of human development 1000 years and more ago, is the Middle East in such apparent turmoil today? In order to address and answer this question, Chapter 2 provides the reader with a historical framework that outlines the factors that contributed to the rise of the Arab-Islamic Empire and outlines

the key negative critical turning points that together contributed to its decline. The chapter begins by discussing the leading explanations for this rise and decline, in particular those that highlight dynamics internal to the region, those that underline external factors. Key internal and external factors contributing to the rise of the Arab-Islamic Empire are highlighted by the authors and these factors are evidenced through a range of Arabic philosophical and scientific texts, as well as Arab-Islamic historical analyses, such as those of Chapra, Al-Rodhan and others.[49] This chapter then considers the nature of the retrenchment before surveying the range of explanations historians have offered to account for the decline. A brief overview of the critical turning points in the pre-twentieth century history of the Middle East is then presented, with attention being paid to initial conditions, political development paths and counter responses.

Chapter 3 examines the first critical turning point of the twentieth century – the defeat of the Ottomans during the First World War and the subsequent collapse of the once great and entrenched Muslim Empire. Support of the British by Zionists and Arabs during the First World War was gained through double diplomacy and betrayal. The events that mark this critical turning point begin with the 1915–16 McMahon–Hussein correspondence in which the British had promised the Arabs independence in return for their revolt against the Ottomans. Yet in the 1916 Sykes–Picot Agreement, Britain, France and Russia had agreed to divide the Arab world among themselves and the 1917 Balfour Declaration indicated implicit support for the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. By 1923, the Ottoman Empire had been partitioned and the French and British mandates were established. Not surprisingly, this series of events resulted in humiliation, cynicism, frustration and mistrust of westerners (especially, colonialist countries) that persists to this day.

The Middle East was also seriously weakened in the aftermath of the war. It was composed of distinct fragile territorial ensembles consisting of Turkey and Iran, and the Arab countries – Iraq, the Levant, Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa. The majority of these territories came, or continued to be, under direct or indirect foreign influence. The following 30 years, from the end of the First World War to the end of the Second, were devoted, for the most part, to fighting for self-determination and full independence. This period was, therefore, characterized by the rise of national consciousness along frontiers drawn by European powers. The priority given to the pursuit of narrow national interests badly undermined the ideal of a greater 'Muslim entity'. All states in the Middle East undertook different national development

pathways, some even radically divergent modernization paradigms. Iran, which had already followed a distinct Persian course for centuries, continued to evolve separately. In 1926, Reza Shah Pahlavi, a promoter of Westernization, was crowned after deposing the last ruler of the Qajar Dynasty (1795–1925). The newly established Turkish Republic (1923), under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal ('Atatürk'), also leaned towards the West and adopted profound modernization reforms patterned on the Western European model and understood as sacrosanct Kemalist principles (secularism, etatism and nationalism). In the Arab world, as opposed to the Persian, foreign presence had a more profound impact. At the time, the notion of Arab unity was no more appealing than a Muslim one. It divided countries more than it unified them. Their relations during the interwar era, were, in general, characterized by enmities and factionalism. This lack of unity compounded by continuous foreign interference affected states' capacity to act efficiently – collectively or individually – in the international arena. The absence of regional cohesion became more visible when the Palestinian crisis erupted in 1948, after the creation of the state of Israel. In short, the first critical turning point had fractured Muslim unity and created states that developed according to their own national identities and ideals.

Chapter 4 outlines the second critical turning point, which was constituted by the events of 1948 and the first major Arab-Israeli conflict. This critical turning point would have long-lasting effects within and without the Middle East. This severe defeat of Arab militaries to Jewish troops in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War represented a real setback for the Arab states involved (Egypt, Syria, Jordan,[50] Lebanon and Iraq). Only about 21 per cent of the Palestinian territories allotted by the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan remained outside Israeli control, at the end of this traumatic war. Egypt and Jordan merely managed to capture the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, respectively. These territorial transfers were accompanied by massive movements of population. This defeat shed a harsh light on the weaknesses of Arab countries and, in particular, the lack of leadership, organization and coordination of their armed forces. Surprisingly, the resultant feeling of frustration and humiliation was reflected in widespread popular discontent which was directed not so much at Israel, but rather at the leaders of the vanquished countries, particularly the ruling regimes in Syria, Egypt and Jordan. In fact, many within societies in the region held the view that traditional governments were not only responsible for internal problems, but also that endemic corruption and general elite disinterest in national needs helped bring about the 1948 disaster.

It was in this context that the idea of collective Arab unity as a potential panacea resurfaced and progressively spread throughout the region. The rationale behind what has been called Pan-Arabism was that a closer union between Arab countries could have positive impacts both internally and externally. The idea was primarily embodied in the person of Gamal Abdel Nasser, the president of Egypt (1954–70). His ideology blended Pan-Arabism, socialism and non-alignment vis-à-vis the two superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union. Although Nasser was fully aware of the impossibility of building a broad Arab political union, he nonetheless strongly believed in the necessity of joint Arab actions. His ideas appealed well beyond Egypt, particularly in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. He was regarded by many as the leader of the Arab world. His prestige reached its peak at the time of the Suez Crisis in 1956, when he won a political (although not military) victory by turning back Israel, France and the UK – after the intercession of the US and the Soviet Union.[51] The event not only buttressed Pan-Arabism, it also reinforced the enmity between many Arab countries, and Israel and the West.

However, Nasser's approach found less resonance among Arab leaders. Some agreed in principle with him, but rejected Egypt's presumption of hegemony in the wider Arab world – for example, Syria, Iraq and to a lesser extent Algeria. Other more conservative rulers in the Arab world – Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Morocco – were unenthusiastic about the revolutionary social and political changes advocated by Egypt and so were also unwilling to accept Egyptian hegemony. The divide between the promotion of and resistance to Pan-Arabism widened in the 1960s. Pan-Arabism ultimately resulted in very few concrete actions or lasting initiatives. The unique and serious attempt at building a political union between Arab countries failed: the United Arab Republic (UAR), merging Syria and Egypt, indeed lasted only three years, from 1958 to 1961. In the meantime, non-Arab Middle Eastern countries, such as Iran and Turkey, continued on their separate routes and adopted pro-Western policies.

Chapter 5 describes how the Middle East was shaken up again by another Arab-Israeli conflict in 1967. The Six-Day War, which involved Israel, Egypt, Syria and Jordan, brought many significant changes to the region and sowed the seeds for the next and fourth crisis. The war resulted from a combination of factors, including increased tensions between Israel and, Egypt and Syria, and internal problems within the Jewish state, evidenced by the anxiety of elites, demographic conditions and economic strains. The key motives behind it are, however, still debated among historians. The war constituted another humiliating moment for the Arab countries. In a single day, the Israelis had

destroyed the whole Egyptian air force. Five days later, they occupied the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights.[52] Again, these military actions were accompanied by huge movements of refugees, which would become a source of enormous political tensions and cleavages in the future.

This conflict revealed the limits of Arab military and political power, and led to further fragmentation. It was also clear evidence of the regional dominance of Israel. Yet 1967 was more than a military defeat. It created a grave moral crisis that had important repercussions. First, it sounded the death knell of the idea of Pan-Arabism (but not nationalism), as promoted by Nasser. There was a growing realization that Arab political unity was merely an illusion. Its last expression, the 1973 war against Israel, led by Egypt and Syria, confirmed this fact.[53]

The political fragmentation within the Middle East had actually become more apparent, soon after the death of Nasser in 1970. Many countries embarked on individualistic strategies. This did not mean that there were no or limited interactions between them. Quite the contrary; the exchange of goods, labour, ideas and capital increased in volume and intensity throughout the 1970s. However, this tendency served more to highlight the significant political differences that existed within the region, rather than to diminish them. It is important to note that this decade witnessed a profound change in the regional balance of power with an increase in the influence of oil-producing countries (Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Libya and Algeria), which benefited from the rise in petroleum prices, and the progressive isolation of Egypt, especially after the conclusion of the 1979 Peace Treaty. In such a complex regional context, it was not surprising to see the strengthening of a distinct Palestinian identity. Palestinian groups realized that Arab solidarity would not be sufficient to help them gain independence and that they should engage in their own struggle. Ironically, the 1967 defeat marked the beginning of their march towards statehood. This is actually the second important consequence of the conflict.

Another major outcome of the Six-Day War was the resurgence of Islamic movements and ideology. Following the military disaster of 1967, some key opinion-formers in the region began to think that the weak observance of religion was, in part, responsible for the debacle. In some circles, Pan-Arabism progressively gave way to pan-Islamism as a dominant idea. Here the development of Islamic unity was presented as a solution to an array of contemporary problems and was promoted as an alternative to secularism. Of course, religion had been an important underlying factor well before the 1970s and groups advocating

such beliefs had existed for quite a long time. Yet with the dismissal of Pan-Arabism after the 1967 defeat, this movement became not only more visible, but also more credible.

Pan-Islamism had two faces. On the one hand, the idea was officially promoted at the interstate level. The objective was to encourage the development and reinforcement of relations between Muslim countries. On the other hand, there were radical non-governmental religious groups, which advocated a return to pure religion and fervour, as a way to restore the region's past glory. Such idealism was especially prevalent in societies that suffered from social disruption caused by the rapid political and economic changes of the 1970s. Initially, this type of pan-Islamism was tolerated and even promoted by some countries in the belief or hope that it could be instrumentalized: pan-Islamism could help regimes control new organizations and prevent the emergence of internal challenges. However, the fragile equilibrium suddenly broke up in 1979, under the pressure of several events, which marked the fourth critical turning point.

Chapter 6 recounts how three major events shook the Middle East in 1979: the Iranian Revolution;[54] the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia; and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and non-Soviet combatant and financial support for the Afghans. The Iranian Revolution suggested that an alternative to the secular, liberal-democratic Western model existed and it thereby helped to galvanize and promote the popularity of radical religious groups, which opposed both conservative and secular regimes. It also rendered these very regimes acutely conscious that state-sponsored revolutionary ideologies could spill over from one state to the next. The seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, a few months later, reinforced this apprehension. It was the first time the religious and political legitimacy of established authorities was so openly questioned. Confronted with such serious challenges to the maintenance of political order and the status quo, many governments had no choice but to change direction. The question was whether they should liberalize further or, on the contrary, adopt more conservative policies. States that were determined to preserve domestic and regional stability opted for the second strategy – reinforced conservatism.

In this unstable and uncertain period, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was understood as an indirect consequence of the Iranian Revolution, was universally and strongly rejected by both moderate and radical religious groups and conservative and secular regimes in the region: it was seen as a threat to the entire Muslim world. To prevent the Soviets from making progress, Arab Muslim combatants, also called

Arab mujahidins, gathered in Pakistan's ungoverned tribal areas and crossed into Soviet-occupied territory to fight alongside the Afghans. They were covertly encouraged and supported by the US, Pakistan and some Arab governments. The 'Afghan adventure' helped to strengthen certain radical groups. It proved to be an incubator for ideological radicalization, networking and training. The important consequences of this conflict would only be perceptible in the next decade.

The critical turning point that occurred from 1987 to the turn of the 1990s is the focus of Chapter 7. Contrary to previous experience, the combination of events – some quite tragic – had, this time, the potential to generate some positive changes to the region. These crucial events included the end of the Iraq–Iran war, the first Intifada in the Palestinian-occupied territories, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the First Gulf War subsequent to the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq and the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The end of the bipolar world order considerably transformed the international system – the certainties of the cold war paradigm were replaced by strategic unpredictability, ambivalence and ambiguity. This new strategic context created new dynamics and modified the coalitions within and without the Middle East. As financial and political support dried up, the former USSR 'clients', such as Syria, Libya and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) were forced to redefine their strategy. Iran and Turkey, for their part, had to review their system of alliances, following the creation of independent majority Muslim republics on their northern and eastern frontiers. They competed with each other in this process. Furthermore, the US, as the sole remaining military superpower, had more leverage to affect regional politics. It was in this new context that the First Gulf War broke out. This conflict had consequences that became visible long after it ended. It was, first of all, quite an extraordinary event. The alliance of Muslim countries against another Muslim state would have been unthinkable a few years before. It represented a further blow to the rhetoric of Arab unity.

Yet, quite paradoxically, the crisis led to some positive, though transient, developments, especially regarding the Arab-Israeli issue. The Gulf War and other events, in particular the Intifada, unexpectedly created the conditions for the establishment of talks between Israel and its Arab neighbours. After the war, Israel, whose population started to become weary of the continuous violence of the Intifada, felt less secure. The change in its policy was also generated by the enormous pressure exerted by the US, in its desire to take advantage of the propitious international context to broker a deal as quickly as possible.

The PLO and Jordan, weakened by their position during the war, were also pushed to the negotiating table. These and other developments resulted in the multilateral Middle East Peace Conference in Madrid in 1991, which involved Israel, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinians (though not the PLO). While the latter failed to lead anywhere, secret talks between Israel and the PLO, on the one hand, Israel and Jordan, on the other, led respectively to the Oslo Accords between the PLO and the Israeli government in 1993 and the Israeli–Jordanian Peace Treaty in 1994. Syria decided not to enter into any agreement. It sought, instead, to exploit the favourable situation that derived from its participation in the coalition against Iraq.

In 2000, there were grounds for cautious optimism, though of course many challenges, obstacles and dilemmas to peace and stability in the region remained to be resolved. A myriad of tensions existed between and within countries. However, there were some positive movements, as well. Progress, albeit slow, was made on certain Arab-Israeli issues: Israel removed its troops from Southern Lebanon and the US government publicly approved the idea of the creation of an independent Palestinian State. In addition, political governance improved in certain countries, notably the oil monarchies. However, the hope for a brighter future would be short-lived. The elements presaging the next critical turning point were already coming to the surface.

One of these destructive elements developed as a result of the withdrawal of the Soviets from Afghanistan in the late 1980s. After the war, the Arab mujahidins were persuaded that they had played a crucial role in defeating the superpower and so transforming the international system. They believed that their role was critical and portended a rise of the Muslim world, its visibility in world consciousness – the first time this had occurred since the 1683 siege of Vienna. In their view, the time had now arrived to move to the next phase of global independence and recognition through confronting directly and with force regional powers and the US, the remaining great power. As a consequence of these and other events, terrorist activities perpetrated by Middle Eastern groups progressively grew larger and internationalized. In the course of the 1990s, the Americans were targeted on several occasions, inside and outside their borders (for example, the World Trade Center bombing in 1993 and the US embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998). US military presence in the region, during and after the Gulf War (initially they were supposed to leave at the end of the hostilities), reinforced the resolve of violent extremist groups. The establishment of US bases in the Arabian Peninsula was, in particular, understood

by the extremists in terms of a serious affront. Even though they were invited by sovereign governments, this was conveniently projected by extremist groups as humiliating and intolerable that non-Muslims were allowed to tread upon such a symbolic holy place. Some radical groups made it their duty to protect Islam and free the region of the infidels.

Another situation was potentially explosive: the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The remarkable and rather unexpected progress made in the early 1990s noticeably raised popular expectations. The inability of the interlocutors to meet these expectations had the obvious potential of increasing levels of popular frustration that could turn into unmanageable anger. Unfortunately, that chain of consequence is precisely what occurred. A series of setbacks, delays and poor policy choices discredited negotiated consensus-based political solutions and incubated the second Intifada. It also spread widely the feeling of pessimism and even despair throughout the region.

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks provoked a shock at the systemic level. What constituted a sixth critical turning point was not so much the act in itself, although it was horrific enough with several thousand innocent people killed – global terrorism had existed for quite some time – but rather the reactions and policy changes that followed it. This strategy placed a great strain on the US relations with many Middle Eastern countries, including close strategic partners, and gave the impression of a greater divide between the West and the Muslim world. In addition, it unsettled the regional order to a notable extent, raising anxiety among rulers who feared the destabilization of the region. This apprehension explains the reluctance of many countries in the region to oppose the build-up to the Iraq war (which is not to say that they supported Saddam Hussein's regime). In some cases, the preservation of stability also served as an excuse to impose political restrictions on populations, civil society and indigenous political parties, groups and movements. Indeed, certain governments limited civil and political rights in the name of the fight against terrorism.

The metaphor of Middle East critical turning points marked by a series of disruptive events provides us with a useful analytical lens that highlights the complexity of regional development. Chapters 3–8 identify six such critical turning points, and argue that each is generated by a combination and complex interaction of internal and external pressures on the region. At critical junctures this combination creates catalytic conditions which undermine individual dignity, societal collective self-confidence and the legitimacy of indigenous governance paradigms. Chapter 9 begins by surveying factors that may contribute to possible

future turning points in the Middle East, including weapons proliferation, failing states, violent extremism and the continued export of strategic dysfunctionality and Palestinian-Israeli generated crisis. We argue that the four dominant narratives that purport to identify and address underlying structural and systemic tension and stress in the region fail to incorporate an understanding of dignity deficits, their pivotal relationship to instability and thus the need to create policies that address them. Chapter 9 clearly identifies and characterizes this nexus, before proposing a set of national, regional and global basic requirements to begin the process of addressing dignity deficits in the region.

It is quite hard to predict what will happen next. What can be advanced without fear of contradiction, however, is that if little or no policy initiatives are conceived and executed with the aim of breaking this down spiral of anger, frustration and repression, the region will continue to be stuck in an intractable situation which will result in yet another critical turning point. Moreover, the longer the status quo lasts, the harder it will be to move forward and upwards into a virtuous spiral. For this reason, if for no other, actions can and must be taken. Defeatism must be rejected. Problems are not unsolvable, as one tends to imagine. Indeed, the various negative critical turning points that have just been described were not entirely unexpected. Rather, they were, in most instances, predictable outcomes of the continued influence and presence of external powers in a region where states are latecomers and regional and domestic orders are contested. Some of these failings can be addressed, rectified or at least ameliorated and managed. To prevent the next negative critical point from occurring, one needs to recognize both the potentials and failures of the region. Only a comprehensive and balanced diagnosis of the crisis will lead to efficient solutions.

Chapter 9 then outlines the most likely sources of a potential seventh negative critical turning point for the region, based on current trends and policies, and dignity deficits. It then discusses current narratives designed to manage change in the region and their capacity to adequately address dignity deficits. Finally, the chapter concludes by offering a more directed and sophisticated set of policy prescriptions that are likely to be more effective in the shorter and longer term at preventing such a storm and at redirecting its energy in more constructive and productive directions.

2
The Historical Legacy – The Rise and Fall of the Golden Era

In this chapter, we identify and survey the factors that contributed to the rise of the Arab-Islamic Empire and its decline. The chapter begins by discussing the leading explanations for this rise and decline, in particular those that highlight dynamics internal to the region as well as those that underline external factors. Key internal and external factors contributing to the rise of the Arab-Islamic Empire are outlined by drawing on a range of Arabic philosophical and scientific texts, as well as Arab-Islamic historical analyses, such as those of Ibn Khaldun, Chapra, Al-Rodhan and others.[1] The chapter then considers the nature of the retrenchment itself. It also examines the range of explanations that historians have offered to account for the decline. A brief overview of the major critical turning points in the pre-twentieth-century history of the Middle East is then discussed. These critical turning points, often brought to the surface by an event or a series of events, reflect broad political, economic, social and cultural processes. Their outcomes include a blow to the collective psyche, weakening and fragmentation of the region, and they prompt reactionary responses and ideologies. We pay particular attention to both internal and external factors contributing to these junctures and their consequences. We aim to demonstrate that together these critical turning points contributed to an acute sense of vulnerability, humiliation, frustration and defeat and successive weakening of the region, culminating in the colonization of a significant part of the Arab-Islamic Empire by European powers eager to fuel their industrialization and expand their influence.

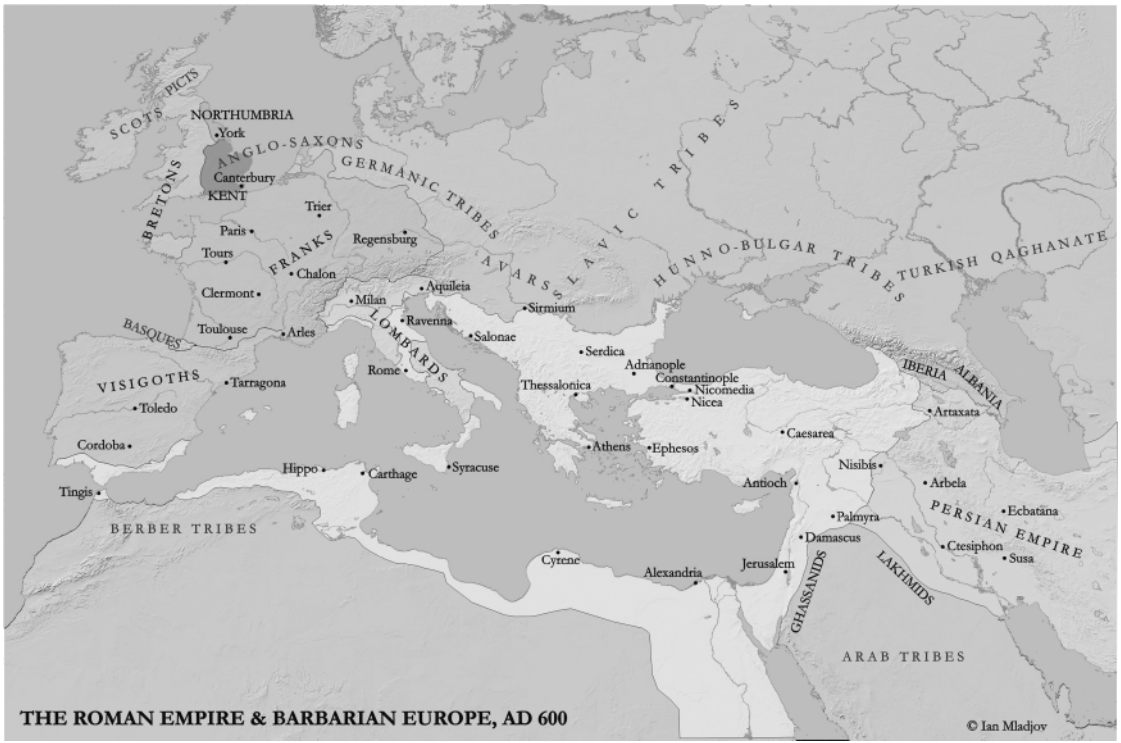
Accounting for the rise of the Arab-Islamic Empire

The rise and expansion of Islam in the seventh century had a crucial impact on the subsequent history of the area we define as the

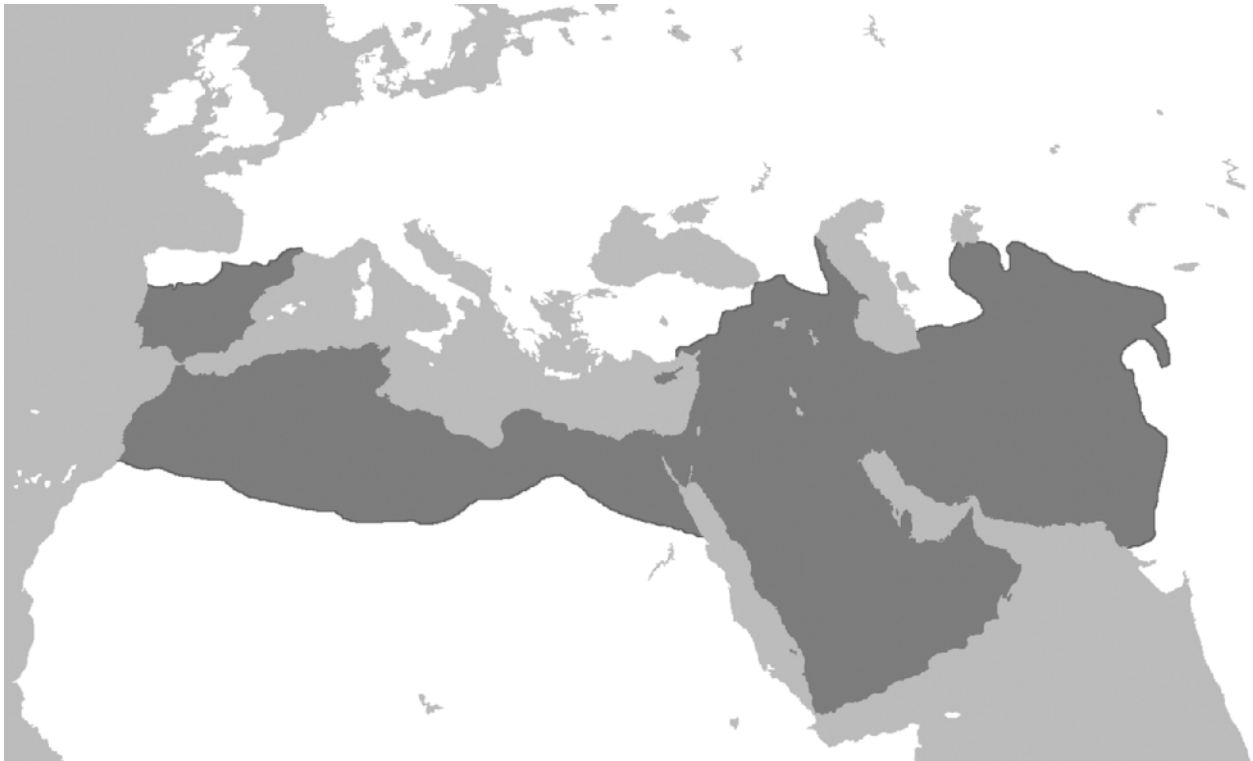
Middle East. The process of Islamization, and to a lesser extent that of Arabization, created specific social, cultural and religious bonds that gave the Middle East its cohesion. Before the Arab conquests, the region was divided up into two rival zones of influence: that of the Byzantine Empire in the West and that of the Sasanid Empire in the East.[2] The greater part of the Arabian Peninsula remained outside these two spheres (see Map 2.1).

Once the followers of the Prophet Muhammad set out from Western Arabia (called *Hijaz*) in AD 634, the Arab-Islamic Empire expanded at an incredible pace. Within ten years, the Arabs had driven the Sasanids out of Persia and occupied Palestine and present-day Iraq, Syria and Egypt. In the second wave of conquests, they conquered Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria. They crossed the Mediterranean in early 711 and advanced as far as the south of Paris. Indeed, 'there is still a trace of this crossing in the name of the island between North Africa and Spain – Gibraltar – derived from the words *jabal Tariq*, the mountain of Tariq, the general who led the Muslim armies into Spain'.[3] After their defeat by Charles Martel at the Battle of Poitiers in 732, they were then forced to retreat to the Iberian Peninsula, which they named Al-Andalus, although they remained in southern France for two more centuries (see Map 2.2). This area of the Empire (Al-Andalus), would later become autonomous under the rule of one branch of the Umayyad dynasty and, later, the Almohad and Almoravid dynasties.[4]

Many explanations have been put forward to account for the rapidity and extraordinary geographical scope of the Arab-Islamic Empire in Europe. Some authors have identified economic drivers for expansion and the weakness of the Arabs' adversaries as key explanatory factors.[5] Others attribute Islam a critical role in the rapid rise and success of the Empire.[6] Chapra, for example, argues that Islam's emphasis on equality, dignity, self-respect, the sanctity of life and property, individual honour and the fundamental importance of knowledge provided the foundations on which human beings and societies could flourish. Islam provided women a respectful status in society and made the upbringing of children a goal of the Shari'ah. Koranic legislation also favoured the underprivileged by enshrining justice, social solidarity and well-being. Islam also provided a system of government designed to ensure not only law and order, but also justice and the socio-economic welfare of the people. It also ensured individual freedom within the bounds of its moral code and discouraged corruption, arbitrary and despotic rule.[7] As Nayef Al-Rodhan has argued in *Sustainable History and the Dignity of Man: A Philosophy of History and Civilisational Triumph*, the tenets of



Map 2.1 The Roman Empire and Barbarian Europe, AD 600.
Source: Ian S. R. Mladjov, www.sitemaker.umich.edu/mladjov.



Map 2.2 The Umayyad Caliphate at its Greatest Extent, c. AD 750
Source: Jarle Grøhn, uploaded by Gabagool on *Wikipedia*.

good governance set out in the Koran, which are based on the principles of equality among human beings, social solidarity and justice, were not the only factors that help to explain the rise and success of the Arab-Islamic Empire. Cultural borrowing, innovation, a lack of dogma and tolerance of diversity were also important contributory factors.[8]

The conquering Arab armies left local administrative and tax systems unchanged and protected minorities, who might otherwise have been prone to rebellion. For the first two decades, they even governed at a distance. In general, the conquering armies settled in garrisons separate from the cities. They were forbidden to confiscate lands or any valuable property after the end of hostilities and were paid via a system of taxes. Another critical element was that the conquerors did not force people to convert to Islam. Contrary to popular belief, forcible conversion was not their primary war objective.[9] They were initially quite tolerant in comparison to common practice during this period. This is not to say that discrimination never took place or that people from other faiths, especially Judaism and Christianity, were treated as equals. They did have to pay a specific tax as a sign of submission to Muslim hegemony, although this was justified on the basis of not obliging Muslims to pay the Muslim tax (zakat). Thus, rather than a discriminatory act, the (jiziah) tax on non-Muslims was viewed as similar to the Muslim tax. However, in general, their beliefs were respected and they were granted protection within self-governed communities, known as *dhimmis*.

Under the Umayyads, basic legal and social institutions were established. The administration was rationalized and the Caliphate was divided into provinces, each led by a governor. A transformation of the conception of power, based at the time upon tribal solidarity, was also initiated. The reinforcement of central power was accompanied by a strengthening of the army.[10] Yet the major innovation was undoubtedly the emergence of dynastic rule with a defined succession line, in a clear break with tribal and Muslim traditions of the merit-based selection of caliphs. Reforms and changes continued under the Umayyad's successors.

The rise of the Abbasid dynasty in the 750s ushered in a new era of empire. The Abbasids did not simply replace the Umayyads; they profoundly modified the nature of the government. In some areas, they even built on their predecessors' work.[11] One of the first changes the Abbasids made was to move the centre of imperial power from Syria to Iraq. The city of Baghdad was constructed to serve as the new capital.[12] This dynasty exercised authority through a strong and ever-growing bureaucracy, following the model inherited from previously existing Persian societies.[13] The basis for their authority was, at first,

more fragile than that of the Umayyads. In fact, the loyalty to the Arab nation, so important under their predecessors, could no longer be used as the moral bond for the community and a source of legitimacy.[14] The Abbasid caliphs legitimized their rule in religious terms. As collective unity was generated through shared religious belief, ethnic differences became irrelevant.

With respect to the organization of the state, the Abbasids continued what the Umayyads had started. They divided the administration into different departments, dealing with military, external and fiscal matters. At the head of this administration, they created the position of *wazir* (vizier), who was also a close adviser to the Caliph. *Emirs* (princes) were in charge of the different provinces. The first three centuries of the Abbasid regime are often referred to as the golden age of the Arab-Islamic Empire and Arabic literature and scholarship: 'The first three centuries of Abbasid rule were a golden age in which Baghdad and Samarra' functioned as the cultural and commercial capitals of the Islamic world. During this period, a distinctive style emerged and new techniques were developed that spread throughout the Muslim realm and greatly influenced Islamic art and architecture.'[15]

Economically, the removal of barriers and increased stability within the Empire allowed for the emergence of a flourishing free trade zone. Trade relations intensified with India, China and Southeast Asia, notably Indonesia.[16] Baghdad was the crossing point of important trade routes. The Empire was naturally endowed with valuable resources: agricultural products, metals and precious stones. The Abbasids tried to optimize this favourable situation. They improved irrigation works and considerably extended the cultivated areas. As far as the industrial sector was concerned, the textile industry was one of the most dynamic. A sophisticated banking system was put in place to support these growing commercial activities, in which many segments of the population participated.

Culture and learning also flourished during this period, placing an emphasis on learning from ancient civilizations, such as Greek, Roman, Chinese, near eastern and Indian. This began with the translation, into Arabic, of some of the greatest philosophical and scientific works. Once Abbasid scholars had integrated this rich knowledge, they refined it and soon developed their own thinking and inventions. They excelled in all fields: science (physics, mathematics, medicine and chemistry), poetry, literature, philosophy and architecture. The result was a brilliant civilization unequalled anywhere else at the time. What made it extraordinary was its inclusiveness. It was a true global civilization in which all

ethnic and religious communities participated. It was fundamentally the product of creative interactions and mutual influences. Different factors facilitated the emergence and diffusion of culture. A key aspect was the importance given to learning in the Koran. Religion literally exalted and promoted it. At a more practical level, the existence of a common language, Arabic, provided a formidable vehicle for the spread and sharing of knowledge. The introduction of paper in the region also played an important role. Books could be produced more rapidly and at a lower cost. The fact that subsequent cultural and scientific developments owed much to these achievements has often been ignored or, at best, underestimated. Yet, one cannot deny that the intellectual dynamism present in the region gave an incredible impetus to the European Renaissance as a result of the flow of ideas, as Al-Rodhan, Bowden, Chapra, Hobson, Morgan, Hunker, Attar, Najjar, Catherwood, Gerner and Schwelder and others argue.[17]

Al-Andalus, which had been an autonomous entity since 756, became a separate Caliphate in 929. By proclaiming himself Caliph, Abd Al-Rahman III, who had restored the Umayyad power throughout the region, clearly indicated his desire to compete on equal terms with the Abbasids. The period of the Western Caliphate in Al-Andalus (929–1031) is widely understood to represent the golden age of Al-Andalus. The region underwent profound changes and remarkable developments, not least its booming economy. Thanks to a sophisticated irrigation system, the agricultural sector was far more advanced than that of western European countries (not yet states, until, arguably 1848). Many cities prospered, including Cordoba, Seville, Toledo and Granada, and could compete with other large metropolises, such as Constantinople:

> Abd al-Rahman III was passionately interested in both the religious and the secular sciences. He was also determined to show the world that his court at Cordoba equalled in greatness that of the caliphs at Baghdad. Sparing neither time nor expense, he imported books from Baghdad and actively recruited scholars by offering handsome inducements. Soon, as a result, scholars, poets, philosophers, historians, and musicians began to migrate to al-Andalus. Soon, too, an infrastructure of libraries, hospitals, research institutions, and centers of Islamic studies grew up, establishing the intellectual tradition and educational system which made Spain outstanding for the next four hundred years.[18]

It was within these important cultural centres where intellectual life flourished and pre-eminent scientists and philosophers, such as Ibn

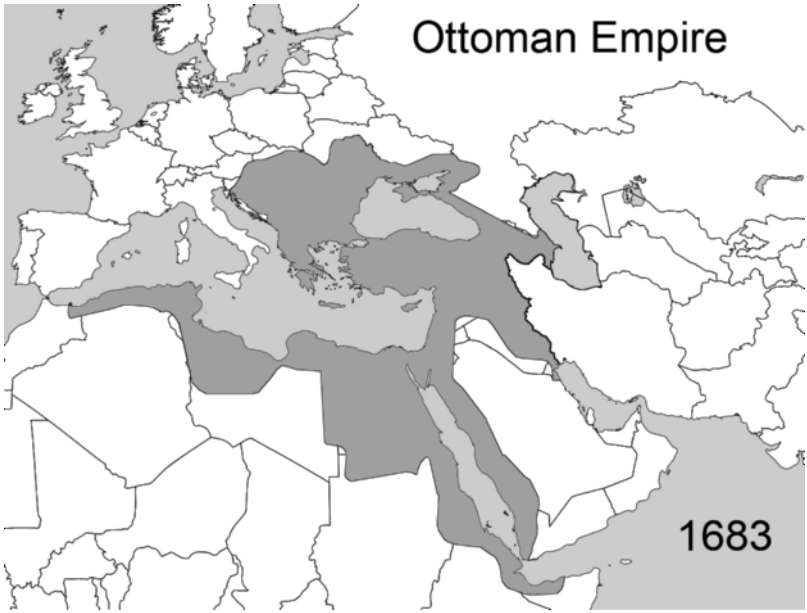
Tufayl and Ibn Rushd (Averroes), originated from this milieu. Many, including the philosopher and historian Ibn Khaldun, also came to study and visit the extraordinary libraries. Andalusians were 'key transmitters of knowledge between civilizations'.[19]

The Ismaili Shiite dynasty of the Fatimids, initially based in Tunis, conquered Egypt in the 960s and extended their rule over Syria and Palestine. Cairo became the capital of their Caliphate, but lost control of distant territories in North Africa. 'In the east, the Fatimids gradually extended their sovereignty over the ports and outlets of the Red Sea for trade with India and Southeast Asia and tried to win influence on the shores of the Indian Ocean.'[20] The Fatimids also undertook the modernization of cities, constructing mosques, schools and libraries, and encouraging art and culture. Although they strictly respected and observed Islamic laws, they did not force non-Muslims to convert. The majority of Egyptians remained Coptic Christian and Jewish, and most of the Muslims remained Sunni. Only a small proportion of the population, mainly the elite, practised Shiism.

While most of the Middle East was weakened by external and internal assaults, a power was growing in Anatolia from the remnants of the Seljuqs: the Ottoman Turks. By the late thirteenth century, the Mongols had lost control over the Turkish populations in that region. The Ottoman dynasty successfully seized the opportunity to extend its rule. The period of the Ottoman expansion started as early as the fourteenth century and reached its highest point three decades later.

In the middle of the sixteenth century, and in particular under the reign of Suleyman the Magnificent (1522–66), the Empire reached its zenith, both in terms of territorial expansion, cultural development and political organization (see Map 2.3). At the time, the Ottomans held sway over a great diversity of ethnic groups (Turks, Arabs, Greeks, Romanians, Armenians, Bulgarians and Serbs) and religions (Islam, Christianity and Judaism). The management of these very diverse populations was quite successful in the beginning, for a number of different reasons. Ethnic equality was put forward as a basic principle, at least during the first centuries, thus avoiding tensions: ethnic identity was not privileged above all else, religion alone was the fundamental unifying factor. Success also can be attributed to the adoption of tolerant policies towards other faiths. The Ottomans did not force people to convert to Islam. They set up autonomous self-governed communities for non-Muslims, following the model of the *dhimmis*, which became the blueprint for imperial organization.[21]

In addition, control over the vast empire was efficient thanks to the existence of a strong administration. The system that the Ottomans put in place worked remarkably well at the start. It was highly centralized



Map 2.3 The Ottoman Empire in 1683
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Territorial_changes_of_the_Ottoman_Empire_1683.jpg

and relied on an elaborate and stratified bureaucracy. The army was the central institutional backbone supporting this edifice. Military forces were well-organized and trained. The chiefs formed the ruling class, together with the men of religion and civil servants and participated in decision-making, cooperating 'to rule and enforce justice'.[22]

This type of governance system was applied to the nearest and most strategically important provinces; other more peripheral and less strategically vital provinces, such as Lebanon, Mesopotamia, parts of North Africa and Western Arabia, were allowed some degree of autonomy. So long as the institutions responded to the needs of the people and the state, the administration of the Ottoman Empire remained quite efficient. However, from the seventeenth century, what had made the Empire initially successful – its diversity and strong rule – turned into weaknesses.

Accounting for the decline of the Arab-Islamic Empire

The region had, as a whole, fallen into decline by the end of the seventeenth century. Before then, its condition was, both relative to its own

history and compared to other parts of the world, much more stable. Yet, it should be noted that the decline has not occurred in a linear way, for example, a rise followed by a steep decline. The evolution was rather experienced through a series of peaks and dips, even before the 1700s.

Many explanations have been offered to account for this overall decline. Some observers focus on external factors. Some, mostly in the Middle East, have located the causes of the decline in external actors and their actions. In the past, the devastating Mongol destruction of the Abbasid dynasty was certainly a major cause as was the lack of emphasis that the Ottomans placed on non-religious learning. This interpretation still resonates today, as the following quotation illustrates:

> Politically and economically, the Mongol invasions were disastrous. Some regions never fully recovered and the Muslim empire, already weakened by internal pressures, never fully regained its previous power. The Mongol invasions, in fact, were a major cause of the subsequent decline that set in throughout the heartland of the Arab East. In their sweep through the Islamic world the Mongols killed or deported numerous scholars and scientists and destroyed libraries with their irreplaceable works. The result was to wipe out much of the priceless cultural, scientific, and technological legacy that Muslim scholars had been preserving and enlarging for some five hundred years.[23]

Similar arguments have been advanced to account for the decline of the Ottoman Empire and its inability to preserve the Islamic heritage.[24] However, with regards to the Mongols, the Arab-Islamic Empire had already indicated signs of weakness before their arrival. The same logic applies to the Ottomans. Perceptions have somewhat changed over the past two centuries. More contemporary interpretations place the burden of responsibility on ex-colonial European powers, mainly Britain and France. Such imperial entanglements have undeniably impacted on the historical evolution of the region, in particular by rendering most of the Middle East countries in a dependent position – formally and informally. Yet, this cannot be singled out as the unique factor for decline.

A slightly different emphasis in approach to the issue of decline is to locate the reasons for current instability not to the decline of the Middle East per se, but in the rise of the West (empowered through borrowing and translation from the Arab-Islamic Empire, primarily through Al-Andalus, Sicily and the Crusades). According to this line of argument, rulers in the Middle East were unable to maintain the tremendous advances that started in the West three centuries ago. This interpretative framework

suggests that discoveries, as well as political, economic, technological, social and cultural developments decisively changed the balance of power and progress in favour of the West. Internal weaknesses within the Middle East only played a secondary role.[25] This does not explain, however, why such progress and achievement failed to also take place in one of the most advanced civilizations of the time.

Another set of explanations points to the internal causes of the decline. Religion, for example Islam, appears as a central element in many analyses. For some observers, the problem lay in the nature of religion itself:

> In the 13th century the Muslim world, with its development of the culture of science, mathematics, physics, chemistry and medicine, led the world. This was despite Islam, not because of it. The Muslim world once possessed in its hands the keys to the future prosperity that technology could deliver. Not only that, but with the invention of double entry bookkeeping, it possessed in its hands the blueprint of the plans for the modern corporation. Because of Islam, because of the Quran, these keys were thrown away. Eventually, after several hundred years, Europe was able to absorb this knowledge and overthrow the dark constraint of its own religion to unlock the mysteries of science and discover the path to prosperity.[26]

This kind of reasoning is flawed, particularly as the golden age's glitter was burnished by Islam's emphasis on learning, justice and good government principles. This erroneous explanation fails to distinguish religion from the way it is interpreted. To claim that Islam, per se, opposed the advancement of knowledge and destabilized the region is inaccurate, given that learning and education were actually part of the Prophet's commandments. The opposite argument advanced by some radical groups is no more convincing. In their view, it was the perverted vision and practice of Islam that caused the decline. They claim that a return to a so-called authentic Islam would have ensured the preservation of Muslim supremacy. This interpretation derives from an imagined and flawed reading of history. In fact, the epoch of glory of the Arab-Islamic Empire resulted, in part, from the existence of sound and just governance, as well as an open and tolerant conception of religion. For many liberal reformers in the Middle East it was indeed this lack of tolerance and rigidity in the way Islam was interpreted that created many of the obstacles and challenges to progress, stability and security in the region. While it cannot be denied that religious fundamentalism

had important negative impacts, this is not a sufficient explanation. Other factors need to be considered.

The explanation offered by Bernard Lewis has been discussed at length in academic and political circles and is widely supported. Lewis has principally advanced his argument in the now-famous book *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*.[27] With his outstanding knowledge of the Ottomans, Lewis works through the decline of that empire. He suggests that the sultans tried to keep up with the progress of the Christian West as the latter grew ever stronger, drawing on the invigorating changes that swept aside the European past: advances in technology, the transformation of public institutions, the growth of individual freedom and responsibility and the emergence of the concept of modernity. The decay of the caliphate is believed to have generated narcissism instead of fruitful dialogue with the West.

This rather short volume has aroused strong reactions that cross the spectrum, from blind admiration to total rejection.[28] The author's description of the difficulties facing the Middle East is quite accurate, albeit demeaning. He highlights the deficiencies of some of the most common accounts of the decline, and rejects the idea that Islam, as such, should be blamed for current troubles: '[I]f Islam is an obstacle to freedom, to science, to economic development, how is it that Muslim society in the past was a pioneer in all three, and this when Muslims were much closer in time to the sources and inspiration of their faith than they are now?'[29]

Yet, his argument remains vague and incomplete. This is partly because he spends more time describing the decline than explaining it. At first sight, his line of reasoning appears clear and convincing. Lewis argues, quite rightly, that external assaults are only partial explanations and do not account for the whole. He notes: 'Anglo-French rule and American influence, like the Mongol invasions, were a consequence, not a cause, of the inner weakness of Middle-Eastern states and societies.'[30] He also highlights the absence of contributing factors to success, such as political, economic and intellectual freedoms.

Throughout his book, Lewis implicitly presents his own historical-analytical explanation, according to which the Muslim world declined mainly because it turned its back to modernity and failed to adopt secularism. However, while the impact of religious dogma on political developments certainly played a significant role, this explanation does not suffice. In discussing nineteenth-century Muslim responses to the rise of European powers, Lewis argues that Muslims had reduced philosophy to the handmaiden of theology. He goes on to discuss attempts to establish

factories in the Middle East, and simply says 'the effort failed, and most of the early factories became derelict'.[31] Debate still continues as to why early attempts at industrialization were not successful in the Middle East – some argue that the restrictions placed on tariffs by European powers in the treaties of 1838 and 1840 were to blame, while others identify Egypt's lack of coal for energy, and of trained mechanics who could maintain imported machines. Middle Eastern silk industries fell behind those of Europe partly because Pasteur invented a way of quarantining healthy silkworms against diseased ones, while Lebanese and Iranian worms suffered from such outbreaks. Lewis here, as elsewhere, gives no explanation, simply noting the failure of industrialization in the region.[32]

In addition, Lewis virtually overlooks European colonization of the modern Middle East. He alleges that it was 'comparatively brief and ended half a century ago'.[33] The French ruled Algeria from 1830 to 1962. While Britain only formally ruled Egypt from 1882 to 1922, it was already influential in the country in the 1870s, and continued to meddle in Egyptian politics and in the Suez Canal until 1956. Lewis fails to mention that during 1880–1 a popular Egyptian movement emerged that imposed on the dictatorial Ottoman governor a genuine parliament with budgetary oversight, and that in 1882 the British invaded to quash this democratic experiment, restoring the throne to the autocratic Khedive, who acted as their puppet ruler. In any case, Franco-British involvement in the Middle East was not 'brief'. If we include various forms of economic imperialism with actual colonization, the period would be even longer.[34] Nor is the length of European rule the only significant factor. The manner in which colonial powers affected local economies and societies is equally important. The French powerfully shaped Algeria in ways that certainly contribute to its current problems, including substantial expropriation of land and the creation of a comprador bourgeoisie – a social class involved in the exploitation of their country through their alliance with foreign interests, and roused ethnic and linguistic differences.

Lewis' argument is problematic in other respects too. His analysis is simplistic and selective. Although the author correctly emphasizes the importance of internal weaknesses, he discards too easily the influence of external interferences (especially Western imperialism). He describes the latter as mere consequences of inner problems. Yet, this static vision of history underestimates the independent influence of these external factors, which, in turn, became causes of subsequent events. This cumulative effect needs to be taken into account.

Another important flaw in the study is the lack of nuance. The author uses broad homogeneous categories, such as the 'world of Islam' and 'Western civilization', without really paying attention to internal differences and evolutions. For Lewis, the sources of decline are to be found within the 'Islamic civilization'. This civilizational dimension is analytically troubling. It creates an opposition between two reified blocs – the accomplished and progressive Western civilization and the failing, backward Islamic civilization – although such a reality is not in evidence. It also overlooks the fact that the decline had different origins and manifestations that varied depending on the area within the Middle East region. In general, Lewis' construction of a Western versus Islamic civilization produces artificial barriers and a hierarchy between civilizations.

Pre-twentieth-century critical turning points

How, then, can we explain the overall decline? While Lewis is correct to argue that internal weaknesses facilitated external interferences, this has nothing to do with 'civilization', per se. The difficulties that the Middle East encountered at different stages of history were due to various causes that are, for the most part, not specific to the region. The variations resulted from the interplay of both internal and external forces, the cumulative effect of which has made sustainable recovery extremely difficult. A number of critical turning points in the pre-twentieth century can be identified (see Table 2.1). At each of these junctures, internal and external factors combined to create relatively stable trajectories that contained latent counter-responses that would eventually generate the conditions for the next critical turning point. The cumulative effect of successive critical turning points struck a blow to the collective psyche of the people of the region and weakened the region, often as a result of fragmentation.

The first of these can be dated to 661, when Ali, Mohammed's son-in-law and the last of the Rashidun caliphs (631–61), was assassinated and meritocratic choice in the determination of the caliph was ended. Muwayia, a member of the Umayyad clan, became the new ruler.[35] The rise to power of Muwayia has always been viewed as a watershed, marking the end of one period and the beginning of another. Leadership of the Caliphate had become hereditary rather than being determined by consensus. Muwayia was replaced by his son, who was later succeeded by his son. Then, following a civil war, another branch of the family took over. Power was now in the hands of the Umayyads, who were believed

Table 2.1 Pre-twentieth-century critical turning points

Initial conditions	Critical turning point	Political development path	Counter-responses
661 Challenge by Muwayia to meritocratic rule	End of meritocratic choice in the determination of the caliph	Establishment of Umayyad rule	Split within the Ummah with the emergence of Shia and Khawarij; disenfranchisement of the Abbasid clan
750 Legitimacy of Umayyad rule challenged	Overthrow of Umayyads by Abbasids	Continuation of dynastic rule; deterioration of political unity of the Empire	Al-Andalus established as a separate entity under the rule of the last remaining Umayyad prince (Abdul Rahman I Al-Dakhil); growth of peripheral forces
1032 Poor governance and conservatism; weakened Umayyad rule in Al-Andalus	Collapse of Umayyad central rule in Al-Andalus and fragmentation into *taifas* (factions)	Fragmented political order in Al-Andalus	Rivalries between *taifas* lead to alliances between *taifas* and Catholic Spaniards
1072 General retreat of Islam in Europe	Norman conquest of Sicily	Decline of Arab Islamic hegemony in the Mediterranean	Antagonism towards Europe
1085 Advance of Latin Christendom in Spain	Loss of the Emirate of Toledo	Sense of retreat; invitation of the Al-Murabitum (Almoravids), a puritanical dynasty from Morocco	Increased intolerance and less focus on learning
1099 Rising confidence in Christendom about capacity to challenge Islam	First Crusade	Increased divisions within Arab-Islamic world; loss of confidence in the capacities of central Abbasid caliphate and regional governing dynasties	Breakaway movements emerge (Ayyubids); increased religious fervour; sense of hatred, mistrust and increased antagonism towards Europe

1236/1248 Conservatism, internal competition, retreat and fragmentation	Loss of Cordoba and Seville	Further weakening of Al-Andalus; loss of two significant centres of learning and economic and cultural innovation; continued loss of confidence in ruling *taifas*; decline of Almohad dynasty which collapsed in 1269	Emergence of the Arab Nasrid dynasty as the last Emirate of Al-Andalus; voluntary exodus of elite Arab families to North Africa; increased antagonism towards Europe; further decline of Al-Andalus and uncertainty about the future
1258 Weak and decentralized Abbasid caliphate	Mongol invasion of Baghdad; defeat of Seljuq Empire and collapse of Abbasid dynasty	Emergence of independent and often competing dynasties; focus on military rather than learning	Further decentralization and weakening; re-emergence of peripheral forces
1492 Ongoing decline in both central caliphate and in Al-Andalus	Surrender of Granada	Significant economic losses; further insistence on religious learning, especially within the Ottoman Empire	Sense of betrayal and mistrust in response to the failure of Spanish Catholics to honour the Granada surrender agreement
1529 Increased attempts by Ottomans to re-assert themselves in Europe after the capture of Constantinople in 1453, and especially after the loss of Al-Andalus in 1492	The Siege of Vienna	Ottoman failure to reassert dominance in Europe reflected weakness and stagnation of the Empire	Increased focus on religious learning and militarization
1683 Ottoman desire to regain a foothold in Europe	Battle for Vienna	Decline of Ottoman Empire vis-à-vis Europe	Defensive posture; incomplete reforms undertaken
1798 Lack of legitimacy of Ottoman rule; revival of ethnic divisions	Napoleonic conquests in the Middle East; establishment of British rule in Muslim-governed India	Further break up of Ottoman rule; beginning of colonialism in the region	Establishment of Mohammed Ali's rule in Egypt; Turkification of the Ottoman Empire leading to Arab-Turkish ethnic tensions and eventually to the Arab Revolt in 1916

to have ruled for self-interest rather than in the service of religion.[36] A hereditary dynasty would have been acceptable if good governance practices were assured. However, they were not and the abandonment of the governance practices that were responsible for the dramatic rise of the Caliphate in the first 40 years of Islam would instil a sense of shock and a feeling of vulnerability created by the expectation that political turmoil would follow and hinder the appeal of the caliphate as a meritocratic governance system for Arab-Islamic lands and beyond.

It began a period of poor governance, civil war, divisions and rivalries between the Umayyad rulers and the old Medina theocracy, between Arab tribes and between the Khawarij and Shia and the regime in Damascus,[37] attempts by other dynasties to take power (Abbasids), and questionable legitimacy due to lack of inclusiveness and accountability. A split also emerged within the Ummah. The murder of Ali in 661 marked the end of the Medina Caliphate and, most importantly, crystallization of the schism within Islam, between Shia, Ali's supporters and Sunnis. In 680, when Muwayia died, Ali's second son, Hussein, sought to seize control of the Caliphate in the belief that he had a rightful claim to leadership. Hussein and his followers met the Umayyad forces at Karbala, were Hussein and those loyal to him were killed. These events marked the beginning of the split in the Muslim Ummah between the Shia and Sunnis.[38]

By the 740s, the Umayyads were losing their grip on the Empire.[39] Revolts took place as Shia Muslims and Khawarij rebels, who asserted the egalitarianism of the Koran, attempted to oust the Umayyads from power. While the Shia and Khawarij rebellions were suppressed, they continued to press for a more rigorous implementation of Islamic ideals.[40]

In 750, the next critical turning point occurred when the Umayyad dynasty was overthrown in a coup by the Abbasid dynasty. From the start, the Umayyads were confronted with various problems. First, they had to legitimize the idea of hereditary empire despite the fact that hereditary succession was contrary to the effort to avoid despotic rule in Islam. To many Muslims, the Caliph should be an elected position to prevent the empire from developing into an autocratic entity. The controversy created political instability in the Empire. The Umayyads were accused of diluting and perverting the Islamic message, especially through the example of their own lifestyle and behaviour.[41]

A second set of issues provided a different source of difficulty for the ruling dynasty. The official policy favouring Arab Muslims caused much resentment among non-Arabs converted to Islam, the *mawalis*, who did not accept the status of second-class citizenship. In addition,

Arabs themselves began to contest the significant class differences that were emergent and growing within society. All these grievances and the increasing autocratic nature of the regime led to the creation of a united front against the Umayyads. Most of the opposition originated from the East of the Empire: 'In Persia [East of the Empire], there was even more ill feeling toward the Umayyad than in most other parts of the Empire. Abbas (who was a descendant of the Prophet's uncle) and his son Abdulla, organized the Abbasid party, whose ultimate goal was to bring an end to the Umayyad dynasty'.[42] The Umayyad dynasty did not withstand the civil war that resulted from these various rebellions and finally collapsed in 750. The descendants of Abbas, Muhammad's uncle, who were heading the group of opponents, succeeded them.

The ousting of the Umayyads signalled that a constant struggle for power could inevitably weaken the Empire. Political unity of the Empire was crumbling, due to persistent political rivalries. Contrary to what is commonly believed in some circles, the Abbasid Empire never formed a cohesive whole. Even when it was at its height, the effective control of the Caliph was limited to the centre as provincial political power was effectively exercised by local regimes. For example, the Fatimids, an Ismaili sect, 'established a rival Imamate which claimed for itself supreme religious authority and political sovereignty. The Fatimids established their capital in Cairo, in Egypt, but the Fatimid Caliphate was recognized at different times much more widely: in North Africa, western Arabia (including the holy cities of Mecca and Medina), Yemen, parts of Syria, and places as far afield as Sind'.[43] As Albert Hourani rightly points out, the Abbasids were

> caught in the contradictions of centralized, bureaucratic systems of government. In order to rule his far-flung provinces, the caliph had to give his governors the power to collect taxes and use part of the proceeds to maintain local forces. He tried to keep control of them by a system of intelligence, but could not prevent some of the governors building up their own positions to the point where they were able to hand power on to their own families while remaining – at least in principle – loyal to the major interests of their suzerain.[44]

The political fragmentation actually began in the late ninth century. Rulers of the regions, which lay on the fringes of the empire, gained more and more autonomy. Two provinces then directly challenged the central authority of the Abbasid Caliphate.

The political authority of the Abbasids was also shaken in the East. From the mid-800s, the caliphs had to face local rebellions of both

social and religious nature. To protect themselves, they reinforced the professional army and recruited slaves of Turkish origin, mainly coming from Central Asia. They would soon come to be referred to as Mamluks – 'Mamluk' is Arabic for white slave, and the word is related to the word for king, 'malik', indicating that a Mamluk was a slave owned by the ruler of a state.[45]

Progressively, the influence of the military casts increased as the military took power to fill a vacuum created by the corruption of the civil administration, disintegration and anarchy: 'The disintegration of the Abbasid Empire into a number of independent provincial regimes implied vast changes in the organization of society. The emergence of a slave military elite and the new iqta' form of administration assured not only the break-up of the Empire but also the transfer of power from old to new elites.'[46] Political power dispersed among numerous local dynasties, with the Abbasid rulers only retaining a symbolic religious authority. In 945, Baghdad was seized by a Shiite dynasty originating from western Persia, the Buwayhids,[47] who ruled for a century, until the arrival of Turkish nomads, the Seljuqs. Thus, from the late tenth century, the three political entities began to slowly decline. Their weakness was soon to be exploited by external powers.

In the east, the Abbasid Caliphate fell prey to the Seljuqs. This group of Turkish tribes, originating from Central Asia, entered the imperial territory in the 970s and captured Baghdad in 1055. They ruled through a succession of dynasties – The Great Seljuqs (1038–1157), the Seljuqs of Iraq (1118–94), the Seljuqs of Kirman (1041–1186), the Seljuqs of Syria (1078–1117) and the Seljuqs of Asia Minor (1077–1302).[48] In a few decades, they had conquered Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia and Anatolia. In the beginning, they managed to recreate a unified whole under the nominal authority of the Abbasid Caliphs. They benefited from the support of the greater part of the army that was mainly composed of Sunni Turks. It was under their reign that the revival of Sunni Islam was initiated, with the construction of religious schools and a return to traditionalism. One has to recall that before their conquests, a majority of regions were under Shiite rule (for example, the Buwayhid and Fatimid dynasties). However, unity was short-lived. Internal conflicts arose in the late 1090s and the process of political fragmentation resumed again. The Empire broke up into numerous states – once more the symbolic authority of the Abbasid rulers was preserved.

As a reaction to the massacres that occurred in the overthrow of the Umayyads, Al-Andalus was split as a separate entity under the last surviving Umayyad prince (Abdul Rahman I Al-Dakhil). Only Al-Andalus

remained in the hands of the Umayyads. There, Abd al-Rahman I, the only member of the ruling family who had managed to flee, created the Emirate of Cordoba in 756.

Within the Caliphate, an increase in narrow-mindedness became more prevalent as the 'gates' of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) began to close. There were, of course, variations depending on time and place. Yet, gradually, Muslim societies tended to become less open and more defensive. External assaults, such as the crusades, accelerated this tendency, contributing powerfully to the introverted assertion of identities.

The decrease in tolerance had a direct influence on the development of intellectual life in the Middle East. During the Abbasid golden age, in the eighth and ninth centuries – and even beyond – the Arab-Islamic world was the leader in all fields. It shone in science, medicine, art, architecture and so on. Imperial subjects had a strong desire to learn and innovate. They drew their inspiration and benefited from their interactions with other cultures, past and present. The region was highly dynamic and creative. According to numerous scholars, it was the process of *ijtihad* that, for the most part, gave the Muslims this vitality and flexibility.[49] The term of *ijtihad* originally applied to the religious sphere. It is the process of interpreting religious texts and translating them in concrete legal texts. In a broader sense, it refers to the tradition of independent thinking: 'Ijtihad is about freedom of thought, rational thinking, and the quest for truth through an epistemology covering science, rationalism, human experience, critical thinking.'[50] This tradition prevailed in the early period of the Muslim Caliphate. Critical thinking was not merely possible, but it was positively encouraged, as evidenced by the numerous philosophical and religious debates that were held at the time.[51] The 'ongoing search for truth and for the overarching Islamic principle of justice has led Muslims and Muslim scholars to respect one another's opinions, making them willing to change their own opinions if proven wrong.'[52] This context favoured creativity and adaptability.

Internal reticence and external pressures, especially the rise of European powers, caused the closing of gates of *ijtihad* to continue. The subsequent lack of curiosity and innovation had a considerable impact on developments in trade, technology and intellectual life and, partially, accounted for the relative decline of the region. The drying up of a creative spirit within Muslim societies was also reflected in the evolution of the education systems, which were generally weak and rigid. Conservatism became increasingly institutionalized in schools. As a result, knowledge and learning were understood in a very restrictive manner. Curricula were narrowly designed and concentrated mostly on

religious matters, leaving aside both natural and social sciences. The educational deficiencies further plunged the Middle East into disarray and undercut all hope of revival: 'the system of education was less one of the transmission of knowledge than it was one of the transmission of personal authority over the texts in which that knowledge was found, and also of socialization. The system was flexible and informal, but it also tended to confirm the authority of particular scholars, who commanded the respect of large numbers of students and their colleagues'.[53]

The intellectual elite came to realize that closing of the gates of *ijtihad* could signify the beginning of the decline of the Arab-Islamic Empire. The marginalization of reason resulted in reduced intellectual output and, with this, confidence. It also contributed to economic stagnation, due to a lack of innovation, and diminishing societal cohesion due to growing divisions between intellectual and governing elites. The rationalist movement had emerged in the eighth century. Their efforts to determine the relationship between the human world and the universe emerged in order to demonstrate that God operated rationally. No disparity between religion and reason was perceived. Their views were contested by some conservatives, and extreme views existed among both rationalists and conservatives. Polarization between the two groups grew.[54] The eventual result was increased conservatism, intolerance and isolationism. As Chapra writes, 'The vigour and dynamism that characterized Muslim scholarship during the late Umayyad and early 'Abbāsid periods, when no discussion was considered a taboo, was substantially diluted.'[55]

The eleventh century witnessed several critical turning points. Al-Andalus had fallen into decline early in the century. The province was then beset by deep internal conflicts, including ethnic divisions, the nature of the army and the Spanish Umayyads' lack of a coherent ideology.[56] The Caliphate did not withstand these tensions and finally collapsed in 1032. It disintegrated into numerous small rival states, called *taifas*. Here again, external powers, namely the Christian Kingdoms of the north (for example, Leon, Castile, Navarre, Aragon and Catalonia), tried to take advantage of these weaknesses and launched an offensive to recapture lost territory.[57]

The break-up of the Umayyad dynasty in Al-Andalus and the resurgence of Latin Christendom struck a blow to the popular Arab-Islamic image of invincibility and inculcated a sense of vulnerability and uncertainty about the future of Al-Andalus, in particular. The loss of key Muslim territories in the Mediterranean represented a loss of important centres of learning, scholarly manuscripts and inventions to Christian Europe.

At the same time, rivalry between the *taifas* reduced Muslim Spain's capacity to defend itself against the incursion of Latin Christendom. Indeed, disunity among the *taifas* and their subsequent weakness encouraged Spanish Catholics to begin contemplating the Reconquista (which was to begin half a century later in 1085). Due to competition and intrigue between the *taifas*, some even entered into alliances with the Spanish Catholics.

Sicily had been under Muslim rule for nearly three centuries from the early ninth century. In 1072, after 34 years of resistance, Palermo fell to the Christian Normans.[58] This seemed to signal the beginning of the waning of Arab-Islamic power in the Mediterranean: 'The medieval Muslim sources tended to view the "Frankish" invasion of Sicily, the "Reconquest" of Spain and the Crusades as part of a wider southern expansion of Christian forces.'[59]

The period of *taifas* came to an end in Al-Andalus when Alfonso VI of Castille, who was protector of the *taifa* of Toledo, seized official control of the city state in 1085.[60] This marked another critical turning point in the history of the Middle East. It increased the sense retreat in Al-Andalus and vulnerability within the Arab-Islamic Empire in general.

Spain, along with Sicily, was culturally extremely rich and as such the loss of Toledo represented the loss of a major centre of learning and translation through which a great deal of knowledge was transmitted to Europe. Many notable scholars congregated in Toledo, including Adelard of Bath, who translated Euclids *Elements* and Gerard of Cremona and was responsible for translating Ptolemy's *Almagest*.[61] Such translations from Arabic into Latin in Toledo helped to lay the foundations of the Enlightenment in Europe. Christian scholars came to the Mosque Library of Toledo after it fell and it was there that they became familiar with Aristotle, for example.[62] Indeed, 'Alfonso and his line of influential successors became the patrons and proselytizers of much of Arabic culture, and the vast range of intellectual goods that were subsequently made accessible to the Latin West.'[63] The loss of Toledo also translated into economic loss in terms of agriculture and taxes.

The fall of Toledo to Latin Christendom also paved the way for a more conservative vision of Islam in Al-Andalus. The capture of Toledo prompted the Mutamid, who were based in Seville, to ask for the assistance of the Almoravids, a puritanical mixed Arab-Berber dynasty from what is now Morocco. While the Almoravids came to help the *taifas* of Al-Andalus to hold the Catholic reconquest at bay, they stayed on after the defeat of Alfonso VI in 1086 as the new rulers of Al-Andalus.[64] The Almoravid rule lasted almost a hundred years (1056–1147). Their empire stretched from

South Morocco to the north of Spain. Al-Andalus, which had flourished because of its openness and a rich mosaic of intertwined cultural and intellectual influences, became characterized as an increasingly intolerant environment, with a subsequent reduction of the focus on learning.[65]

The next critical turning point would occur in the Eastern part of the Arab-Islamic Empire with the First Crusade in 1099. Christian pilgrimages to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem were interrupted by the Seljuk conquests of Anatolia from the Byzantines and the conflicts between the Seljuqs and Fatimids in Syria and Palestine.[66] Christian rulers took advantage of the confusion and the rivalry between the Seljuqs and the Fatimids, launching the First Crusade in 1096. They were initially quite successful, mainly because of divisions between their Muslim opponents. Godfrey of Bouillon (c.1058–1100) achieved prominence in the siege of Jerusalem (1099) and then established small Christian states along the coast of Syria and Palestine (including the principality of Antioch and the counties of Edessa and Tripoli).[67]

Psychologically, this was a major shock to the collective psyche of the Arab-Islamic world. Not only did it represent the continuation of a pattern of retreats, but this time Latin Christendom was entering into the heartland of the Empire. This was perceived as a major sign of vulnerability and generated a deep and visceral antagonism towards the West that persists, along with a sense of persistent siege, to this day. The loss of Jerusalem as the third holiest site in Islam had a particularly profound impact.

The success of the crusaders aggravated divisions within the Arab-Islamic world. It also resulted in territorial and economic loss. It resulted in a loss of confidence in the capacities of the rulers of the central Abbasid caliphate and the regional governing dynasties, generating further fragmentation of the Abbasid Empire.

The loss of Cordoba to the Catholic Spaniards in 1236 and then Seville in 1248 constituted critical turning points. Their loss was psychologically devastating, because of their importance to the Empire. These events also indicated that further challenges could be expected and that the momentum had shifted in favour of Latin Christendom. Cordoba and Seville were prosperous and intellectually and culturally rich. Cordoba was referred to by the Saxon nun Hrotsvithia as 'the Ornament of the World'.[68] The loss of these two significant centres of learning and wealth, along with manuscripts that would further empower competing Europe, served to weaken the rest of Al-Andalus.

Their loss increased antagonism towards Latin Christendom. It also caused major reactionary movements in terms of religious antagonism,

intolerance, preoccupation with military matters and a reduction in the focus on learning due to more urgent military matters. The emergence of a new dynasty in Morocco, the Almohads (Al-Muwahidun) rose, partly as a response to the failure of the Al-Andalus government to protect Arab-Islamic territories. They expanded their Empire into Muslim Spain, succeeding the Almoravids (Al-Murabitun). Their interpretation of Islam was equally puritanical and served to further disrupt the intellectual vigour of Al-Andalus. The Almoravid dynasty collapsed in 1269 and was replaced by the Arab Nasrid dynasty that would rule over the last Emirate of Al-Andalus. Against the backdrop of turmoil in Al-Andalus, many elite Arab families to fled to North Africa, causing further decline in what remained of Muslim Spain.

The unnecessary massacre of Muslim civilians at the hands of the crusaders left a deep and visceral sense of hatred, mistrust and antagonism towards the West that remains real in the collective psyche of the region to this day. Thousands of Muslims and Jews were killed in the seizure of Jerusalem by the Crusaders. As Mansfield notes,

> Whereas the Muslims had been fairly tolerant of the Christians and Jews – the *dhimmis* or people of the two other monotheistic religions – the brutal treatment of Muslims by the crusaders during the three centuries of their occupation made the Muslim leaders, especially the Mamluke sultans and later the Ottoman sultans, much harsher in their attitude towards anyone suspecting of collaborating with the infidel invaders.[69]

Encroachment of the crusaders into Arab-Islamic lands generated a counter-reaction in the form of a breakaway movement (the Ayyubids). In Egypt and Syria, Salah Al-Din Al-Ayyubi – known as Saladin in the West – overthrew the Fatimids dynasty in 1171. Saladin gathered support for his rule by proclaiming a united front against the Christian invaders, thereby increasing religious fervour. He captured new territories from other rulers, as well as crusaders:

> From Egypt, Saladin brought Syria and Mesopotamia into a unified Muslim State. In 1174 he took Damascus; in 1183, Aleppo; in 1186, Mosul. He then defeated the Crusaders at the battle of Hattin (1187) and brought an end to the Latin occupation of Jerusalem. At the siege of Acre (1192), however, Saladin made a truce with Richard the Lion-Heart which allowed the crusading principalities to maintain their foothold on the coasts of Palestine and Syria.[70]

The dynasty he founded, the Ayyubids, reigned over Egypt (until 1252), Syria (until 1260) and West Arabia (until 1229).

At the time of the fifth crusade, in the early thirteenth century (1217–21), the Seljuqs faced a much more serious threat from the east: the Mongols. In 1258, under the authority of Mongke, Kubilay and Hulegu (all three brothers and were the grandsons of Genghis Khan), these central Asian nomadic tribes sacked Baghdad and put a definitive end to the Abbasid Caliphate, initiating another critical turning point. The Mongol invasions marked the end of an important era in the history of the Middle East. The consequences of these invasions were disastrous, both economically and politically – on their way to the west, the invaders devastated irrigation systems, lands, cities and places of culture (libraries, schools and so on). This severely disrupted the economy and the political organization.

However, even the Mongols gradually adapted to the culture of the conquered territories and converted to Islam. They rebuilt public places and set up a society that promoted culture:

> While the first century of Mongol rule wreaked havoc, the later Ilkhan regime resumed the historical trend toward state centralization of power and recreated the brilliance of Salhuq-period Turkic-Iranian monarchical culture. Beginning with the reign of Ghazan (1295–1304), the Ilkhans rebuilt cities, redeveloped irrigation works and sponsored agriculture and trade in the familiar way of Middle Eastern empires. In particular they opened up Inner Asian routes to China.[71]

The Mongols ruled for about a century until another wave of Mongol invasions led by Timur, also known as Tamerlane, swept over the area in the late fourteenth century (1370–1405).[72] At its height, the Timurid Empire embraced Central Asia, modern Afghanistan, Iran and parts of Mesopotamia.[73] It lasted until 1506, when it was absorbed by the two rising powers, the Ottomans Turks from Anatolia and the Safavids from Persia, though the Mongols maintained control over Afghanistan, the Punjab, the fertile Ganges plain and a series of forts located along central India.

The collapse of the Abbasid caliphate was a catastrophic event in terms of its impact on the collective psyche at the time. It had lasted 500 years, before the Mongols captured Baghdad.[74] With the Mongol invasions, infrastructure, libraries and educational institutions were destroyed. Intellectual and governing elites were also murdered. These chaotic circumstances gave rise to the emergence of independent and

often competing regional dynasties. The resultant rivalries and divisions encouraged the remaining crusaders to side with the Mongols against Arab-Islamic armies. The alliance of Christian crusaders and the Mongols meant that resources were directed towards war rather than learning as the siege mentality mounted. The scholarship of Ibn Tamiyya, an eminent scholar who lived during the aftermath of the Mongol invasion, reflects the increased conservatism that ensued. Ibn Tamiyya argued that the only reliable sources of knowledge were those derived from the revealed truth of the Quran and the Sunna. His thinking represented a radical rejection of philosophy and the more mystical Sufism that was spreading within the Empire at that time.[75] Ibn Tamiyya's books would later be misinterpreted by extremist groups as a call for rejecting the 'Other' through violence.

Threatened by the Mongol invaders in the thirteenth century, Saladin's successors recruited and formed Mamluks to reinforce their troops and preserve their hold on power. The Mamluks, as mentioned, were slave soldiers taken initially to the present-day Caucasus and converted to Islam. Their influence grew and they finally came to rule in the place of the Ayyubids after a coup in 1252. The Mamluk military held sway over Egypt, Syria and West Arabia. They managed to repel invaders, not only the Mongols at the Battle of Ain Jalut in 1260, but also the crusaders; and the crusader states in Palestine were destroyed under their reign.

In 1492, the year that Columbus would set off on his journey to the new world, Granada was surrendered to Catholic Spain. This monumental event marked the end of an era characterized by tremendous intellectual and cultural achievements. Its loss was hard to fathom throughout the Arab-Islamic world. It was the clearest signal yet that the golden age of the Empire was waning and that Europe was on the rise in every sense of the word. It also generated a sense of guilt in the other Arab-Islamic powers of the day, such as the Ottomans and the Mamluks, who did not come to the aid of Granada.

When the Spanish Catholic Monarchs reneged on the terms of Granada's surrender (that Muslims could be protected and religious freedoms respected), a sense of betrayal and mistreatment would also enter the popular psyche of Muslims. The surrender of Granada resulted in a tremendous transfer of knowledge, treasure, skilled people, such as sailors and maps (all of which would help Columbus with his journey). Granada was not only culturally and intellectually rich, it was also prosperous. With a large population and mountainous territory, Granada was flourishing economically. Its loss to Spanish Catholics also

resulted in economic losses for the Arab-Islamic Empire.[76] This event also reinforced the emphasis on religious learning, especially within the Ottoman Empire.

After the loss of Granada and the successful capture of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottomans attempted to re-assert themselves in Europe. The siege of Vienna in 1529 and Battle for Vienna in 1683 marked the next critical turning points in the pre-twentieth-century history of the Middle East. These unsuccessful attempts to capture Vienna represented a failure of the Ottomans to reassert their dominance in Europe. As such, they had a significant negative impact on the collective consciousness. Inability to keep or gain new territories and potential manpower and resources contributed to initial weakening of the Ottomans. The Ottoman Empire had risen between 1280 and 1566, but after more than two hundred years of expansion it entered a period of stagnation that lasted for about a century. During that time, the Ottomans saw their supremacy increasingly threatened by external powers. In addition to the Europeans and the Persians, they had to face a third enemy, the rising Russian Empire that challenged them in the Caucasus and Black Sea regions. Yet, for a while, they managed to maintain a certain equilibrium with their enemies. However, after a succession of inconclusive battles, they started to slowly lose ground. In the early years of Peter the Great (1672–1725) a reforming Russian military threatened to conquer the Khanate of Crimea in the 1680s, and succeeded in capturing the Ottoman fort of Azov on the Sea of Azov in 1696, thereby gaining access to its first warm water port at Taganrog. The 26 January 1699 Treaty of Karlowitz – a peace settlement that ended hostilities (1683–99) between the Ottoman Empire and the Holy League (Austria, Poland, Venice and Russia) – transferred Ottoman sovereignty over Transylvania and Hungary to Austrian control.[77] This settlement was thus highly significant: 'The Treaty of Karlowitz was the first of many agreements between the Ottomans and coalitions of European powers allied against them, and it represented the Ottoman transition from the offensive to the defensive.'[78] This treaty marked the beginning of a progressive change in the balance of power between the Ottoman and the European imperial powers. Economic and intellectual stagnation followed as a result of an emphasis on military matters and religious learning. The latter stifled the dynamism of Shari'ah law as well as the development of non-religious learning.

In the eighteenth century, the European states progressively established their superiority, not only in military but also in economic terms. They modernized their armies and weaponry, and considerably

increased their naval power, improved agriculture and started to trade manufactured products. They gradually took control of many key trading areas, such as Indonesia and North India. New technologies were also developed in different sectors. The economic and political ascendancy of Europe placed additional strains on an already weak Ottoman system, whose institutions had become rigid and quite inefficient with time. In particular, the fall of revenues, due to the end of territorial expansion and to a partial diversion of trade, resulted in further corruption, a paralysed administration, intolerance and a progressive weakening of political authority. Under such circumstances, the Ottoman Empire was unable to adequately adjust to new circumstances. It adopted a defensive posture: 'The expansionist and colonizing empire of the first centuries was becoming an Islamic fortress under siege.'[79] In contrast to the golden age of the early days of the Arab-Islamic Empire, the Ottomans did not benefit from the knowledge of their rivals, except, perhaps, in the military realm. As a result, they could not keep pace with changes, not least the revolution in government of the sixteenth century and revolution in military affairs of the seventeenth century. Efforts to reform and open up the system at the end of eighteenth century ultimately ended in failure. Vested interests, not least as represented by imperial administrators who financially benefited from systemic and structural weakness, and the ruling class who isolated themselves from society and technological and scientific advances: 'It [was] only during the 18th century that this isolation was at least partially broken down when a few Ottoman ambassadors went to Europe and more European merchants, travellers, and consuls began to come into the Ottoman Empire.'[80] The Empire was caricatured, most famously in the satirical magazine *Punch*, as the 'sick man of Europe',[81] although it remained a strong power.

Pressure on the coherence and sustainability of the Ottoman Empire intensified further in the nineteenth century. The turkification of the Empire prompted ethnic tensions between Arabs and Turks. With the growth of opposition to Ottoman rule, certain local leaders posed a direct threat to the central government. In Arabia, the forefathers of Ibn Saud overtly challenged the Ottomans. By the early 1900s, the Al-Saud dynasty controlled most of the peninsula, except the Hijaz – an area in the western Arabian Peninsula bordering on the Red Sea, which includes both Mecca and Medina – which itself enjoyed some degree of autonomy from the Ottomans under the rule of Sharif Hussein. Further north, other provinces rebelled. Some, including Greece, managed to obtain their independence. Even areas that did not initially question

the formal authority of the Ottomans, such as Egypt, North Africa and the Levant, began to dangerously increase their autonomy. On several occasions, the Ottomans had to intervene directly to contain them, as in the case of Egypt and Lebanon.

In both instances, these wayward provinces received the assistance of European powers, notably the British and the French, respectively. The French, together with the Russians, the Italians and, later, the Germans played a growing role in the Middle East during this time. These European imperial powers came to view the region as politically strategic. Their objective was to avoid the collapse of the Empire, while maintaining it in an inferior and weakened position. To achieve this objective, they not only interfered in the internal affairs of the Empire, but also began to conquer and occupy territory in the region. It would not be long before another critical turning point would occur in 1798. First, Napoleon's armies invaded Egypt with the aim of striking a blow to Britain's economic and political power by blocking its route to India.[82]

The establishment of British rule in Muslim-governed India also occurred in the late eighteenth century. The area that is now Pakistan became Islamic in the seventh century. The Delhi Sultanate represented the Arab-Islamic Empire's expansion into the Indian Subcontinent in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[83] The later Mughal Empire fell into decline in the early eighteenth century as power flowed to the British East India Company, which gradually consolidated its presence and de facto rule in India from the middle of the century.[84]

European imperial penetration of the Middle East generated significant collective psychological shocks. The eighteenth century marked the first time since the crusades that Muslim lands were subjugated to the West and, thus, contributed to the already present sense of vulnerability, humiliation and retreat. Economic and military weaknesses were also exacerbated. The Indian Subcontinent was agriculturally extremely rich, with sophisticated institutions.[85] This century witnessed further territorial fragmentation, but this time not to rival Arab-Islamic dynasties but to the West. Further fragmentation and reactionary movements in the Arab-Islamic world would result, including the takeover of Egypt by the Mohammad Ali dynasty, thus weakening the Ottomans further.

The French presence in Egypt had undermined the authority of the Mamluke leaders, who were unable to recover it even after Napoleon had left. An Albanian young Muslim officer, Mohammed Ali, took advantage of their weakness.[86] After invading central and western Sudan in 1820 and eastern Sudan in 1840, he was asked by the Ottoman Sultan to suppress resistance by the Empire's Greek subjects. British and

Russian forces intervened in defence of the Greeks. Mohammed Ali's son, Ibrahim Pasha, posed a threat to the Ottoman Sultan, causing the Sultan to seek assistance from Russia. In return, Russia had gained the right to close the Dardanelles in times of wars, alarming the British, who were hoping that the Ottomans would prevent Russia from expanding southward. The British initiated an effort on the part of major European powers to contain Mohammed Ali that resulted in the Treaty of London in 1841, which was signed by Austria, England, Russia and Prussia. It demonstrated the willingness of European powers to intervene in the Middle East whenever they perceived a threat to their interests. While Mohammed Ali remained in power, an Anglo-Turkish convention of 1838, which enabled Britain to sell its manufactured wares in Egypt, helped to contribute to the collapse of Egyptian industry.[87]

The colonization of the Middle East brought about the last critical turning point in the pre-twentieth century. Most of the Middle East, like many other regions of the world, were colonized by European powers in the latter's efforts to fuel economies and later their industrialization.[88] The French had established a trading post near Algiers in the early 1800s. In 1830, Hussein, the last dey of Algiers, decided to bring an end to the privilege granted to the French. The French invaded in retaliation. Their occupation of Algeria would last 132 years, during which time Algeria was declared part of the French state.[89] Algeria provided France with a foothold in North Africa from where it could compete with Britain for influence in the East. The later discovery of oil in the country also increased French determination to maintain their grip on Algeria.[90] Mosques were transformed into churches, Muslim holidays were not officially respected and tribal territories were confiscated. Not surprisingly, large sections of the population resisted French colonization. The French responded with brutal repression.[91]

Concerned to protect its access to India, Britain decided to establish a trading post at Aden, taking it by force in 1839. It provided a base from which Britain could increase its influence in the Persian Gulf.[92] Egypt became a British protectorate rather than a colony in 1882. Although the latter's concern was primarily to secure the passage to India through the Suez Canal, it also provided Britain with a strategic base in the East and a market for its goods and source of cotton for its mills.[93] The French occupation of Tunisia began in 1881. Fearful of French presence in the Sudan, Britain sent an Anglo-Egyptian expeditionary force to the area in 1896 and imposed a British governor general to administer the territory in 1898.[94] Morocco would later be conquered by France in 1912, with Libya coming under Italian rule in 1911.

Conclusions: The seeds of the first twentieth-century critical turning point

Imperialism enduringly marked Middle Easterners psychologically. The collective psychological impact of the abusive, intrusive and humiliating colonial occupations continue to this day to add to the sense of vulnerability and humiliation generated by losing ground to Europe. Atrocities that were committed by the colonialists (most notably in Algeria), left a deep scar. A sense of powerlessness became part of the collective psyche as the Ottoman Empire drew to its close.[95] This strong feeling of helplessness was often accompanied by nostalgia for past glory and hegemony and a desire for its return.[96]

Another consequence of colonialism that still plagues the region was the development of political and economic structures designed to meet the interests of the colonial powers rather than those of the indigenous populations: '[t]heir ambition was to turn the markets of the East towards the West, create levels of dependency, establish a local bourgeoisie ready to support the capitalist venture at home and encourage religious and political rulers of the Ottoman Empire to opt into Western-based capital markets.'[97] Western political, technological and economic influence relegated most countries, especially Arab-speaking ones, to a state of dependency, which seriously undercut, if not ruined, their chance of development. While European powers were diversifying their markets and developing their industries, boosted by the technological revolution, the Middle East continued to live on agricultural goods and the export of raw materials.[98] The absence of sufficient capital did not allow the region to make the productive investments necessary for the development of a modern capitalist economy. And it was not in the interest of colonial powers to encourage such evolution. The same reasoning applies to the political realm. Although imperial powers introduced – directly and indirectly – some administrative reforms and brought advances in educational systems in some provinces, they never really attempted to enhance countries' political capacities (national and international). Their objective was not to empower people or to create sustainable institutions and viable civil societies. It was rather to serve their own geopolitical and economic interests. Among the indigenous populations, only the elite benefited substantially from reforms, creating a disjuncture between the local bourgeoisie and the majority of the population, and general fragmentation of society.

In addition to politico-economic consequences, European penetration had a societal and cultural impact as well. The increasing Western

dominance and presence in the region created discontent and frustrations within the populations. It is in this tense context that debates arose regarding the possibility of adopting European practices without threatening Islam. This central question often led to tensions between pro- and anti-Western groups within societies, especially in the nineteenth century (mirroring debates within the Russian Empire between 'Slavophiles' and 'Westernizers'). Such divisions existed not only within but also between countries. Some refused external influences altogether, while others tried to follow the Western model. The Ottoman government and the autonomous provinces of Egypt and Tunisia illustrate the latter tendency. All attempted to reduce their dependency, but without success.[99] There was even less emphasis on intellectual and economic developments thus sinking the region into deep stagnation and dependence.

The importance of the psychological impact of defeat and occupation should not be underestimated; they greatly help us to understand subsequent actions and reactions, both in the form of ultra-religious and nationalist movements that would emerge at the next critical turning point, fuelled yet further by a sense of betrayal and humiliation at the hands of the great powers. The events discussed in this chapter still have repercussions today and help account for a sense of humiliation and Arab mistrust of Western countries. Looking back also serves to illustrate that the history of the Middle East can boast extraordinary progress and achievements, but also terrible reversals and wrongs. It also helps to highlight that the historical evolution of the Middle East has been neither linear nor homogeneous, and that the region is not a monolith, but rather one in which differences, disparities and divergent trends abound.

3
Double Diplomacy and Betrayal

In the previous chapter, we examined pre-twentieth-century critical turning points in the Middle East, the last occurring as a result of European colonialism in the western lands of the Arab-Islamic Empire and internal rivalry within the Ottoman Empire. The outbreak of the First World War ultimately sealed the fate of the last Arab-Islamic Empire. Having been rebuffed by Britain, France and Russia, the Ottomans allied with Germany.[1] While this proved initially to advance their interests through territorial gains, attacks orchestrated by the British and the Arab Revolt of 1916–18 eventually led to their defeat and the loss of all European territories. The ultimate outcome was the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in 1922. The defeat of the Ottomans represented the first critical turning point of the twentieth century. During the First World War, two events occurred that would have important repercussions for the future. The first was the false promises made by the British at the time of the Arab Revolt. Prior to the uprising, the British and Arab nationalists, particularly Sharif (meaning descendant of the Prophet Muhammad) Hussein Ibn Ali, appointed Amir of Mecca by Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1908, had come to an agreement in the McMahon-Hussein correspondence that took place between 1915–16 by which the British would support the creation of an Arab kingdom (including Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and the Hijaz) in return for the Arab participation in the war.[2] What the Arabs did not know was that, in the meantime, the British Foreign Office was discussing the division of the region with the French. These discussions resulted in the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, which served as the basis for the post-war partition of the region. In apparent contradiction to these two agreements, Lord Balfour, the British foreign secretary, issued an ambiguous declaration on 2 November 1917, now known as the Balfour Declaration. This

constituted the second significant episode of the war. The declaration sent to Lord Rothschild, member of the Zionist movement, stated: 'His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish People, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.'[3] The British objective was to ensure access to the Indian Subcontinent through the Suez Canal, to limit French and Russian influence in the Middle East and to secure American, Bolshevik and European Jewish financial and political support for the war without alienating the Arabs. The British overestimated the power of the Jews and were fearful of a possible rapprochement between the Jews and Germany.[4] While the British may have succeeded in securing Jewish support for the war effort and their interests in general, not surprisingly, British foreign policy further inculcated a deep and lasting suspicion of the West within the collective Arab memory.

When the war ended, the Middle East was composed of an ensemble of fragile territorial entities consisting of Turkey and Iran, and the Arab countries – Iraq, the Levant, Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa that remained, to a greater or lesser degree, under foreign influence. After the war, only three Middle Eastern countries were not placed under formal foreign control and were able to consolidate their power during the interwar period: Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran – which had followed a separate path for many centuries. Others would have to fight to liberate themselves from French, British and Italian rule. These territories were divided into two main 'zones' of influence, that of the French and that of the British. The French zone comprised the mandates of Syria and Lebanon, the protectorates of Tunisia and Morocco and Algeria.[5] The British zone or sphere of influence covered the mandates of Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq, and also extended to Egypt and Sudan.[6] Libya was the only colony under the rule of another European power, namely Italy.[7]

The interwar years, therefore, witnessed the growth of national consciousness as people engaged in struggles for independence. The priority given to the pursuit of narrow national interests badly undermined the ideal of a greater 'Muslim entity'. Iran had already taken a distinct Persian course for centuries and, therefore, continued to evolve separately. In 1926, Reza Shah Pahlavi, a promoter of Westernization, was crowned after deposing the last ruler of the Qajar Dynasty (1795–1925).

The newly created Turkish Republic (1923) also adopted a Western European model in which the Kemalist principles of secularism, etatism and nationalism were sacrosanct. In the Arab world, as opposed to the Persian, the situation differed as foreign presence was more consequential. At the time, the notion of Arab unity was no more appealing than a Muslim one. Arab nationalism was deployed within the newly created states both as a means of legitimizing their authority as well as to fight against colonialism and struggle for independence. It divided countries more than it unified them. Their relations during the interwar era, were, in general, characterized by enmities and factionalism. This lack of unity compounded by continuous foreign interference affected the capacity of states to act efficiently – collectively or individually – in the international arena. The perceived need for greater unity among Arabs was expressed by a new generation of elite through the ideology of Pan-Arabism. The absence of regional cohesion became more visible when the Palestinian crisis erupted in 1948, after the creation of the state of Israel.

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire: Initial conditions

In order to understand the first critical turning point of the twentieth century, it is necessary to consider the period between the middle of the nineteenth century and the outbreak of the First World War. During this time, the Middle East was either under European colonial rule or fell within the Ottoman or Qajar Empires.[8] The power politics in which the Great Powers of the period were engaged were inextricably tied to the break up of the Ottoman Empire. Russia had been present in parts of Muslim Central Asia from the eighteenth century.[9] This prompted the British to occupy Afghanistan in 1839 to pre-empt the perceived threat of Russian expansion southwards towards India. It was feared that Russia may upset the balance of power in the Middle East among the Great Powers. This was of particular concern to the British, who believed that the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire could result in Russia claiming the Balkans within its sphere of interest. At the same time, Britain was locked in competition with France in the eastern Mediterranean. It sought to drive the French and Mohammed Ali (Governor of Egypt) out of Egypt. Britain's relations with leaders in the Arabian Gulf and its occupation of Aden were designed to outmanoeuvre the French and Mohammed Ali. France, for its part, was expanding its influence in the Maghrib. It captured Algeria in a war that lasted from 1830 to 1847 and established protectorates over Tunisia in 1881, and Morocco

became a Franco-Spanish protectorate in 1912.[10] European imperialism in the Middle East began in North Africa, because of its location on the periphery of the Ottoman Empire and the autonomy of the North African provinces.[11]

The Middle East was also of concern for Britain and France, because pan-Islam began to be espoused in the region by the 1860s. Pan-Islam was premised on the idea that Muslims should unite to thwart external threats and nationalist movements in the Balkans. According to Arthur Goldschmidt jr, 'Pan-Islam reaffirmed the tradition of Muslims uniting to defend the ummah, but this doctrine took on a new meaning: the Ottoman sultan claimed for himself the caliphate, hence the allegiance of all Muslims, regardless of who actually ruled them. Because Britain, France, and Russia all had Muslim subjects within their empires, Europeans soon saw danger in the potential of pan-Islam.'[12]

Partly in response to growing pressure for change from the European powers, the Ottomans had attempted to promote an Ottoman identity and promised better governance in order to maintain the loyalty of the peoples of the Balkans. However, ultimately the Ottoman government failed to live up to such promises.[13] The reforms had created their own opposition that culminated in establishment of the Young Ottoman Society whose members sought continuity with the traditional Ottoman system, a renewal of Islam and Western-style modernization. The Young Ottomans brought to power Abdul Al-Hamid II through a coup d'état in 1876. While Abdul Al-Hamid II initially accepted a constitution that limited the power of the Sultan, a representative government, decentralization and equality among religious groups, he later suspended parliament and then used his absolute power to establish an authoritarian and religiously conservative regime.[14]

In response, exiled members of the intelligentsia formed the Ottoman Society for Union and Progress in 1889. Its members became known as The Young Turks. While they remained loyal to the Ottoman dynasty, they sought the restoration of a parliamentary and constitutional regime. Alongside this development, military and civilian elite within the Ottoman Empire, who were critical of poor governance, the defeats suffered against European and Balkan powers and their exclusion from power, established revolutionary units in places such as Damascus and Salonika. In 1905, an Ottoman army officer, Mustafa Kemal, created the Fatherland Society and, in 1907, The Young Turks founded the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP).

Following a military coup against Abdul Al-Hamid II in 1908, a CUP government was formed. However, rather than restoring parliamentary

democracy, the military coup resulted in greater authoritarianism and centralization within the Empire. Turkish rather than Ottoman national consciousness was also promoted. The concept of a Turkish people enabled the emergence of a political and cultural identity that was not synonymous with an Islamic identity and was modern without being Western.[15] However, the process of Turkification implied increased frustrations and resentment within what was a multiethnic Empire.

Support for Arab nationalism emerged with the creation of a number of Arab secret societies. Members of these societies belonged to the Arabic-speaking elite. Local leaders in Arab territories had grown in influence and power by the middle of the eighteenth century at the expense of Constantinople.[16] The centralizing schemes of the Young Turks were perceived by many as repressive. They promoted Turkish over Arabic as the official language within the Empire, for example.[17] In Syria, for example, opposition to the government in Constantinople was growing. Syrian opposition derived primarily from the desire for greater decentralization and a return to old-style Ottomanism.[18] Arab nationalism began to be expressed among the Damascus elite as the CUP government imposed Turkish as the official language in schools and courts. Turkish officials also took over management of the *waqfs*, which had previously been the preserve of Damascene notables. Participation and upward mobility of Syrian elite within the Ottoman bureaucracy was also curtailed.[19] The aim of members of the secret societies was not only to resist centralization within the Ottoman regime, they also sought to remain independent from the rule of Christians or Europeans.[20]

In the Arabian Peninsula, the First World War appeared to provide an opportunity for the Hashemite clan to realize its ambitions. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the guardian of the two cities of Mecca and Medina was Sharif Hussein of the Hashemite clan. He and two of his sons, Abdullah and Faisal, would play a central part in the creation of the modern Middle East.[21]

In the years prior to the First World War, the Arabian tribes had discussed the possibility of uniting against the Ottoman Empire.[22] Before war broke out between Britain and the Ottoman Empire, the Hashemites had been in contact with the British in Cairo.[23] Sharif Hussein hoped to attain independence for the Hijaz under his rule. The CUP government planned to extend the railway to Mecca and Jeddah, thereby threatening the autonomy of Hussein, who ruled the Hijaz on behalf of the Ottoman Sultan.[24] These initial objectives became entangled in the wider context of the First World War.[25] This may explain why Sharif Hussein's Pan-Arabism credentials are sometimes questioned by historians.[26]

A decisive moment would come in January 1915, when Sharif Hussein became aware of an Ottoman plot to depose him after the war. This discovery helped to prompt him to oppose the Ottomans in the war.[27] His resolve was strengthened by the support of the Arab nationalist societies in Syria, who assured him that Arabs in Syria would support him in a British-backed revolt against the Ottoman Empire on the condition that Sharif Hussein could secure acceptable terms from the British.[28]

In the Arabian Peninsula itself, however, there was considerable rivalry between Sharif Hussein and Ibn Saud, whose authority had been expanding in eastern and central Arabia ever since he captured Riyadh in 1902. When his chief rival, Abd Al-Aziz Ibn Mu'tib Al-Rashid, was killed in 1906, Ottoman forces retreated from the city of Hail, prompting Ibn Saud to expel Ottoman forces from Al-Ahsa. By 1914, the Ottomans had recognized him as governor (*wali*) of Najd. In 1915, the British also recognized him as ruler of Najd, as well as Al-Ahsa, Qatif and Jubail. In return for Britain's recognition, Ibn Saud vowed not to engage in acts of aggression against the territories of Kuwait, Bahrain or the sheiks of Qatar and the Oman Coast.[29] In 1917, Sharif Hussein declared himself king of the Hijaz. Yet, his position in relation to Ibn Saud was deteriorating.

The first critical turning point

By the time of the First World War, Persia was de facto a Russian protectorate. Russia hoped to capture Istanbul and the Dardanelles Straits in the war. France had colonized North Africa. Britain ruled Egypt, Cyprus, controlled Aden and had concluded treaties with many leaders in the Arabian Gulf. Both the French and the British had significant investments in the Middle East, and Germany was helping the Ottomans to reform the army and financing the construction of a railway connection between Istanbul and Baghdad.[30]

As early as 1914, the British Agency in Cairo established contact with Sharif Hussein's son, Abdullah, who had indicated that Arabia may be ready for revolt.[31] The British had initially intended to reply that if the Arab nation supported England in the war against the Ottomans, England would pledge that no intervention would occur in Arabia and that England would assist the Arabs in the event of hostilities. However, advised by Arab émigrés in Cairo with whom they were in contact, the Agency in Cairo went one step further by implying that Britain would not only support the independence of Arabia, but also that of Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia. Moreover, the message to the Sharif

of Mecca implied that after the war a caliphate would once again exist in Arabia.[32]

The British Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener, was motivated by expected rivalry with Russia once the war was over. The promise given to Abdullah, however, seems to have been premised on a misunderstanding of the nature of a caliph. The British had failed to grasp that spiritual leadership was all-embracing and, as such, it had a governance dimension too. The proposal sent to Mecca by Kitchener was understood quite differently by Hussein.[33] While the British had in mind the creation of an independent Arab kingdom, they envisioned such a kingdom as falling under British influence. Britain was also motivated by the perceived need to secure an important land route to India. Mesopotamia was also believed to have large oil reserves.[34] As far as the British were concerned, independence from the Ottoman Empire simply meant falling within the sphere of influence of one of the European powers.[35]

The reassurances that prompted Hussein to lead an Arab revolt against the Ottomans were outlined in a series of letters that came to be known as the McMahon-Hussein correspondence that took place between July 1915 and January 1916 between Sir Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner in Egypt, and Sharif Hussein.[36] McMahon made pledges to Hussein in a letter written on 24 October 1915 regarding territories and boundaries. He stated on behalf of the Government of Great Britain that Arabs would have independence after the war. However, the Arab kingdom would essentially be a British protectorate. McMahon insisted that Sharif Hussein must relinquish claims to territories west of Damascus, Aleppo, Homs and Hama. In the letter, it was also stated that Britain could not make any pledges that would damage its relationship with its ally, France, or other Arab leaders. The letter was, therefore, evasive.[37]

Hussein replied that he could not accept this proposition. He argued that the provinces of Aleppo and Beirut were purely Arab. He also emphasized that interference in Arab internal affairs after the conclusion of the war would not be acceptable.[38] As a result, no firm agreement was reached. According to historian David Fromkin, the British Foreign Office did not expect to have to hold true to their promises. Britain needed Arab support, but was unwilling to deliver what was demanded in return, attempting instead to deceive the Arabs.[39] This would certainly help to explain Britain's double-dealing. While McMahon was still engaged in discussions with Sharif Hussein, Britain and France entered into secret negotiations on the post-war division of the Ottoman Empire. In these talks, the British were represented

by Kitchener's Middle East expert, Sir Mark Sykes, and the French by Charles François Georges-Picot.[40]

The secret intentions of the Allies were laid out in the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 16 May 1916. The Agreement specified that Damascus, Aleppo, Homs and Hama ought to be excluded from the area that would fall under French control. They were to fall under the rule of an independent Arab state or states. The British assumed that the latter would, in fact, fall under British influence and administration.[41] Christopher Catherwood writes: 'It is this feeling that the British were duplicitous – saying one thing to Arabs to enlist their support against the Turks, and another to their French co-belligerents – that has caused the story of great British betrayal to arise, and not without reason.'[42] The Sykes-Picot Agreement still resonates in the Arab psyche as a painful memory and continues to feed a sense of betrayal and bitterness, even today.

T. E. Lawrence and Sir Edmund Allenby would become central figures in the drama that played out between 1916 and 1918. Lawrence was Britain's liaison with Hussein's son, Faisal, and his armed forces, and Allenby a cavalry officer.[43] On the basis of the McMahon-Hussein correspondence, Sharif Hussein led an Arab Revolt against the Ottomans in the Hijaz from 5 June 1916. On 12 June Mecca fell, followed a few days later by Jeddah. In 1917, Sharif Hussein and his son, Faisal, confronted the Ottomans in what is now Jordan and, in 1918, the Arab Army and Allenby's army took the city of Damascus. Sharif Hussein had thus honoured his commitments and now expected the British to do the same.[44] The story of Arab betrayal began here with the liberation of Syria.

Following the liberation of Damascus, a meeting was held between Allenby, General Harry Chauvel, a senior officer of the Australian Imperial Force, Faisal, their chiefs of staff and Lawrence. Allenby outlined the details that had been agreed between Britain and France. Contrary to Faisal's expectation, an Arab confederation would include neither Palestine nor Lebanon, and Syria would fall under French control. In Chauvel's notes, Allenby had told Faisal 'a) That France was to be the Protecting Power over Syria; b) that he, Faisal, as representing his Father, Sharif Hussein, was to have the administration of Syria (less Palestine and the Lebanon Province) under French guidance and financial backing; c) that the Arab sphere would include the hinterland of Syria only and that he, Faisal, would not have anything to do with Lebanon; and d) that he was to have a French Liaison Officer at once, who would be expected to give him every assistance'.[45]

Faisal objected to the idea of French assistance, but said that he was ready to accept Britain's support. He also said that Lawrence had

promised him that the Arabs would have the whole of Syria, including Lebanon. Lawrence claimed that he was not aware that it had been agreed between the British and the French that Syria would be a French protectorate and that Faisal would not have control over Lebanon. In fact, he is believed to have been aware that these were the terms of the Sykes-Picot Agreement.[46] Given his empathy with the Arabs and their struggle for independence, he undoubtedly felt deeply disturbed by the deceitful web that he was helping to weave.

While negotiations with the Sharif Hussein were going on, British prime minister Lloyd George had come to view an alliance with the Zionist cause as serving Britain's interests in the war as well as in peacetime. Support for the creation of a Jewish homeland had a longer tradition in Britain. Chaim Weizmann, a Russian Zionist, who would become a leader among British Zionists and the first prime minister of the State of Israel, had settled in Britain to work as a chemist and was introduced to Lord Balfour as early as 1906. Lord Balfour had hoped to convince Weizmann that the Zionist movement should accept Uganda as a Jewish homeland. Weizmann, however, sought to persuade Lord Balfour that it should be Palestine. The British Zionist movement was particularly active in lobbying the British government during the early years of the war for the creation of Jewish homeland in Palestine. Weizmann had found sympathetic support in Sir Mark Sykes as well the prime minister. He had also become friends with C. P. Scott, the editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, who had subsequently introduced Weizmann to Lloyd George, when the latter was still Chancellor of the Exchequer.[47]

On 2 November 1917, the British Foreign Office released the Balfour Declaration that stated Britain's intent to create a Jewish homeland in the Holy Land. The Foreign Office had hoped that this might prompt Russian Jews to join the Allied cause against the Bolsheviks, who had emerged victorious in the Russian civil war.[48] This should also be seen against the backdrop of social unrest in Britain and British fears that the Bolsheviks could stir up trouble at home. The British also feared that Russian Jews could be inclined to favour an alliance with Germany.

The Balfour Declaration completely contradicted the Sykes-Picot Agreement, in that it indicated British support for a Jewish homeland. Under Sykes-Picot, Palestine was to be in an international zone. The Balfour Declaration also reneged on promises made to Sharif Hussein, who believed that the area that is now Palestine would fall under his control. It is impossible to determine whether McMahon was being deliberately deceitful, given that his letters predate the Declaration. Whatever the case may have been, there was a clear incompatibility

between the Balfour decision on a Jewish homeland and the correspondence with Sharif Hussein, and this remains a source of Arab mistrust of the West to this day.[49]

The post-Ottoman political development path

Following the war, decisions were made by the Council of Four, comprising the leaders of the United States, Britain, France and Italy. However, difficulties at home caused Italy and the United States to withdraw. This left Britain and France to determine the fate of the Ottoman Empire in the wake of the First World War. Egypt and Persia were declared British protectorates and were kept off the agenda of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. Britain's influence in the sheikdoms of the Persian Gulf was also agreed to by France and, consequently, they were not discussed at the conference. In addition, Britain and France had agreed in advance of the conference that Palestine would be awarded to Britain.[50] At the Peace Conference, '[d]ecisions, by all accounts, including those of the participants, were made with little knowledge of, or concern for, the lands and peoples about which and whom the decisions were being made'.[51] Indeed, the aspirations of both France and Britain overrode the US King-Crane Commission that had been established to try to determine the desires of non-Arab Ottoman peoples. US President Woodrow Wilson hoped that it would set a precedent for the right to national self-determination. Faisal had welcomed the American initiative. However, the commission was a futile exercise. The British and French had no intention of being bound by its recommendations. As a result, French and British diplomats failed to participate, thereby undermining what was hoped would be a multinational effort.

In the meantime, Syrian nationalists had begun uniting the people behind a common agenda for independence. A temporary parliament, gathering elected delegates from Syria and members of notable families in Palestine and Lebanon, was created in preparation for the Commission, which arrived on 10 June 1919. Its members visited towns and villages in Palestine, Syria, Transjordan and Lebanon. The Commission found that Syrians desired the complete independence of Syria and wished to be ruled by Faisal as a constitutional monarch. They expressed their willingness to come under a mandate that was limited to economic and technical assistance. Henry Churchill King and Charles R. Crane therefore called for a Syrian state with Faisal as a constitutional monarch. They also concluded that the Balfour Declaration was irreconcilable with the commitment to protect the civil and religious

rights of non-Jewish people in Palestine. In the findings, nine-tenths of Palestinians were against the Zionist project.[52]

The King-Crane Report was, however, shelved.[53] In 1919, financial considerations and social unrest at home had forced the British to develop a timetable for withdrawal from Syria.[54] Faced with the prospect of occupation by the French, the Syrian General Congress declared independence. Its declaration was not recognized by either French or British governments, and Britain continued with its plans to withdraw.[55] This left Faisal and the French to deal with matters themselves. For Faisal, this represented a betrayal. The French were willing to allow Faisal to be king of Syria, if he would accept their rule of Greater Lebanon and tacit rule of an 'independent' Syria. France was willing to come to such an arrangement regarding Faisal in order to consider British interests in the Middle East. A secret accord was reached between French prime minister Georges Clemenceau and Faisal. However, Clemenceau failed to become president of France and subsequently withdrew from political life. Clemenceau's successor, Alexandre Millerand, was less willing to save face for Britain by recognizing Syria's independence and allowing Faisal to become king.[56]

Britain had also promised that Egypt would gain independence and, when the war was over, a number of out-of-office Egyptian politicians asked to meet with the British in the expectation that martial law and protectorate status would come to an end. However, the British were not receptive. They refused to allow Saad Zaghlul, the leading figure in the nationalist movement, to attend the Peace Conference to negotiate a programme for full independence. Following increased activity on the part of Zaghlul and his Wafd (delegation), the British deported him and three of his colleagues to Malta. As a result, demonstrations and strikes occurred across the country. Full independence was demanded by the Sultan and other leaders, which the British did not wish to grant given its dependence on the Suez Canal. The result was a continued British military presence and dominance in Egypt in the absence of consent by local leaders.[57] Britain was principally concerned with the security of the Suez Canal and any potential impact on Egypt of a call for Holy War issued from Constantinople.[58]

The outcome of the Peace Conference was the Treaty of Sèvres, which was signed on 10 August 1920. Under the terms upon which Britain and France finally agreed, Arabic-speaking parts of the Ottoman Empire would be divided between the two powers. Palestine, Mesopotamia, Egypt and the Gulf coast would be retained by Britain; Arabia would remain formally independent but fall under British influence. The idea

was at least proclaimed to be that Palestine, including Transjordan, Syria, including Lebanon, and Iraq would eventually become independent. The Dardenelles was placed under international control. Armenia in eastern Anatolia was granted independence and Kurdistan autonomy.[59] European influence would, therefore, replace Ottoman rule, despite the aspirations and claims of Arab and non-Arab nationalists in the region – an outcome different from that expected by those who had participated in the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman regime, but quite in keeping with the wishes and long-term plans of Britain and France.

Aspirations of independence on the part of the Arabs had thus come to naught when the Ottoman Empire was partitioned in 1923 and the French and British mandates were established. Support by Zionists and Arabs during the First World War had been secured through duplicitous diplomacy and betrayal. Not surprisingly, this turn of events resulted in humiliation and mistrust of Westerners, particularly the colonial powers. And, in Turkey, a so-called Sèvres syndrome – the perception of being surrounded by hostile powers intent on destroying the Turkish state – became part of the dominant Turkish worldview.[60] The states that emerged in the Middle East were fragile entities that lacked full independence. The following 30 years, from the end of the First World War to the end of the Second, would be devoted, for the most part, to fighting for self-determination and effective independence. States in the Middle East followed different national development paths.[61]

In the majority of states, Arab nationalism was deployed as a means of consolidating and legitimizing newly created states, as well as challenging colonial rule.[62] As Barnett observes, '[t]he period surrounding World War I introduced two eternal elements that favoured Arab nationalism: a duplicitous Western diplomacy that betrayed the cause of Arab independence and imposed the mandate system and then legitimated the Zionist movement with Britain as its nominal guardian'.[63] Arabism had a strong appeal in those countries where there was as yet little identification with territorial state entities. It was also useful for political elites in new environments in which traditional forms of authority and legitimacy had been undermined.[64] Independence was sought in a variety of ways: proto-state protagonists navigated towards full-sovereignty using European as well as traditional ideals and values as their lodestar.

Reactions and counter-responses

In Syria, the French transformed their mandate into a colony. Syrian nationalists were unwilling to accept the role that France had designated

for itself in their country. In March 1920, the second Syrian General Congress declared the independence of Syria, which was understood to include Lebanon and Palestine, with Faisal as their monarch. As a result, an ultimatum was sent by Paris to Faisal, who accepted the terms, however unrealistic they may have been. However, this was followed by revolts against him in Damascus. Faisal offered the French unconditional surrender, but the French were intent on moving against Faisal.[65]

France divided the country into districts and established a special republic of Lebanon. The latter was a larger version of the Ottoman province of Mount Lebanon, which had autonomy under European protection from 1860 to 1914 due to its majority Maronite community.[66] However, the majority of Syrian elites did not accept the partition. In 1925, the Druze revolted and formed an alliance with the nationalists based in Damascus. As a result, the French adopted a more liberal approach. In 1930, France created parliamentary constitutional arrangements for Syria, just as it had for Lebanon in 1926. France, nevertheless, retained control over Syrian foreign policy and security.[67]

In the autumn of 1936, treaties providing for the independence of both countries were negotiated. While both Syrian and Lebanese parliaments ratified the treaties, their French counterpart never did. More conservative interests came to dominate France. They favoured continued French domination over the Levant for strategic and economic reasons – there was believed to be oil in north-eastern Syria, the two countries provided a passage to the Far East, and, in the shadow of rising Nazism in Germany, North Africa provided manpower to draw on in the event of war. The potential outbreak of war also prompted France to agree to the incorporation of sanjak of Alexandretta, an area with Turkish, Arab and Armenian populations, in 1939. This area was considered by Syrians to be part of Syria.[68]

The outcome of the Paris Conference not only undermined Faisal's credibility in Syria; his kingship in Iraq was approved and supported by the British, which placed him in an uneasy relationship with Iraqi nationalists. Shortly after the outbreak of the First World War, Britain had invaded the provinces of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul, which laid the groundwork for the establishment of the state of Iraq following war. The new state was placed under a League of Nations Mandate administered by Britain.[69] Opposition to direct British rule resulted in a revolt in 1920. An additional problem arose due to differences between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims. The only form of government being considered by the British rested upon Sunni domination. In fact, each produced their own nationalist society. Revolts occurred during 1920, and in August of

that year insurgents proclaimed a provisional government in Baghdad.[70] In 1921, the British convened the Cairo Conference at which it was decided to create a kingdom of Iraq and to offer Faisal kingship. Faisal had fled Syria after the French occupation in 1920.

Following the uprising, Britain attempted to adopt more liberal approach, decentralizing some powers to a newly established parliament and having Iraqi ministers run government ministries. They persuaded Faisal and the Iraqi government to pass a first Anglo-Iraqi Treaty in 1922, which did not replace the Mandate and ensured that Britain's interests were protected. The Treaty did, nevertheless, give Iraq some degree of independence.[71] In 1930, a second Anglo-Iraqi treaty was signed, which defined the terms of Iraq's relationship with Britain after its independence in 1932. The Treaty provided for an Anglo-Iraqi alliance for 25 years, but enabled Iraq to become a member of the League of Nations.[72] Thus, while Iraq would be formally independent, British influence and presence remained in the country. King Faisal's son, Ghazi, had taken the throne after his father's death in 1933. Dissatisfaction with him prompted a military coup in which reformist intellectuals and nationalist army officers attempted to take power, only to be themselves overthrown by another military coup. The faction of the military responsible helped to bring to power a pro-British civilian politician called Nuri Said.[73]

In 1921, the British were also in contact with Faisal's brother, Abdullah, who was threatening to invade Syria. In order to pre-empt the threatened invasion, the British offered Abdullah the kingship of Transjordan under their protection. This dependent regime could control the Bedouin tribes and so enable an Anglo-French settlement.[74] Transjordan was a territory which had formed part of the province of Syria under Ottoman rule and was not distinguished by a prior political community.[75] Partial independence was recognized under the 1928 Anglo-Jordanian Treaty. However, Britain retained control of foreign policy and finance. In 1939, the legislative council was made into a cabinet.[76] Full independence only became a reality in 1946. When Abdullah was assassinated in 1951, his teenage grandson, Hussein, took the throne in 1953. In 1956, King Hussein of Jordan dismissed Sir John Glubb as commander of the Arab legion in Jordan – a paramilitary force financed by Britain and commanded by British officers – thereby breaking the last tie that harked back to a bygone era.[77]

While the nationalist movement in Egypt did not win independence for the country in 1919, the British promised to grant Egypt independence in 1922. Britain, nevertheless, maintained a presence in Egypt even

after the latter's protectorate status had ended.[78] The Wafd Party had emerged as the most popular political force in the semi-independent Egypt. Yet, they failed to successfully manage economic development, to define the country's political and cultural identity and to secure full independence.[79] Gradually supporters of the nationalist Wafd and other parliamentary parties were joined by those of the pro-Fascist Young Egypt, the Communists and the Muslim Brotherhood.[80] The latter gained ground in the 1930s. It proposed Islam as a total system by which all aspects of life should be governed.[81]

Like Egypt, Afghanistan represented a passage to India for Britain. It had become a British protectorate in 1907.[82] After the First World War, Afghanistan sought full independence. However, Britain was only willing to concede limited self-rule. The Amir, Habibullah Khan, who was in favour of gradual modernization and independence, was assassinated on 20 February 1919.[83] His third son, Amanullah succeeded him, declaring Afghanistan independent on 19 April 1919. After a war with Britain, Afghanistan won its independence.[84]

In Palestine, a British military administration had been established in 1917–18. Unrest broke out between Bedouin tribes and Jewish settlers in the area between British and French military administrations in late 1919 and early 1920. In Jerusalem, clashes between Arabs and Jews took place in April of 1920.[85] Following the violence, Britain replaced the military administration with a civilian one.[86] Britain's Colonial Office governed Jerusalem in what was then Palestine. The Jewish community was represented by a Jewish Agency and had an elected assembly with which to govern themselves. The Arabs, however, had no such representation. They had rejected a proposal for a legislature in which they would not have been represented in accordance with their population.[87] Moreover they never accepted the British mandate.[88]

In 1929, riots took place in Jerusalem, reflecting a rise in tension between Arab and Jewish communities. In the same year, Palestinian Zionists and the World Zionist Organization created an enlarged Jewish Agency. Half of its membership came from outside Palestine. This, along with increased economic influence on the part of Zionists, deeply concerned Palestinians. Outside Palestine, the Palestinian question was arousing growing concerns among Arabs and Muslims. It would become one of the central issues fuelling Arab nationalism in the years to come.[89]

In Arabia, a theocratic-based regime was established by Ibn Saud.[90] The Al-Sauds expanded their territory by conquering states in northwestern Arabia and on the border of Yemen.[91] Ibn Saud's rival, Sharif Hussein,

was driven into exile.[92] Yemen, Aden and other Gulf states were under British protection and, therefore, proved much more difficult to conquer.[93] Tribal sheiks near the Arabian Sea and Gulf had negotiated treaties that also placed them under British protection. Oman too became a British protectorate.[94] Unlike the Hashemites in Transjordan and the Levant, Ibn Saud was successful in preserving political independence.[95]

Libya, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria had remained European colonies after the First World War. The Allies liberated Libya from the Italians in 1942.[96] The British entered into a tentative alliance with the leader of the Sanusi order, Amir Idris Al-Sanusi. Following long years of negotiations the country was granted independence under United Nations (UN) auspices in 1952.

In the Maghrib, the independence movement developed later than in the other parts of the Middle East. In Tunisia, attempts by the French to take a more liberal approach did not satisfy nationalists and was not accepted by the sizable French colony in Tunisia.[97] A guerrilla war was fought with Tunisia gaining independence in April 1955.[98]

Similarly, a rebellion against the French occurred in Morocco. The majority of the French colonialists in Morocco supported repression. They had considerable influence on the government of the French Fourth Republic. In 1953, pro-French rulers demanded the deposition of the sultan, Mohammed V. He was deposed and sent to Madagascar. The puppet sultan, Sidi ben Arafa, was subject to a number of assassination attempts. By 1955, the French were faced with no other choice than to bring an end to the protectorate and recognize Morocco's independence.[99]

The French were, however, more determined to retain Algeria. Frustrated with the lack of progress in terms of granting Muslims in Algeria French citizenship, the Algerian resistance established the Front de la Libération Nationale in 1954.[100] Fighting between rebel forces and the French became increasingly entrenched. In addition, severely repressive measures, including the use of torture, were employed by the French, driving the communities within the country even further apart.[101] After the arrest of its leader, Ahmed Ben Bella, a government in exile was formed in Tunisia.[102] Under a new French government, headed by Charles de Gaulle, secret talks were held with the rebels. They were to lead to the Évian Accords under which the terms of future Franco-Algerian social and economic cooperation would take place and a referendum on independence would be held in Algeria. Algerians voted for independence in cooperation with France in 1962.[103]

Within each of the countries engaged in the political struggle for independence, divisions within the elite emerged. The conservative

elite associated with the mandate system and state-centred Arab nationalism was increasingly challenged by a younger generation of elite who sought to promote Pan-Arabism as a means of uniting an Arab nation despite the existence of separate states. The idea of a unified Arab nation, defined in terms of common language, shared history and culture remained an aspiration for some.[104] In the 1930s, Pan-Arabism gained greater definition. Plans of action for the Arab world as a whole were espoused. One of the first manifestations of this could be seen with a convention of the pan-Islamic congress held in Jerusalem in 1931. It was intended to set out the concerns of the Arab-Islamic world vis-à-vis the status of Palestine and Zionism. A pan-Arab covenant was created that articulated the desire for Arab unity.[105]

A number of pan-Arab movements also emerged. The Syrian Social Nationalist party, which was created in 1932, called for unification of a greater Syria. It was opposed to the Lebanese nationalism of Maronite Christians and Sunni-based Arab nationalism. Another prominent pan-Arabist party was the Baa'th party, which was founded in the 1940s. It espoused Arab unity, socialism and anti-colonialism. While its support base was in Syria, it expanded its support to Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and the Arabian Peninsula.[106] The Movement of Arab Nationalists and Nasserism constituted two other important pan-Arab movements. The former was largely concerned with the Palestinian issue and would emerge after 1967 as the Poplar Front for the Liberation of Palestine.[107]

Yet, the notion of Arab unity did not translate into a more formal political unity. Iraq and Syria sought closer bonds. However, in Lebanon sentiments were mixed, due to the Arab-Islamic and Christian composition of the population. Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Yemen possessed a strong sense of Arab unity, but also had their own distinct national interests. The one issue that tended to unite them was the fate of Palestine.[108]

While colonial political structures were established in much of the Middle East, this was not the case in Iran and Turkey. As a result, their paths would be considerably different. Despite the fact that the Ottomans had allied with Germany during the First World War, the Turks remained independent after the war. The Ottomans had refused to accept the Treaty of Sèvres. Only the northwest and north-central Anatolia would remain as part of Ottoman territory under its terms, along with Istanbul.[109] Following a Turkish War of Independence, the Conference of Lausanne was held in order to negotiate a new peace settlement. Under the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, the Turks accepted Allied demands that did not directly concern them. British and French

mandates in Palestine, Syria and Iraq were agreed to. The Dardanelles Straits were placed under international control until 1936, when they were due to be given back to the Turks.[110]

However, in early 1920, Mustafa Kemal became the leader of the national resistance movement.[111] The Ottoman Chamber of Deputies declared their intention to create an independent Turkish Muslim state on 17 February 1920. Britain refused to reconsider Prime Minister Lloyd George's proposed terms of peace, which led to hostilities between Kemalist forces, on the one hand, and Britain and France on the other. France and Italy were more ready to negotiate than Britain. The latter occupied Constantinople, declaring martial law, and arrested and deported to Malta a number of Ottoman civil and military officials and deputies. Occupying the Sultan's government, however, simply eroded the Sultan's legitimacy further and boosted support for Mustapha Kemal.[112]

After a series of military defeats, Greece withdrew from Ottoman territory. Greek civilians were expelled from Asia Minor. Lloyd George had wanted to assist the Greeks, but Conservatives within his coalition government, as well as the French, were opposed to entering into another conflict with Turkey.[113] During the spring of 1920, Kemalist forces had taken over western Armenia and Kurdistan, thereby breaking the Treaty of Sèvres. By 1921–2, Kemal's authority extended to most of Anatolia. Then, on 1 November 1922, the Grand National Assembly in Ankara brought into being the Turkish Republic.[114]

In 1923, Kemal abolished the sultanate and other Ottoman institutions. Muslim institutions, such as the Shari'ah courts and schools, as well as dervish and Sufi orders, were also abolished. The Arabic alphabet was replaced with the Roman alphabet. The Gregorian calendar, clocks and metric weights and measures became standard. Women were discouraged from wearing veils and men from wearing fezzes. The judicial and educational role of the Ulama was also quashed. All this in an effort to Europeanize Turkey.[115] A clause within the 1924 constitution that designated Islam as the state religion was also abolished.[116] One member of the former ruling family was allowed to stay on as the Caliph of Islam. However, this position was abolished in 1924, ending a post that had existed since the death of the Prophet in 632.[117]

Iran too would chart a different path from the majority of states in the Middle East. It was coveted by Britain, because of its closeness to India, and by Russia because of the extension of its empire in Central Asia. Both Britain and Russia had been concerned by the Constitutional Revolution of 1906–11.[118] In 1907, Russia and Britain had concluded a treaty that divided Iran between them. Britain gained control of Iran's

southern provinces and Russia gained those in the north. In the area in-between, Iranians were allowed to rule, as long as they did not impinge on the interests of the two great powers.[119] Oil had also been discovered in southwestern Iran in 1908 and, in 1914, Britain had bought a controlling interest in Anglo-Persian, a company that had a monopoly on its exploitation.[120]

In comparison to Turkey, Iran would not become a republic. Following the 1917 revolution, British troops remained in Persia in order to prevent a Russian invasion and to protect Britain's energy interests in the country.[121] Britain had negotiated a treaty with the Qajar rulers of Persia that would have transformed the country into a British protectorate.[122] The terms of the 1919 Anglo-Persian Agreement gave Britain control of Iran's army, treasury, transport and communication networks. It also imposed martial law in Iran. The Agreement further fuelled nationalist sentiment in Iran. In the northern provinces, a communist party was established and an Iranian-Soviet Socialist Republic was declared. At the same time, separatist forces were gaining ground in some provinces.[123]

After taking power, the Bolsheviks negotiated a favourable treaty of friendship with Persia under which the Soviet Union agreed to cancel Persian debts and relinquish many of their rights in Iran.[124] Strengthened by the treaty with the Bolsheviks, Persia rejected the Anglo-Persian Agreement. Within this context, Reza Khan, a military man in the Cossack brigade that served the Qajar kings and foreign interests rose to the fore. He was to lead a coup against the prime minister and his cabinet, supported by the British. The Shah had little choice but to acquiesce to the demand that Sayyed Zia Tabatai be made prime minister and commander of the Cossack brigade.[125] In 1921, Reza Khan established a military dictatorship. Britain, nevertheless, continued to protect oil fields in the southwest of the country.[126]

Reza Khan admired Kemal Atatürk in Turkey. He declared Persia a republic and made himself president. This worried the religious class, who feared the consequences of Reza Khan's emulation of Atatürk, who had abolished the Sultanate and the Caliphate. A political drama subsequently played out in which Reza Khan resigned from all of this public posts. Ahmad Shah announced that he intended to return. Fearing this, the Majlis (parliament) gave the Peacock Throne to Reza Khan. On 25 April 1926, he took the throne and became Reza Shah. The family name would be Pahlavi, after the pre-Islamic Persian language.[127] Persia was renamed Iran (land of the Aryans).

As in Turkey, the power of the Ulama was decreased as courts, schools and welfare institutions were secularized. Women were banned from

wearing veils and people were obliged to wear European dress. Nomadic tribes were also encouraged to become sedentary farmers.[128] Iranian nationalists also began to openly oppose British control of oil in their country. Nationalism in Iran was secular insofar as it sought to limit the influence of Islam.[129] Reza Shah created a national civil service and army. Like Atatürk, he introduced a metric system of measurement, the modern calendar, civil marriage and divorce, as well as the use of surnames.[130]

During the 1920s and 1930s, Britain and Russia retained economic interest in the Iranian economy. German interests in Iran also grew in the 1930s.[131] Reza Shah also attempted to reduce the influence of foreign powers in the country.[132] No foreign loans or the sale of property to non-Iranians were accepted, the right of the British Imperial Bank of Iran to have a monopoly on issuing currency was brought to an end and Iranian officials were prevented from attending receptions at foreign embassies.[133]

Iran's relationship with Germany grew. It had provided a significant proportion of the capital used to build infrastructure and fund industrial projects. During the initial years of the Second World War, Iran proclaimed its neutrality and succeeded in staying out of the war. However, when Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, the Allies feared that Reza Shah's pro-German stance could result in an alliance that could have serious consequences, particularly if Turkey entered the war on Germany's side.[134] Britain and Russia then intervened militarily in Iran. The Shah subsequently abdicated on 16 September 1941. His eldest son, Mohammed Reza succeeded him.[135]

Conclusions: The seeds of the second critical turning point

The seeds of the next critical turning point in the Middle East were sowed during the period discussed in this chapter. Despite the promises of Arab independence, the peoples of the Middle East found themselves under the dominance of the French and British after the First World War, both of which acted in their own strategic and economic interests, with little regard for the wishes of local populations. The result of the dashed hopes for Arab independence immediately after the First World War was a sense of humiliation and mistrust of Westerners, especially colonialist countries. Catherwood writes, 'the Muslim world forgot about brief loss of territory to the Crusaders, especially since the Muslims won. Now French and British rule, along with the legitimation of Zionist wishes for Palestine, engendered an Arab/Muslim sense of humiliation and betrayal that still burns in our own time'.[136]

The states created in the Middle East after the First World War were the products of European powers, fragile and heavily penetrated by foreign influence with their borders often arbitrarily drawn. Nevertheless, the existence of these state structures meant that Arab nationalism would tend to be centred on individual struggles for independence. While most nationalist movements would have an Arab and Islamic dimension, secular nationalism was prominent in Turkey and Iran. Leftist and Islamist movements also formed ideological responses to colonialism, class stratifications and the emerging political order. Yet, at the same time, the notion of an Arab nation that transcended these newly created borders was also deployed for the purposes of generating greater unity. It would take on greater importance in the region; Nasserism and Baa'thism in particular would become prominent articulations of Pan-Arabism that would have a significant impact on the region as Nasser and party leaders sought socio-economic transformation according to a socialist programme and Arab unity. Socialism was, thus, conceived as a means to unite Arabs against the capitalist interests of European states as well as dynastical regimes.[137]

While Pan-Arabism took a number of ideological forms and was employed sometimes for different purposes, one issue that tended to unite Arabs in the interwar years was the Palestinian issue. Another seed of the next turning point was planted in 1917, with the Balfour Declaration. In the 1920s, emigration to Palestine was slow, speeding up following the rise of Nazism in Germany. In 1936, Arab political parties in Palestine organized a general strike to protest the mandate, following which a civil war lasting three years took place. In 1937, the British recommended dividing Palestine between Arabs and Jews, creating separate enclaves reserved for Jewish settlement. After opposition to partition by both Palestine's Arabs, supported by Egypt and Iraq and the Zionist Congress, albeit for disparate reasons, the British issued a White Paper in 1939 that sought to limit Jewish immigration and purchases of land in Palestine.[138] According to Arthur Goldschmidt, jr, '[t]he Zionists felt betrayed, for Europe's Jews were in mortal peril and no other country would admit them. Palestinians, for their part, doubted British promises of independence, even though they constituted a majority in Palestine, and argued that Zionism was another manifestation of Western imperialism'.[139] As a result, the British were distrusted by Palestinians. As we will see in the next chapter, the conditions for the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict had, thus, been laid during this period

4
The Arab Defeat

The first critical turning point brought into existence a number of states that altered traditional authority structures. The elites that came to power within these newly created territorial entities drew upon Arab nationalism as a means of legitimizing their power and constructing national identities within a state-centred system. During the interwar years, a new generation of elite emerged, who stressed the need for greater unity among Arabs and promoted Pan-Arabism as a means of achieving this. The second critical turning point is constituted by the events of 1948 and the first Arab-Israeli conflict. This juncture would have long-lasting effects both within the Middle East and beyond. The severe defeat of Arab militaries by Israeli troops in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War represented a real setback for the Arab states involved (Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq). At the end of the war, only 21 per cent of the Palestinian territories allotted by the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan remained outside Israeli control. Egypt and Jordan merely managed to capture the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, respectively. These territorial transfers were accompanied by a Palestinian exodus and the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem. The defeat dealt a serious blow to Arab countries, measured in terms of their humiliation, credibility and prestige, which translated into popular dissatisfaction with elites of the vanquished states, especially those incumbent in Syria, Egypt and Jordan.

It was in this context that the idea of Arab unity resurfaced and progressively spread throughout the region. The ideology of Pan-Arabism advocated the political unification of Arab nations. The rationale behind it was that a closer union between Arab countries could have positive impacts both internally and externally. The idea was primarily embodied in Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. His ideology

blended Pan-Arabism, socialism and non-alignment vis-à-vis the two superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union. Although Nasser was fully aware of the impossibility of building a broad Arab political union, he nonetheless strongly believed in the necessity of joint Arab actions, and acted in an 'appropriate' way, according to the norms of Pan-Arabism. His ideas appealed well beyond Egypt, particularly in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. He was regarded by many as the leader of the Arab world, with his prestige reaching a peak at the time of the 1956 Suez Crisis, when he won a political (although not military) victory by turning back Israel, France and Britain – after the intercession of the US and the Soviet Union. The event not only buttressed Pan-Arabism, but also reinforced the enmity between many Arab countries and Israel, on the one hand, and the West, on the other.

However, Nasser's approach found little resonance among Arab leaders. Some agreed in principle with him, but rejected Egypt's presumption of hegemony in the wider Arab world – for example, Syria, Iraq and to a lesser extent Algeria, in particular. Other more conservative rulers in the Arab world – in Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Morocco – were unenthusiastic about the revolutionary social and political changes advocated by Egypt and so were also unwilling to accept Egyptian hegemony. Nasser's call for Pan-Arabism was also hindered by his misguided adventurism, especially against other Arab countries. This included the Yemen crisis and the support for the overthrow of monarchies in the Arab world, which pitted some Arab countries against him. In addition, Nasser's participation in Third World nationalist movements as well as the Non-Aligned Movement alienated him from leaders in Washington, who failed to understand the nature of these movements and insisted on his support against the Soviets. The divide between the promotion of and resistance to Pan-Arabism widened in the 1960s. Pan-Arabism ultimately resulted in very few concrete actions or lasting initiatives. Ultimately, the only serious attempt at building a political union between Arab countries – the United Arab Republic (UAR) – lasted only three years, from 1958 to 1961. In the meantime, non-Arab Middle Eastern countries, such as Iran and Turkey, continued on their separate routes and adopted pro-Western policies.

The 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict: Initial conditions

As Simona Sharoni and Mohammed Abu-Nimer remark, 'it is seldom recognized that the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, which affirmed the national aspirations of the Jews, came at the expense of

Palestinians, whose desire for self-determination and territorial sovereignty remains largely unfulfilled'.[1] Palestinians had sought independence in vain, first from the Ottomans and then from the British. From the Palestinian perspective, the 1917 Balfour Declaration had undermined their rights. Violent confrontations between Palestinian nationalists and Zionists took place in the years following the Declaration.[2] In the 1930s and 1940s, the future of Palestine would become inextricably tied to events in Europe as rivalries between European Great Powers now had new ideological foundations that would affect the fate of both Jews and Palestinians.

During the 1930s, Jewish immigration to Palestine increased dramatically as a result of the rise of Nazism in Germany. The pressing need to provide haven for European Jews eclipsed Arab and Palestinian opposition to the creation of a Jewish homeland.[3] Palestinians already inhabiting the land were eager not to lose their ancestral territory to foreign immigration.[4] They viewed the Jewish community in Palestine as a tool of Western imperialism.[5] From this viewpoint, as Shlaim points out, 'Palestine is the patrimony of the Palestinians; and the dispossession and dispersal of the native population by the State of Israel is the real cause of the conflict.'[6]

During the interwar years, both Arab and Jewish communities established parallel social and political structures. Palestinians refused to participate in national entities in order to demonstrate continued rejection of the Balfour Declaration, and Jewish communities believed that Britain's attempt to find a solution for both Arabs and Jews in Palestine was undermining the creation of a Jewish homeland. The Zionist goal was to increase the Jewish population in Palestine in order to validate their claim to a homeland as provided for in the Balfour Declaration. Prior to the end of the Second World War, Zionist leaders pushed for the 1939 British White Paper on Palestine to be annulled.[7] The White Paper had stated that Palestine should not become part of a Jewish state. At the same time as Zionist leaders were mobilizing support for their position, Germany invaded Poland and the Second World War got underway.[8] The horror of the holocaust increased the determination of members of the Jewish community in Palestine to bring survivors from Europe to Palestine. They refused to respect the 1939 British White Paper and revolted against the British mandate in Palestine.[9]

After the war, Britain also faced increased pressure by the US to allow immediate and unrestricted entry of Jews into Palestine.[10] At the same time, the Jewish Agency was increasing pressure to establish a Jewish state. The Jewish community carried out sabotage attacks against the

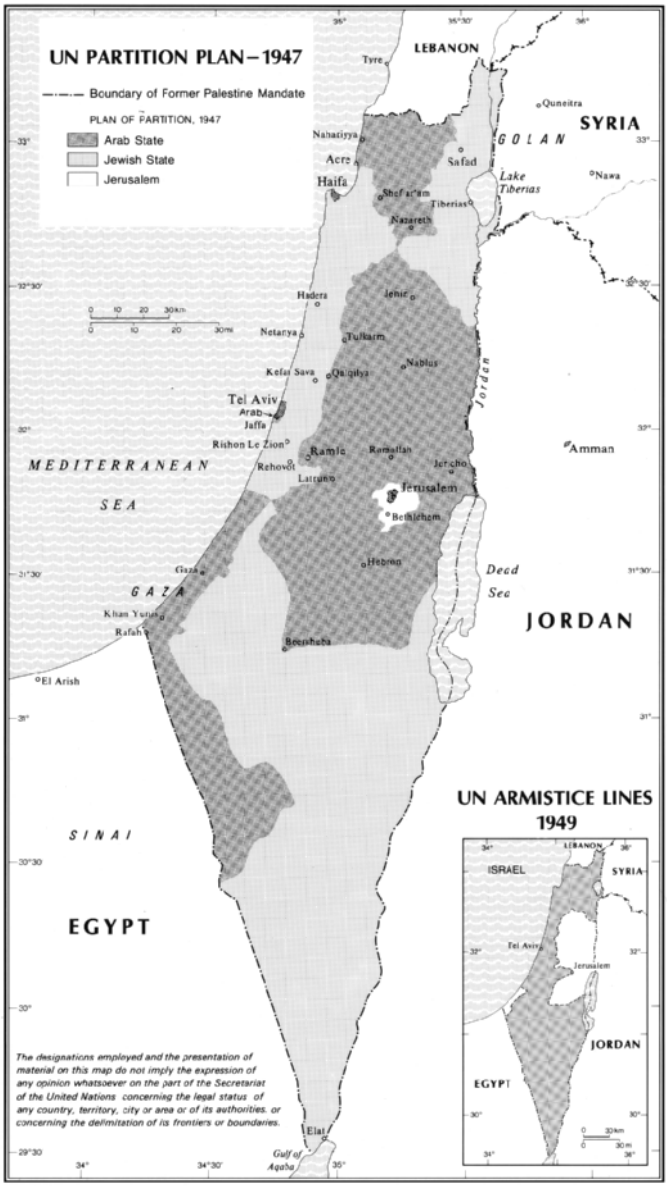
British mandate following the end of the Second World War.[11] The British government set up a joint Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry. The Commission was tasked with examining the issue of what to do with Jewish survivors and, at the same time, to consider possible solutions to the Arab-Jewish question in Palestine.[12] The Committee first visited the displaced persons camps in Europe and then went on to Palestine. When its members arrived in Palestine, they were welcomed by Jews and boycotted by the Arabs. Most of the Anglo-American committee members concluded that the resettlement of Jews in Europe ought to be connected to Jewish settlement in Palestine.[13]

The resulting 1946 report recommended that the mandate continue and that 100,000 Jews should be allowed access to Palestine. The British wanted Jewish irregular troops to be disbanded before allowing Jewish immigration. In the meantime, Arab states were mobilizing diplomatically and militarily in favour of Palestinians.[14] The Committee also recommended the creation of a bi-national state under UN trusteeship. The latter suggestion was rejected by the British government.[15]

The British and American governments decided to appoint two representatives – Herbert Morrison, on the British side and diplomat Henry F. Grady on the American. The Morrison-Grady Committee suggested the division of Palestine into four provinces. This failed to win Jewish or Palestinian support. The British government then suggested a cantonization of Palestine under British trusteeship. The proposal was rejected by both sides.[16] Britain was unable to find a workable solution to the problem.

In February 1947, the British Foreign Secretary asked the UN to take up the Palestine question. A committee was sent to investigate the dimension of the problem and to prepare a report for the General Assembly.[17] The UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was comprised of representatives from The Netherlands, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Canada, Australia, India, Iran, Peru, Guatemala and Uruguay.[18] The majority within the committee were convinced that the British mandate should be ended.[19] It concluded that the earlier British decision to partition Palestine was the best solution.[20] US President Truman, who fully supported the establishment of a Jewish state, was in favour of the majority solution.[21] Yet, the Arab delegation made it clear that implementation of the Resolution would result in war.[22]

The UN proposal for the partition of Palestine was put to vote by the General Assembly (see Map 4.1). It voted in favour of partition by 33 to 13, with ten abstentions.[23] Zionists endorsed the UN resolution and insisted that a Jewish homeland be ethnically and religiously



Map 4.1 UN Partition Plan – 1947

Source: UN Partition Plan – 1947, Map No. 3067 Rev. 1, April 1983, United Nations Cartographic Section.

homogeneous. Palestinians feared that partition would result in the expulsion of Palestinians already residing in areas that would fall within a Jewish state.[24] Arab states rejected partition and demanded full sovereignty for Palestinians. For them, accepting a two-state solution would have meant accepting the existence of an Israeli state.

Without waiting for the result of the General Assembly's vote on partition, Britain announced in September 1947 that the mandate in Palestine would come to an end on 15 May 1948, plunging Palestine into further turmoil and inter-communal war. Jewish forces sought to take control of the territories allotted to it under the UN resolution, causing 400,000 Palestinian inhabitants to flee.[25]

Britain withdrew from Palestine on 14 May 1948.[26] During the mandate period, Britain had failed to create political institutions in Palestine, which left the Jewish and Palestinian communities to strive for pre-eminence.[27] On the very same day that Britain withdrew, Zionists declared independence. The day after, Syrian, Jordanian, Iraqi and Egyptian military forces intervened in Palestine in support of Palestinians. Jewish troops not only outnumbered Arab forces; they were also better equipped, securing a fresh supply of arms from Czechoslovakia. Though the fighting formally ended in January 1949, by 1948 it was clear that Israel had won the ascendancy and this outcome constituted a humiliating defeat for the Arabs.

The armistice agreements between Israel and the belligerent Arab states were completed by July 1949. Israel now occupied 80 per cent of the area of Palestine during the time of the mandate. Many Palestinians had fled from areas within Israel. Egypt was to administer the Gaza Strip. The West Bank was annexed by Transjordan in 1950.[28] The latter transformed the territorial configuration of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which had been created in 1946.

As Mansfield notes,

> [t]he Palestine war and the harsh injustices that it caused the indigenous inhabitants left a legacy of bitterness among the Arabs against Israel and the two Western powers most responsible for its creation – Britain and the United States. (The Soviet Union's role in supporting Israel's 'war of independence' against what it regarded as Western puppet states was largely forgotten by the Arabs when Soviet policy changed in the early 1950s).[29]

This legacy was compounded by the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration. Once again, Britain had failed to live up to expectations.

The Soviet Union rather than the US had been supportive of the Israeli state in the hope of reducing Britain's weight in the Middle East. The US wished to maintain good relations with Arab states. However, 1948 was an election year and Truman, like other politicians, feared losing the Jewish vote as well as that of Christians, who viewed the creation of a Jewish homeland as part of biblical prophecy.[30]

In 1945, Ben-Gurion concluded that the struggle against British policy was largely over when the Palestine question was entrusted to the UN. Prior to this, both the Palestinians and British were the focus of attention for the Jewish community in Palestine. Now, Palestinians became the principal opponent. Having little in the way of political and military leadership, they were heavily dependent on their Arab neighbours for support.[31] While the Arab Higher Committee (AHC) was recognized by the Arab League and British Mandatory Authority as the body representing Palestinians, it was politically divided.[32] Given the AHC's ineffectiveness, the Arab League became the principal political body in which the all-Arab policy on the Palestine question was decided.[33] This granted Palestinians very little room to follow an independent policy from the Arab League and, therefore, they lacked political clout.

The AHC opposed the plan submitted to the London Conference in September 1946 by the Arab League. The Arab League had proposed the creation of one independent Palestinian state in which Palestinians would be a majority and the Jewish minority would have one-third representation in the legislative council. The AHC wanted the Jewish community to have only one-sixth representation, which would be reflective of the percentage of their population.[34] The AHC also wanted a ban on the sale of land to Jews and additional Jewish immigration. These stipulations were rejected by the Arab League.

In fact, Palestinians were coming to the conclusion that a military solution may be inevitable. This was further compounded by the visit of the UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) in June 1947 and its recommendation to establish a two-state solution. In contrast, the Jewish leadership accepted the United Nations Partition Resolution.[35] Arab states, for their part, viewed the future of Palestine as an Arab cause. In key Arab states, such as Egypt, Syria and Iraq, domestic regimes were also faced with unrest. In order to generate domestic support by demonstrating their willingness to stand up against what was perceived as Western imperialism, they took an uncompromising, hard-line position on the Palestinian issue, making it clear that they were willing to defend the Palestinians militarily.[36] Indeed, it would have been difficult to do otherwise. The leaders of Arab states had been highlighting the

centrality of the conflict and the struggle for Palestine was becoming a test for Arabism, understood in broad terms as a movement committed to Arab interests, culture and ideals. The credentials of Arab nationalists were perceived as being at stake in the confrontation with Zionism.[37] Despite their publicly hard-line policy, members of the Arab League were divided over the future of Palestine. Yet, failing to confront the Zionist challenge would cost them their Arabist credentials and weaken them domestically.[38]

When Britain announced its intention to pull out of Palestine, the AHC had requested support from the Arab League for the establishment of governmental structures. However, the League's members were generally against handing over leadership of the war effort to the leader of the AHC, Hajj Amin Al-Husseini.[39] In October and December of 1947, the Arab League decided that the Palestinian military campaign ought to be placed in the hands of the Arab League's military committee.[40] Thus, during a critical period, Palestinians were divided and lacked political authority vis-à-vis Arab states and the international community as a whole.[41] When the State of Israel was declared and the Arab armies intervened in Palestine, Palestinians had no government and no military and administrative structures.[42]

The second critical turning point

There were two phases of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The first, a civil war between the Jewish and Palestinian Arab communities, took place between the end of November 1947 and the middle of May 1948. The second was a war between the newly established Israel and Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq.[43] As mentioned, the outcome of the latter resulted in the State of Israel gaining more territory than was attributed to it under the UN proposal for the partition of Palestine.[44]

Some 780,000 Palestinians became refugees.[45] Some refugees settled in Jordan, others went to the West Bank and to the East Bank. Most displaced persons wished to return to their homes. Those that settled in Jordan were comparatively better off. They were given Jordanian citizenship, though they retained a refugee identity necessary to receive aid and to keep the political objective of refugee return alive.[46] Israel refused to allow Palestinian refugees to return to their homes. The lands were needed for the settlements of new Jewish immigrants. Moreover, allowing their return would be potentially destabilizing for the newly created State of Israel.[47]

The circumstances in which Israel came into existence meant that a siege mentality reigned in the new state. The highly militarized and

defensive posture of the state contributed to Arab suspicions about its expansionist intentions rather than encouraging them to pursue peace.[48] The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is widely perceived as a primary strategic issue in the regional political system – the resolution of other points of conflict and tension in the Middle East are considered dependant upon its settlement: 'The Palestinian-Israel conflict resonates deeply in the Arab and Muslim imagination, and as long as this conflict remains simmering, it is difficult to address the underlying reasons for the antagonism between Arabs and Muslims.'[49] Indeed, this conflict is an enduring and sensitive issue for many within the region. This not only had interstate implications but also has an important impact on the domestic politics of many countries. A resolution or settlement of this conflict would end the instrumentalization of Israel by Arab states, who could then no longer justify current policies, such as a patron-based political system, the privileging of their militaries in the states and status-quo tendencies.

The political development path: the renewal of Arab unity

While Islam continued to shape the way that nationalism was articulated, the notion of the Third World as a third force uncommitted to either 'bloc' in the cold war divide and Pan-Arabism as a unifying ideology was comparatively more important during this period. The 1948 Arab-Israeli war helped to consolidate antagonism between the newly created State of Israel and its Arab neighbours. The emergent Palestinian question became a unifying bond between Arab states. Following the war, the idea of Arab unity had considerable import as Arab states sought to bring an end to the continued dominance of old colonial powers. Socialism too took on greater significance as a response to the desire for greater control over national resources and their use by governments in the interests of the people, as well as need for greater justice and equality within the states of the region. How these dimensions came together in response to concrete political and socio-economic situations, of course, varied.[50]

Those who gained power in the newly independent states of the Middle East belonged to the elite, either through birth or educational background. However, they lacked popular support and tended to employ national resources in their own favour rather than on behalf of the population at large. In the new, post-independence context, the time was ripe for political movements that promised change.[51] The 1948 defeat of newly independent Arab states represented a profound blow

to the collective psyche. It prompted dramatic political changes as a younger generation of leaders from more modest backgrounds replaced elites who had been more closely affiliated with the former colonial era. The ideology that now held sway was Arab nationalism and Arab unification.[52] Nasserism and Baa'thism were the most prominent expressions of this new political and ideological verve.

Few regimes would survive the 1948 defeat by Israel. In Egypt, King Farouk, the son of King Fa'ud, was overthrown in 1952 by a group of officers, the Free Officers, including Gamal Nasser and Anwar Sadat, both of whom would later become presidents of Egypt. The new regime was initially headed by General Negib.[53] Nasser was radicalized by the 1948 war in which he had served as a captain and it was he who emerged as the leading figure within this context.[54] Like his fellow Free Officers, he belonged to a new generation of officers from Egypt's lower and lower-middle classes. They had in common a desire to end Britain's occupation of Egypt, reduce foreign influence in the country and to reform the existing political and economic system in favour of greater democracy and social justice.[55]

In 1954, he overthrew Negib and became leader of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) – the name given to the Free Officers group once they had taken power. Nasser believed that a structural change in the direction of greater justice and equality required a period of 'guided democracy' in which the RCC would perform the role of guide.[56] Democracy in the political realm was thus thought to follow social democracy. Arab unity was also given greater emphasis in Egyptian foreign policy as Egypt vied for regional leadership.[57] At the outset, Nasser's conception of Pan-Arabism was minimalist. Yet, once he had helped to establish its norms, he was obliged to adhere to them to avoid symbolic sanctioning that might be meted out if such norms were violated, as well as regime instability.[58]

Two issues were to reach a climax not long after Nasser's coming to power. The first was how to rid Egypt of the British and to bring an end to Anglo-French control of the Suez Canal. The second was the need for energy and fertile agricultural land. The building of a dam to satisfy the latter two demands was not to be, due to a lack of Egyptian finances and American funding.[59] The latter was not forthcoming because Washington tended to view Egypt's non-alignment as a pro-Communist stance, when in fact it was related to nationalism and the ongoing struggle to shed the legacy of colonialism. Ultimately, the US stance helped to push Nasser closer to the Soviet Union for practical rather than ideological reasons.

Nasser's desire to free Egypt from British hegemony and his association with the Non-Aligned Movement brought him into conflict with the British early on. The future that Britain had envisaged for the Middle East was not a non-aligned one, but part of a network of anti-Communist satellite states. Britain and France were urging Egypt to join a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-sponsored alliance, the Baghdad Pact – otherwise known as the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) – to no avail. However, Britain's ally in Iraq, Nuri Said, joined Turkey, Britain, Iran and Pakistan to form the Pact, which was established in February 1955. Nuri Said had expressed his desire for other Arab countries, such as Syria and Jordan, to join the Pact.[60] Member states of the Pact received generous funding from the US as part of America's policy of containment.[61]

The debate that surrounded the creation of the Baghdad Pact served to radicalize some strands of Arabism and Egypt's leadership for whom a 'normative prohibition' against alliance with the West had developed. While Nasser was not initially opposed to cooperation with the West, he was more sensitive to implications for Egypt's and the Arab world's independence vis-à-vis the West. Nasser associated the Pact with a threat to the security of Arab states and to Arab nationalism. The difference between Nasser and Said's Arab nationalism was a generational one. Their conceptions of Arab nationalism differed on the forms of relations with the West that were considered desirable.[62]

In 1955, Nasser announced that Egypt would buy Soviet arms via Czechoslovakia. The announcement came as a shock to the West. However, in the Middle East, it was positively perceived. It appeared to demonstrate that Arab leaders did not have to follow the dictates of the West.[63] Nasser's ability to successfully frame the Baghdad Pact as an affront to Arab nationalism and a continuation of Western imperialism, eventually contributed to other Arab leaders abandoning the idea of joining the Pact.[64] Another blow to the West came in May 1956, when Egypt recognized the regime in Peking. By doing so, Nasser hoped to avoid a UN embargo on arms supplies to the Middle East.[65] The regime in Egypt appeared to be emerging as a regional power that was willing and able to oppose Anglo-American domination.

Yet, the Western powers were still eager to maintain Egypt within their sphere of influence. The World Bank had accordingly agreed to loan $200 million to match a US and British loan of $70 million to Nasser's regime in support of the construction of a dam on the Nile, which was designed to increase the country's hydroelectricity production. However, the conditions attached to the Anglo-American loan

implied some degree of Western control of the Egyptian economy and were difficult for the Egyptian government to accept. Nevertheless, Nasser finally accepted them. Yet, by that time, the US and the British had decided to withdraw their offer.[66]

A negotiated withdrawal of British troops from Egypt took place in early 1956. A few months later, Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal. Revenue from the Canal had largely gone abroad. As such, it was seen as representing the exploitation of Egypt and the developing world in general by the colonial powers.[67] Nasser portrayed the nationalization of the Canal not only as a question of Egyptian sovereignty, but also as a symbol of Arab independence.[68] The nationalization of the Canal was legal under international law since compensation had been offered to the shareholders. However, both the British and French were intent on preventing Nasser from taking permanent control of the Suez Canal, by force if necessary. This could not have diverged more from the US position. The US was vehemently opposed to using military intervention to impose outside control of the Canal.

The French and British pulled out their pilots from the Suez Canal Company, expecting that this would slow traffic and provide an excuse to intervene. This did not work, however. Egyptian pilots, along with foreign pilots from friendly states, were able to keep the traffic flowing. At this point, the British prime minister, Anthony Eden, considered joining a Franco-Israeli plan for Israel to attack Egypt with French backing. Israel wished to gain Egyptian recognition of the Israeli state through participating in such an action. It also aimed to stop attacks in Israel by Egyptian commandos, as well as lift the Egyptian blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba. France was already in conflict with Arab nationalism. For the British, however, the risk was greater since it could worsen the already deteriorating relations it had with the rest of the Arab world.[69]

Israel invaded Sinai on 29 October 1956. The following day, an ultimatum was issued by France and Britain. Egypt and Israel were to cease fighting or face intervention by the French and British. Israel accepted. Nasser, however, rejected it. When the deadline for the ultimatum expired, British and French troops began to bomb Egyptian airfields and radio stations. The Egyptians blocked the Canal and the Syrians blew up oil pipelines and pumping stations on Syrian soil, thereby threatening Western Europe with oil shortages.

Both Arab and world opinion was against the Anglo-French-Israeli military action.[70] The subsequent war was brought to an end by America's insistence that Britain and France withdraw their forces. The US had placed pressure on sterling in order to influence the British and

had threatened to expel Israel from the UN. This effectively marked the beginning of the end of the latter two European powers' influence and presence in the Middle East, which would subsequently be shaped by superpower rivalry within the context of the cold war.[71]

While Egypt withdrew from Gaza and the Sinai, it, nevertheless, emerged victorious from the conflict. The Suez Canal base was taken over by Egypt, and the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement was cancelled. In addition, all French and British property and interests in Egypt were nationalized, thereby ending an era of colonial influence on the local economy. The nationalization of the Canal and subsequent conflict multiplied Nasser's popularity within the Arab world. Nasser was delighted to accept the mantle of leader of the Arab world and Arab nationalism.

Jordan was the most susceptible to the current of Arab nationalism encouraged by Nasserism. Over half of Jordan's population were Palestinians who felt little loyalty to the Hashemite regime. Jordan's leadership was under severe criticism from Egypt and Syria for its connections with the West. In addition, it could not rely on Saudi Arabia to come to its aid due to the longstanding enmity between the Al-Saud and Hashemite clans.[72] A pro-Nasser government was formed in October 1956. Ties with the British were subsequently broken and British subsidies to the kingdom were replaced by contributions from an Arab solidarity agreement comprising Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia.

In Syria, Baa'thism held greater appeal. During the first three years of independence between 1946–9, Syria was ruled by a civilian government that was perceived as ineffective. A coup in 1949 brought in a military government.[73] The Baa'th (Resurrection) Party represented a challenge to the traditional elite in Syria, who were typically drawn from ruling urban families. Its appeal was strongest among the new educated elite, who were not from the dominant families and those from minorities, such as the 'Alawis, Druzes and Christians. It also responded to the need to define the Syrian identity.[74] Unlike Nasserism, Baa'thism was not associated with any particular leader or state and, therefore, had wider appeal and potential. This was much needed in a country beset by ethnic and religious divisions that had been encouraged by the French. The Baa'thist ideology was based on ending social injustice and oppression and promoting freedom, democracy and socialism – a national resurrection through social revolution. The party also stressed the need to unite as a single Arab nation.[75] In 1957, with political instability in the country threatening to benefit the Communist Party, the leaders of the Baa'th Party approached Nasser about a union with Egypt.[76] A union between Syria and Egypt was formed in February 1958 and was called

the UAR.[77] It represented an Arab nationalist ideal.[78] Its creation helped to generate significant changes in a number of other countries. Jordan and Iraq established the Arab Union.[79] Nuri Said and the Iraqi monarchy were overthrown in July of the same year. Said's support for President Camille Chamoun is believed to have prompted the violent revolution to take place. Said, the king and the crown prince were murdered and an Iraqi republic was declared. With this, Nasser's main rival in the Middle East was removed.[80] While many factors contributed to the violent and bloody overthrow of the regime, Iraq's membership of the Baghdad Pact and its isolation within the region undoubtedly played a role.[81] At the same time, the short-lived Arab Union came to an end.[82]

The civil war in Lebanon was brought to an end with elections that brought in a moderate president, General Faud Chehab, and a government that represented both sides in the conflict. However, the government took a less pro-Western stance, which was more palatable to Arab nationalists. Yemen attempted to gain support for its efforts to wrest control of South Arabia from the British by applying to join the UAR. The United Arab States comprising Yemen and the UAR was subsequently formed. Arab unity now seemed palpable.[83] In Algeria too, the wind of change seemed also to blow in a similar direction as the regime that had been established after independence in 1962 was replaced in 1965 by a government committed to non-alignment and socialism. At the same time, the exploitation of oil in the Middle East had given the region a distinctive place in the world economy, particularly the Gulf states. It also multiplied the revenues of some governments.[84]

Turkey and Iran continued to follow separate paths. In Turkey, the end of the Second World War generated pressure for political change. Atatürk's successor, President Ismet Inönü, who took office in 1938, had basically followed the policies of his predecessor. Greater freedom of expression was allowed, spawning a multiparty system.[85] In 1950, the party founded by Atatürk was defeated in elections. This marked the end of republican rule and the beginning of democratic rule in Turkey.

The desire for political change was in part an indication of opposition to the secularism associated with Atatürk and Inönü. One of the first things that the Democrats did upon election was to legalize the Arabic call to payer, which had been banned by their predecessors. Religious education was also permitted in primary schools, unless parents objected. The new government also increased the number of schools devoted to training Muslim payer leaders. Greater funds were also allocated to the upkeep of mosques. These and other such measures represented the return to a more balanced approach to the expression

of religion. The Democrats were not intent on overturning the principle of secularism.

The government of Adnan Menderes, who was prime minister between 1950 and 1960, was also committed to reducing the role of the state in economic affairs, although some degree of state involvement was retained. However, when public criticism of economic reform policies increased, Menderes reduced press freedom and called on the army to disrupt Republican political campaigns. The army was, however, not willing to be instrumentalized in this way. A military coup d'état on 27 May 1960 brought an end to the first Turkish republic. The coup was undertaken in order to preserve Kemalist principles. While Atatürk had created a separation between the military and political authority in the country, the military continued to regard itself as the guardian of secular and democratic ideals.

The new constitution was approved in 1961. It created a bicameral legislature in place of a single-House assembly. It also included clauses ensuring the rights of individuals and reasserted the republic's commitment to secularism. Once the new constitution was approved, the military prepared to return power to civilian authorities. In response to mounting political unrest, the military once again intervened in defence of Kemalist principles in 1971. The country was returned to civilian rule two years later.[86]

In Iran, Mohammed Reza Shah took the thrown following his father's abdication in 1941. The country was marked by political instability during the 1940s. Political factions that had been suppressed by Reza Shah sought to reassert themselves. The domestic political situation was further aggravated by the activities of the Soviet Union, Britain and the US – all of which sought to increase their influence within the country by backing particular political factions. This rendered the Shah especially vulnerable to the criticism that he was being used as a puppet by foreign powers. Resistance to foreign interference was strong, since Iran, while never colonized or designated a protectorate, was unable to enjoy full sovereignty for the first part of the twentieth century.[87] Indeed, '[c]ultural disrespect, economic domination, and imperial manipulation characterized Europe's relationship with Iran for much of the century leading up to 1950'.[88]

Criticism of the activities of foreign powers in Iran and anti-royalism found its expression in Mohammad Mossadegh. A broad-based coalition under his leadership came together to form the National Front.[89] Some religious leaders believed that Mossadegh had abandoned Islam. One of the mullahs, Ruhollah Khomeini, who would one day become

Iran's supreme leader, was among them. One of the most vocal of the mullahs was Ayatollah Abolqasem Kashani, who rose in prominence in the anti-imperialism movement. Mohammed Reza Shah attempted to silence him by sending him into exile in 1949. This did not, however, succeed. He won a seat from his exile in Beirut in the Iranian Majlis and was permitted to return, due to his popular support. Kashani wanted to rid Iran of foreign influence and for Iran to become part of a pan-Islamic commonwealth that would represent an alternative force to that of the Western and Soviet blocs. He led a faction within the Majlis. Both Mossadegh and Kashani were fiercely anti-British. Iranian politics were becoming increasingly polarized. The nationalist fervour came to a climax around the issue of oil. In January 1951, they called for national protests to force a nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian oil company. The prime minister, Razmara, was shot dead. The official version was that he was assassinated by a member of the group Fedayeen-i-Islam (Devotees of Islam), an Iranian secret society founded in 1946. Yet, controversy surrounded his death, which was believed by some to have been arranged by the Shah. The day after Razmara's death, Mossadegh's oil committee voted to advise the nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian.[90]

The British persuaded Mohammed Reza Shah to appoint a pro-British prime minister, which he did – Sayyed Zia. The British also wanted the Truman Administration to engage with and strengthen the relative position of pro-Western factions, without avail. However, when the Majlis assembled to discuss the appointment of Sayyed Zia, Mossadegh put himself forward as prime ministerial candidate. It was put to an immediate vote and Mossadegh was voted in as prime minister. Mossadegh announced that he would only accept the position if the Majlis accepted an Act to nationalize Anglo-Iranian that he had been behind.[91]

In spite of a British and American boycott of Iranian oil that precipitated both a domestic and international crisis, Mossadegh refused to bow to foreign interests. Internal tension developed as the US sought to assert their influence by backing Mohammed Reza Shah. Mossadegh was granted emergency powers, which he used to restrain the monarchy. His objective was to replace the Monarch's personal rule with that of constitutional law, to place the military under parliamentary authority and to bring about a fairer distribution of wealth and land within the country.

However, with dwindling oil revenues, Mossadegh's reform plans became more and more difficult to realize. In addition, the religious elements of the National Front were fearful of the possible secularization of Iranian society that the reform measures might generate. As

the National Front disintegrated, a group of military officers, backed by both the US – now under Eisenhower – and British governments, plotted a coup to overthrow Mossadegh. The Shah approved the coup and signed a decree that appointed the leader of the officers' secret committee, General Fazallah Zahedi, as prime minister. After an initial failed coup, following which the Shah fled to Rome, the military officers succeeded and the Shah returned to Iran. The 1953 coup restored the Monarchy's personal rule and consolidated US influence in the country. The Shah sought to establish alliances with Western powers and to follow a Western development model.[92]

Conclusions: The seeds of the third critical turning point

The 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict was instrumental in polarizing Arab and Israeli influences. There was ambiguity in the terms of the armistice agreements between Israel, on the one hand, and Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, on the other. Thus, rather than bringing an end to the conflict, it perpetuated it and prepared the way for the next critical turning point, which was marked by the 1967 War.[93] The agreements were not peace treaties. Arab leaders viewed them as expanded ceasefire accords and, therefore, temporary.[94] Moreover, Arab states refused to recognize Israel.[95] On the Israeli side, some viewed the armistice agreements as peace accords, while others shared the Arab perception of them.[96]

The 1948 defeat had a significant impact on Arabs:

> For the Palestinians 1948 did mark the most catastrophic defeat in their protracted fight against the Jewish National Home. In 1917 some 690,000 Palestinians (compared to 85,000 Jews) formed a community that controlled nearly all of Palestine. By 1948 they had become an impotent minority inside a Jewish state. Some 700,000 Palestinians became refugees. The trauma of defeat, dispersal, and exile seared itself into their collective memory. They resolved to return to liberate Palestine.[97]

The loss of Palestine also contributed to anti-Western sentiments among Arabs: 'Many Arabs still view Israel as a bridgehead planted in their midst by Western powers determined to keep Arabs divided and to frustrate their national ambitions.'[98] Deep-seated mistrust and antagonism was felt towards Britain, in particular, and towards the US for its role in garnering support for the UN partition plan.[99]

The major humiliation of defeat served to bring to power a new generation of leaders, replacing those who belonged to the colonial era. It was committed to achieving greater equality and justice and Arab unity. Arab nationalism, as interpreted by the political elite of the mandate era, had not borne the fruits it had promised. Relations between Egypt and Iraq were far from harmonious. Shortly after the 1958 revolution in Iraq, General Kassem's second-in-command, Colonel Aref, who supported a union between Egypt and Iraq, was imprisoned. Kassem favoured Iraqi communists over Arab nationalists, resulting in an acrimonious relationship with Nasser.[100]

Relations between Egypt and Syria also ended in division rather than unity. While the UAR was highly acclaimed when it was brought into existence, it was not a partnership of equals. The union was made conditional on Nasser having absolute authority in both constituent parts of the union. Syrian Baa'thists assumed Nasser would govern Syria through them.[101] However, the reality would be somewhat different. Syrian leaders found themselves with limited capacity to influence decision making. A single-party military government was imposed on Syria, with Egyptian personnel holding some important positions within the regime. These measures, as well as the implementation of land reform laws, that had been adopted in Egypt disaffected influential elements of Syrian society.[102]

Not surprisingly, the UAR came to an end in September 1961 when the Egyptians were asked to leave Syria. While the popularity of the Baa'thist party in Syria had suffered since it had promoted the Union, it recovered rapidly. After a brief spell in power by a non-socialist government, the Baa'thist party was back in government by 1963. A split within the Baa'thist party between those with political experience and young, often army, officers, from minority groups formed. The division resulted in a coup in 1966 in which the Alawite officers played an important role. After another coup in 1970, the Alawites gained yet greater prominence under the leadership of Hafez Al-Assad.[103]

The collapse of the UAR represented a blow to Nasser's objectives and to Pan-Arabism. He, nevertheless, continued to espouse Arab unity, though not without considerable opposition from the governments of Iraq, Jordan, Syria and Saudi Arabia. In response to bitter accusations that he was destroying rather than promoting Arab unity, Nasser announced in 1962 that Egypt would leave the Arab League.[104]

Divisions within the Arab world were further aggravated when civil war broke out in Yemen in 1962. When the Zaydi imam, the ruler of Yemen, died, his successor was removed by army officers, who received

some tribal support. The imamate was declared the Yemen Arab Republic (now North Yemen). Egypt sent military support to assist the group that had taken over. However, parts of the population remained loyal to the imam and rose up against the new government. They received support from Saudi Arabia. Several years of civil war followed, in which Egypt's conflict with traditional Arab monarchies became embroiled.[105] Nasser was, thus, pitting himself against Arab monarchies – as well as the colonial powers in sub-Saharan Africa – which only served to exacerbate discord in the region.

In 1963, a new union between Egypt, Syria and Iraq was proposed. Yet, the degree of distrust between Nasser and the Baa'thists was now considerable. The Iraqi Baa'th Party was also split and was ejected by President Aref, who continued to push for a union. Cautious about the lack of national unity in Iraq, Nasser agreed to only regular political consultation with Iraq through joint political command. The seed for the decline of Pan-Arabism as a dominant ideology in the Middle East had thus already taken root by this time.

In the Maghrib, Tunisia joined the Arab League in 1958 and left immediately, accusing Egypt of dominating the body. Tunisia's President Bouguiba also accused Nasser of interfering in Tunisian politics and of trying to remove him from power. The relationship between Egypt and Morocco was also strained when Nasser backed Algeria in a border dispute between the new socialist republic of Algeria and Morocco in 1963.[106]

Disillusionment with Arab nationalism – exacerbated by the gap between norms and practice – during this period also contributed to the growth of Islamism as a political force in the region. The coup in which Nasser had overthrown King Farouk was planned in collaboration with the Muslim Brotherhood. When Nasser took power, he offered to make Sayyid Qutb an adviser to the Revolutionary Command Council. Qutb, who was hoping to be invited to become a cabinet member, declined the offer. While he eventually accepted the post of head of the editorial board of the revolution, Qutb did not stay in the post for long. The Free Officers and the Muslim Brothers, in fact, had very different visions of how Egypt ought to be reformed.[107]

Qutb was imprisoned in 1954. He was no less radical when he was released a few months later. The parting of ways of Nasser and Qutb reflected the broader divergence of positions and antagonism between the military and the Brotherhood. Their disparate paths reached a climax in October 1954, when a Muslim Brother attempted to assassinate Nasser. Qutb was charged with being a member of the secret branch of the Brotherhood and sentenced to life in prison. The sentence was

reduced to 15 years due to ill health. His time in prison was spent writing a manifesto entitled *Milestones* (ma'alim fi al tariq), which was gradually smuggled out and, in 1964, published. Qutb was eventually executed in 1966.[108]

Qutb claimed that Muslims in Egypt were living in a state of *jahiliyya* – the Time of Ignorance – that existed before Islam, characterized by decline, disorder and paganism.[109] According to this view, society could only be altered through a complete acceptance of Islam as a total system. This implied that secular governments such as Nasser's would have to be replaced by an Islamic state governed by Shari'ah law.[110] Islamism was, thus, beginning to emerge as a competing vision of the radical transformation required in countries suffering from a crisis of political identity and regime legitimacy.

5
The Six-Day War and its Consequences

The 1948 defeat in the Arab-Israeli war, the ambiguous armistice agreements that followed and the growing belief in the need for collective Arab actions that characterized the second critical turning point created the conditions for the third critical turning point, which was highlighted by the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. The Six-Day War, as it is also known, which involved Israel, Egypt, Syria and Jordan, brought many significant changes to the region and helped to sow the seeds for the next and fourth critical turning point. The war resulted from a combination of factors, including increased tensions between Israel, Egypt and Syria, and internal problems within the Jewish state, evidenced by the anxiety of elites, demographic conditions and economic strains. The key motives behind it are, however, still debated among historians. The war constituted another humiliating moment for Arab countries. In one day, the Israelis had destroyed the whole Egyptian air force. Five days later, they occupied the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights.[1] Again, these military actions were accompanied by huge movements of refugees, which would be a source of enormous political difficulties in the future.

This conflict again revealed the limits of Arab military and political power and led to further fragmentation. It was also clear evidence of the regional dominance of Israel. Yet 1967 was more than a military defeat. It created a grave moral crisis that had important repercussions. First, it sounded the death knell of the idea of Pan-Arabism (but not Arab nationalism as such), as promoted by Nasser. There was a growing realization that Arab political unity was merely an illusion. Its last expression, the 1973 war against Israel, led by Egypt and Syria, confirmed this fact.[2]

The political fragmentation within the Middle East had actually become more apparent, soon after the death of Nasser in 1970. Many

countries embarked on individualistic strategies. It is important to note that this decade witnessed a profound change in the regional balance of power with an increase in the influence of oil-producing countries (Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Libya and Algeria), particularly Saudi Arabia, which benefited from the rise in petroleum prices, and the progressive isolation of Egypt, especially after the conclusion of the 1978 Peace Treaty, which was signed by Egyptian president Anwar El Sadat and Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin on 17 September, and negotiated at Camp David and so also known as the Camp David Accords. In such a complex regional context, it was not surprising to see the strengthening of a distinct Palestinian identity. Palestinian groups realized that Arab solidarity would not be sufficient to help them gain independence and that they should engage in their own struggle. Ironically, the 1967 defeat marked the beginning of their march towards statehood. This was the second important consequence of the conflict.

Another major outcome of the Six-Day War was the resurgence of Islamist movements and ideology. Following the military disaster of 1967, some key opinion-formers in the region began to think that the weak observance of religion was, in part, responsible for the debacle. In some circles, Pan-Arabism progressively gave way to the resurgent Islamism. Islamist movements articulated the desire for more authentic solutions to an array of contemporary problems and an alternative to secularism. The quest for genuine independence and greater authenticity were, therefore, still ongoing and the seeds for the next critical turning point were being laid. Of course, religion had been an important underlying factor well before the 1970s and groups advocating such beliefs had existed for quite a long time. Yet, with the dismissal of Pan-Arabism after the 1967 defeat, this movement became not only more visible, but also more credible. Islamist movements were especially prevalent in societies that suffered from social disruption caused by the rapid political and economic changes of the 1970s. Initially, they were tolerated and even promoted by some countries in the belief or hope that they could be better controlled and might help prevent the emergence of internal challenges. However, the fragile equilibrium suddenly broke up in 1979, under the pressure of several events, which marked the fourth critical turning point.

The 1967 War: Initial conditions

The crisis that led to war began with expectations of an imminent Israeli attack on Syria. In February 1966, a radical faction of the Syrian Baa'th

party overthrew the regime in place. It took a more combative stance towards Israel. Al-Fatah, which proclaimed a Palestinian nationalist ideology and was founded by members of the Palestinian diaspora in 1954, had by early 1965 begun to carry out sabotage operations, with the support of the Syrian Baa'th party. In 1967, Israel issued warnings to Syria that Israel would retaliate if sabotage operations within Israel continued. Soviet, Syrian and Egyptian intelligence warned of an imminent Israeli attack against Syria. On 18 May 1967, Nasser asked the UN to withdraw from the Sinai. Nasser then closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. Realizing that war was imminent, King Hussein of Jordan signed a defence pact with Egypt, something which Egypt and Syria had already done.[3]

The Soviet intelligence indicating that Israeli troops were gathering in preparation for an attack on Syria has been subject to considerable scrutiny. Some suggest that the Soviet Union may have deliberately exaggerated the military threat in order to bolster the Syrian regime by enlisting the support of Egypt, with which Syria had a defence pact.[4] It is speculated that Soviet warnings of an imminent Israeli attack may have been intended to encourage Egyptian support for the Syrian regime or to increase tension between Israel and Arab states.[5] Others support the view that the Soviet Union was deliberately attempting to escalate the crisis in order to force Israel to strike first and was even involved in their military planning.[6] According to Fred Khouri, Nasser was led to believe that the Soviet Union would support Arab states in countering Israel.[7] Meetings had indeed taken place between Shams Badran, Egyptian Minister of War, and Soviet leaders from which Badran came away believing that he had received assurances of active support from the Soviet Union and he is believed to have reported this to Nasser.[8] It seems safe to assume that the Soviet Union encouraged Israel to engage in brinkmanship that might culminate in a military confrontation with its Arab neighbours. Soviet reasons for doing so, however, remain unclear and open to speculation.

The belief that the US would come to the aid of Israel also served to embolden the Israeli government and encourage it to adopt an uncompromising position.[9] The Six-Day War marked a turning point for US relations with Israel. Under President Johnson the US forged a closer alliance with Israel and shunned the Arab nationalist leaders, especially Nasser.[10] Johnson had been a strong supporter of Israel and had criticized Eisenhower for his insistence that Israel pull out of the Suez in 1957. While he may not have unquestioningly supported Israel, he was sensitive to the mood in Congress.[11] The warm relations between Israel

and the British Labour Party in the 1960's as well as with the Johnson White House in the US, and the collective antagonism towards Nasser at the height of the cold war, all encouraged Israel's Zionist territorial ambitions to execute a pre-emptive and crippling strike of its neighbours in 1967.

King Hussein and Nasser were convinced that Israeli intervention was being supported by the British and American governments, although King Hussein and Nasser were never able to prove that their accusations were true. This claim had been based on the large numbers of enemy aircrafts that Jordan had detected on its radar screens, far more than was believed possible had Israel been acting alone. As a result, Egypt severed relations with the US (it had already broken off relations with Britain in 1965 over Rhodesia). Syria and Algeria did the same and Lebanon, Sudan and Kuwait withdrew their ambassadors from London and Washington. The oil-producing Gulf states imposed an embargo on oil exports to Britain and the US.[12]

The governments of both Britain and the US would have had good reason to wish to see Nasser fall. Cairo had become the freedom capital of the Third World. Nasser was supporting revolutionary movements in the Maghrib and sub-Saharan Africa. This, in addition, for his support of the separatists in Yemen, had not won him friends in the West.

A number of other factors served to increase tension in the region before the outbreak of war. The 1967 War has been characterized as a 'slide into crisis' and as the 'product of error and mutual miscalculation'.[13] There were certainly a number of factors that increased tension in the region in the run up to the war. Clashes between Syria and Israel over the use of Jordan River waters and Israeli cultivation of land in the demilitarized zone constituted important factors that contributed to mounting antagonism. In mid-1964, Israel began pumping water from the Sea of Galilee. Syria then planned to respond by diverting the River Jordan's sources into its own territory. Israel responded by increasing military patrols near the sources. This was followed by exchange of fire between both sides and then clashes in 1965.[14]

Clashes between Israeli and Syrian forces along the border in early 1967 also appear to have played a significant role in increasing tension. Israel had sent tractors to plough 'disputed' lands. At the same time, a radical regime in Syria supported Palestinian commando activities aimed at reducing the Israelis' sense of security, discouraging foreign investment in the country and encouraging emigration from Israel.[15] Syria was keen to support Fatah in order to prove its Pan-Arabist credentials to its domestic audience as well as to outdo Nasser's bid for

leadership of the Arab world.[16] Both Syria and Israel were aware that their actions would induce reprisals from the other side. Inevitably, clashes occurred. What started out as fighting using light weapons ended with Israel employing planes to bomb Syrian military positions close to Israeli-controlled land as well as Syrian border villages.

Israeli military action prompted the governments of Arab states to pledge their support for Syria. It also generated divisions between them. Egyptian media accused the Jordanian leadership of failing to come to the assistance of Syria, while the Jordanian government complained that as in the case of the attacks on Samu, the United Arab Republic (UAR) did nothing to help and accused Egypt of being too preoccupied with fighting fellow Arabs in Yemen. These events placed even greater pressure on Egypt to take a more proactive role in support of Syria in the event of any future Israeli attack. Nasser's Arabist credentials hung in the balance.

The fact that no other Arab state came to the assistance of Syria may also have made Israel more pugnacious by suggesting that they could act with relative impunity. With the rhetoric of both Israel and Syria growing increasingly bellicose, this left Nasser in a quandary. Arab military forces were not strong enough to prevail in a military confrontation with Israel, which would most likely be supported by the US. Nasser is believed to have entered into a mutual defence pact with Syria in the hope of restraining Syrian leaders.[17]

At the height of Arab nationalism, Arab states believed themselves to be militarily and ideologically superior to Israelis.[18] Pan-Arabism had bought a sense of confidence to the Arab world. An important element of Nasserism was the promise of the liberation of Palestine. Arab unity was believed to be the means by which Arab states could defeat Israel. Nasser was concerned to maintain a leadership role in the Arab world.[19] However he appears to have been motivated by pragmatism and balance of power politics as much as by ideology. This stands in contrast with the motivations of the political leadership in the considerably more radical Syria.[20] As well as Arab unity, another foundational element of Syrian foreign policy was its position vis-à-vis Israel. Israel was viewed as an obstacle to the unification of the Arab nation as well as an extension of Western imperialism, planted in the heart of Arab lands. The domestic political climate was imbued with revolutionary enthusiasm and was not conducive to seeking stable relations with its Israeli neighbour. Ardent support for the Palestinian cause was also used as a means to undermine Nasser's credentials as the leader of the Arab world. Syria's aggressive foreign policy stance towards Israel was,

however, unlikely to have been intended to culminate in an all out war with Israel.[21] Although King Hussein warned Nasser that this may have been the intention of the bellicose regime in Damascus.[22]

The militant Baa'th regime in Syria had begun to increase the pressure to liberate Palestine. Nasser is believed to have taken on the challenge by dismissing the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) and showing himself ready to come to the aid of its ally Syria.[23] He may not have expected UNEF to comply so easily with the request. Egyptian forces then occupied UN positions at Sharm al-Shaykh and blocked Israeli traffic in the Straits of Tiran. This considerably undermined the status quo in the region. Nasser was bluffing, hoping for US-Soviet intervention to calm the situation. Yet, neither the US nor the Soviet Union took steps to prevent UNEF's removal.[24]

However, the blocking of the Straits was a step too far. As far as the Israelis were concerned, this act and the increasing furore around Nasser's brinksmanship could not be allowed to go unchecked.[25] The Israeli government had previously stated that it would consider the closure of the Straits of Tiran as an act of war. Jordan's defence pact with Egypt also caused concern in Israel.[26] Prime Minister Levi Eshkol was also dependent on the military for intelligence and analysis of the strategic situation. This also gave military leaders a generous margin of manoeuvre when translating orders. This lead to actions in the military theatre that the political leadership may not have intended.[27] Whether military leaders believed Egypt to be a genuine threat is debatable. The Israeli chief of staff at the time, Yitzak Rabin, is on record as having stated a year after the Six-Day War that he did not believe that Egypt intended to go to war with Israel.[28]

Nevertheless, in May, the mood among the Israeli military was that war was impending and action was paramount. Its leaders were convinced that the accumulation of Egyptian forces in the Sinai could imply the end of Israeli deterrence. Israeli military intelligence had also received indications that the Egyptians were preparing to launch a pre-emptive strike. Whether there was really evidence of an imminent Egyptian attack is still debated. The military were certainly trying to convince Eshkol that this was the case and of the need for action. Pressure from the public to take a tough stance was also growing. Ultimately, Eshkol gave into the mounting pressure. He was replaced by General Moshe Dayan, a 1956 war hero, as minister of defence. This led to a national unity government in which Menachem Begin, from the right-wing opposition party, was a part.[29]

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan had adopted a pragmatic approach to Israel and was certainly not eager to promote a full-blown war with

its Zionist neighbours. Recently released documentation suggests that an Israeli retaliatory attack on the Jordanian village of Samu on 13 November 1966 severely damaged King Hussein's confidence in the Israelis and nourished his suspicion that Israel had designs on the West Bank. King Hussein also began to doubt that the US would intervene to protect Jordanian territorial integrity.[30] The attack left 15 Jordanian soldiers and five civilians dead, wounded 36 soldiers and four civilians, and resulted in the destruction of 93 buildings. This was clearly a disproportionate reprisal for the three Israeli soldiers killed by a landmine. It was all the more concerning for King Hussein, given that the Israeli leadership was aware that he was doing what he could to prevent the Fatah group from launching sabotage attacks on Israel from within Jordan. It appeared to indicate a change in the Israeli stance towards Jordan and the prelude towards an attempt to seize the West Bank.[31] The extreme and aggressive nature of the attack on Samu may also have reflected the latitude that the Israeli military enjoyed vis-à-vis the civilian leadership at the time. Reflecting the sense of insecurity within the kingdom, the Jordanian state-run media condemned Nasser for failing to defend the Hashemite kingdom and for using UNEF as a shield.[32] However, despite the public row between Nasser and Hussein, fear of being drawn into a conflict with Israel and, in so doing, losing the West Bank, prompted Hussein to seek reconciliation with Nasser.[33]

Whether Israel was intent on territorial expansion is much debated. In the Arab collective memory, the answer is affirmative. Yet some observers maintain that the Israeli government appears to have had no prior strategic plan for the war, which indicates territorial expansion was not defined as a political objective prior to the outbreak of war. It is important to note, however, that there were significant divisions between the political and military leadership within Israel at the time. The former were more intent on finding a diplomatic solution to the crisis, whereas the latter were eager to engage in military action to deal offensively with their Arab neighbours.[34] In the run up to the war, the military actions often appeared to contradict official policy and contributed to growing antagonism between Israel and its neighbours, as was the case in the attack on Samu. In addition, on 12 May, then chief of staff, Yitzak Rabin, spoke of occupying Damascus and overthrowing the Syrian regime in a newspaper interview, which was out of line with Israeli policy.[35]

While it does appear that a lack of adequate civilian control of the General Staff was partly responsible for the offensive actions of Israel, recently declassified documents suggest that the Israeli attack was carried

out not for military reasons, but in order to scupper diplomatic endeavours that may have resulted in a disadvantageous outcome for Israel.[36] These documents imply that the Israeli claim that Egypt intended to strike Israel was aimed at winning American consent for an Israeli first strike. It seems that members of the American administration did not share the Israeli opinion about the imminence of an Egyptian first strike. Nasser's actions had effected a return to the status quo ante 1956. A political solution to the crisis may have represented a diplomatic defeat for Israel.[37] Fifteen years after the Six-Day War, Menachem Begin admitted that the war was not a defensive war.[38] Although Israeli civil-military relations may also help to provide an answer to the question of territorial expansion. The military campaign in relation to Jerusalem, the West Bank and Syria was not defined by the government.[39] The outcome appears to have been guided primarily by the military leadership rather than the government. Indeed, the cabinet was not always consulted in advance before military orders were given.[40]

Thus, superpower and inter-Arab rivalries as well as the militancy of the Syrian regime certainly encouraged the dangerous game of brinkmanship between Israel and Egypt. However, weak civilian leadership in Israel and the Israeli Defense Forces' (IDF) war-footing appears to have contributed to the outbreak of war. The military played a significant role in escalating the crisis prior to war and was eager to make a first strike against Egypt. If territorial expansion was not a political objective of the government, it was certainly the outcome of the offensive and unlimited objectives of the Israeli General Staff. This perhaps helps to explain and partly support the widespread view in the Arab world that Israel was motivated by a desire to capture a greater proportion of Arab lands.

The third critical turning point

The Israeli aim initially was to destroy the Egyptian army in the Sinai. On 5 June, Israel destroyed most of the Egyptian air force in a surprise attack. Jordan had entered the war in defence of Egypt, despite Israel's warning to Jordan to keep out of the war. In fact, it was too late. King Hussein had already handed over control of Jordanian forces to Egyptian command. Israel then advanced into the West Bank. During the fighting on 5 June, Israel began edging towards the idea of 'liberating' Jerusalem.[41] The speed and success with which Israel sealed the fate of the Arab armies was perceived by some as confirmation that Israel was not primarily motivated by self-defence but by territorial expansion. It was certainly interpreted in this way by the majority of Arab

Map 5.1 Territories occupied by Israel since June 1967

Source: Territories occupied by Israel since June 1967, Map No. 3243 Rev. 4, June 1997, United Nations Cartographic Section.

observers. However, as mentioned, events on the ground may not have been indicative of a prior political objective of territorial expansion. Indeed, Moshe Dayan was highly critical of the government for its apparent lack of a political plan.[42]

After Israel had occupied the Old City of Jerusalem and the West Bank by 7 June, Jordan accepted the UN Security Council's call for a ceasefire. The following day, Egypt accepted a ceasefire. After Israel had captured the Golan Heights and the Syrian city of Quneitra, Syria also accepted a ceasefire on 10 June. Troops sent from Algeria, Sudan and Kuwait to the Suez Canal front failed to arrive in time to affect developments.[43] In just six days, Israel had succeeded in vanquishing three Arab states. The outcome of the war represented a humiliating defeat for the Arab states involved. Map 5.1 shows the territories occupied by Israel in June 1967.

The speedy and crushing defeat of Arab armies had a number of consequences for the region. As the victor, Israel's credentials as a regional power were significantly enhanced. Not only had it become a regional power to be reckoned with, it also had become an occupying power, with huge and lasting ramifications for the Middle East security context. The apparent ineffectiveness of Arab states to liberate Palestine prompted Palestinians to take the struggle into their own hands. The Arab defeat would also mark a sea change in Arab politics. Political Islam began to emerge and to be cultivated as an ideological competitor to an increasingly moribund Pan-Arabism.

Post-1967: The political development path

The Six-Day War altered the map of the Middle East. It resulted in Israel occupying the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and the Sinai.[44] It was now an occupying power.[45] In addition, Israel was viewed by the West, especially the US, as a major regional power and potentially important ally.[46] The war served to cement the previously informal alliance between Israel and the US into a 'special relationship'.[47] The complete and unquestioned US support for Israel after 1967 was meant to end Nasser's Pan-Arabist project, turn more of the Middle East into an anti-Soviet camp, while meeting Israel's greater Israel-Zionist dream. Strategically, the 1967 war was a similar exercise to the 1956 crisis, where the constant in both campaigns was Israel and its expansionist interest in the Sinai peninsula.

After the war many considered that the occupation would be only temporary. However, colonization of these territories by Israeli settlers was prompted by the combination of euphoria following easy victory

and a feeling of Israeli impunity (until 1973). The outcome of the war generated a debate within Israel about the territorial objectives of Zionism and marked the beginning of the settlement movement.[48] The objective was massive and irreversible settlement leading to annexation in keeping with the greater Israel-Zionist dream. One year after the war, the Golan had six settlements. Settlements were also established in the West Bank, the Jordan Rift and the Gaza Strip. After these rather ad hoc beginnings, a more concerted settlement movement was concentrated on the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.[49]

The most immediate consequence of the war for Palestinians was the creation of even more displaced persons. Those Palestinians who did not flee, becoming refugees in neighbouring Arab states, were now living under occupation and governed by strict military laws. Land would also be confiscated to enable the creation of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.[50] Initial protests against occupation took place approximately a month after the war. Israel's annexation of east Jerusalem triggered protests. A petition was also sent to the authorities objecting to annexation. This was followed by larger demonstrations and strikes. Dissidence and protest were curbed through military rule unrestrained by the civil rights that Israeli citizens enjoyed. In the face of the crushing of civil dissent, Palestinians turned to armed resistance.[51]

Palestinian nationalism had not emerged in a significant sense prior to the Six-Day War, with the exception being the creation of the PLO in 1964. Prior to the 1967 War, Palestinians had placed their faith in the capacity of Arab states to liberate them. Their sense of identity had been formed through a wider identification with the Arab world. After the Arab defeat during the war, they realized that their future would depend on their own efforts. Palestinian resistance organizations subsequently increased in popularity.[52] In addition to the PLO, a number of other resistance groups emerged following the war, such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which later became known as the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The PFLP boycotted the PLO, due to ideological differences. Al-Sa'iqa ('thunder and lightening') was also established following the 1967 War and was supported by the Syrian government. The Iraqi-backed Abu Nidal Group or 'Fatah – The Revolutionary Council' was spawned as a splinter group of Fatah and the PLO in 1974.[53] The PLO and Fatah both refused to endorse UN Resolution 242 on the basis that it would imply acceptance of the right of Israel to exist and because it referred to the Palestinians only as a refugee problem rather than a people with the right to a homeland.[54] Inter-Palestinian rivalry would, however, emerge between the PLO and Fatah. Fatah and

its supporter, Syria, suspected that Arab states were trying to contain Palestinian nationalism. After the war, an internal debate was launched on how it should adapt to the new situation.[55]

Many members of Palestinian resistance organizations were living outside the land they sought to liberate. Therefore, they required bases in at least one of Israel's Arab neighbours. The tension that this caused for Jordan was particularly acute. The guerrilla movements posed a threat to King Hussein. By 1970, they had established their own administrative entities, carried out raids in Israel and generally escaped the control of the Jordanian state. King Hussein sought to re-establish his authority by cracking down on the guerrillas for ten days following 15 September 1970, when marshall law was declared. The Jordanian authorities carried out an offensive against Palestinians in the country in what became known as 'Black September'. No distinction was made between civilians and guerrillas. This dark episode left 3,000 Palestinians dead and served to reinforce the sense of isolation felt by Palestinians.[56]

The continued Israeli occupation served to radicalize the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Fearful of losing their land and increasingly demoralized by their apparent abandonment by the international community, armed resistance appeared the only option available. The PLO became the principal organization towards which they turned. By the late 1970s, Arafat had become the figurehead of the organization, which had now created a base in Lebanon and established linkages with the Palestinians in the occupied territories.[57]

The defeat of combatant Arab states was so complete and devastating that it had a profound collective psychological impact not only among the political and military elite within these countries, but also among Arab intellectuals. It shattered the confidence of a generation and caused people to look deep inside the workings of their countries and fabric of their societies for the cause. It came as such a shock to people, because they had been buoyed by the grandeur of the Pan-Arabist project. With the defeat, people were brought back down to earth. They felt that they had been duped by the revolutionary rhetoric of the likes of Nasser. The promise of effective independence seemed suddenly to ring hollow. Not only had they been defeated by the tiny State of Israel, but their lands had also been occupied.[58] The 1967 War prompted a period of introspection and self-criticism among Arabs that would bring about significant changes in regional politics.

Military defeat was compounded by the revenues that Egypt would lose from Sinai oil and the Suez Canal. Lost revenues had to be replaced by subsidies from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Jordan had also lost its most

agriculturally productive and industrial area – the West Bank – as well as major tourist havens – Bethlehem and Jerusalem. The loss of the latter was also symbolically damaging. The Old City of Jerusalem was also associated with the Hashemite claim to legitimacy. Syria's loss of the Golan Heights put Israeli forces within striking range of Damascus. The militaries of the three Arab states were also in tatters.[59] Any illusions of invincibility had been shattered. Arab states lost more territory to Israel in 1967 than in 1948.[60]

While there was a good deal of effort to downplay the scale of the defeat, it ultimately contributed a change of leadership, and in some cases regime, in the Middle East: '[m]uch as the defeat of 1948 had discredited the old regimes of landed elite, urban notables, and wealthy monarchs, so the 1967 debacle tarnished the reputations of the military regimes that had come to power in the 1950s with their programs of social reform and their promises of strength through Arab unity'.[61] There had been a failure to realize grand visionary schemes that promised radical change.[62] Disillusionment with Arab nationalism also followed the defeat, though Pan-Arabism movements were already declining in Syria prior to the 1967 War in large part as a result of the failure of efforts at union with Egypt in 1958 and with Egypt and Iraq in 1963.[63] For some, it represented the end of the Nasser era.[64] Some would stress the need for democracy and modernization. For others, a more extreme militant radicalism similar to that of Vietnam or Cuba was appealing.

The war also served to distance the Arab world from the US. Cairo broke off diplomatic relations with the US. Syria and Algeria did the same. Lebanon, Sudan and Kuwait called back their ambassadors from Britain and the US. Oil-producing Arab states announced an embargo on oil exports to the two countries believed to have aided the Israelis. While Anglo-American involvement was never proved, the belief that Britain and the US had colluded with Israel remained.[65] The defeat of Arab states also resulted in increased Soviet support in the form of arms and political aid. On 10 June 1967, the Soviet Union severed diplomatic relations with the State of Israel.[66]

The war also highlighted the gap between the ideals of Pan-Arabism and reality. Competition and bickering among Arab states had played a role in the outbreak of the war. Nasser's call for Pan-Arabism was hindered by his misguided adventurism inspired by his more radical interpretation of Arab nationalism, especially against other Arab countries. This included the Yemen crisis and the support for the overthrow of monarchies in the Arab world which pitted some Arab countries against him. The distraction of the Yemen crisis diverted some 60,000

of Nasser's troops away from the confrontation with Israel, for example. In addition, his over-reach in supporting independence movements in Sub-Saharan Africa infuriated old colonial powers and aligned them against him. His association with Third World national liberation movements as well as the non-aligned movement also estranged him from the US, which failed to understand the nature of these independence movements and insisted on his total support against the Soviets, including the Baghdad Pact of 1955 which he refused to join.

Nasser's decline also boosted the Saudi Arabian position within the region. The door was now open for King Faisal of Saudi Arabia to promote Islamic unity as potentially as important as Arab unity. In 1969, he sponsored a conference in Rabat that gathered all the leaders of Islamic states. This summit was a major success for King Faisal. It led to the creation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). The Islamic conference also upstaged the Arab summit, which took place a few months later – a summit that Nasser had been eager to convene. Nasser was by this time looking increasingly jaded.[67]

If collective Arab weakness and the lack of Arab unity had encouraged Israel to attack in the Six-Day War, the outcome of the war itself sounded the death knell of Nasser's Pan-Arabism, though there would be one more show of Arab unity during the 1973 'October War', which is also known as the Yom Kippur or Ramadan war. In this war, the leaders of Egypt and Syria, Presidents Anwar Sadat and Hafez Assad, aimed to recapture the territories lost to Israel in the 1967 War. On 4 February 1971, President Sadat launched a peace initiative in which Israel would withdraw from the Canal zone and Egypt would reopen the Canal and extend the ceasefire. The proposal was met with a lack of enthusiasm from the Israeli side, which stated that there would be no return to pre-1967 borders.[68] An agreement between Syria and Egypt to engage seems to have been reached in April 1973. In September, Egypt and Syria attempted to improve relations with Jordan and to secure pledges of financial and military support from other Arab states.[69] As Egypt prepared for war, Sadat also travelled to Riyadh to try to persuade the Saudi government to maintain an oil embargo. In 1973, global powers were far more dependent on Arab oil than they had been in 1967 and the Saudi king, who was a committed Arab nationalist, believed that an oil embargo could be effective in mobilizing world opinion against Israel this time.[70]

On 6 October 1973, Egypt attacked Israeli forces on the east side of the Suez Canal and Syria launched an attack on Israelis in the Golan Heights. After initial successes during the first few days of fighting, Egypt and Syria began to loose ground to Israel. The turning of the tide was partly

due to the military equipment supplied to Israel by the US and partly by inconsistencies between Egyptian and Syrian policies. The war ended with a ceasefire imposed as a result of the influence of the US and the Soviet Union, who had each taken sides and did not wish to see an escalation of the conflict in which they could become further embroiled or the continuation of the oil embargo by the Arab oil-producing states. Saudi Arabia had imposed an embargo on oil exports to the US and the Netherlands (the most pro-Israeli European state).[71] Indeed, one of the consequences of the 1967 War was the emergence of Saudi Arabia as a regional power.[72]

The 1973 October War would be one of the last instances in which Arab states demonstrated a united front. Their inability to effectively respond to the Palestinian question was made painfully clear by the end of the decade. With a more hard-line Israeli government led by Begin, settlement in the occupied territories accelerated, with the ultimate objective being annexation of the land occupied by Israel in the 1967 war. The Arab states and Palestinians appeared to be incapable of preventing this from happening.[73]

When Sadat decided to make peace with Israel in 1977 on his own, it was clear that Pan-Arabism was no longer a pre-eminent part of Egypt's foreign policy. In fact, Sadat had consciously sought to break with Nasser's radical form of Arab nationalism. While the Egyptian public had once hailed Sadat as a national hero, he was now failing to deliver on his promises of prosperity, and he was losing credibility. Sadat saw prosperity coming as a result of peace with Israel and, therefore, through support from the US. By being the first Arab state to make peace with Israel, Sadat wagered that Egypt would receive considerable US aid and financial investment.[74] By travelling to Jerusalem to make peace overtures with Israel, Sadat was also signalling to the US that it would negotiate alone and not with other Arab states. By doing so, he had violated the norms of Pan-Arabism. In response, Iraq attempted to fill the gap in hard-line leadership within the Arab world. Following the 1978 Camp David Accords, Baghdad led the boycott of Cairo by Arab governments. Most Arab states severed relations with Egypt and the seat of the Arab League was also moved from Cairo to Tunis.[75] Though undermining Arab unity, Sadat did succeed in forcing Israel to the negotiating table and his initiative did constitute the first Arab-Israeli peace process.

Conclusions: The seeds of the fourth critical turning point

The failure of the regimes that came into power following the 1948 Arab-Israeli war to forge coherent national identities and to gain

legitimacy would see political Islam rise to the fore as secular nationalism, socialism and Pan-Arabism waned. According to Milton-Edwards,

> The loss of Muslim-ruled Palestine to the imperial British forces during World War I, the loss of territory under the terms of the 1947 UN partition plan, the Al-Nakbah of 1948 in which thousands of Palestinians became stateless refugees, the defeat of 1967 … for the Islamists underline loss (territorial and in terms of power) and loathing of political forces that have wrought control over Muslim peoples.[76]

The loss of custodianship of Jerusalem during the Six-Day War reverberated within the Arab and Islamic communities. Jerusalem or Al-Quds holds deep religious significance within Islam as well as Christianity. It is the third holiest city in Islam (after Mecca and Medina) and was the original direction (before Mecca) towards which Mohammed decreed prayer should be made. The loss of Jerusalem is perceived as a wound that must be healed and, as such, is a symbol of Muslim identity with which to mobilize people.[77]

In Egypt, Islamic radicalism seemed to provide an alternative to Nasserism. Islamists were vehemently opposed to Nasser's secular nationalism. Following Nasser's death in 1970, Sadat brokered a deal with the Muslim Brotherhood. If they would renounce violence, he promised that he would allow them their voice. Sadat's hope was that this would weaken both Nasserists and Communists. There was thus a conscious effort by Sadat to ally himself with political Islam. The waning of Pan-Arabism as the dominant ideology in the Middle East was not only due to the fact that the defeat of 1967 had undermined its currency, but also because there was a deliberate effort to purge, for example Egypt of, the Pan-Arabist legacy. After having brutally repressed Islamic movements, the Egyptian regime under Sadat was now courting them. In this changed atmosphere, the Islamic movement gained ground, particularly among students. Among them was Ayman Al-Zawahiri, who espoused Salafism, finding the Muslim Brotherhood too ready to make compromises.[78] Al-Zawahiri would later become a leading figure in Al-Qaeda.

In Iran, that had thus far forged its own path, the return to monarchical dictatorship following the overthrow of Mossadegh's government resulted in an absence of political freedom. Mohammed Reza Shah dissolved the National Front and Mossadegh and its other leaders were sent to prison. The Shah also attempted to destroy the Tudeh (Masses)

Party, the opposition party, by weeding out its underground networks, jailing its members and executing and torturing its leaders. While a two-party system remained, elections to the Majlis were tightly controlled.

A brief episode of greater participation occurred between 1960 and 1963, a period during which Iran was experiencing an economic downturn and the US was exerting pressure on the Shah to liberalize the Iranian regime. The National Front was authorized to participate in the elections, although the results were allegedly rigged. Against the backdrop of a worsening economic situation, demonstrations broke out. In the midst of this popular expression of dissatisfaction a figure that would later play a critical role in the future of Iran emerged. That figure was Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Khomeini condemned the Shah for being corrupt, for violating the rights of the masses, allowing foreign interference in Iran and ignoring Islam by selling oil to Israel and granting economic privileges to the US. The military crushed the demonstrations after three days and Khomeini was exiled to Turkey in 1964; he was to spend 14 years in exile, moving to Najaf in Iraq in 1965, and then spending four months in France in 1978 before returning to Iran in early 1979. His application of Islamic principles to contemporary issues and deep-seated resentment of violations of Iran's sovereignty by foreign powers were indications of things to come.[79]

The Shah relied primarily on the army for his support, maintaining loyalty through the granting of special privileges. Large sums of money were also allocated to the purchase of state-of-the-art military equipment procured in the West. The Shah was able to fund such extravagances due to increases in oil prices prompted by the oil boycott Arab oil-producing states had initiated in response to the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. The aim was to transform Iran into a major regional power.[80] However, a serious challenge to Iran's monarchical dictatorship would soon be mounted in what would constitute the fourth critical turning point.

6
The Iranian Revolution and its Aftershock

The Iranian Revolution sent shock waves through the region. The establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran implied that an alternative to a secular, liberal-democratic Western model could be brought into existence. It led to an increase in the popularity of, and spurred on, radical religious groups, which opposed both conservative and secular regimes. It also made these very regimes acutely conscious that state-sponsored revolutionary ideologies could spill over from one state to the next, particularly since Iran was eager to export the revolution to other countries. The seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, a few months later, reinforced this apprehension. It was the first time the religious and political legitimacy of established authorities was so openly questioned. Confronted with such serious challenges to the maintenance of political order and the status quo, many governments had no choice but to change direction. The question was whether they should liberalize further or, on the contrary, adopt more conservative policies. States that were determined to preserve domestic and regional stability opted for the second strategy – reinforced conservatism.

In this unstable and uncertain period, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which itself was an indirect result of the Iranian Revolution, was universally and strongly rejected by both moderate and radical religious groups and conservative and secular regimes in the region: it was understood as a threat to the entire Muslim world. To prevent the Soviets from making progress, Arab Muslim combatants, also called Arab mujahidins, gathered in Pakistan's ungoverned tribal areas and crossed into Soviet-occupied territory to fight alongside the Afghans. They were covertly encouraged and supported by the US, Pakistan and some Arab governments, not least Saudi Arabia.[1] The 'Afghan adventure' helped to strengthen extremist movements in Islam. It proved to

be an incubator for ideological radicalization, networking and training. The important consequences of this conflict would only be perceptible in the next decade.

The events of 1979: Initial conditions

While Iran had followed its own path after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the desire to achieve genuine independence from foreign influence was no less strong than in its Arab neighbours. The Shah's reliance on foreign support helped to generate significant opposition to his regime. Iran occupied a critical position in the US global strategy to contain the extension of Soviet influence. The US had played a key role in the 1953 coup and Iran had since remained an important pro-Western country in the Middle East. Strengthening Iran as a US client state implied using the country as a pro-Western 'asset' under the rule of the Shah.[2] Iran had also joined the controversial pro-Western Baghdad Pact in 1955 and the Central Treaty Organization in 1959.[3] After the adoption of a Western development model, the country was welcomed by the US as a bulwark against Soviet influence. During the 1960s, Iran received development aid that made it one of the biggest recipients of US aid among non-NATO countries.[4] US aid constituted a major part of Iranian state revenue.[5] In addition, being allied with the US helped the country to reduce the influence of Britain and Russia.[6] Creating a client state also involved using indirect ways of containing domestic opposition to the Shah and his pro-Western stance. The principal objective of US military aid was to suppress social unrest.[7] Iran's relationship with the US became a fundamental element of Iranian foreign policy by the late 1970s.[8] The eagerness of Western governments to sell military equipment to Iran was encouraged by the rise in oil prices. The Nixon Administration in particular encouraged the Shah to buy American military equipment. Moreover, both Britain and America were happy to see Iran become a regional power that could help maintain the status quo in the Persian Gulf in the absence of British presence in the country.[9] The Shah became an important US ally in the Middle East. Even some of the Shah's supporters viewed Iran's support of Israel as a manifestation of the country's subservience to the US. The growing number of Americans and their families in the country was seen by some as evidence of the Shah's lack of nationalist credentials. These sentiments were fed by a deep-seated paranoia regarding foreign intervention and involvement in the country.[10]

External support for the regime also contributed to the notion that it could exist without the support of a loyal middle class or the army.[11]

The Shah increasingly isolated himself from opposing political forces. This contributed to the gap between the regime's positive self-image and negative popular sentiment and frustration. According to Michael Fischer, '[w]hat produced the Islamic form of the revolution was not Islamic revivalism so much as repression of other modes of political discourse'.[12] The Shah's reliance on foreign aid and advisors, nevertheless, helped to reinforce opposition to the regime. Leftists and the fundamentalist right found common ground in their anti-Westernism. Islamic fundamentalists viewed the US as the Shah's principal supporter and as a major cause of corruption in Iran.[13] The search for greater authenticity and independence from the influence of foreign powers was also intensified by the realization that the Soviet Union would not be the saviour of the Iranian people.[14]

By early 1977, the disconnect between the Carter Administration's human rights rhetoric and support for the Shah was increasingly apparent and a source of embarrassment for the US President. It was becoming difficult to defend the Shah's regime.[15] Records of human rights abuses, including torture, arbitrary arrest and unfair trials were accumulating. Amnesty International's first major report on the human rights situation in Iran had coincided with Carter's election.[16] In November, when the Shah visited the US, demonstrations in opposition to the administration's support of the Shah by students, Marxist groups and religious leftists made the situation even tenser.[17] This reinforced the processes unfolding at the time in Iran.[18]

However, the Pahlavi regime had suffered from a crisis of legitimacy from the start. It had come into existence through military coups. When the Tsarist regime in Russia fell in 1917, the whole of Iran came under British influence, becoming a virtual protectorate in 1919. Reza Khan had acceded to power as a result of a British-backed coup in 1921. After consolidating his power, he pronounced himself Shah of Iran in 1925. This marked the beginning of the Pahlavi era.[19] Under the authoritarian rule of Reza Shah, an ambitious economic modernization programme and cultural westernization were pursued. The influence of the Ulama, who had expected the Shah to reduce foreign interference in the country, was also curtailed. This experiment in the transformation of Iran was cut short by the Second World War, when Britain and the Soviet Union seized control of the country and forced Reza Shah to step down.[20]

Reza Shah's son, Mohammed Reza Shah, had also come to power as a result of a 1953 coup d'état in which both domestic and foreign opposition to the nationalist government were involved.[21] The reliance of the

Shah and his father on foreign support further served to impair their legitimacy as rulers.[22] While the 1953 coup had been brought about by a coalition of different social and political forces, power would become increasingly concentrated in the hands of the Shah. Opposition was repressed from quite early on in the Shah's rule. During the period in which the Shah's power was consolidated, between 1953–5, both the Tudeh Party and the National Front were purged from Iranian politics. This marked the beginning of a gradual concentration of power under the Shah.[23] By the early 1960s, direct and personal rule was the hallmark of the Shah's rule.[24]

While the Shah pursued economic reforms designed to modernize Iran's economy, they were not accompanied by political liberalization. In addition, in emphasizing Iran's glorious pre-Islamic past with little acknowledgement of the country's post-Islamic achievements, the Shah was alienating the regime from the people and their beliefs. In response to the activities of guerrilla fighters who were opposed to the regime, the two-party system was abandoned, leaving just one organization known as the National Resurgence Party. Membership of the party was mandatory for the whole population. The movement to a one-party system was also accompanied by increased repression.[25] Indeed, the regime came to rely more and more on repressive state structures. The Shah maintained personal control over every detail of the military and relied heavily on the National Intelligence and Security Organization or SAVAK, the Shah's secret police.[26]

In an attempt to bring opposing forces, such as merchants and the Ulama, into line, the National Resurgence Party tried to infiltrate the country's bazaars and to reduce the role of the religious establishment in Iranian society. A further provocation occurred when the Shah replaced the Islamic calendar with a royal calendar dating from Cyrus the Great. However, this simply served to encourage the formation of an alliance between merchants and the religious establishment.

The high oil revenues of 1973–4 also increased the Shah's belief that he could survive without widespread popular support and encouraged arrogant behaviour vis-à-vis the Iranian public.[27] By 1977, over 70 per cent of state revenue came from oil.[28] The Shah had also squandered the country's oil revenue on expensive military equipment. Those that benefited from oil wealth were the privileged elements of Iranian society. The Shah and his retainers used the national wealth to increase their own personal riches and pay for their luxurious lifestyles. Meanwhile, the high oil prices that translated into high inflation hit the urban middle classes the hardest.[29]

The Shah's preference for foreign advisors was another bone of contention among the population. It is estimated that there were some 60,000 foreign technicians and advisors in the country by 1977. Their presence and the Shah's reliance on them only served to fuel perceptions of Western imperialism and the Shah's slavish following of Western models.[30] Corruption was also widespread.[31] This diminished the accountability of the regime even further.

The Shah was vulnerable to Khomeini's indictment of his obsession with Western values. In 1963, Khomeini was imprisoned for criticizing the Shah's policies as violating the principles of Islam. As a result of his continued criticism of the regime following his release from prison, Khomeini was sent into exile in 1964. Despite this, he continued his lectures and sermons, which were disseminated in Iran through a network of former students who had by then risen to important positions within the Iranian religious establishment. His principal criticism continued to be the destruction of Iran's Islamic identity due to selling out to foreign powers.[32] The Ulama had a long tradition of opposition to tyranny. Shiism was presented as an activist faith that required its followers to rise up against injustice and imperialism.[33] Khomeini was able to draw on this. Having crushed opposition parties, the Shah had no interlocutors with whom concessions could be negotiated.[34] As Homa Katouzian notes, '[t]he politics of elimination had a dialectical effect. While it led to the elimination of conservatives, liberals and democrats from politics, it encouraged the development of its opposites, namely beliefs, ideologies and movements which, one way or the other, aimed at the overthrow of the regime and the elimination of the Shah himself'.[35] Paradoxically, the effectiveness of the Shah's suppression of opposition forces would create the conditions that would lead to his eventual downfall.

The socio-economic transformation of the country under the Shah had also been substantial, generating considerable tensions within society.[36] A reform programme was initiated in 1964, dubbed 'The White Revolution'.[37] This programme of modernization was married with secular nationalism.[38] In the countryside, land reform was undertaken. The regime sought to transform semi-feudal relationships between landowners and farmers, creating a fairer distribution of land. However, implementation of the reforms was uneven. They tended to benefit the more wealthy farmers and large-scale production. As a result, many smaller-scale farmers were put out of business and farm labourers flocked to the cities to find work.[39] Nomads were also encouraged to lead sedentary lives, which undermined the tribal system.[40] Pastoral livestock herding

was replaced with mechanized dairy and meat farms.[41] Manufacturing was also encouraged. The business community was flourishing. The social status of women was also changing. However, along with these changes grew increasing disparities in wealth among the population.[42] While a gap between rural and urban incomes had been growing since the 1960s, a gap between urban incomes began to appear in the 1970s. The result was a growing urban poor.[43]

The main engine behind economic growth in the country was oil. High oil revenues subsidized other sectors of the economy, including an inefficient industrial sector.[44] A combination of declining agricultural output, an inefficient industrial sector, increased imported manufactured goods and weapons and high oil revenues led to severe inflation.[45] In an effort to reduce inflation caused by the Shah's economic policies, deflationary measures were taken from mid-1977. These generated unemployment, particularly among unskilled and semi-skilled workers.[46]

In urban areas, commercial and religious institutions had traditionally been associated with the bazaars, which had adapted to socio-economic changes underway but had retained their autonomy from and antagonism towards the Shah's state. While the economy was becoming more industrialized, those working in manufacturing tended to work in small artisanal units and retained the production processes and values of an earlier era. A great deal of commercial and financial activity also remained in the hands of the bazaars alongside the emergence of a modern banking system, lending to those that the commercial banks qualified as unworthy of credit. The bazaar had also traditionally supported religious institutions (mosques, shrines and madrassahs) financially. As a result, the bazaar merchants, the urban poor and the clergy were natural allies.[47]

The Ulama's dissatisfaction with the regime stemmed from the reduction of their influence domestically. The secularization of the legal and educational systems had reduced the number of jobs available to them. The madrassah system was becoming increasingly sidelined.[48] They were also opposed to societal changes, such as co-education and the unveiling of women, which seemed to indicate an erosion of Islamic values.[49] The clergy used religious networks to mobilize people. Some of the leading clerical figures had been eager to remove the Shah for two decades. The fact that they were supported financially by the bazaaris also gave them autonomy from the state.[50]

As in Arab states, secular nationalism was losing credibility. The Islamic resurgence was a response to the perceived failure of secular nationalism and the alienation of the general population from the

political elite. Moreover, secular nationalism in Iran was considered by some an alien concept and, worse, associated with Western cultural values that were not indigenous to the country.[51] It was associated with Western hegemony and secularization. Most secular Iranian intellectuals also embraced the country's religious and cultural traditions as a means of resisting Western hegemony and returning to some kind of cultural authenticity. A state-society schism was becoming increasingly serious. As a result, intellectuals began advocating 'authenticity, religion and a return to self'.[52] As was the case elsewhere in the Middle East, nationalism and communism – as products of European history – gave way to Islamic movements.[53]

The fourth critical turning point

What was developing in Iran was a religious nationalism. Shiism was 'being defined in terms of the Iranian state'.[54] Khomeini's thinking reflected an attempt to develop an ideology that was capable of resisting Western influence and secularization.[55] His theory of *welayat-el Faqih* or Guardianship was a theory of the state that claimed that legitimate government belonged solely to the imam. This contrasted with the traditional state theory in which the Ulama (senior theologian scholars), in the absence of the *Mahdi* ('the Guided One'), were the legitimate guides of the faithful. His new theory was, therefore, revolutionary.[56] The vacuum that was created by the Shah's perceived autonomy from societal influences was being filled by the revolutionary Islamic political ideology being espoused by Khomeini and his followers. Ideologically, it was an attempt to separate modernity and the global system from Westernization.[57]

In 1978, opposition to the Shah metamorphosed into an Islamic revolution when the regime launched a damning media attack on Khomeini, prompting demonstrations by students and bazaar merchants in Qom.[58] The regime violently broke up demonstrations, killing some 70 people over a two-day period. According to Shiite tradition, memorial demonstrations were organized at 40-day intervals. Given the religious dimension of the memorial gatherings, the Shah could not ban them. As a result, momentum among the opposition forces was generated.[59] The protests were thus defined within the framework of religious rituals, giving the opposition to the Shah an Islamic character.

The government had also adopted a new economic policy during 1978, which was aimed at reducing inflationary pressures. The result was an economic slowdown and increased unemployment. Urban

workers joined students and merchants in their protests against the regime. In response, the Shah declared marshal law and banned demonstrations. However, the protests continued, leading to violent clashes between demonstrators and the army that resulted in the loss of many civilians lives on Friday, 8 September, which subsequently became known as 'Black Friday'. This tragic event increased support for Khomeini's call for the overthrow of the Shah.[60] After Black Friday, oil workers went on strike and bazaar merchants closed their businesses.[61]

Political concessions were made to the Ulama and the Ayatollah Khomeini was declared free to return to Iran. However, he refused to return as long as the Shah remained on the throne. Political negotiations were undertaken between the leader of the National Front, Karim Sanjabi, and the government. The latter flew to Paris to consult with the Ayatollah on 25 October and he announced on 4 November that a compromise would not be made with the Shah. Demonstrations and rioting took place between 4 and 5 November. The army did not intervene. A new civil-military government was formed and the leader of the opposition was arrested. Oil workers were offered substantial pay increases and many returned to work. However, this did not bring an end to unrest and strikes. Calls for the removal of foreign technicians from the country increased. Despite conciliatory gestures from the government, demonstrations continued. The government announced a ban on the 'Ashura demonstrations, commemorating the martyrdom of Hussein Ibn Ali, the grandson of the Prophet Mohammed, which was followed by rioting and attacks on a police station and the homes of several American advisors. The oil workers again went on strike. The government then released Sanjabi and Foruhar. Concessions were made regarding the 'Ashura marches, which took on a political dimension. In response, the army organized pro-Shah demonstrations. Clashes between protestors and the army became more violent.[62] Ultimately, the military was either unable or unwilling to use force.[63]

On 3 January 1979, a new civilian prime minister, Mehdi Bazargan, was approved by parliament.[64] On 16 January 1979 Mohammed Reza Shah left Iran on what was termed an extended 'vacation'. He would never return. A year later he would die of cancer in Egypt. Triumphant, Khomeini returned to Iran from Paris on 1 February 1979.[65] On 1 April, an Islamic Republic was declared. This followed a referendum that was held the month before. Barzagan, an engineer who had served with Mossadgeh and was considered moderate, was appointed prime minister. However, his tenureship did not last long.[66] Barzagan's provisional government was weak. Real influence lay with the clerics. Under the

newly formulated constitution a system of parallel structures was established. Each political institution had a parallel revolutionary institution that had ultimate power.[67] By October the hard-line Shia theocrats won the struggle for power and took control of the country.[68]

The political development path following the Iranian revolution

The Iranian Revolution had dramatic consequences for Iran, for the Middle East in general and Muslim countries as a whole. It also destabilized a number of regimes within the region as Iran sought to export its revolutionary ideology, culminating in the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979 and Iraq's invasion of Iran in 1980. However, the most significant consequence of the revolution was perhaps the ascent of religion as a political force in the region.[69]

The Revolution brought an end to monarchical rule, making Iran a republic.[70] It was perceived by the Iranian population as a nationalist project aimed at liberating Iran from the hegemonic influence of the West and the US in particular. This perception was reinforced by the enduring belief that political events in Iran are determined by foreign hands. Never having been a formal colony, but penetrated by British, Tsarist Russian and later US influence, there was not the clear symbolic break that colonized countries experienced with independence.[71]

The Islamic Revolution brought about a complete break with the Shah's policy and, thereby, removed the foundations upon which US policy in the Gulf had been constructed. Iran under the Shah had been one of America's major satellite states in the Middle East with which to protect its interests as well as thwart any increase in Soviet influence. The new revolutionary regime, into whose hands a large military had fallen, severed Iran's ties with the US and committed itself to reducing US influence in the region.[72] The Islamic Republic's foreign policy was premised on non-alignment with either the Communist East or political West. While the anti-US dimension of Iranian foreign policy was preeminent given that the revolution was partly a response to the Shah's close relations with the US and his 'Westernization' policies, Iran's leadership was also suspicious of Soviet motives in the Middle East.[73]

The Islamic Republic rapidly distanced itself with the West. In May 1979, it asked to join the non-alignment movement and its request was accepted. On 4 November, radical militants took over the US embassy, resulting in 53 people being taken hostage, further straining relations between Iran and the US. The seizure of the American embassy

prompted the resignation of Prime Minister Barzagan, following which the Revolutionary Council took control and an Islamic fundamentalist constitution was approved by the assembly, signalling that Khomeini and militant radicals that surrounded him had succeeded in gaining control of the country.[74] The Islamic republic relinquished the country's ties with the US and condemned Israel. The new regime in Iran also promised to rid the region of US influence.[75]

The Islamic Revolution generated considerable concern among the leaders of surrounding Arab states, who feared for the future of their own regimes. The revolution drew attention to Islamic movements in other states.[76] Indeed it was portrayed as the first instance of the Muslim world overthrowing its oppressors.[77] It was viewed as a transferable model for similar regime and political system changes across the Middle East region. The Islamic Republic, therefore, sought to support revolutionary Islamist movements in neighbouring countries.[78] It is important to bear in mind that the Islamic Revolution took place within the context of a revival of Islamist movements in the Middle East in response to the waning currency of Arab nationalism described in the previous chapter. The Iranian Revolution demonstrated the continued power of Islam as a social and political force. It also served to legitimize the suppression of Islamic opposition within some Muslim-majority countries.[79] Across the Middle East, Islamic movements came into direct confrontation with established regimes. They began to eclipse leftist movements. Islamist discourse stressed the need for greater authenticity and decreased dependency. The basic assumption that states in the Middle East would undergo a linear and inevitable Westernization was radically challenged.[80]

As in Iran, Western development models and goods had failed to deliver political and economic stability in many Arab states. They had failed because they did not reflect the fabric and specificities of existing societies.[81] In Egypt, defeat in the June 1967 War and the failure of Sadat's economic reforms increased support for Islamic movements and militant underground organizations. They later called on the population to disobey governments that failed to respect the principles of Islam and to endeavour to restore the Shari'ah.[82] Yet this initial accommodation of Islamists was later replaced with a conviction that religion and politics should not mix.[83]

Sadat was assassinated in October 1981 by members of Al-Jihad, one of the leading Islamic movements in Egypt. Their hope was that the removal and assassination of Sadat would bring about an Islamic Revolution in the country. Unlike Iran, there was no revolution and the

state remained intact. While calls for a return to the principles of Islam continued under President Mubarak, Sadat's successor, violent activities of Islamic organizations dwindled.[84] According to Shahrough Akhavi, the Islamic Revolution encouraged rather than initiated the Islamic resurgence in Egypt. He writes that for the majority of Egyptians, the appeal of the Iranian Revolution was its anti-Westernism rather than anything else.[85]

In Lebanon, supporters of the Iranian worldview congregated in Hezbollah. Since 1982, Iran has sought to promote Iranian influence among the Shia in Lebanon. The regime in Iran has also maintained linkages with Shii figures and groups that are not part of Hezbollah.[86] Hezbollah itself originated from the training camps established by the Islamic Republic of Iran in Baalbek in the early part of the 1980s. This Shiite town in Lebanon became a centre for religious and military training among the Shia of Lebanon. The ideology of the Islamic Republic was also imparted to the Shia who flocked to city.[87]

The revolutionary government in Iran had openly called for the overthrow of the Iraqi government and supported Iraqi Shia opposition groups.[88] In Iraq, the fear that the Iranian Revolution would have an impact on the country was great. This was due to the proximity of Iran as well as the fact that the majority of the Iraqi population were, like Iranians, Shii Muslims. There were linkages between radical Shia religious leaders and the Islamic leaders within Iran. Khomeini had himself been resident in Najaf from 1965 to 1978.[89] Underground movements were encouraged by the revolution in their neighbouring country. Their activities were, however, small in scale. The response from the Iraqi government was, nevertheless, harsh, provoking continued dissent from within Iraq's Shia community.[90]

When radical militants appeared to be winning the power struggle taking place in Iran, Iraq decided to take decisive action. On 22 September 1980, Iraq invaded Iran. It wished to reclaim the territory ceded to the Islamic Republic in 1975. The objective was also to damage, if not destroy, Ayatollah Khomeini politically.[91] However, the war with Iraq ultimately served to consolidate the new Islamic republic. The West strongly supported Saddam Hussein in Iraq's struggle with Iran. US support for the Iraqi regime increased as it became clear that it was waging the war to its advantage. The Reagan Administration supplied the Hussein regime with arms, intelligence and economic aid. This led to greater hostility between Iran and the US, and, as we shall see in the next chapter, the support that it provided Hussein would come back to haunt it.[92]

In the Persian Gulf, riots in Saudi Arabia, civil unrest, terrorist activity and hijackings in Kuwait, as well as several coup attempts in Bahrain were spurred by the events in Iran.[93] In Saudi Arabia, the situation was particularly delicate, because of the country's role as a guardian of Islam and its two holy mosques. One of the consequences of the Iranian Revolution in Saudi Arabia was the brief seizure in 1979 of the Grand Mosque in Mecca by religious extremists. The siege of the mosque was finally broken after two weeks, when the Ulama gave permission to do so through the use of armed force. While this movement did not generate any public support, it was enough to cause concern.[94]

The Iranian Revolution also attempted unsuccessfully to challenge Saudi Arabia's claim to spiritual guardianship of the Islamic world, which is partly premised on the country's custodianship of Islam's holiest sites: Mecca and Medina. In addition, the Islamic Revolution tried to challenge Saudi credentials as the most conservative regime in the Arab-Islamic world. Indeed, for the conservative regimes in the Persian Gulf in general, the Islamic Revolution was perceived as a threat. As such, it had an impact on the subsequent policies of many states in the region. It brought Iraq in from the cold. Egypt too came to be viewed as less of a pariah.[95]

The Islamic Republic of Iran adopted an anti-Western stance and condemned Muslim majority countries with close ties to the West. In addition, Iran intended to export the Islamic revolution to other countries, particularly ones with Shia communities.[96] Iran under the Shah had been America's strategic ally in the region. While public statements were pointedly direct, the message being diffused by the media and at sermons was that the kingdom was antiquated and tainted by its close relationship with the US. The Islamic Republic of Iran was portrayed as offering change within the Arab-Islamic world on the basis of radical Islamist principles.[97]

The seizure of the Mosque in Mecca was an attempt among others to promote a radical Islamic worldview and foreign policy, on the one hand, and failure to live up to the ideal it implied, on the other hand. The Mecca siege was inspired by the extremist interpretations of Islam by local as well as Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood members who had taken refuge in the kingdom following Nasser's clampdown on the Muslim Brothers in Egypt.[98] A number of Muslim Arab lecturers were engaged by Saudi universities. Among them were Egyptian Muhammad Qutb, Sayyid Qutb's brother, Palestinian 'Abdullah Azzam, who would later go on to found Al-Qaeda, and Yemeni leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, 'Abd Al-Majid Al-Zindani. Their ideological commitments

to a broader struggle inspired concern for other Islamic groups around the world, an interest in the thinking of the Muslim Brotherhood and a deep-seated antagonism towards Western regimes.[99]

In 1980, the Shia organized strikes and demonstrations to celebrate the first anniversary of Khomeini's return to Iran. The Islamic Revolution Organization was created to clandestinely represent and organize the Shia community in the eastern province. The organization broadcast from Iranian radio stations, and an office was established in Teheran.[100] Iran's leaders began to target Saudi Arabia for its alliance with the West and to contest the kingdom's claim to the two Muslim shrines in Mecca and Medina.[101]

As a result of these challenges, Saudi Arabia's claim to religious leadership within the Arab-Islamic world was more actively pursued. Social policies were also adopted to reduce the potential for frustration arising from a lack of educational and economic opportunities. The kingdom's relationship with the US was also strengthened in order to cope with external challenges. Both Saudi Arabia and the US viewed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as a threat to the Gulf and its oil reserves. The US-Saudi partnership implied strengthening Saudi military capacities. US-Saudi ties were reinforced by the Saudi purchases of equipment and joint training exercises.[102]

Conclusions: The seeds of the fifth critical turning point

In the Arab world, political, economic and social factors all contributed to the appeal of Islamic movements. Secularization as well as Westernization caused some to conclude that the Arab-Islamic world was abandoning its values and culture.[103] The focus of their critique was on the degree of Islamization of societies and the alliances of regimes in the Middle East with Western powers, whose foreign policies were perceived as anti-Islamic and supportive of Israel in its humiliation of Palestinians and occupation of their land.[104] The American-Saudi alliance – that would later play a part in the First Gulf War – was also becoming increasingly problematic for the Saudis and the focus of criticism. Economic sanctions and military operations were on the rise against the Muslim-majority countries. US failure to take a firmer stance on Israeli settlement activity also helped to consolidate the notion that the US was antagonistic towards the Arab-Islamic world. For some within the kingdom, the government appeared to be allying itself with a country with an anti-Islamic foreign policy agenda.[105] American foreign policy was placing extreme pressure on Saudi Arabia as well as its

other allies in the region and it was increasingly difficult for them to justify and defend their alliance with the US. As Tim Niblock observes, 'The grounds for political discontent which was to achieve expression in the 1990s were, unwittingly, being cultivated.'[106] The participation of some Arab states in the US-led Gulf War, itself an indirect consequence of the economic price that Iraq had paid during the Iran-Iraq War, would bring anti-Westernism, especially anti-Americanism, to a boiling point within the context of the next critical turning point.

The seeds of the next critical turning point were also being sown in the actions of the mujahidin in Afghanistan. In 1978, Communists, first led by Nur Mohammed Taraki and then by Hafizullah Amin, seized power in Afghanistan. In reaction to their proposed reforms, local uprisings began to take place along tribal and ethnic lines. It was within the context of these uprisings that the mujahidin formed. With the Soviet invasion, the movement underwent a radical change. The emphasis shifted from confronting an unpopular, domestic government to removing and defeating foreign invaders. The purpose then became one of restoring their *qawm* (roughly translated as tribe) and their religion.[107] The movement itself was not a coherent and united entity. It contained groups that were hard line as well as moderates, Shia and Sunni, nationalist and religious. However, the more hard line, fundamentalist elements became predominant, partly because Pakistan supported them in an attempt to avert calls for an independent Pashtunistan.[108]

When Soviet forces intervened in Afghanistan, Afghan refugees flooded into Pakistan. Most passed through Peshawar. Among these was Al-Zawahiri. While working in Pakistan, he made several trips across the border to Afghanistan, where the mujahidin were engaged in a bloody battle with the Soviets.[109] When Al-Zawahiri returned to Egypt, the Islamic revolution in Iran was reverberating across the Arab-Islamic world: 'For Muslims everywhere, Khomeini reframed the debate with the West. Instead of conceding the future of Islam to a secular, democratic model, he imposed a stunning reversal.'[110] While the Iranian Revolution had been led by Shia radicals, Al-Zawahiri's group, Al-Jihad, supported it and encouraged Egyptians to rise up.[111]

Having lost the Shah as an ally in the Persian Gulf, which risked forming closer ties with the Soviet Union, the Carter Administration was following closely the accession to power of a pro-Moscow government in Afghanistan – a country that also bordered the Soviet Union. The Communist government in Afghanistan allied itself with the Soviet Union. The government in Kabul promoted state atheism and was hostile towards Islam.[112] As a result, the US was relieved to see the

emergence of resistance to the Afghan regime. Anti-regime sentiment was strong among the Afghan refugees who had fled to Pakistan.[113] Following a series of assassinations and political infighting, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan on 24 December 1979. Following the Soviet invasion, the US could not intervene directly in Afghanistan within the context of the cold war. Instead, US government agencies channelled arms through Pakistani government agencies to the mujahidin fighters.[114] For those committed to generating support for the liberation of Afghanistan from Soviet occupation, it was viewed as the duty of all Muslims. People who would later be labelled as terrorists, but at that time were seen as freedom fighters, hoped that the fight for Afghanistan would awaken the spirit of jihad in Islam.[115]

Mujahidin fighters, supported by American and Arab sources of finance and weapons, passed through the training camps in Pakistan.[116] One of the most active mujahidin was Bin Laden. When the founder of Maktab al-Khidamat al-Mujahidin (Service Office for the Mujahidin) in Afghanistan, Palestinian ʻAbdallah ʻAzzam, was assassinated, Bin Laden took on a prominent role within the Service Office. His views became increasingly inspired by those of the Egyptian, Al-Zawahiri, who was engaged in a broader struggle against Communism and the US. The Service Office was designed to provide a centre from which Arab volunteers could be organized and trained independently of the infighting among Afghans.[117] These fighters would help to bring about the next critical turning point, which, inter alia, saw the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan.

7
A New Strategic Context in the Middle East

The next turning point started in the late 1980s and matured at the turn of the 1990s. Contrary to previous experience, a cluster of systemic shocks – some quite tragic – occurring between 1987 and 1991 gave rise to the perception of the next turning point, a turning point which had the potential to bring about some measure of positive change in the region. These crucial events included the first Intifada in the Palestinian territories that began in 1987, the end of the Iraq-Iran war in 1988, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, the First Gulf War subsequent to the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The changed strategic context of the final years of the cold war created new dynamics and modified the coalitions within and without the Middle East. As political support dried up, the former USSR 'clients', such as Syria, Libya and the PLO redefined their strategy. Iran and Turkey, for their part, had to review their system of alliances, following the creation of independent majority Muslim republics on their northern and eastern frontiers. They competed with each other in this process. Furthermore, the US, as the sole remaining military superpower, had more leverage to affect regional politics. It was in this new context that the First Gulf War broke out. This conflict had impacts that became visible long after it ended. It was, first of all, quite an extraordinary event. The alliance of Arab countries against another Arab state would have been unthinkable a few years before. It represented a further blow to the rhetoric of Arab unity and deeply divided the region. Some countries/entities backed Iraq, including Libya and the PLO. Others, like, Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, supported the liberation of Kuwait through the allied coalition led by the US. Jordan tried to remain neutral, but without great success. Iran was probably the main

beneficiary of the war. Its 'wait and see' approach allowed it to increase its power relative to the Arab states in the region. In actuality, all these alliances were unstable and lacked cohesion.

Yet, quite paradoxically, the crisis led to some signs (albeit temporary ones) of positive developments regarding the Arab-Israeli issue. The Gulf War and other events, in particular the Intifada, unexpectedly created the conditions for the establishment of talks between Israel and its Arab neighbours. After the war, Israel, whose population started to become weary of the continuous violence of the Intifada, felt less secure. The change in its policy was also generated by the enormous pressure exerted by the US, in its desire to take advantage of the propitious international context to broker a deal as quickly as possible. The PLO and Jordan, weakened by their position during the war, were also pushed to the negotiating table. These and other developments resulted in the multilateral Middle East Peace Conference in Madrid in 1991, which involved Israel, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinians (though not the PLO). These talks had two concrete outcomes: the Oslo Accords between the PLO and the Israeli government in 1993 and the Israeli-Jordanian Peace Treaty in 1994. There were, however, no sustainable or tangible results on the Syrian or Palestinian issues.

One of these aforementioned destructive elements developed with the withdrawal of the Soviets from Afghanistan in the late 1980s. After the war, the veteran 'Afghan' mujahidins were persuaded that they had played a crucial role in defeating a superpower (the Soviet Union) and so transforming the international system. They believed that their role was critical and presaged a rise of the Arab-Islamic world, its visibility in world consciousness – the first time this had occurred since the 1683 siege of Vienna. In their view, the time had now arrived to move to the next phase of global independence and recognition through confronting directly and with force regional powers and the US, the remaining great power. As a consequence of these and other events, terrorist activities progressively grew larger and internationalized. During the 1990s, Americans were targeted both inside and outside the US (the World Trade Center bombing in 1993 and the US embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998, for example). The stationing of US armed forces in the region during, as well as after, the Gulf War generated greater wrath among extremist groups. The establishment of US military presence in the Arabian Peninsula was, in particular, understood in terms of a serious affront. It was humiliating and intolerable that non-Muslims were allowed to tread upon such a symbolic holy place. Some radical groups made it their duty to protect Islam and free the region of what they saw as infidels.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict was also a factor that contributed to this critical turning point. Expectations had been raised by the considerable progress made in the early 1990s. Yet, the incapacity of the interlocutors to ensure continued progress spawned growing levels of popular discontent. Unfortunately, that chain of consequence is precisely what occurred, laying the seeds for the next and sixth critical turning point. A series of setbacks, delays and poor policy choices discredited negotiated consensus-based political solutions and incubated the second Intifada. It also spread widely the feeling of pessimism and even despair throughout the region.

The events of 1987–91: Initial conditions

The struggle for power in Afghanistan was viewed by the superpowers through the prism of the cold war. Moscow had supported the revolution following the coup in 1978 by the pro-communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), despite its misgivings about the PDPA's ability to remain in power. The PDPA sought to impose a socialist revolution on a deeply conservative Afghan society. The redistribution of land, secularization of the state and the emancipation of women, generated opposition from landowners and the clergy in particular. Opposition to the regime became violent within several months of the coup.[1] Religious leaders called for a jihad against the PDPA regime. As the insurgency spread and the Afghan army began to disintegrate in early 1979, the Soviet military took on a greater role in fighting the rebels. The PDPA regime also became increasingly repressive in an attempt to crush the resistance.[2]

The Soviet Union decided to intervene militarily in December 1979 in order to support the government in Kabul and defend the southern flank of its sphere of influence.[3] The Soviet Union believed the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to have been involved in intelligence gathering missions around the Hindu Kush area, prompting fears in Moscow that the US would attempt to destabilize the communist PDPA regime.[4] Whether the US had begun covertly supporting the mujahidin before the Soviet invasion is still disputed.[5] However, what is clear is that the US viewed domestic instability in Afghanistan as an opportunity to unseat Soviet influence in the country and saw the insurgency as serving this goal.[6] Washington increased its economic and military aid to neighbouring Pakistan, thereby establishing a means of covertly supporting the rebel fighters in Afghanistan.[7] For the insurgents, their struggle was one of national liberation as well as an Islamic cause.[8]

Indeed, the mujahidin jihad in Afghanistan was widely heralded as the latter within the Middle East.

Rather than suppressing the insurgency, the Soviet invasion enlarged the scope of the revolt against the incumbent regime in Afghanistan. It prompted more Afghans to join the mujahidin, as well as the formation of regional rebel organizations in the country.[9] As the resistance grew, so too did support from the US, China and Saudi Arabia. This did not, however, deter the Soviet military effort. When Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985, the military campaign intensified. Yet, ultimately, the mujahidin proved a formidable adversary and a military solution to the conflict appeared less and less likely.[10] The scene was thus set for a negotiated Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as well as the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the US hostage crisis in Teheran led to the US policy of responding militarily to any state seeking to dominate the Gulf. The policy was initially directed at both the Soviet Union and Iran.[11] The Islamic Revolution in Iran and the loss of its ally, the Shah, prompted the US to foster friendly relations with Iraq. It channelled economic credits to the Iraqi regime through unofficial channels.[12] The US government feared that if Iran were to defeat Iraq, the oil-producing Gulf States would fall under Iran's sphere of influence.[13] An Iraqi victory was, therefore, perceived in the US interest. In addition to economic assistance, the US also is thought to have indirectly provided Iraq with surveillance information.[14] American strategic interests were also evident in its efforts to convince its allies to cease supplying Iran with arms.[15] The Iraqi regime also received material support from Britain and France.[16]

The general reduction in Soviet external involvement in the late 1980s also implied reduced support for its allies in the Middle East, such as Syria, Iraq and South Yemen. It also meant less support for national liberation struggles, such as that of the Palestinians.[17] Under the Reagan Administration, the US was distinctly pro-Israeli. This coincided with increased Israeli settlements and repression of Palestinians within the occupied territories. The Israeli elections of 1984 and 1988 failed to deliver majority governments. The National Unity governments were divided on the issue of the occupied territories. While the Labor Party favoured some form of territorial compromise, the Likud Party was vehemently against giving up any territory. Likud's hard-line position was represented by Yitzak Shamir, Israel's prime minister between 1986 and 1992. He believed that the all biblical lands of Israel should form part of the Jewish state. Under his premiership, Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank were increased. Government policy was

also to incorporate the occupied territories into Israel. Measures aimed at isolating and suppressing the Palestinians were adopted. The confiscation of Palestinian land, increased use of administrative detention and security checks, more frequent arrests, imprisonment and even torture became commonplace.[18] When the PLO won municipal elections in the West Bank in 1976, the officials were dismissed. Despite this situation, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank were required to pay Israeli taxes.[19] Against the backdrop of increased suppression of aboveground political organization to which Israel responded with collective punishment measures, including mass arrests, extended curfews and the demolition of homes, underground organized resistance grew.[20]

The fifth critical turning point

The continued plight of the Palestinians and Israeli settlements led to an uprising or Intifada that was both a demonstration of resistance to Israeli occupation and a show of Palestinian identity. The Intifada began on 9 December 1987. It started spontaneously, following a road accident in Gaza in which four Palestinians were killed and several others injured by an Israeli army vehicle. When people protested the accident, some of the demonstrators were shot and killed. The uprising spread from Gaza to the West Bank within a few days. As the Intifada continued, the Unified National Leadership (UNL) attempted to give it coherence. It represented the principal local factions of the PLO.[21]

The aims of the Intifada were to bring a halt to the construction of Israeli settlements and the confiscation of land belonging to Palestinians, to end the imposition of special taxes and restrictions that applied only to Palestinians and for Israel to recognize an independent Palestinian state. As the uprising went on, other groups emerged as rivals to the UNL. In 1988, Hamas was formed. Rather than espousing a secular-based nationalism as the PLO did, its message was couched in Islamic terms. Hamas defined Palestine as a waqf ('a trust'), no part of which could be conceded. This meant that a two-state solution would not be acceptable to them, whereas the PLO had come to accept the idea. Through its grassroots activities, Hamas had won enough support among the Palestinian population to become a serious competitor to the PLO by the 1990s.[22] Until that time, the PLO had been viewed by Palestinians as their sole legitimate voice.[23]

The Intifada posed a challenge to Israeli authority in the occupied territories.[24] The Israeli response was harsh as the government attempted to quell the uprising. The disproportionate reaction prompted

condemnation both within Israel as well as abroad. The desired effect of crushing the Intifada was not achieved. Instead, Palestinians were further united by Israeli retaliation. The Intifada was also an expression of frustration and dissatisfaction with the PLO's leadership, even though the majority of Palestinians continued to view it as their representative.

In order for a Palestinian state to come into existence, Israel would need to abandon its hope of annexing the occupied territories. The only external power capable of pushing Israel to do so was the US. However, for the US to be in a position to do so, the PLO would need to recognize the state of Israel. In 1988, the PLO shifted its position and Arafat set out what became know as the two-state comprise in which the prior insistence on the liberation of the whole of Palestine was dropped and Israel's right to exist within its pre-1967 borders was recognized.[25] A series of US-PLO negotiations were then initiated to establish a basis on which the US could mediate between the PLO and the Israeli government within the framework of a peace process. The talks, nevertheless, came to very little as the Israeli government refused to compromise on the issue of the occupied territories. In the face of domestic pressure, the former US President George H. W. Bush withdrew from the talks.[26]

Another event would take place at the end of the 1980s that would contribute to the alteration of the political landscape in the Middle East. Realizing that efforts to help establish a viable regime in Afghanistan were failing and determined to improve the Soviet Union's relations with the West, President Mikhail Gorbachev sought a withdrawal from Afghanistan.[27] President Gorbachev publicly called for an end to the war in February 1986 and a Politburo decision to withdraw came in November of that year. On 14 April 1988, the Geneva Accord was signed. It provided for a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan within 10 months. However, the Accord neither committed the PDPA to give up power following a withdrawal nor the mujahidin to disband. With both the Soviet Union and the US continuing to supply either side with arms, the chances of the conflict outliving a Soviet withdrawal were extremely high. In fact, the US expected the government of Najibullah to be overthrown following a Soviet withdrawal. Yet, he managed to remain in power for another three years, largely due to the re-emergence of divisions within the mujahidin, who were divided into at least seven different groups along either clan or ideological lines. Within the context of the cold war, US policy towards Afghanistan appeared to have been a success. At minimal cost to Washington, the mujahidin had driven the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan. However, the cost of the occupation and war for the Afghan people was considerably greater. Many had lost

their lives, others had been wounded and others still were left homeless and displaced. The country was divided up between rival warlords, who now fought each other for power. What was a war of liberation had become a bloody civil war.[28] The real cost to the US would only become apparent several years later.

The civil war had an ethnic as well as religious extremist dimension. The Soviet occupation had disrupted the balance between the previously dominant Pashtuns and other ethnic groups. Pashtuns sought to re-establish themselves as the dominant ethnic group in Afghanistan, while Hazara, Tajik and Uzbek minorities aimed to achieve greater representation within the political power structures of the central government as well as greater regional autonomy. In addition, the Taliban and their extremist interpretation of Islam emerged as a political force. The leaders of the Taliban were Afghan religious scholars and veterans of the mujahidin resistance against the Soviet occupation. Despite the demobilization of the Ulama, they and students of Islamic theology grew frustrated with ethnic rivalry, corruption, the breakdown of law and order and the continuation of the civil war. Disappointment with the mujahidin parties' capacity to work together towards the establishment of an Islamic state, national unification and the elimination of communist fighters led the Taliban to attempt to dislodge the mujahidin commanders.[29] The Taliban initially received wide support from a cross-section of the Afghan population. They seemed to offer security and an end to the civil war.[30]

Friendly US-Iraqi relations also came to a halt when Iraq invaded Kuwait on 2 August 1990, marking the beginning of the First Gulf War. The border between Kuwait and Iraq was drawn by the British in 1923. The boundary demarcation gave Kuwait more land than its rulers had traditionally controlled in order to apparently restrict Iraqi access to the Persian Gulf. As a result, Iraq was dependent on the Shatt Al-Arab waterway. During the Iran-Iraq War, the waterway was blocked and Iraq had to rely on pipelines that ran through Saudi Arabia and Turkey to export its oil. This left Iraq vulnerable.[31] Before the First Gulf War, Iraq had made claims to Kuwait, but never in the form of documented evidence.[32] When Iraq invaded Kuwait, the Iraqi government argued that the people of Kuwait had requested the help of Iraq to overthrow the Kuwaiti regime.[33]

Other Gulf States had hoped that Iraq would settle its differences with Kuwait. It had received financial support from its neighbours in the Gulf, especially Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Fearing that it could be the next to confront Iran, Kuwait had supported Iraq in the Iran-Iraq War.[34] Iraq's

invasion of Kuwait, therefore, came not only as a surprise to states outside the region, but also to those within it. A number of domestic factors appear to have contributed to the decision to attack Kuwait. Yet, there were also more pressing economic factors driving the decision to invade Kuwait. In the wake of the Iran-Iraq War, Saddam Hussein's regime was finding it increasingly difficult to sustain a system of patronage upon which its stability in part depended. Moreover, the import-based development model adopted by the country relied upon subsidies that were increasingly in shorter supply. In addition, oil revenue was not enough to cover the import bill and public debt, due to low oil prices. The Iraqi regime had sought additional loans and debt forgiveness from Kuwait following its war with Iran. Kuwait, however, sought repayment.[35]

The war had also caused serious damage to Iraq's oil infrastructure. The closure of the Persian Gulf to Iraqi oil exports had also resulted in a reduction in the country's earnings from oil.[36] In an effort to boost its oil revenue, Iraq attempted to convince other members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to raise the price of oil. It was particularly hopeful that OPEC members from the Gulf would be accommodating, especially Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Yet, they were not forthcoming.[37] Relations between Iraq and Kuwait also deteriorated following the Iraqi government's request that Kuwait cancel debts it had incurred during the war with Iran, and that Kuwait pay Iraq compensation for its role in defending the interests of the Gulf States during the Iran-Iraq War.[38] The Iraqi government accused Kuwait of illegally extracting oil from Iraqi oil fields.[39]

The idea of resorting to the use of force was not only aimed at Kuwait, but also at extracting resources and winning concessions from other Gulf States over the longer term. The hope was that these would assist in financing Iraq's economic reconstruction, enhance Saddam Hussein's influence and establish Iraq as a dominant power in the Gulf and oil market.[40]

Within several days of the invasion, Iraq announced that it intended to annex Kuwait. By the end of August, Kuwait was declared the nineteenth province of Iraq. Both the Arab League and the UN condemned Iraq's invasion of its neighbour in an effort to push Iraq to withdraw unconditionally from Kuwait.[41] The American intervention in the conflict following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was initially prompted by the desire to prevent an attack on Saudi Arabia. The latter had, in fact, formally invited the US militarily to defend the kingdom.[42] This was after the US had offered assistance, shown satellite images of the Iraq military build up near the Saudi-Kuwaiti border and urged the Saudis to allow the US to deploy military support to the kingdom.[43]

When the objective of averting an invasion of Saudi Arabia had been achieved, there was a debate over the effectiveness of employing sanctions to bring about a resolution of the crisis. Ultimately, the US president had already decided to go to war with Iraq. As US forces in Saudi Arabia were increased for this objective, the UN Security Council passed a resolution that set the deadline for withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait as 15 January 1991. In the event of Iraq's failure to do so, the resolution sanctioned the use of all necessary means to expel Iraqi forces from the country. The purpose of US military intervention in the Gulf shifted from defence of Saudi Arabia to the liberation of Kuwait. The stability of the Gulf States as primary suppliers of American and European oil provided a motivation for the liberation of Kuwait. Ensuring the continued investment in European and American economies by the Gulf States was also a motivating factor. When the deadline for the Iraqi withdrawal of troops was not met, the First Gulf War was set in motion on the following day. Iraq accepted the terms of a UN-negotiated ceasefire on 6 April 1991. These terms included returning property stolen from Kuwait, contributing to a fund to help finance war damage claims, moving the Iraqi border so that Kuwait gained 6 more oil wells in the Rumeila oil field and part of the Iraqi naval base at Umm Qasr. It was also required not to fly in no-fly zones. The resolution also stipulated that if Iraq were to surrender all of its nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, the ban on exports, including that of oil, would be lifted. The latter was not done and economic sanctions lasted until 2003.[44]

The political development path following the events of 1987–91

The First Gulf War demonstrated the limitations of Arab unity. The invasion of one Arab state by another was itself an affront to Arabism.[45] Moreover divisions within the region became evident as a result of the war. Egypt sent troops to support Operation Desert Shield; Syria also joined the alliance. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan condemned the military intervention. There was a general ambivalence in the Arab world about US intervention. For America's Arab allies it proved highly controversial and embarrassing against the backdrop of the Palestinian Intifada. The Iraqi government was able to use the situation to its advantage by linking the occupation of Kuwait to that of the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank,[46] even though the connection was not particularly convincing.

The prospect of American intervention to resolve a regional crisis caused consternation among many Arab states and attempts were made

to muster the will for a regional crisis management initiative. Libya, Sudan, Yemen, Jordan, Algeria and the PLO all hoped that an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait could be negotiated. However, ultimately the divisions within the Arab world prevented any such regional response from coming to fruition.[47] The decision of several Arab states to ally themselves with the West against a fellow Arab state consolidated divisions within the Arab world. The lack of a pan-Arab response to the crisis cast a severe blow to Arabism. So too did the decision of some Arab states to act in concert with the West, which violated Arabism's resistance to Western influence and intervention in the region.

The First Gulf War not only exposed the growing hollowness of Arabism; it also generated dissent and dissatisfaction with a number of governments. In addition to the physical damage suffered by Kuwait, which included burning oilfields and destruction of infrastructure, and the thousands killed and injured, the government's pre-war credibility was also compromised. Following the war, the government's pre-war lack of accountability, inability to defend the country and mismanagement of the country's oil fields and revenues sparked popular discontent. In response to pro-democracy demonstrations and US pressure, the government announced that the National Assembly would be restored.[48]

In many countries that had allied themselves with the US during the intervention in Iraq, the general public were deeply critical of their governments' decision to fight against another Muslim and Arab state.[49] In Saudi Arabia, the situation was particularly delicate. The First Gulf War had established the precedent of stationing American troops in Saudi Arabia. The US Combat Air Operations Centre for the Gulf was situated near Riyadh. Modernizers took advantage of the potential opening and pressed for greater civil and human rights. In the early 1990s, King Fahd announced the planned creation of a National Consultative Assembly and his intention to expand the public role of women. The government was, nonetheless, determined that the American military presence in the country should not be exploited by reformers in order to push for change that could generate instability.[50]

When US troops remained in Saudi Arabia and some of its neighbours in the Gulf, some people believed that the US was using the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait as a pretext to maintain a foothold in the Gulf in order to gain control of its oil resources.[51] A separate element of Islamic critique and opposition was led by Bin Laden and other leading figures in Al-Qaeda. Their critique went beyond Saudi Arabia.[52] The War in Iraq also contributed to a growth of Islamic insurgency in Egypt and the Maghrib.

Against the backdrop of crackdowns on the political left, Islamists provided a new opposition to some of the regimes in the region.[53]

The situation in Afghanistan played a critical role in the growth of more extremist forms of Islamism. In the late 1980s, many volunteers went to fight in Afghanistan in what was expected to be the final push to expel the Soviet forces. After an 11-year occupation of Afghanistan, the Soviets withdrew from the country without achieving their political goals. The mujahidin had successfully driven them out.[54] However, the outcome of their fight would not be the creation of an Islamic state. As mentioned, once the Soviets had withdrawn, the subsequent struggle for power among Afghans degenerated into civil war. Some Arab mujahidin fighters stayed on to fight in the civil war. Others returned to their home countries in the hope of contributing to the realization of the Islamic vision to which they subscribed.[55]

A number of individuals emerged from the Afghan theatre, including Ramzi Yousef, who was implicated in the attack on the World Trade Center in 1993, Mir Aimal Kansi, who murdered two US government employees in Virginia, as well as Bin Laden.[56] In 1989, when Bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia, he became more active within the transnational guerrilla army that had evicted the Soviets from Afghanistan.[57]

The loss of Afghanistan as a sanctuary also helped to prompt linkages between North African extremist groups and Al-Qaeda. In Algeria, for example, Algerian 'Afghan' fighters returned home and some became part of the extremist Islamist insurgency against the Algerian government that was in part a response to increased repression and lack of democratic reforms.[58] This was also the case in Egypt. Indeed, the loss of Afghanistan as a theatre for Islamic insurgency prompted a dispersal of highly motivated individuals who would continue their fight in other areas. Al-Qaeda formed connections with other radical movements focused primarily on altering the status quo in their own national contexts. This was compounded by the fact that these young men could not find employment after returning to their respective countries of origin. They also felt that their successful fight against the Soviets was not sufficiently recognized. They had also been radicalized intellectually and trained in military tactics. Together, these factors amounted to a ticking bomb.

Elsewhere, more positive developments appeared to be taking place. The American-led intervention to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation placed pressure on the US to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.[59] While members of the coalition rejected Iraq's linkage between the invasion of Kuwait and the Palestinian question, there was a widespread expectation

that the same principles of liberation should apply to Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories. If this was not the case, it would imply that double standards were being applied – one set for Arabs and another for Israelis.[60]

Paradoxically, the crisis led to some false hopes, particularly with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian question. At the beginning of the decade, as mentioned, Israel was ruled by a right-wing government, headed by the Likud leader Shamir, who neither accepted the principle behind the 1967 UN resolution 242, which was the basis upon which efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict were still based, nor the creation of a Palestinian state. Likud also considered the West Bank as an integral part of Israel and rejected Jordanian claims to it. The party also refused to deal with the PLO as a negotiating partner.[61]

When Iraq invaded Kuwait, the US urged Israel to stay out of the conflict and Israel was happy to oblige. However, in response to a riot in the Old City of Jerusalem, Israel forces reacted disproportionately, killing 19 Palestinians. International attention was suddenly focused on the plight of the Palestinians. It also compromised the US effort to keep the coalition against Iraq together. In its efforts to try to limit the damage, the administration of George H. W. Bush voted in favour of UN Security Council Resolution 681 of 21 December 1990, which condemned Israel's conduct vis-à-vis Palestinians in the occupied territories and supported an international conference on the Arab-Israeli conflict.[62]

While the US had rejected the linkage between the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait to the withdrawal of Israel from Palestinian territories that was being made by Hussein, the administration of George H. W. Bush did commit itself to convening a peace conference once the war in the Gulf was over.[63] The international peace conference took place in Madrid on 30 October 1991. Both the US and the Soviet Union acted as sponsors of the conference. Meetings between Palestinians, Israelis and representatives of Arab states took place until the spring of 1993. During this time, some positive developments took place.[64]

However, Shamir was replaced in 1992 by a less hawkish Yitzhak Rabin from the Labour Party, who announced a partial cessation of settlements in the occupied territories.[65] In a significant departure from the past, the Israelis and the PLO held direct, secret talks with each other in Oslo, Norway.[66] Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and his deputy Yossi Beilin believed a resolution of the conflict to be in the national interest of Israel and realized that a settlement could only be reached by talking to the PLO directly. The Norwegians provided an atmosphere in which the two sides in the conflict could iron out their differences with

minimal interference – what was to become the Oslo Peace Process had been initiated.[67] Within this framework an agreement between the PLO and the Israeli government was reached in the summer of 1993. The so-called Oslo Accords (Oslo I) provided for the recognition of the PLO by Israel and of Israel by the PLO, and the basis for Palestinian autonomy in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

A number of factors contributed to this outcome. Hamas was gaining more and more popular support among Palestinians, which gave Israel cause for concern. With support for Hamas growing, the PLO needed a diplomatic victory.[68] Rabin had received reports indicating a growth in support for Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the occupied territories. Rabin and Peres were also convinced that resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestinians in the occupied territories would reduce Syria's bargaining power vis-à-vis Israel.[69] Israel also had an interest in engaging in direct diplomatic talks with Palestinians as the Clinton Administration in the US took less interest in foreign affairs and was more pro-Israeli than its predecessor had been.[70]

On the basis of this broad deal, agreements governing economic relations and the transfer of authority to the Palestinians in Gaza and Jericho were signed in 1993. The latter marked a breakthrough in the conflict between Palestinians and Jews in Palestine.[71] Once Palestinians had negotiated a deal with the Israelis, other Arab states could permit themselves to do so without facing accusations of betrayal or fear of angering their own publics.[72] In a more low-key ceremony, Israel and Jordan agreed to an agenda for peace negotiations. In 1994, a peace treaty between the two states was concluded. At the same time, Arafat took up residence in Gaza.[73] The prospects for peace in the Middle East looked extremely promising at this stage.

In 1995, an Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip or Oslo II was signed by the PLO and Israel. This agreement marked the beginning of the next phase of negotiations between the Israeli government and the PLO.[74] It outlined details of how power was to be transferred to a Palestinian civil authority in the West Bank. The agreement envisioned a division of the West Bank into a number of zones under varying degrees of Palestinian control and phased Israeli military withdrawal from the various zones at different rates.

While the Knesset (Israel's legislature) endorsed the Interim Agreement, the leader of Likud, Binyamin Netanyahu condemned it. On 4 November 1995 Rabin was assassinated by a religious-nationalist Jew intent on disrupting negotiations. The election of Likud, led by Netanyahu, brought a halt to progress in the peace process. He refused

to recognize the right of Palestinians to a state and the right of return of Palestinian refugees. He was also opposed to stopping settlements, asserted Israel's right to the whole of Jerusalem and refused to entertain the idea of Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights.[75] Indeed, the Zionist dream of a Greater Israel was never completely abandoned by some factions within the Israeli political elite, whose objective remained (and still remains as the building of the wall demonstrates) maximum land and minimum Palestinians. Yet, the Greater Israel dream was and remains irreconcilable with peace and coexistence in the region.

At the same time, the PLO and Arafat were in danger of losing supporters to opposition groups. Important posts within the Palestinian authority were occupied by previously exiled politicians rather than local politicians. Despite the creation of a Palestinian Council comprised of elected representatives, the Palestinian Authority (PA) lacked accountability and press freedom, and repressive measures were deployed against members of opposition groups.

The peace process had also caused deterioration in the economic situation of Palestinians as a result of lack of access to the Israeli job market due to restricted access in response to terrorist attacks. Foreign economic aid was also channelled into financing the PA's security and administrative structures rather than to infrastructure. As Palestinians grew weary of the way in which the PA was being governed and the increasingly difficult economic situation, Hamas gained ground as a legitimate opposition group that better understood the concerns and hardships of the Palestinian people. It was also doing more at the grassroots level to improve social welfare than the PA administration.[76] Hamas had emerged out of the Muslim Brotherhood presence in the Palestinian territories, whose initial focus before the 1948 Arab-Israeli war was on social and cultural activities rather than direct engagement in politics. The Brotherhood only became increasingly militant as repression in Egypt in the 1950s and 60s prompted a reorganization of its political activities that led to the creation of the United Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood Organization from which Hamas originated as a political movement from 1967 onwards, becoming its official armed wing in 1987.[77]

Hamas was opposed to the Oslo Peace Process and carried out attacks against Israeli civilians as a way to end the Israeli occupation. In response, Israel pressured Arafat to bring Hamas under control. Yet, ultimately the raids carried out against Hamas by Arafat's security forces only served to increase its popular support.[78] Hamas was an indigenously formed political movement as opposed to the PLO. It was initially vehemently

opposed to the peace process and committed to creating an Islamic Palestinian state composed of the whole of Palestine.[79] Hamas continued to support relentless and continuous struggle until the whole of Palestine is liberated and represented an Islamic-nationalism that contrasted with the secular nationalism of the PLO and altered the interpretation of the struggle with Israel.[80] To this end, Hamas departs from the traditional incompatibility between Islam on ideological grounds and nationalism on territorial grounds.[81] As Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela note, 'Hamas offers the Palestinian masses an alternative religious narrative whose powerful message is embedded in its religious authenticity, clarity, and familiarity.'[82] Indeed, this was a reflection of the most significant developments in this period, which was the resurgence of political Islam in its various forms.

Conclusions: The seeds of the sixth critical turning point

By the time the Afghan regime collapsed in 1992, extremist Afghan Islamic groups and the mujahidin were divided and formed a number of different groupings. Differences and antagonisms between these groupings were exacerbated by the end of involvement of the US and various regional countries.[83] When the mujahidin returned home once the Soviets had withdrawn from Afghanistan, many became frustrated with their efforts to reform their own countries. Bin Laden, for example, had been rebuffed when he offered to organize militants to help protect Saudi Arabia against a potential Iraqi invasion in the prelude to the First Gulf War.

Bin Laden and other members of Al-Qaeda later took up residence in Sudan, where they were welcomed by an experimental Islamic state that had been established.[84] At this stage Al-Qaeda referred to a mode of activism rather than an organization per se. However, after being expelled from Sudan in 1996, Al-Qaeda's leaders relocated to Afghanistan, which was now ruled by the Taliban. In the same year, Bin Laden called for a war to be waged upon the US and for the expulsion of US forces from Saudi Arabia.[85] Afghanistan provided a safe place from which the leaders of Al-Qaeda could operate and organize the movement and it was during 1996–2001 that it morphed into what we know it as now, laying the seeds for the 11 September attacks. During this period, experienced and committed militants, many of whom had fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan, assembled and came to form the 'hardcore' of Al-Qaeda away from the watchful eyes of domestic security services in their home countries.[86]

The move to Afghanistan provided the first real opportunity to build up something resembling an organized violent extremist entity, although it never amounted to a tightly structured organization. By this time, the movement's action, media campaign and recruitment drives had become global,[87] even though the origins of the militancy of many of the individuals who flocked to Afghanistan was connected to national contexts and struggles. The significance of the internationalization of violent extremist movements in Islam would become evident in the next critical turning point in the Middle East in 2001.

8
September 11 and After

On 11 September 2001, extremists seized control of passenger jets leaving Boston, Newark, New Jersey and Washington. Two of these planes were crashed into the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center. Another was flown into the Pentagon in Washington and the fourth, thought to have been intended to target the US Capitol or the White House, crashed in a field in Pennsylvania.[1] The reactions to these events and the corresponding policy changes that they prompted created a sixth critical turning point. The first important consequence was the reversal of US foreign policy. The new approach resulted in, among other things, the attack on Afghanistan in 2001 (as part of the Global War on Terror), which was carried out with key allies, and the invasion of Iraq in 2003 (supposedly, as part of the fight against the 'axis of evil'). This strategy placed an enormous strain on US relations with many Middle Eastern countries, including close strategic partners, and gave the impression of a greater divide between the West and the Muslim world. In addition, it unsettled the regional order, raising anxiety among rulers who feared the destabilization of the region. Most governments within the Middle East were uncomfortable with the US military intervention in their region. This apprehension explains the reluctance of many countries in the region to support the build up to the Iraq war (which is not to say that they supported Saddam Hussein's regime). In some cases, the preservation of stability also served as an excuse to impose political restrictions on populations, civil society and indigenous political parties, groups and movements. Indeed, certain governments limited civil and political rights in the name of the fight against terrorism, the political implications of which were still playing themselves out by mid-2010 and are helping to sow the seeds of a potential seventh critical turning point.

The September 11 attacks: Initial conditions

As the foregoing chapters have outlined, there is a general sense of frustration, disarray and a loss of dignity in the Arab-Islamic world that results from the cumulative effects of a series of defeats. In the twentieth century, they were most closely linked to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, European colonialism, betrayal by the British with regards to the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the continued colonial occupation by the State of Israel.[2] There is a general disillusionment with the West. Anti-Western sentiment has to be interpreted against this historical context. According to Lewis, anti-Westernism and anti-Americanism in particular has much to do with a sense of humiliation. The Arab-Islamic world, as we have explained, was once a beacon of light for Europeans in their 'dark ages', excelling in science, philosophy and architecture. Today, there is a feeling that they are being not just eclipsed, but overwhelmed by a West that they once considered their inferior.[3] Moreover, during the colonial era, the introduction of new technologies and means of producing wealth brought about tremendous changes in the Middle East, but those who benefited the most were European colonialists and, in some cases, a comprador bourgeoisie. Today, elites in many Middle Eastern countries are still regarded as the West's stooges – a political class that fails to act in the interests of the populace.

The states that emerged in the Middle East after de-colonization were first challenged by Pan-Arabism, which failed to live up to its promises. The ideology of secular Arab nationalism faced a crisis of legitimacy.[4] Socialism and Arab unity espoused by Nasser and the Baa'th party in Syria and Iraq failed in particular, despite initial optimism, to bring about a transformation of the region. Nationalism and socialism were Western concepts and their failure to revolutionize the Middle East only added to disenchantment with secularism and the West.[5] Efforts by foreign powers to promote democracy in the region have tended to assume that a separation of spiritual and temporal power must form part of any reforms. However, this is anathema to many people in society for whom Islam is central to their identity and the totality of their lives. Secularism, which itself emerged in the West, is generally opposed, especially in extremely conservative societies. It is also associated with something that is being imposed on the people of the Middle East by the West and a pro-Western elite from whom many people feel alienated. Indeed, historically, it was borrowed from the West as a means of buttressing modernization and development. The apparent failure of modernization projects in largely secular nationalist postcolonial regimes suggested a

concomitant failure of secularism.[6] Disenfranchisement and alienation from the state due to poverty and unequal access to public services has also contributed to the search for an alternative. This has led to the emergence of political Islam as a force for change in the region. Not only have Salafist organizations and parties often appeared as the most credible and authentic endogenous opposition to some existing un-Islamic regimes in the region, they also often provide welfare support to those who do not have, for example, affordable and accessible social and medical assistance. The Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas and Hezbollah have actively provided welfare support where it is most needed.[7]

Salafists do not only challenge the secular nature of the state; they offer an alternative worldview.[8] The return to 'fundamentals' sought by Salafists implies cleansing Islam not only of Western cultural influence, but also of fringe Muslim cultural influences. They reject the idea that there are different schools of Islam and prefer to think of themselves as the only true Muslims. 'Salafi', the most frequently used label to identify this movement, was originally employed in relation to a nineteenth-century reform movement associated with Jamal Ad-Din Al-Afghani. The perceived need for reform was a response to colonization and Westernization. Al-Afghani's call for a return to the fundamentals of Islam was a means of challenging the religious establishment rather than a call for the establishment of Shari'ah law. Today, however, 'Salafi' has come to refer to those who seek a purification of Islam from cultural influences, especially those originating from the West.[9]

Many Salafists advocate a strict implementation of the Shari'ah. Local cultural influences that contextualize Islam as it is practiced by Muslims in different countries are also opposed. In quite stark contrast to Arab nationalism, some Salafists refuse Western concepts such as the political party, revolution or social justice. They are not interested in engaging in state politics. Constructing state institutions is not part of their agenda.[10] Some Salafists do, however, demonstrate a willingness to engage in politics when allowed to do so. In Yemen and Kuwait, for example, Salafi movements participate in the party political system.[11]

Despite the differences between less conservative variants of political Islam and Salafism, they both agree that the Ummah is in a state of disarray and that Westernization is threatening Islam. The manner in which each respond to this identified problem is, however, different. Less conservative Islamic movements view an Islamic state as the ultimate goal. Salafists may take an apolitical stance. Others advocate the preaching of Islam or even jihad.[12] Some Salafism is antagonistic towards the West and rejects engagement and accommodation with secular Western

communities. The decision to employ violence is often a tactical decision and is not implied in the basic tenets of Islamic fundamentalism.[13] It is made in relation to an ever-evolving political contest.

According to Olivier Roy, 'neofundamentalism', as he calls it, in Islam represents a reformulation of religiosity that responds above all to the deterritorialization of Islam and the process of Westernization with which many Muslims are having to cope with.[14] For Roy, neofundamentalism is both a result and a tool of globalization; in that it is a vehicle for the process of 'deculturation'; in that it opposes culturally embedded expressions of Islam. Globalizing processes provide a means through which to reconstruct the Ummah on a solely religious basis. This is what is thought to make it perfectly compatible with globalization – it expresses a decontextualization of religion. Their critique is, therefore, targeted first and foremost at Muslim cultures and, only after that, Western cultures.[15] This is a crucial point to understand in order to avoid misleading and dichotomous thinking that evokes a clash between the West and the Arab-Islamic world. However, the lack of sustainable and acceptable successes achieved by these groups has ultimately led the extremist members to reject patient engagement in conventional politics and to seek to realize their goals through violent struggle.

While violent Islamic extremism may be partly a response to the deterritorialization of Islam, particularly outside the Middle East, it is also important to remember that the objectives of extremists, which does not include all forms of Islamic fundamentalism, is a response to Western, especially US, foreign policies. Washington's extreme pro-Israeli stance in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has contributed to anti-Americanism in the Middle East. There exists a widespread perception among the people of the region that the US is too lenient with Israel and indifferent to the plight of Palestinians in the occupied territories. The US, therefore, tends to be viewed as collaborating with the State of Israel to the detriment of the Palestinian national struggle. This is compounded by the anger and frustration at foreign influence in the region generated by the stationing of US troops on Saudi territory during the First Gulf War. Moreover, the fact that a Muslim-majority country (Iraq) with close relations with the US was implicated in an attack on another majority Muslim state (Kuwait) contributed and still contributes to the feeling that some of the established regimes (and Western states in general) were engaged in anti-Islamic activities.

Islamism is also a means of mobilizing a population against domination by non-Muslims.[16] In this sense, Islamism represents not only a challenge to secular Arab nationalism, but also to Western hegemony.[17] While the vast majority of Islamist political movements aim to

challenge the legitimacy of national authorities, transnational Islamic extremist groups seek to challenge a more distant 'enemy' – the West in general and the US in particular. Their aim is to remove Western political, economic and cultural influence within the Muslim world. Transnational Islamic extremist networks thus advocate global rather than local forms of political action. Moreover, violence is conceived as the principal form of political action.[18] One of the grievances cited by Bin Laden was the presence of US troops on Saudi soil during and after the First Gulf War in 1991. In his discourses, Bin Laden had also identified the US pro-Israeli stance on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and US support for sanctions against Iraq.[19] Domination by a non-Islamic country and the Palestinian question resonate with the Arab-Islamic public at large. European colonialism remains fresh in the collective memory of the Arab-Islamic world and the ongoing struggle for national liberation of Palestinians continues to garner tremendous sympathy and support across the region: '[s]upport for the Palestinian cause was deeply ingrained in the public consciousness of Arabs and Muslims .... Arab and Muslim attitudes towards the conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories represent a demand for the end of the colonial era and a reaction against feelings of disempowerment.'[20]

The emergence of both the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, as discussed in the previous chapter, has also to be understood within the context of the cold war and the proxy war that was fought in Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda itself had grown out of the mujahidin's struggle against the pro-Soviet, pre-Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The US had provided money and arms to the mujahidin in order to limit expansion of Soviet influence and the spread of Communism. The Taliban had come to power following civil war in Afghanistan, consolidating its power during 1996–2000.[21] The Taliban had garnered popular support because they promised to bring an end to fighting between rival mujahidin groups that had followed in the wake of the Soviet withdrawal. Al-Qaeda was allowed to operate freely there, many of its members, including Bin Laden, had fought against the Soviets there in the 1980s. Afghanistan was, therefore, familiar territory. The alliance formed between the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in 1996 provided the Taliban with military and financial regime-support, in return for freedom to train, recruit and launch attacks from Afghan territory.[22]

The sixth critical turning point

The scope and psychological impact of the September 11 attacks in New York and Washington on Americans were momentous.[23] They altered

the course of US foreign policy, as well as the global environment. The attacks in New York and Washington in 2001 were carried out by members of Al-Qaeda.[24] The specific intelligence that led to the conclusion that Bin Laden had masterminded the attacks was initially revealed by the former British prime minister Tony Blair.[25] The British government revealed that 19 men had been identified as the hijackers of the four passenger planes, three of which had been linked to Al-Qaeda and one of whom had been identified as having had a key part in the earlier East African Embassy Attacks and the USS *Cole* attack.[26] A list of the names and aliases of 19 hijackers was then released by the FBI. Bin Laden had also appeared in a home video filmed by a visitor in which he celebrated the attacks.[27]

It is important to note that every Islamic country condemned the 2001 attacks. Indeed, many of the regimes in the Middle East are also the targets of violent extremist movements within Islam. If the 2001 attacks in the US were met with some degree of satisfaction among the general public in the region, this is not because there is widespread support for Al-Qaeda or similar entities. It is because the perpetrators were visibly challenging the US, citing US foreign policy on a number of Middle East issues as justifications, including its pro-Israeli stance. Palestinians were, however, resentful of the instrumentalization of the Palestinian question by Bin Laden and violent extremists.[28] The events that transpired as a consequence of the attacks in the US would not only increase anti-American sentiments and contribute to further radicalization, they would also seriously fragment and weaken the region.

The George W. Bush Administration declared its intention to wage war against terrorism. Pre-emptive military intervention against regimes that threatened the security of the US became part of American security policy. The US first turned its attention to Afghanistan.[29] Nine days after the September 11 attacks, former US President George W. Bush delivered a speech to the nation in which he gave the Taliban an ultimatum to either hand over Bin Laden or face a military attack on Afghanistan.[30] The US was widely supported by the international community. Britain was quick to demonstrate its solidarity, as were other European countries. America's NATO allies invoked Article 5 of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty that stated that an attack against one member of the Alliance constituted an attack against all members. A number of small and medium-sized powers also asserted their support for the US. However, one of the most critical states that the US needed to bring on board was Pakistan. Under significant pressure from the US, Pakistan announced its full support for the American administration's position and even attempted to persuade the Taliban to give up Bin Laden to no avail.

Within Afghanistan, the US required allies on the ground, which would come in the form of the United Front forces. With the prospect of an American attack on the Taliban regime, the United Front leadership made an alliance with the former Afghan King Zahir Shah, who was exiled in Rome, in an attempt to increase anti-Taliban support within the country.[31]

The second event of the sixth critical turning took place in October 2001, when the US administration led an invasion of Afghanistan aimed at removing the Taliban regime and capturing Bin Laden and other extremist leaders.[32] The initial goal was to remove the sanctuary from which the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon had been planned by members of Al-Qaeda, with the knowledge of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.[33] Within just two months the military campaign to topple the regime was over. On 16 December 2001, former US secretary of state Colin Powell announced that Taliban rule was over and that the Al-Qaeda network in Afghanistan had been destroyed.[34] The military campaign in Afghanistan succeeded in overthrowing the Taliban regime, and a friendly regime was established. However, Bin Laden was never captured.[35]

At the beginning of 2002, the idea of the invasion of Iraq and the removal of Saddam Hussein became the principle foreign policy preoccupation of the administration of George W. Bush. Throughout 2002, the impetus for a confrontation with Iraq increased in the US. This began with the reopening of the Weapons of Mass Destruction **(**WMD) file and a demand for the return of UN inspectors, although intelligence on Iraq's WMD capabilities was inclusive. Despite the ambiguous nature of the intelligence, the decision to remove Hussein from power seemed to have already been taken.[36] The case for invasion was justified on the basis that the Iraqi regime represented a clear source of terrorism against the US, rendered particularly worrying given its alleged possession of nuclear weapons. Liberating the Iraqi people was also put forward as a justification for military intervention and regime change. While not expressly mentioned at the time, Iraq's oil reserves and the agenda of neoconservative members of the US administration who had served under George Bush, Sr during the First Gulf War also contributed to desire to remove Hussein from power.[37] The idea that establishing democracy in Iraq could create a model for the region was also put forward as a rationale for regime change.

The US took the case to the UN General Assembly in September 2002. In November, the UN Security Council voted unanimously for Resolution 1441 that called for Iraq to allow weapons inspections to resume.

Iraq accepted Resolution 1441 and inspections resumed in November. While the Hussein regime cooperated with the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Committee (UNMOVIC), its report to the UN failed to shed new light on Iraq's WMD capabilities. The findings of UNMOVIC too failed to provide any new information. The international community was deeply divided over whether inspections should continue. Some countries, such as Belgium, France, Germany, Russia and Turkey, were in favour of this option. However, others, in particular the US and Britain, called for the use of force.[38] Despite a diplomatic offensive, it became clear that a draft resolution that would sanction the use of force and military intervention would not have obtained sufficient votes in the UN Security Council to be adopted.[39] The draft resolution was subsequently withdrawn by its three sponsors – the US, Britain and Spain. In a communiqué using the language of Resolution 1441, the US informed Saddam Hussein that he had 48 hours to leave his country in order to avoid military intervention.[40] Fearing the consequences of a US invasion of a Muslim state, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries hoped that a diplomatic solution to the crisis could be found.[41]

On 20 March 2003, an Anglo-American-led 'coalition of the willing' invaded Iraq.[42] That the US was willing to go to war with Iraq without UN authority for such action caused widespread concern within the international community that the US had entered a period of robust unilateralism and could not be constrained. The legality of the military campaign against Iraq was hotly debated.[43] Unlike in the case of Afghanistan, America's allies did not offer overwhelming support for military intervention in Iraq; NATO members were divided over the issue and the war was not authorized by the UN.[44] Among its traditional NATO allies, France and Germany notably refused to accept Washington's argument that the Hussein regime represented an immediate threat and needed to be overthrown by military force.[45] Within the Arab-Islamic world, with the exception of Kuwait, Qatar and Afghanistan, military intervention in Iraq met either with condemnation or severe criticism. Not only was it seen as a violation of international law, but also a threat to regional stability.[46]

Operation Iraqi Freedom began with a heavy aerial bombing campaign and the invasion of Iraq by Anglo-American ground troops that had been based in neighbouring Kuwait.[47] Although they met some sporadic resistance, the regime of Saddam Hussein was brought to an end within just three weeks. However, Iraqi troops did not surrender en masse as expected. Instead, the Iraq army simply melted away as members of its

units dissolved into society. The US army entered Baghdad on 9 April 2003, dramatically pulling down a statue of Hussein.[48] This was followed by a largely American and British occupation of Iraq.[49]

The post-September 11 political development path

While many people in the Arab-Islamic world may have understood the invasion of Afghanistan, the subsequent military campaign against Iraq is perceived as an illegitimate war and reminiscent of British and French colonial wars and the Crusades – aspects of the past that live on in the collective memory of Middle Easterners. The presence of foreign troops in Iraq seems to many like a twenty-first-century version of Napoleon's occupation of Egypt, British and French colonialism and the wretched Sykes-Picot Agreement that betrayed the Arabs and the creation of Israel and its continued occupation of the Palestinian Territories.[50] This and the Global War on Terror (GWOT), which was perceived as an attack on Islam and a ruse for exploitation of the region's energy resources, have increased anti-Americanism in the region and people's sense of siege. Many in the Middle East felt that the West saw the Arab-Islamic world purely through the prism of the GWOT.[51]

The invasion of Iraq constitutes one of the most serious blunders in US foreign policy. US credibility in the Arab world plummeted to an all-time low and even a majority of the Israeli public found the US approach to the region unbalanced. It is easier to concentrate on the reasons for the miscalculation than to formulate a plan for addressing the outcome. The administration of George W. Bush had underestimated the investment necessary for Iraq, both in terms of manpower and finance. It also neglected to draw on lessons learnt from US and UK experiences of nation-building in the 1990s. It also failed to recognize how difficult it would be to stabilize Iraq if neighbours that could influence events were not inclined to cooperate and that status quo regimes would not support the creation of a democratic Iraq established through coercive regime change.

The George W. Bush Administration's insistence on viewing conflict in the Middle East through the lens of GWOT has also generated a great deal of resentment. Hezbollah and Hamas were grouped into the same category of 'terrorists' as Al-Qaeda. Yet, the former are generally viewed as national resistance movements in the Arab-Islamic world or as potential contenders for power. Lack of engagement in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and support for some autocratic regimes in the region also marred the administration of George W. Bush in the eyes of the

general public in the Middle East.[52] To make matters worse, the Israeli response to the Second Palestinian Intifada that began at the end of 2000 involved the collective punishment of the Palestinian population, generating even greater anger towards the US for its seeming complicity with the Israeli government that claimed that its struggle against 'terrorism' was similar to that of the US.[53]

The invasion of Iraq and the removal of the Hussein regime profoundly transformed the region in geostrategic terms.[54] For the first time since colonial powers withdrew from the region, a Western country was taking on governance responsibilities for a Muslim state.[55] The Syrian regime feared what the US invasion of Iraq could portend for its own future. Egypt, Jordan, the UAE and Qatar had developed close ties with the US, which placed them in a awkward position. They were obliged to exercise restraint in their public discourse. Yet, they were concerned about the direction of US Middle Eastern policy. Saudi Arabia, with its Shia minority, was also apprehensive about the implications of a potential shift in power between the Sunni and the Shia in Iraq and the consequences that it could have for regional as well as domestic stability.[56] The administration of George W. Bush declared that it wished to transform Iraq into a secular liberal democracy.[57] Insurgency against the occupying powers – the US and Britain – at first involved Sunni Iraqis determined to counter the presence of foreign troops in their country. Failure of the occupying forces to increase security and provide jobs soon became additional sources of grievance among the Iraqi population. The presence of private security operatives functioning within a legal grey zone as well as abuse of Iraqi prisoners by US military personnel at Abu Ghraib also served to fuel insurgency against the increasingly beleaguered occupying forces.[58] Public opinion in the Middle East was deeply opposed to the occupation and tended to sympathize with the insurgents.[59]

Sectarian violence also plagued the country. Comparisons with Vietnam were encouraged by increasing international criticism of US action, uncertainties about the prospects for stable self-governance and security in Iraq, and growing domestic opposition (the military's strategic centre of gravity) to the war in the US. Against this backdrop of escalating sectarian violence and ethnic cleansing in Iraq, the possibility of a low-level, if not full-scale and widespread, civil war was at one point envisaged. In 2006, Britain's outgoing ambassador in Baghdad, William Patey, warned in a confidential memo that civil war was a more likely outcome in Iraq than democracy. He predicted a break-up of Iraq along ethnic lines: 'the position is not hopeless', but would be 'messy' for

five to 10 years. 'If we are to avoid a descent into civil war and anarchy then preventing the Jaish al-Mahdi (the Mahdi Army) from developing into a state within a state, as Hezbollah has done in Lebanon, will be a priority.'[60] In the same year, senior Iraqi officials admitted that the government was deeply divided, the prime minister increasingly isolated and 'Iraq as a political project is dead. The Parties have to move to plan B. There is serious talk of Baghdad being divided into a Shia east and Sunni West'.[61] The emergence of the Sadrist movement was in part built on the provision of public services no longer supplied by the state. The desire to participate in the struggle to liberate Iraq from the occupation of foreign powers also contributed to support for the movement.[62] Despite a continued insurgency and sectarian tension, a permanent government was established and a new constitution adopted in 2005, though the establishment of strong institutions still represented a challenge to post-war reconstruction well into the end of the decade.

Attacks by violent extremist movements within Islam did not cease despite the removal of the Taliban from power in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein in Iraq. The foreign presence in Afghanistan and Iraq is actually a factor that feeds global Islamic jihadist discourse. Yet, the neoconservatives in Washington refused to accept any responsibility for generating the roots of Islamic extremism. They maintained that it is the institutional structures in the Middle East that prevent human and socio-economic development that are the source of violent extremism. This suggests that it is poor governance in the Middle East that is the principal culprit. Reforming the regimes of the Middle East was thus central to the neoconservative anti-terrorist strategy. They rejected the idea that US foreign policy may have contributed to Islamic extremism.[63] Yet, the war in Iraq provided transnational violent extremists with a focus for their struggle against the US. It also increased hostility towards European and Gulf countries. The invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq provide powerful examples as well as visual images of Muslims suffering at the hands of non-Muslims.[64]

The focus of GWOT shifted from Iraq to democratization of the Middle East. This marked a departure with traditional US policy towards the region that had privileged stability over democracy.[65] The Greater Middle East Initiative (GMEI) developed by the administration of George W. Bush in late 2003 was aimed at bringing the US, Europe and countries in Middle East (the Arab world, Afghanistan, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and Turkey) together to promote political and economic reform in the region.[66] It proposed that the reduction of restrictions on political freedom in the region ought to be an explicit objective of

G8 diplomacy. The plan was initially met with scepticism in Europe and outrage in the Middle East.[67] The theory of democracy underpinning the GMEI reform project lacked a political dimension of society as well as a cultural element. As such, it failed to recognize the importance of political legitimacy. It also overlooked the loyalties to the state that exist in the Middle East, particularly in oil-producing countries, and ought to be differentiated from regimes, which generate considerable opposition and resistance. Another important dimension missing from this democratization policy is Islam.[68] The documents that finally emerged at the G8 Sea Island Summit in 2004 were vastly different from the GMEI text. The G8's subsequent Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENAI) no longer suggested that G8 states should encourage countries in the Middle East to transform.[69]

In 2006, as it became obvious that the GMEI reform project was not generating the desired results. The waning enthusiasm for democracy promotion in the Middle East was demonstrated by the 2007 State of the Union address in which President Bush explicitly mentioned countries such as Cuba, Belarus and Myanmar as places ripe for democratic reform.[70] US policy had shifted to realpolitik and propping up existing regimes against what was perceived as the new threat in the GWOT – Islamism.[71] However, political Islam is often the most credible and authentic opposition to some un-Islamic existing regimes.[72] For this reason, threats to state and regional stability are now identified not as those states adopting a diluted or robust form of Arab nationalism, but non-state actors that challenge the legitimacy and authority of the state.[73]

Yet, as noted earlier, Islam represents not only a religion, but also a way of life in the Middle East.[74] It is a blanket term that fails to distinguish between different forms of Islamism. Identifying Islamism as a threat also implies that Islamic organizations or parties, who are not opposed to engaging in politics, are a menace. Excluding them from the political arena carries with it a number of risks. It may prompt some to advocate violence as a means of achieving their objectives. For this reason, '[t]here will be no democratisation of the Muslim world without the integration of the Islamists who have chosen the first avenue, that of political integration and democracy'.[75] One example of the most significant developments in relation to political Islam in Egypt since the 2001 attacks is believed to be Gama'a Al-Islamiyya's renunciation of violence and its accusation that the government was guilty of abandoning faith. It emphasized preaching of Islam instead of violence.[76] It is thus an instance in which a Salafist group that advocated violence against the government has perhaps adapted its strategy to engage in

politics as a means of achieving its objectives. The possibility of engaging in politics has, however, to exist in practice for de-radicalization of this kind to be truly successful.

Conclusions: The seeds of a potential seventh critical turning point

The seeds of the next potential critical turning point have been planted. The effort to rid Afghanistan of the Taliban and to bring stability to the country is still ongoing. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan is a NATO-led mission and UN-mandated mission, designed to extend the authority of the Afghan government and establish the conditions for reconstruction and development throughout the country. NATO aims to militarily suppress the Taliban and ensure peace in the region, to provide the sine qua non for effective reconstruction and improvement in the political, economic and cultural spheres. Clearing regions of insurgents to provide a stable and safe environment for implementing development projects is the primary mission.[77] The secondary mission of ISAF is to support the international community in its efforts to build the political, economic and societal dimensions of the end-state outcome in Afghanistan.[78]

What constitutes the success of a NATO operation and so of external politico-military intervention in this region? The military objective of this intervention was to ensure the separation of indigenous Afghan military forces – particularly between the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, on the one hand, and Northern Alliance and other US-supported coalition fighters, on the other. This objective was achieved relatively quickly and successfully. How is success measured? It is measured according to both a purely military understanding (military defeat of 'the enemy'/body-count/territory held/asymmetries maintained are metrics of choice) and through the military's ability to support viable political objectives. In complex operations NATO needs to use different operational metrics in different parts of a country, using metrics for stability operations in the north and insurgency operations in the south.

Three arguments were marshalled to suggest that NATO was experiencing operational success. First, the 'Afghan First' Programme – building the Afghan National Army (ANA) as an exit strategy – was effective. In 2006, former NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer indicated one key metric of success would be when Afghan government troops take control of ISAF functions in 2008. Scheffer stated, 'I would hope that by 2008, we will have made considerable progress … with

effective and trusted Afghan security forces gradually taking control.'[79] He stated that

> The Afghan National Army, now some 35,000 strong, is an increasingly tough and resilient combat force, respected by the Afghan people as a tangible and promising sign of national unity. Indeed, the ANA has become a national asset with its emphasis on discipline, service to the nation, respect for the rule of law, and literacy and education – an institution that boasts Afghanistan's most advanced medical, legal, training and merit-based promotion systems.[80]

By early 2010, the ANA had taken over lead control of some ISAF operations, particularly in Kabul. However, it is still very much a fledgling force that needs to be strengthened and needs to gain trust from the local population.[81]

Second, tactical military victories against the Taliban fighters, which forced the Taliban to move back to asymmetric warfare, are evidence of effectiveness and success. 'Operation Medusa', for example, which defeated Taliban elements in Kandahar province in autumn 2006, was one such victory. NATO's top commander in Afghanistan, British Lt.-Gen. David Richards, stated that NATO forces in southern Afghanistan were on a mission to prove they can and will win by gaining a 'psychological ascendancy' over Afghan loyalties in the south.[82] NATO Spokesman, James Apathurai has noted, 'The international community recognizes that NATO has unique assets among international institutions. It's still the best organizer of large multinational military operations. In terms of robust peacekeeping, it's still the only game in town.'[83]

Third, progress in the civil development sector provides another positive metric. Progress has been made in Afghanistan's civil sector, led by the international community and supported by NATO as a secondary mission: building of the police forces, providing training, equipment and mentoring and advancing governance and justice in Afghanistan. In 2006, UN sources suggested that 'the percentage of people receiving medical care has jumped from 9 to 77 per cent, the number of students enrolled in schools has increased by 600 per cent, the annual average income of an Afghan has doubled to $355 up from $180 during the Taliban rule, and some 4,000 km of roads have been constructed or rebuilt'.[84] During the period 2004–9, approximately 2,000 schools were either repaired or built. By 2009, some 6.4 million children (including 1.5 million girls) attended school and 80 per cent of the Afghan population had access to health care (compared to 8 per cent in 2001).[85] In late

2002, the coalition established the first Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Gardez, Paktia province. The success of this innovation led to the establishment of PRTs throughout Afghanistan, bringing the benefits of development and security directly to the people of their provinces. By 2009, in cooperation with their local partners, PRTs had helped to create 34 provincial development plans aimed at supporting the implementation of the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS).[86]

Nevertheless, NATO's success has been widely questioned. Increasingly publicly, political elites have questioned prospects of success and raised the possibility of failure. This reflects domestic opposition or doubts about the operation and brings into question the interests, capabilities and political will nexus, the sine qua non of operational success. André Flahaut, former Belgian Defence Minister, called into question its prospects of success: 'The situation is deteriorating and, over time, NATO forces risk appearing like an army of occupation.'[87] The Italian government of Romano Prodi was brought to crisis point on the issue of Italian contributions to ISAF in February 2007. A Canadian Senate National Security and Defence Committee report in February 2007 noted, 'Anyone expecting to see the emergence in Afghanistan within the next several decades of a recognizable modern democracy capable of delivering justice and amenities is dreaming in Technicolor.'[88] Former Canadian Ambassador to NATO (1985–90) and former deputy defence minister, Gordon Smith, noted that a key task was to separate extremist Taliban in Pakistan-based safe havens from mainstream moderate Taliban based in Afghanistan and that negotiating with the Taliban would be necessary: 'while negotiations certainly cannot guarantee that the Taliban will be brought into the political process, failure to negotiate will almost surely cede the field to them'.[89]

By 2008, ISAF seemed in danger of losing the hearts and minds of the Afghans and began to be viewed as an occupying power, albeit and at best a necessary evil. Governance was weaker, with no mechanism to screen senior appointments allowing patronage systems to be embedded. The Ministry of Interior and police force were widely perceived to be totally corrupted institutions, colonized and penetrated by drug lords. The gulf between the Afghan government and the people was growing, as was the gap between the Afghan government and international donors. Judicial impunity and corruption were consolidating societal unrest. Two classified cables from Karl Eikenberry, the US Ambassador to Kabul, leaked in November 2009 indicated Eikenberry's ongoing concerns about the Karzai regime's capacity and

will to address corruption and, as a result, the value of sending additional US troops to Afghanistan.[90] The international community, ISAF and the Afghan government would not until 2010 devise a strategy to engage the Taliban.

Among Afghanistan's regional neighbours, Pakistan has been the most negatively affected. The Taliban were not defeated in the US invasion of 2001. They fled to Pakistan and are operating in the border region between the two countries. The movement is largely led by Al-Qaeda operatives from bases on Pakistani territory: 'The relationship between the Taliban and Al-Qaeda is a murky one but it is becoming closer.'[91] Since the Taliban has re-emerged as a serious political force, many have accused Islamabad of failing to crack down on them in Pakistan. Islamabad ended its military campaign against pro-Taliban tribes in 2006, leaving the border region with Pakistan fairly open to tribal leaders, clergy and Taliban. The deal was made on the basis that tribal leaders would not provide sanctuary to the Taliban or foreign fighters. According to some commentators, the Iraq War demonstrated the lack of domestic support in the US for the War. Governments in the region and insurgents are thought to be increasingly concluding that the US will not stay much longer.[92] 2009 saw, nevertheless, an increased deployment of US forces in Afghanistan, as well as efforts on the part of the Pakistani government to crush insurgency in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP).

Iran was a benefactor of the 2003 War in Iraq. Initially, Iran's reaction to the invasion of Iraq remained low-key. However, the US-Iranian relationship took a turn for the worse when the US accused Afghan refugees in Iran of involvement in an attack on the western compound in Saudi Arabia and asked for them to be extradited. Teheran offered to exchange them for the leaders of Mojahedin-e Khalq in American custody in Iraq. Washington refused to oblige and so too did Teheran. Iran had also indicated to Swiss diplomats representing the US in Teheran that it would be willing to negotiate with the US on a number of issues, including Iran's nuclear programme. However, the US failed to take up the opportunity. Initial US successes in overthrowing the regime in Iraq may have contributed to the US rejection of Iran's offer.[93]

Once the war was over, the Anglo-American occupation of Iraq helped to bolster the Iranian regime. Saddam Hussein's regime had been removed and with it Iran's major rival in the Middle East. The US was also in a quagmire in Iraq. The growing strength of its allies in Iraq and Lebanon also served to embolden the regime in Teheran.[94] However, the Shia-Sunni confrontation in Iraq rendered the situation more

complex. Under President Ahmadinejad, Iran's involvement in arming Shia factions in Iraq led to deterioration in Teheran's relationship with Washington and from this point onwards the administration of George W. Bush took a hard-line position towards Iran.[95]

Iran's aspirations to regional leadership have also resulted in a confrontational foreign policy stance on two issues in particular: Iran's nuclear programme and Israel's right to existence. Its nuclear activities serve its political objectives in the region, where only two nuclear states exist – Pakistan and Israel.[96] In relation to it's refusal to recognize the right of Israel to exist, Iran supports Hezbollah, even though Arab states have now de facto accepted the existence of a Jewish state. It is a vehicle for undermining the Gulf countries and appealing to the Arab populace. The regime in Tehran is trying to engage in a tactical rapprochement with Sunni radicals.[97]

President Ahmadinejad's confrontational insistence on the Israeli and nuclear issues have brought Iran into direct conflict with the West.[98] His hard-line posture on both issues raised concerns in the West, primarily related to its potential development of nuclear weapons. Iran has denied that it is using its nuclear programme to develop nuclear weapons. Even though many within the political elite and the population at large may object to Ahmadinejad's policy of confrontation, there is widespread support for Iran's right to develop nuclear energy. It has become a question of national honour.[99]

Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran are all possible incubators of factors that could culminate in another critical turning point, but the creeping destabilization of a large state could also provide a trigger. Paradoxically, it is the very profile of these other crises that have obscured growing latent and potential sources of insecurities in the region from erupting. Indeed, the six previous critical turning points have served to draw attention away from and obscure the challenges, obstacles and dilemmas the region faces, and its growing inability to manage change. Some states in the region face the stresses that all states in the international system confront. In our globalizing world, the gap is growing increasingly large between the rate and speed of systems change and the ability and capacity of societies, bureaucracies, states and regions to respond and manage these changes.

An example of an important state in the region is Egypt which is facing some challenges that may be consequential given its significance to the region. Some of its challenges include escalating food prices, rising inflation, a demographic bulge and a succession challenge. To take a series of snapshots from 2008 to illustrate this, let us focus first on water

scarcity. As Elie Elhadj, one of the Arab world's most respected and controversial bankers, notes,

> Egypt's food self-sufficiency is a mirage too. Why? Because a population of 80m requires 80bn cubic metres of water. But, the Nile River provides only around 55bn cubic metres annually. So, Egypt needs to import today the equivalent of about 25bn cubic metres in foodstuffs. As the Egyptian population grows, imports will follow. The same is true in the entire water scarce Middle East.[100]

Food prices in Egypt had risen by 50 per cent between 2007 and 2008. Consequently, Egypt turned to Sudan as a source of arable land. In early 2008, an agreement was signed with the Sudanese 'to grow two million tons of wheat a year in the north of the country'.[101] Although Egypt is pursuing an ambitious robust economic expansion, living conditions remain challenging. On the ground, poverty increased somewhat during the three-year period between 2005 and 2008, even though the economy experienced an annual growth rate of approximately seven per cent. These circumstances cause even greater concern, due to Egypt's booming population.[102]

In the Maghrib, the last few years have also witnessed an increase in religious extremism. Having lost its effectiveness in Iraq, Al-Qaeda has been attempting over the last few years to extend its influence to the Maghrib, principally by joining forces with local violent extremist movements. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) was until January 2007 called the Salafist Group for Call and Combat (known under its French acronym GSPC), whose activities were directed at the Algerian state. GSPC had emerged as the principal violent extremist group in Algeria and in North Africa in general. In 2007, it joined forces with Al-Qaeda and violent insurgence has since been increasing. The new name – AQIM – that accompanied the merger of the two networks indicates an effort to unite extremist insurgents in the whole of the Maghrib (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia). Since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the network has also begun to internationalize its activities and to emphasize the need for global struggle in the service of the Ummah. It has not only paid attention to Western targets in Algeria, for instance, but also condemned 'apostate regimes' in the Arab-Islamic world.[103] The internationalization of what were hitherto national opposition movements is likely to encourage responses from national governments that further reinforce resistance to opening the political systems and addressing the legitimate grievances of the people

to which the moderate Islamic and Salafist political opposition most effectively speak.

By early 2010, the Middle East situation is worryingly unsettled. The level of instability is high throughout the region: the Israeli-Palestinian peace process remains deadlocked, violence continues in Afghanistan and Pakistan, tension grows between Iran and the Arab countries, as well as Iran and the political West. Furthermore, long-awaited political reforms have yet to materialize in many of the states in the region, generating frustration and disenfranchisement. While it is difficult to predict what may happen in the near future, it is clear that if concerted efforts are not made to halt the negative spiral in which the region is presently caught, another negative critical turning point will surely occur. Moreover, the longer the status quo lasts, the harder it will be to move forward and upwards into a virtuous spiral. For this reason, if for no other, actions can and must be taken. Defeatism must be rejected. Problems are not unsolvable, as one tends to imagine. Indeed, they were, in most instances, predictable outcomes of poor policy decisions, incompetence and failure of vision, compounded by the reactions to the events themselves. Some of these weaknesses can be fixed, or at least improved. To prevent the next negative critical turning point from occurring, one needs to recognize both the potentials and failures of the region. Only a comprehensive and balanced diagnosis of the crisis will lead to efficient solutions. We attempt to provide this in the next chapter.

9

Implications for a Potential Seventh Critical Turning Point – 2011–15

This concluding chapter has two tasks. First, we survey the range of potential factors that are likely to create the conditions for a potential seventh critical turning point in the Middle East. These range from fragile and failing state implosion; violent extremism and the continued export of strategic dysfunctionality; and Palestinian-Israeli generated tensions. Second, we reflect on the nature of current approaches to managing change in the region – noting four different and competing approaches, each of which is supported by a narrative that purports to identify and address underlying structural and systemic causation in the region. *The Sixth Crisis: Iran, Israel and the Rumours of War* by Dana H. Allin and Steve Simons constitutes a recent attempt by imaginative scholars to outline the parameters of the next major crisis – identified as the juncture created by Iran's nuclear programme, the Israeli-Palestinian stalemate and the state of US-Israeli relations.[1] We argue that to be able to speculate on the catastrophic event or series of crises which might constitute such a future critical turning point has little utility for policymakers, if we draw the wrong conclusions as to its causes. Under such circumstances policy responses will be driven by existing narratives that misidentify a set of underlying tensions and cleavages that the responses then attempt to address. As a result the policy responses will have limited utility, and, worse, will likely sow the seeds for yet another critical turning point. This is the pattern of action and reaction identified in the previous six critical turning points. Unless policies are formulated to focus on reducing and eliminating dignity deficits, this chapter argues, the seventh critical turning point will lead to an eighth. We provide a clear analysis of the internal and external dimensions of this issue, identifying nine internal and nine external deficits, before proposing a set of national, regional and global basic requirements to begin the process of addressing dignity deficits in the region.

Current stresses and tensions in the Middle East

While it is difficult to pinpoint the exact causes of a potential seventh negative critical turning point in the region, each of the six critical turning points that we have examined thus far has contained the seeds of the next (see Table 9.1).

Based on the nature of the sixth critical turning point, we are able to identify contemporary key fractures and stress points that allow us to speculate that a number of interlocking factors are likely to be critical in creating the initial conditions of a potential seventh critical turning point that could be made apparent through an event or series of events. These range from persistent crisis of government and state

Table 9.1 Six previous critical turning points

Critical turning points	Seeds of the next critical turning point
(1) 1915–22 Betrayal of the Arabs; division of Middle East by colonial powers	Balfour Declaration; Arab nationalism
(2) 1948 British withdrawal from Palestine; UN proposal for the partition of Palestine; the creation of Israel	Creation of the Palestinian Question; Pan-Arabism
(3) 1967 The Arab defeat; Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories	Failure of Pan-Arabism; rise of political Islam
(4) 1979 Creation of the Islamic Republic of Iran; seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca; Soviet invasion of Afghanistan	Export of the revolution; US support for Saddam Hussein; Iran-Iraq War; mujahidin in Afghanistan
(5) 1987–91 Palestinian Intifada; Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan; the First Gulf War	Frustration with the Middle East peace process; increased anti-Westernism/Americanism; dispersal of 'Afghan' mujahidin and internationalization of their cause
(6) 2001 11 September attacks in the US; US invasion of Afghanistan and US-led invasion of Iraq	Increased anti-Westernism/Americanism; dispersal of Al-Qaeda; internationalization of other extremist movements; antagonism; state fragility and failure; Israeli-Palestinian conflict

failure, fragile and failing state implosion, the evolving balance between religious and political power, violent extremism and Palestinian-Israeli generated tensions. The failure of secular Arab nationalism to provide adequate domestic governance and Pan-Arabism to produce regional political integration have created a crisis of legitimacy in many regimes in the Middle East that is exacerbated by the West's continued support for them. While some key dimensions of Arabism have waned, lack of Palestinian statehood and resistance to Western influence in the region remain extremely powerful issues. Within this context, the perception that the West is anti-Islamic and biased towards Israel helps to fuel anti-Westernism, which may be exploited by extremist elements within Islam due to the gap between prevailing norms and the reality on the ground and the frustrations and disappointment generated by such a schism. Let us examine the key fault lines before reflecting on their relationship to pre-existing explanatory narratives that govern our understanding of this region and how to respond to its ailments.

Persistent crisis of governance and state failure

A persistent failure to improve governance in the Middle Eastern countries – and in the worst case scenario failed states – is likely to contribute significantly to a potential critical turning point, given that the result will be increased frustration due the persistence of a lack of dignity and hope. Many governments in the region lack sufficient political legitimacy due to poor governance paradigms that have resulted in a sense of disenfranchisement within society. Many states are failing to provide for the whole of society's socio-economic welfare, adequate health care and employment opportunities for a growing population. In many instances, the legitimacy and authority of states in the region are being challenged, primarily by Islamist parties and extremist networks.

The Gulf states are managing comparatively well. There is continued effort to include opposition forces within the political process and to absorb talented individuals within the government and facilitate social mobility within a stable framework. They are also fairly sensitive and responsive to the collective mood within society.[2] Reforms have tended to be driven from above as a means of self-preservation, though opposition forces are playing a greater role in pressing for change.[3] However, the situation is less positive in other countries of the region, where governments are failing to provide adequate public services.[4] Lack of political, social and economic reforms are also adding to frustration and stifling change. In most instances, moderate political Islamic parties and organizations are perceived as the most credible form of opposition.

Some governments have tended to respond to challenges to the status quo by restricting the participation of opposition parties in the political system. Yet, this seems to be increasing disenfranchisement and violent extremism.[5] In some countries, governments tend to clampdown on opposition forces, preferring to prioritize economic development over political reforms.

Some countries in the region are even close to implosion. Pakistan is a highly unstable country as the 2007 assassination of Benazir Bhutto aptly demonstrated. While the February 2008 elections brought an end to military rule in Pakistan, political stability remains fragile. Tension between the military and civilian democracy continues. The military still dominates security policy, thereby determining the country's strategic priorities. This poses an obstacle to the pursuit of peaceful relations with its neighbours.[6] It also hampers efforts to counter insurgency in large swathes of Pakistani territory. The Pakistani military and security services tend to view violent extremist groups as a means of counterbalancing India's regional influence as well as a safeguard against an American exit from Afghanistan.[7] As a result, their relationship with them is ambiguous, adding even greater uncertainty for the future. Severe flooding in the summer of 2010 risks exacerbating existing systemic and structural weaknesses in Pakistan.[8]

In Yemen, war, a secessionist movement, the presence of Al-Qaeda, as well as demographic and economic trends are placing great pressure on this fragile state. According to Christopher Boucek, 'Yemen faces unprecedented challenges – violent extremism, economic collapse, a looming water shortage, and a growing secessionist movement. Any one of these challenges coming to a crisis point could overwhelm the Yemeni government. Unless appropriate steps are taken, Yemen is at risk of becoming a failed state and a training ground for Islamist extremism.'[9] The country faces near depletion of its oil resources with no clear preparation for a post-oil economy, its fast-growing population is also placing strain on its limited water resources and the living standards of a growing population are declining.[10] Yemen is not alone in facing such a predicament.

However, in Yemen these challenges threaten to disrupt not just local stability, but also regional and international stability, including the flow of vital hydrocarbons. If left unaddressed, Yemen's problems could potentially destabilize Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states. The inability of the Yemeni central government to fully control its territory will create space for violent extremists to regroup and launch attacks against domestic and international targets. The international community must

be realistic about the limitations of intervention in Yemen. In the near term, however, inaction is not an option.[11]

Despite the hope that the establishment of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in 2004 would help to stabilize the country and bring an end to the ongoing crisis in Somalia, the insurgency in the country continues and the TFG has lost control of greater areas of Somali territory. Al-Shabab insurgents control large areas in central and south Somalia, and they have managed to take control of much of Mogadishu.[12] There is also fear that the situation could degenerate into a full-scale civil war, creating greater numbers of refugees and making the country an even more attractive haven for violent extremist groups. Members of Al-Qaeda are thought to be relocating from Pakistan to Somalia.[13] Al-Shabab's leadership is linked to that of Al-Qaeda and some attacks in Yemen have been connected to people trained in Somalia.[14] There has also been some indication of late that extremist groups in Somalia and Yemen are working together.[15]

Sudan is also an extremely fragile state and a cause for concern. While a peace accord between the north and south of Sudan was signed in 2005, which gave considerable autonomy to the south and included provisions for the south to share oil revenues equally with the north, fighting continues in Darfur. Sudan too may be sliding into a violent implosion in the absence of implementation of the peace accord.[16] However, the spring 2010 elections may be a positive step towards a referendum in which Sudanese from the south will vote on whether to secede, as specified in the 2005 accord.[17] After so many years of civil war, the country is in desperate need of reconstruction.

Persistent failure to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict

While Arab nationalism has become more modest in its objectives, largely abandoning the goal of Arab unity, the Palestinian issue continues to generate strong emotions among the general public. A persistent lack of progress in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, with the continued immoral and inhumane persecution, humiliation and deprivation of stateless Palestinians, epitomized by the land blockade of the Gaza Strip by Israel and Egypt, sustains a regional issue that has the potential to contribute to a seventh critical turning point. Having failed to grasp the 'Arafat moment', it is possible that the 'Abbas moment' may also be lost. Abbas is regarded positively by Palestinians, Arab states and the international community. He is viewed as a continuation of Arafat, but without the baggage. However, the longer that the West Bank and Gaza remain separated, the harder it will be to pull them

together. As President Mubarak has noted, '[t]he halt of the peace process and continuation of the division between the Palestinian Authority and the factions, constitute the optimal situation for both Israel and the Palestinian factions and regional forces that are opposed to peace. It constitutes, at the same time, the worst situation for the Palestinian people, their suffering and just cause'.[18] There are also forces within Israeli politics that are not interested in negotiating peace for land and are more interested in changing the facts on the ground in the hope that over time their presence in parts of the occupied territories will be accepted. This is exacerbated by the way that the Israeli political system grants small parties considerable influence. Coalition politics ensure that government policies tend to reflect the lowest common dominator, making progress on the resolution of the conflict extremely difficult. There have also been efforts by the Israelis to link resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue with resolution of the Palestinian issue.

The change of administration in the US does, however, give cause for hope. Jordan's King Abdullah II has urged the US to devote its 'undivided attention' to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, warning that if a two-state solution were to become unviable, it would generate instability in the region for decades to come: 'Sooner or later there's an invisible line in the sand that we will cross that will be clear to everyone whether the viability of a two-state solution is there, and I hope we haven't crossed that yet. When we cross that line, God forbid, the Middle East will be doomed to many decades of instability … it is the injustice felt towards the Palestinians that allows state actors and non-state actors to take the role of the defenders of Palestine.'[19]

Yet, President Barack Obama may be the right man in the wrong time. His domestic agenda is considerable, including health care reforms, recovery from the economic and financial crisis, restructuring the real estate and financial markets, and infrastructure renewal across the country. In addressing these issues, he will require strong domestic support. Internationally, there are many pressing issues, including mitigating climate change, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the prospect of state failure in Yemen and Somalia, the US relationship with China and Russia and the Iranian nuclear issue. Together, all of these issues may constrain President Obama on the Palestinian-Israeli issue. However, it is possible that President Obama may succeed where previous presidents have failed because of his pragmatic liberal and global approach and his recognition that the resolution of this problem in a just and comprehensive way is not only the morally correct thing to do, but, because it is in the national interest of the US to do so. At the beginning of

September 2010, President Obama's special envoy to the Middle East, George Mitchell, declared that a 'window of opportunity' exists for Israelis and Palestinians to reach a deal within one year.[20] There certainly seems to be a determination on the part of the US administration to create a momentum and expectation that this will be the case, and the resumption of direct peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians has raised hopes that a two-state solution may be attainable in the near future. However, the language of the two parties still differs considerably, reflecting the challenges that remain.

Persistent lack of respect for the region's people

Another factor that is certain to contribute to a potential seventh critical turning point in the Middle East, if governance is not improved significantly and the Arab-Israeli issue continues to fester, is the continued perception among the people of the region that the West is anti-Arab and anti-Islamic, and is dismissive of the people of the region ideologically, culturally, militarily and economically. A great deal will depend on the policies of Western powers, particularly in relation to the Palestinian issue, the promotion of Western models of democracy and military intervention in the Middle East. As discussed earlier, there is a general sentiment that the West, especially the US, has failed to deal even-handedly with Palestinians and Israelis, is intent on promoting secularization as part of democratization and has been unwilling to accept the results of elections when Islamic parties have been successful, and has intervened in the region to secure their energy supplies. Anti-Westernism resulting from such perceptions feed anger that can be tapped by politicians and by extremists. Against the backdrop of these conditions we should expect the further politicization of religion and the continued challenge of violent extremist elements within Islam.

The further politicization of religion

How the relationship between spiritual and political power is managed within individual countries of the region is likely to have a significant impact on stability and security within the Middle East. The balance is likely to continue to be a delicate but essential one. Since the failure of Pan-Arabism, political Islam has been an increasingly important force in the politics of the region. *It reflects a widespread desire for more efficacious and legitimate government as well as the desire for greater cultural authenticity in the face of Westernization and a perceived movement towards secularization*. Community, welfare and social rights and the reduction of economic inequality are likely to be the issues that continue to draw

people towards the voices of political Islam.[21] In many countries across the Middle East, there is an increased desire for Islam to occupy a public space. If incumbent regimes fail to adequately respond to these concerns as well accommodate counter-hegemonic forces, the result will be increased support for moderate political Islamic and Salafist opposition and, if this is combined with continued or increased repression of non-violent movements, an increase in violent extremism within Islam. It may also encourage attempts to increase the regionalization of violent extremist networks and the internationalization of their cause, making it perhaps even less likely that the real grievances within society will be addressed in appropriate ways.

Within the region, the Gulf states are managing this balance fairly well. The political elite in these countries have accommodated hard-line clerics and Salafists. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have been particularly astute in their efforts to manage change within deeply conservative societies. This has allowed them to be responsive to the need for reform, while minimizing opposition to them. Thus, contrary to what one might expect, these countries are far from being petrified and are moving, albeit slowly and deliberately, towards the evolution of more responsive government in accordance with their own cultural and political referents.

The challenge of violent extremism in Islam

Violent extremist fringe movements in Islam represent another factor that is likely to contribute to a potential seventh critical turning point. The invasion of Afghanistan has dispersed both the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Extremist movements within Islam are now better able to use Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia as bases from which to regroup and rebuild. They represent safe havens and it is fair to say that the tribal areas in these countries to some extent resemble Afghanistan pre-9/11 and radicals are now dominating larger and larger amounts of territory, including making serious inroads into Peshawar through a process of creeping Talibanization. The regional impact will be profound and represents a great unknown. What is certain is that India, China, Saudi Arabia and Russia, as well as the US, will all have policy perspectives and prescriptions that may be different and it is critical that these are coordinated to reinforce each other and diminish the power of violent extremist groups.

Having failed to make significant inroads in Iraq, Al-Qaeda is also seeking to expand its influence in the Maghrib. The invasion of Afghanistan removed Al-Qaeda's operational base, thus the invasion

has also dispersed its members. Al-Qaeda has been making connections with violent extremist networks that had previously been focused on the national level in various parts of the region. How exactly the relationship between groups like Al-Qaeda and various local violent extremist movements in the region is likely to evolve is difficult to say at this stage. While strengthening both in the short term, it may eventually result in splits.[22]

In the Persian Gulf, a war has been going on in Yemen's northern governate of Saada since 2004.[23] While a fragile ceasefire exists between rebel and government forces, there is concern that global violent extremist networks, such as Al-Qaeda, are finding a new operational base in Yemen, providing another instance of the merging of local insurgencies with the global movement. Huthi forces have recently been carrying out attacks on Saudi Arabia. Saudi armed forces have been attempting to quell infiltration attempts by Huthi/Al-Qaeda fighters into their territory. Iran is believed to be supporting the Huthi rebels. Yemen is fast becoming the new focus of global and regional powers in their fight against terrorism. Preventing Yemen from becoming a failed state and a haven for terrorists was given added urgency following the failed Christmas Day 2009 bombing. The situation in Yemen is of particular concern, because of its proximity to Gulf energy resources.

Approaches to managing change in the region

Having briefly surveyed a range of potential contemporary key fractures and stress points that may come together to generate a seventh critical turning point, let us now reflect on the nature of current explanatory narratives that govern our thinking about how to respond to crisis and instability in the Middle East. There are currently four narratives that offer explanatory frameworks or paradigms to account for the state of the contemporary Middle East. We will offer our own narrative of Endogenous Good Governance that we believe has a greater chance of success and sustainability.

The first narrative is *deviant violent extremism*. This narrative argues that the Middle East status quo is unsustainable, points to the cause and suggests a solution. It is partly a reaction to constant humiliation and a sense of hopelessness and helplessness due to persistent occupation (Palestine), poverty, inequality, corruption and a lack of accountability, security, opportunities and innovation (especially theological). It is also a response to feeling swamped by Western popular culture and the loss of people's traditional way of life, and the perception that

society is becoming decadent and experiencing a moral decline. It suggests that the weakness and lack of legitimacy of current elites is the problem, exacerbated by external support for such regimes and meddling in the region. The proposed solution is a return to the glorious past – to the age of Caliphates. Such a vision challenges state structures, secular ideals and nationalism which were supposed to create stronger, more competent and cohesive states. Rather it promotes transnational, sub-national and non-national movements based on ethno-religious identity and beliefs that challenge the authority of states and offer an alternative world vision.

This reading and return to the Caliphate is unlikely to ever occur any time soon. The reality of states in the region is far more complicated; the Arab-Islamic civilization was glorious, but not for the reasons that violent extremist movements today suppose. It is important to study this past in order to move forward, rather than to be trapped in recreating false realities. At its height, the Arab-Islamic Empire was characterized by comparative tolerance vis-à-vis other monotheists and non-Arabs; it was innovative in almost all areas of learning, including science, theology and philosophy; it also borrowed from other cultures, innovated and expanded on the earlier achievements of others.[24] Moreover, religion was not divorced from the various cultures found in the Middle East as Islamic extremists' desire. Local cultures influenced the way in which religion was expressed and experienced.

The second narrative is *neoconservatism*, the aim of which was forced regime change from the outside for cultural and geopolitical national interests. Here, the lack of free market democracy is thought to be the major source of the Middle East's ills. Democratization efforts are presented as the answer. Proponents of these ideas, including Paul Wolfowitz, Bernard Lewis, Robert Satloff, Fouad Ajami and the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), suggest that a democratic deficit is the problem and regime change and democratization of the region – a democratic peace in the Middle East – is the answer.[25] Former President George W. Bush, in particular, was apparently inspired by the ideas of Nathan Sharansky who wrote a book titled *The Case for Democracy. The Power of Freedom to Overcome Tyranny and Terror*.[26] Democratic peace theory argues that structural factors such as divisions of power, checks and balances, accountability and transparency slow down decision making but give it greater legitimacy allowing for peaceful resolutions of conflicts within a state. In addition, norms and political culture matter – tolerance, openness and a willingness to cooperate, negotiate, bargain and compromise transcend the state and impact on

interstate relations, so creating a zone of peace in international relations. Neoconservative thinking stressed the importance of elite-driven structural democratization – the adoption of democratic procedures, the building of democratic institutions and the holding of democratic elections, and the elaboration of other checks and balances – rather than the community-based normative democratization – the construction of a democratic political and civic community. The emphasis on the structure reflected a neoconservative understanding of human frailty in general and their belief that the Middle East is a patchwork of ethnic groups and communities, each with values, norms and cultural differences (so highlighting the importance of cultural factors in identity formation). Cultural incompatibility and clash and sectarian rivalry generate a 'constructive instability' or 'constructive chaos' which then allows for structural democratization in the short term, with normative democratization, after civilizational change, to follow thereafter.[27]

However, if structural democratization could be transplanted or grafted onto any civilization, normative democratization would fall on fallow ground, due to civilizational differences – to put it bluntly, Islamic civilization was arrogantly and ignorantly understood by the neoconservatives to be incompatible with democracy. Rather than focusing first on the process of political liberalization – an effective press, functioning civil society and the rule of law – an essentially evolutionary approach, neoconservatives advocate regime change by the revolutionary use of military force.

'Democratic realism' suggested that democratization brought peace and stability and so served US national interest – democratization had a strategic value. The cornerstone of former US President George W. Bush's second term administration was the promotion of the freedom and democracy agenda. Former secretary of state Condoleezza Rice stated that the 'organizing principle of the 21st century' is the expansion of freedom all over the world. The US National Security Strategy in 2006 explicitly set 'the genius of democracy' in opposition to 'terrorist tyranny' and directly compared this post-9/11 'battle of ideas' with the cold war ideological contest between democracy and Communism. It is clear that while '9/11' continued to be the prism through which US policies were formulated, despite lofty rhetoric, perceptions concerning the role of outsiders in shaping the region have altered: the US and coalition partners brought violence to the region, but cannot shape Iraqi politics. Aggressive democracy promotion does not acknowledge the futility and counter-productiveness of democratization at bayonet point. Indeed, the role of external influences in contributing to the region's lack of stability and prosperity is not accounted for in this narrative.

This narrative has the least chance of success for many reasons, not least of which is the pervasive conviction by many in the region that these ideas have nothing to do with political freedoms, but a great deal to do with cultural antagonism and deep and visceral distaste for the region, its culture and its religion, and that all of these are preventing the ability to meddle and manipulate the region, its youth and its resources. These kinds of efforts to promote democracy were rejected at the time and will continue to be rejected in the future on three fronts:

1. political elites reject it because they see it as a vehicle for outside control and influence;
2. intellectual elites reject it on cultural hegemony grounds, given the perception within the region that the West is antagonistic and dismissive of Arab-Islamic culture and its historical excellence and relevance; and
3. the majority of the general public reject it because they equate it with de-Islamization.

A third approach – *pragmatic realism,* one that is espoused by the Obama Administration – has recently overshadowed neoconservativism. Pragmatic realism favours stability over the promotion of democracy in the region. This approach is premised on balancing states deemed to be a threat to regional stability, and entrenched domestic interests connected to energy security and arms as well as Israel. Under the George W. Bush Administration, a strong US presence and influence, notably in the Gulf, was sought as a means of shoring up Gulf states against Iran and Al-Qaeda.[28] The Barack Obama Administration has altered the tenor of its approach to the Middle East, as illustrated in President Barack Obama's Cairo speech. However, a pragmatic realism continues to inform US Middle Eastern policy, despite rhetoric about employing a holistic approach to the region: The US continues to fund and make concessions to Israel; it has neither engaged Hamas nor facilitated its reconciliation between Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas; scope for dialogue with Iran is non-existent;[29] and it has shown a continued reluctance to engage Islamist parties and willingness to support existing regimes, regardless of their human rights and democracy records.

These three narratives – deviant violent extremism, neoconservatism and pragmatic realism – have a selective or partial understanding of the dynamic factors that account for the historical development of the region and do not fully comprehend the importance of the interplay between external and internal factors in the Middle East. Three examples

illustrate such interplay. First, it is widely understood within the region, for example, that US policy towards Israel is biased, with unfavourable outcomes for both the US and Israel. The widespread view in the Arab-Islamic world that the US is not an honest broker increases the need for the US to restore its credibility, legitimacy and reoccupy the moral high ground which an Arab-Israeli settlement would enable. Second, Al-Qaeda has reconstituted itself as a serious threat and the US needs to learn how to counter the current generation of violent militants without creating the next, as well as to discover how to bolster moderates without undermining them. Third, a nuclear Iran poses serious implications for US extended deterrence and countering violent Islamic insurgency: reducing US military presence in the Gulf would remove a cause of recruitment for violent insurgents. A counter proliferation strike carries with it a risk of a regional war, similar to 1914 in Europe or the potential, not realized, catastrophe which the 1962 Cuban Missile crisis represented. These efforts are further complicated by the apparent hypocrisy that Israel has more than 200 nuclear heads and unlike Iran, is not subjected to pressure or inspection by the international community on this issue.

The fourth narrative is *secular liberalism.* It is articulated by liberal elites in the region, with a focus on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Arab Development Reports 2004–7, and argues that *underdevelopment* is the key obstacle to stability and modernization. Multilateral efforts, including intergovernmental organizations, social movements and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are all best involved in such an effort. The fact that the various UNDP reports are published by an UN agency and that they are written by intellectuals from the region gives it certain credibility and cannot be accused of Western bias.[30] However, these reports suffer from some defects. They are too pessimistic and do not sufficiently emphasize the positive developments which would encourage people to continue the fight. They offer little hope. They do not mention the interrelationships between religion and politics and are quite vague in terms of prescription and implementation. This narrative does not insist that a future focus and agenda should include the long-term implications of effective hearts and minds campaigns, demographic and economic change and how it impacts on regional development and how the post-Iraq syndrome will likely shape US policies in the region.

Several explanatory factors have been put forward to account for the problems of political governance in Middle Eastern countries, especially – but not exclusively – the Arab ones. Most of these are essentialist and

partial explanations that do not take into account many other relevant internal issues and external meddling that have collectively prevented the peaceful maturation of self-government paradigms from becoming a reality, although the *Arab Human Development Report 2009* does go some way to correcting this in recognizing that obstacles to human development in the region are partly connected to its vulnerability to external intervention.[31] For some people, the reason for the resistance to political liberalization lies in the very nature of Middle Eastern societies and political culture. Some emphasize the central role of societal and cultural traditions, like Adam Garfinkle.[32] In a similar vein, Martin Kramer presents the lack of tolerance of political differences as the major stumbling block to political liberalization.[33] David Pryce-Jones is harsher in his criticism. He explains that the Arabs are unable to change their political attitudes because their societies are burdened with age-old tribal behaviour which, he believes, are not expected to be altered soon.[34] Religion often plays a central role in this type of explanation. A number of academics and observers go so far as to claim that Islam is incompatible with democratic principles.[35] According to such cultural and religious accounts, changes are not impossible. They are, however, improbable in the short term, for culture and traditions are not easily malleable. For the same reason, attempts to impose democracy from the outside (for example, US policy in Iraq) are seen as doomed to failure and possibly counterproductive.

There are different grounds for discarding culture and religion as the key explanatory factors for the resilience of undemocratic regimes in the Middle East. The way 'culture' and 'society' are viewed is quite reductionist. These are fluid and complex notions that should not be considered in a static and monolithic manner. As Eva Bellin notes, 'Rapid democratization carries with it the danger of tipping deeply divided countries into sectarian civil war, fuelling radicalism rather than moderation, and empowering forces that are deeply anti-American. But this is not equally true in every country; in many cases, a process of political opening, properly calibrated, would enhance stability and advance the process of moderation.'[36] The same applies to Islam and its relation to democracy. It is far too simplistic and, in fact, wrong to portray Islam as intrinsically opposed to democratic values. This idea, which many people contest, is actually not supported by strong empirical evidence.[37] As several studies and surveys show, religion does not say anything about political attitudes or preferences.[38] Democracies exist in certain Muslim countries, although in an incomplete form. Contemporary and liberal democracy in the Islamic world would depend on whether 'an Islamist

party and the state that it might govern can admit the legitimacy of some political and legal authority in addition to (and somehow combined with) the authority of Islamic law'.[39] With this development, democratization of the state can occur through the opening of the private sphere and increased individual rights – 'principles by which liberal democracy stands or falls'.[40] This opening, or sphere, would necessitate a softer adherence to Islamic law.

Our narrative: Endogenous good governance – Reducing dignity deficits

The key weakness of existing narratives is that although they attempt to account not just for the symptoms of instability in the region – surveyed in the first section of this conclusion – but also their true causes – they fail in this effort. These narratives fail for three principal reasons. First they are partial. Second, they reflect pre-existing and competing irreconcilable ideological agendas of internal or external actors and so are structured to create instability rather than reduce it. Third, with the exception of pragmatic realism, they generate policy prescriptions that are either unacceptable to elites and publics in the region, inappropriate to local contexts or unaffordable in terms of time and resources needed to realize them.

This chapter argues that a reflective understanding of the seeds of a potential seventh critical turning point suggests that dignity deficits is the key to generating policy prescriptions that will generate sustained stability in the Middle East. Thus, our proposed prescriptive public and security policy framework for the region is the development of endogenous, culturally appropriate and globally acceptable good governance paradigms that aim to address the pervasive dignity deficits in the region. This will ensure local acceptance and produce societies that are ascendant, tolerant and innovative in a similar way to what the region was during its successful previous golden age of the Arab-Islamic Empire.

The foundations for this narrative were previously outlined in a book by Al-Rodhan titled *Sustainable History and the Dignity of Man: A Philosophy of History and Civilisational Triumph*.[41] The author advocates that the sustainability of history and for that matter any peaceful, stable and progressive political order is premised on the guarantee of human dignity through good governance paradigms that

1. are appropriate, acceptable and affordable to each geocultural domain ('civilization') and must be developed endogenously in

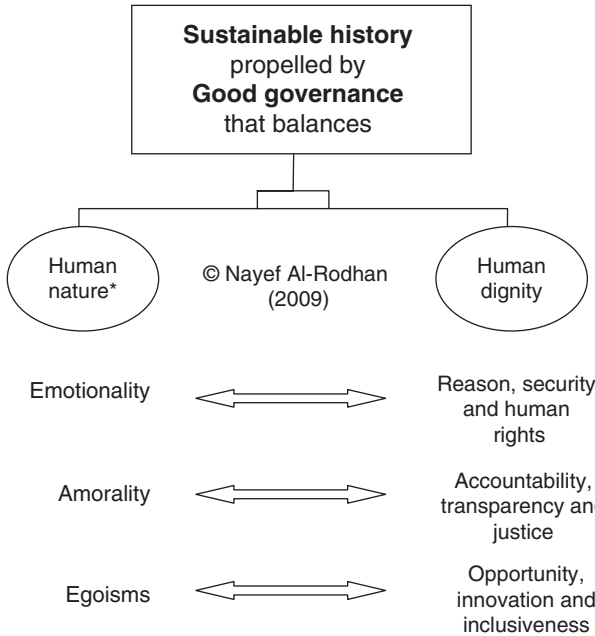


Figure 9.1 Sustainable history

* See Nayef R. F. Al-Rodhan (2008), '*Emotional Amoral Egoism*': *A Neurophilosophical Theory of Human Nature and its Universal Security Implications* (Berlin: LIT).

Source: Nayef R. F. Al-Rodhan (2009), *Sustainable History and the Dignity of Man*: *A Philosophy of History and Civilisational Triumph* (Berlin: LIT), p. 15. Reproduced with Permission from LIT.

accordance with local cultural and historical norms while meeting certain common global criteria of universal values to ensure maximum moral and political cooperation.

2. balance the ever-present tension between the three human nature attributes (emotionality, amorality and egoism) and nine human dignity needs (reason, security, human rights, accountability, transparency, justice, opportunity, innovation and inclusiveness). This relationship is depicted in Figure 9.1.

In our view, two principal factors are responsible for the problems faced by the region. The first is internal and may be thought of in terms of dignity deficits created by political exclusion, marginalization, economic inequality, a lack of universal welfare provision, corruption, wasted resources, instability, insecurity and a lack of confidence.

The second is external, due to interference by outside powers driven by geopolitical interests, economic imperatives, primarily the need for inexpensive resources (primarily oil and gas).

As our examination of the previous six critical turning points has indicated, there is a widespread disillusionment with the West due to its hegemony and perceived manipulation of the region, coupled with the search within the region for greater authenticity and control. The West and the Arab-Islamic world have been rubbing up against each other historically for 14 centuries due to the incursions of the Arab-Islamic Empire into Europe in one direction starting in the eighth century and by the West into Arab-Islamic lands in the other starting with the First Crusade in 1099, through the subsequent crusades, European colonialism, political and military interventions and manipulations, driven partly by ideology, and partly by material interests.

The combination of these internal and external factors is preventing the development of authentic endogenous *good governance paradigms* that are acceptable to the people of the region and in keeping with *local cultures and history*. The aim of these governance paradigms should be to *guarantee dignity* for all of the citizens at all times and under all circumstances, while insuring that they *meet globally acceptable criteria* to maximize international political and moral cooperation.

Culturally appropriate good governance paradigms are necessary for the guarantee of the previously described nine vital human dignity needs (*reason, security, human rights, accountability, transparency, justice, opportunity, innovation and inclusiveness*). Moreover, in a world of instant connectedness and interdependence, more equitable and cooperative interstate relations and greater intercultural understanding are required in order to foster a sense of self-confidence in the region and relations of trust with the West.

The endogenous development of these good governance paradigms and the resulting attainment of these nine dignity needs will have an excellent chance of success because it will be acceptable to all three sections of societies (as explained above) who might have rejected it otherwise, namely, the political elite, the intellectual elite and the general public. There is an increasing realization among the elite within the Middle East that the status quo is not sustainable. Guided, evolutionary change is often perceived as a means of controlling reforms that have become inevitable and as a way of ensuring survival. This is being reinforced by increased domestic pressure for reforms that has prompted some ruling elite to perceive their legitimacy and longevity as highly dependent on their ability to ensure continued change according to

local norms. Increased access to information through cable television, the Internet and social media networks around the clock and in real-time has rendered censorship increasingly difficult. In some instances, domestic media groups are also pushing the boundaries of what is permitted. Dissatisfaction with social inequalities and rigid bureaucratic systems that fail to meet people's needs is also growing and challengers are becoming more vocal. In addition, young professionals, who have often been educated abroad, have aspirations and expectations for themselves and their countries that go beyond the current limits of the possible. Within this context, the elite are interested in keeping all major stakeholder groups in society on board in order to maintain social cohesion and to prevent destabilizing forces from gaining leverage. National dialogues that aim to develop endogenous good governance structures need to include all stakeholders in society, regardless of their different views.

If implemented, endogenous good governance will appear to be what it is: authentic, local, free from outside influence and manipulation and in keeping with local cultural and historical norms while meeting global criteria. Equally importantly, it will not be seen as a conspiratorial effort for the de-Islamization of the region, which is extremely important to its people. For this to succeed, there should be minimal outside imposition or interference in the region. Sensitivity and opposition to exploitation by external powers, as we have noted through the book, is prevalent within Middle Eastern societies and has deeply embedded historical and ideological roots that have taken different forms, but have remained a constant. The search for greater independence remains part of the domestic and regional normative structures. Therefore, outside involvement should be limited to

1. providing the necessary know-how in developing transparent and accountable military and police forces, and independent judiciaries and medias that are a pre-requisite to stable societies;
2. helping to resolve regional conflicts that are obstructing the region from going forward and draining its resources; and
3. avoiding double-standards in dealing with the region in equitable and mutually beneficial arrangements.

Internal challenges to dignity needs

Endogenous good governance paradigms that are appropriate, acceptable and affordable to each Middle Eastern state need to be developed or improved upon. At the heart of such paradigms should be the guarantee

of human dignity needs for all citizens, at all times and under all circumstances. Below is a list of all the nine internal dignity deficits that must be addressed.[42]

(1) First internal dignity deficit: *Prevalent dogma*

In our opinion, this first dignity deficit (less reason, and more dogma) is one of the most significant reasons for the decline of the golden age of the Arab-Islamic Empire previously and for the stagnation of the Middle East at the present time. It is critically important that this 'reason' is urgently promoted, and 'dogma' lessened through better and more enlightened educational programmes and knowledge – based on societal mechanisms, while ensuring that this is not seen to be anti-religious, to avoid its rejection by societies where Islam is central to people's daily lives.[43]

There have been dramatic changes in educational systems in Arab countries since the 1950s. The number of children enrolled in elementary schools has considerably increased. From 1960 to 1977 it went up from 39 per cent of children from 6–11-years old to 60 per cent in 1977.[44] Literacy rates have greatly improved, although they remain on average much lower than in the West. Overall, the quality of education has also improved with more schools in the rural areas and the extension of women's access to education. In the *2004 Arab Human Development Report*, the UNDP noted positive developments in the area of knowledge and education, especially regarding the content of educational curricula that are subject to increased attention.[45] However, it largely varies from place to place. In some countries, the quality of education has actually deteriorated. Despite achievements, the education level in the Arab states is still insufficient and imperfect. Investment in education is essential for sustainable economic growth. The so-called Asian Tigers all invested heavily in education, endowing them with a highly skilled workforce. In many Arab countries, oil has been the main driver of economic growth, which has led to a neglect of investment in education.[46] Yet educational systems in the region are not producing young people equipped with the skills required. Training is very often inadequate. This explains why many people leave the country to study. Also, the work place and education are not well connected.[47] This results in high levels of unemployment. Educated and skilled individuals who do not find jobs or cannot influence the system often decide (if they can) to work abroad. The UNDP 'estimates that by the year 1976, 23% of Arab engineers, 50% of Arab doctors, and 15% of Arab BS holders had emigrated. Roughly 25% of 300,000 first degree graduates

from Arab universities in 1995/96 emigrated. Between 1998 and 2000 more than 15,000 Arab doctors migrated.'[48] Such emigration has a negative impact on human and economic development in many states.

A major problem in some countries of the Middle East is uneven access to public education. For less privileged youth, madrassahs are sometimes the sole source of education. They fill a gap that is left by the state. Into this gap fall the disenfranchised and those alienated from state structures. In some instances, madrassahs can be a source of radicalization, although one should not assume that this is always the case. In response to the rise of political Islam, some regimes in the region have sought to co-opt the more radical clerics in order to ensure regime stability. In such instances, a greater emphasis has been placed on religious education at the expense of non-religious learning.

Another reason for the urgent need for better access to public education is the demographic boom that the Middle East is currently experiencing. The average population growth rate is one of the highest in the world. The combination of sharp population increase and substantial share of young people yield significant social and economic changes. They are not negative factors per se. They can either be an asset or a burden. They could be positive under certain circumstances:

> [T]here is the possibility that the Middle East could see a demographic 'bonus' in the next decades. As the young population bulge moves to employment age, there is a window of opportunity for an economic leap. With this sort of age distribution, there is less need for spending on either the young or elderly (being smaller percentages of the population). More funds can then be moved into capital investment and productivity gains. However, this window of opportunity only comes once and is highly dependent on the effectiveness of good state institutions to make the proper decisions to take advantage of it.[49]

Indeed, an increasing young population poses many political, social and economic challenges, not least access to resources, including housing, health education, food and the labour market. This pressure places a strain on state institutions and economies. In particular, it requires appropriate education systems and efficient job markets.

In the Gulf states, there has recently been a great deal of progress in that regard although more effort and concrete results are needed. Reform of school curricula, re-education of teachers, opening up of very sophisticated new universities (like the King Abdullah University of

Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia) and empowering existing institutions are all good steps in that direction. The new emphasis in Saudi Arabia on knowledge-based society and economy is gaining ground and is very promising because it is being done in cooperation with all strata of society, which will maximize its chances of success. While there is still a long way to go, these initial efforts are admirable and should be aided, encouraged and expanded.

(2) Second internal dignity deficit: *Lack of security*

Many of the states in the Middle East have had to deal with communities seeking to increase their autonomy or to separate from the state. In most instances, regimes have sought to counterbalance and contain such movements. Internal security has thus taken on great importance for many regimes. Some political elites in some countries tend to rely too much on coercive measures when faced with opposition and instability.[50] The military's role in some countries in maintaining the political status quo can comprise its military effectiveness. Civil-military relations also play an important role in relations between the states in the Middle East. In some instances, parallel military structures may be created to counter the conventional armed forces. For example, in Iran, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps was established to defend the revolution against opposition forces. Loyalties and affiliations may in some instances rather than competence determine selection for the top positions. They serve as safeguards against challenges to the regime from opposition forces.[51]

Some internal security agencies tend to be numerous in the form of agencies independent from the military and as specialized units or departments of militaries. Leadership appointments are not necessarily based on merit, but may be made in accordance with loyalties. These agencies monitor civil society activities and track potential opposition to the incumbent regime in a similar way to most countries in the world, but the difference in some Middle Eastern countries is in the lack of responsible oversight of these entities to make sure that civil liberties are not being compromised. This role can translate into political influence. They may provide a means for political leaders to balance the influence of the military, which may be necessary in the short term for stability in societies that lack mature and well-developed civil society institutions. While these may succeed in the short term, they are not the answer in the long run. The only safety mechanism for long-term stability is the creation of accountable, independent and transparent civil society institutions. The dependence on security agencies may

reduce their incentive to provide strategic assessments that may not be in accordance with the established view of things.[52]

Some of the military and state security services in some Middle Eastern countries are generally not subject to independent oversight, giving them a great deal of freedom of operation and few institutional checks on their activities. The considerable room for manoeuvre with which they operate renders individuals vulnerable to violations of their fundamental rights and freedoms.[53] The heavy emphasis placed on internal security has resulted in oversized militaries and a proliferation of security agencies, bloated personnel, duplication of roles and lack of interservice cooperation. These factors lead to both inefficacious performance and inefficient use of resources.

The concern for security and stability in these states is real and should not be taken lightly and that includes the need for building up of very sophisticated, competent and effective security services. However, as stated above, these alone will not be enough in the long run. Alongside the continued development and responsible oversight of these security services, additional civil societal measures are needed in order to ensure long-term success and sustainability of these states. There are encouraging signs in that regard especially in the gulf countries. The outcome of the September 2010 vote in favour of constitutional amendments in Turkey that overturned the legacy of the 1980 military intervention is also a positive development.[54]

(3) Third dignity deficit: *Human rights abuses*

Given the central role of human rights in Islam, it is shocking how far the region has failed in this regard. Failure is primarily due to the general decline in the region of innovation and *ijtihad*, both of which are critical aspects of modern societies. Appeals for further reforms in this domain have recently been stepped up throughout the region. Initiatives have been taken at both governmental and societal levels. At the 2004 Tunis Summit of the Arab League, the Arab states issued a 'Declaration on the Process of Reform and Modernisation' and agreed to revise and strengthen the 1994 Arab Human Rights Charter. Civil society organizations have also organised different events to encourage discussions about good governance and human rights in the region. For example, they conveyed, in 2004, a conference on Arab reform which resulted in the adoption of the Alexandria Charter that called for political, economic, social and cultural reforms.[55]

While most states in the region have signed on to international treaties and included clauses in their constitutions that call for human rights

to be protected, their practice tends to depart from their commitments. However, frequently, what is granted in constitutions is curtailed when inscribed into individual laws, which may be ignored in practice.[56] Many states in the Middle East have had extended periods of martial law in which some human rights provisions have been suspended. The pretext of fighting terrorism has also translated into a violation of rights in the region. Many states have adopted anti-terrorism legislation that employs a very loose definition of terrorism.[57]

Freedom of the press, expression and assembly is generally limited in most countries. The media is tightly controlled by some governments. Many restrictions exist on the use of the Internet, except in certain countries. Cases of ill treatments, torture, unfair trials and political harassment are frequently reported by international human rights organizations. Minority groups (ethnic or/and religious) are subject to various types of discriminations. In some places, there is, in particular, a 'general lack of respect for international agreements on migrant workers' rights and work conditions'.[58] These workers are denied basic political and civil rights, although they quite often account for a significant share of the population. Discrimination on the basis of gender is prevalent in many states. There are currently provisions in some states across the region that prohibit the formation of political parties.[59]

(4) Fourth internal dignity deficit: *Lack of accountability*

Most states in the Middle East suffer from a good governance deficit. According to the World Bank: 'When compared with countries that have similar incomes and characteristics … the MENA [Middle East and North Africa] region ranks at the bottom on the index of overall governance quality.'[60] There are, of course, differences between countries. However, certain regional patterns can be discerned. The political systems in the region, in general, require greater accountability to the people over whom they govern. The electorate require greater control over the use of the countries' symbolic and material resources. Given the opportunity to exert such control, it is likely that societies would choose to spend less on the military and security sectors and more on education, health and social welfare (once the current regional crises are resolved). The military has considerable political influence in a number of countries in the Middle East, in some instances intervening directly as in the case of Algeria in the early 1990s.[61]

Many Arab countries have now adopted some sort of formal democratic institutions. Parliaments or consultative bodies exist almost everywhere in the region. Elections are also widely held (it is quite a

recent event in certain states). Yet, in many cases, these institutions and processes remain relatively weak and/or dysfunctional, and lack accountability and transparency – although there has been progress in some places. Actual separation of powers between the executive, the judiciary and the legislative is not adequate. Power is almost solely concentrated in the hands of the executive. The description given in the 2004 UNDP report is severe, but quite accurate in this respect: 'the modern Arab state, in the political sense, runs close to this astronomical model, whereby the executive apparatus resembles a "black hole" which converts its surrounding social environment into a setting in which nothing moves and from which nothing escapes',[62] although in reality, this is changing rapidly especially in the Gulf states. As regards electoral processes, they are rarely fair and free. The number and type of candidates is often restricted or subject to supervision. Political parties hardly ever operate freely. They are either prohibited or play a very limited role. Even in countries where a multiparty system does exist, one party often dominates.

Some of the concerns of governments in this regard are based on the skewed tribal loyalties in these elections which rather than producing public participation may lead to internal division and fracture of societies. Some countries in the Gulf are trying to work out how to do this effectively, which is harder than it appears to the outside observer (given the tribal nature of these societies), although there is a recognition that this must be done.

Governments also need to address the issue of political Islam as a force in politics. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Salafists represent in many countries across the Middle East the most credible opposition to incumbent regimes. They are the most ardent critics of the lack of adequate governance, lack of provision for basic social needs and people's concerns about Westernization, most frequently understood as secularization. They offer a vision of society that people feel is more authentic and appropriate for their histories, culture, lives and aspirations. They also express people's frustrations with the lack of reform in their countries over the last few decades. In many countries across the region a combination of controlled pluralism and elections and selective repression exists.[63] Their rise in popularity has prompted regimes in the region to respond in a number of ways. Some have chosen the path of repression. For example, following the brief political opening and subsequent electoral success of the Islamic Salvation Front (known by its French acronym FIS) in Algeria in the first round of the 1991 elections, the military intervened to prevent a second round. This laid

the foundations for a civil war in which some 100,000 people lost their lives. This led to an effort to establish a system of power sharing in 1997 in which opposition forces could participate.[64] The results have been mixed, though FIS appears to have adapted their position and aim to achieve their objectives within the bounds of the existing political structure. There are many other similar examples.[65]

In some instances, it has proved useful in encouraging formerly violent Salafist groups to renounce violence and act within the framework of conventional politics. In the wake of the 1991 unification of North and South Yemen, the General People's Congress (GPC) came to power through negotiating a deal with the Islah party.[66]

In Saudi Arabia, the alliance between religious conservatism and political power goes back to the joining of forces of Muhammad Ibn Saud and Muhammad Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab in the eighteenth century. The alliance has increased the stability, effectiveness and legitimacy of both spiritual and political elements of Saudi society where there are currently significant progressive elements. While Islam remains an absolutely central part of the Saudi identity and way of life, given the structural and cultural fabric of this society, there is no reason to suppose that progress and spirituality are not compatible. The Saudi approach is attempting (and to some extent beginning to succeed) to prove this reconciliation successful.

Excluding and repressing Islamist parties that engage in the conventional political process is ill-conceived. In instances where they have won a majority of the popular vote – Algeria and Gaza – they reflect the will of the majority within those societies. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the endorsement of violence is a tactical choice by Islamist organizations. If they are excluded from the political process, it seems likely that they will go underground and resort to violent means of attempting the attainment of their goals. Moreover, repression, arrests and torture of militants in prison is unlikely to reduce their commitment to their beliefs and affiliations. Additional violent militant cells may be formed in prisons. Rehabilitation programmes for violent extremists such as the ones employed by Gulf states like Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Afghanistan may be far more effective in the long run.[67]

(5) Fifth internal dignity deficit: *Lack of transparency*

Because of numerous governmental limitations, civil society has tended to be weak in most Middle Eastern countries.[68] Significant advances have been made in this respect over the past two decades however. Civil

society organizations have mushroomed and diversified in many states, though not all. In 2001–2, they were about 58,000 in Algeria.[69] In Egypt, the figures vary from 15,000 to 20,000 depending on sources.[70] Two broad categories of organizations can be identified. First, there are 'traditional' organizations (both religious and secular) that have long been present in most countries. They are involved in social and charity work. They chiefly focus on service provision. They are the most numerous. Second, there are NGOs that are more professional and primarily interested in effecting political and social change. They generally emerged in the 1980s–90s. With respect to the relations between the government and civil society, they greatly vary from one country to another. Yet there are some similarities. Although the legal frameworks are very different, the legislation regarding associations is by global standards quite restrictive. Overall, governments have been suspicious of organizations pressing for political change (advocacy NGOs). They have tried to keep tight control over their activities. In general, intermediary bodies in the Middle East are rarely completely independent from the state. Civil society's role and influence have undeniably increased in recent times. However, its overall impact is limited by internal constraints (lack of resources and means) and external constraints generally imposed by the government (formal and informal restrictions, activists' harassment, closing of office, cutting of funds, for example.).

Corruption is still rampant in many states in the region, though its nature and extent vary from one place to the other. 'Virtually all MENA governments acknowledge that corruption is an impediment to good governance and there has been no shortage of official promises to curb it. Indeed, leaders have been competing for coverage of their pledges to combat corruption, but the motives are varied and the promises are often mere rhetoric.'[71] Yet, some governments have made real efforts to control corruption.[72] Some improvements in other countries have also occurred. For example, the Algerian parliament passed a law in 2006, which establishes a grand strategy against corruption. Morocco adopted a UN convention against corruption a year earlier.[73] In many states, however, there is still a long way to go to reduce corruption to acceptable levels.

(6) Sixth internal dignity deficit: *Absence of justice*

This deficit is equally shocking in Islamic societies given the central nature of equality and justice in Islam, which was one of the main reasons for the dramatic success of early Islam in European territories in which it had taken root early. In general, the judiciary lacks

independence from political influence in states across the region. Rulings are often made in the name of the head of state, who, in some instances, presides over judicial oversight. In some cases, this is accompanied by extraordinary forms of justice, such as military and state security courts, that may compromise the right to a fair trial and adequate legal protection of individuals' rights. Political influence has also been known to be exerted on judges in some countries.[74]

There are many efforts that have been initiated in reforming the judiciary, although it may be some time before these produce practical results that are visible. Bar associations, judiciaries themselves and organizations advocating human rights and democracy have been active in calling for strengthening the rule of law at the national level. A number of conferences on judicial reform have also taken place at the regional level and an agenda has emerged that includes the need for judicial councils that have the autonomy and authority to oversee judicial appointments and promotions, budgets, as well as the activities to support staff and judges. There is also a recognition that special courts, exceptional courts and emergency rule should be eradicated. However, how such reforms should occur remains contentious.[75]

(7) Seventh internal dignity deficit: *Lack of opportunity*

As in the political sphere, the Middle East is not economically homogeneous:

> The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is an economically diverse region that includes both the oil-rich economies in the Gulf and countries that are resource-scarce in relation to population, such as Egypt, Morocco, and Yemen. The region's economic fortunes over much of the past quarter century have been heavily influenced by two factors – the price of oil and the legacy of economic policies and structures that had emphasized a leading role for the state. With about 23 percent of the 300 million people in the Middle East and North Africa living on less than $2 a day, empowering poor people constitutes an important strategy for fighting poverty.[76]

The region is represented economically by two types of states, Turkey and Israel aside. The first type of state – for example, Egypt – can be characterized by impoverished and corrupt economies with great inequalities and dependence on external aid or revenues and remittances from overseas workers. A second type of state has economies dependent on one resource (especially oil), that is unevenly distributed

and reinforces wide disparities and inequalities between groups in society and raises expectations which are not met, thus creating anger. In response, some states use subsidies to ensure the popularity of the regime, but this further damages productivity and growth. Although economies may be booming, and the state enjoys high growth, the problem of unemployment is still present. While these states may experience extremely rapid economic change, social and cultural development is markedly slower.

Paradoxically, although the World Bank reports job creation in the region, noting that the overall aggregate unemployment rate fell from 14.3 to 10.8 per cent, these jobs are mainly filled by foreign workers, especially those coming from Asia: 'Locals are too proud or too capricious to take up low-skilled work, or they emerge from inadequate education systems with insufficient qualifications for higher-paying private sector jobs.'[77] This creates a potential for destabilization and a source of insecurity. In previous oil booms, the public administration employed many, but current public sector employment is reduced and skill deficiency is a notable problem: 'The challenge for oil-dependent Gulf countries with young populations has long been to turn the demographic bulge – nearly 40m more people are estimated to be joining the labour force this decade, a 40 per cent rise – into an opportunity, or risk exacerbating social and political disenchantment.'[78] Population growth and the increasing share of young people means that economic growth and opportunity need to be sufficient to maintain standard of living and avoid frustrations. A failure to meet these various challenges is potentially very dangerous. In fact, high unemployment rates and economic stagnation can create discontent and destabilize political regimes. The supply of labour exceeds demand for workers in the majority of states. Of course, the impact is more pressing in areas where the population is highly concentrated, like big urban centres.

There exists a state of economic dependency between both types of states:

> The oil-rich states of the Gulf are under continued pressure to share their wealth with their poorer and more populous neighbours. One can make a point that the political stability of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, all with few natural resources and fast-growing populations, can only be assured with substantial subsidies from rich and developed nations. Failure to provide this aid most likely will result in increasing demands for a more equitable world order.[79]

In addition, the increase in the price of oil at the beginning of the twenty-first century helped aggravate the distance between rich and poor:

> Growing disparities between the lavishly rich and the desperately poor within the boundaries of specific countries are manifested either in great wealth enjoyed by the few in the midst of acute poverty (Egypt, Morocco) or unwavering poverty in the midst of unusual wealth (oil-producing countries). The same patriarchal and neopatriarchal relations continue to prevail in both sets of countries. Nevertheless, rich Arab countries conduct themselves as regional powers by imposing a system of local dependency on poor countries. This intra-Arab stratification system results in a dual or even triple dependency, which weighs heavily on impoverished countries.[80]

How might we account for such economic performance? Economic problems in the region are more structural – and so relate to the ways the economic systems function and are organized – than resources-based. As Halim Barakat notes, 'While there seems to be a strong determination to adopt and imitate the most fashionable and technologically sophisticated innovations, the process of development continues to be hindered by prevailing socioeconomic and political structures and by a network of authoritarian relationships.'[81] Therefore, even if high growth is sustained, it has a limited effect on the standard of living of people due to inequalities and high population growth. Economic growth has also increased the polarization of populations, particularly the gap between the majority of the population that is poor and the rich, who benefit most from such growth. Economies suffer from over-control and too much direct and indirect state regulation. States have massive public sectors and private capital has a limited role. Inadequate educational systems, particularly the absence of scientific research and the lack of research and development capacity, also undercut vibrant economies. As a result of inadequate economic systems, the existence of a massive informal economy (licit or illicit, income generated does not appear in national statistics). In many countries, the informal economy represents up to half of the entire economy. States therefore lose control of important parts of the economy. The informal economy has increased in Iran and is as important as the formal economy in Egypt, where the uneducated and the young tend to work within the black or grey economy.

Pressures for economic change are mounting as governments are increasingly expected to implement policies designed to improve economic performance in a globalizing economy. Under conditions of urbanization, education and globalization people are less passive and less ready to remain silent, especially women.[82] This pressure for change has prompted attempts to diversify the economy in various countries. Gulf states are trying to reinforce the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and the Saudi government (with the help of the private sector) has launched a programme to boost industrial investments and create jobs and step up the exploitation of natural gas and making new investments in infrastructures.[83] Despite these responses to the need for economic change, states in the region face a central dilemma: the possibility of rapid economic change is impeded by economic disparities and inequalities within states and by diverse forms of dependency that locks states within the region into networks of dependency that are difficult to escape. In addition, problems of political governance also limit economic progress and undercut the development of regional cooperation and integration, as well as the acceleration of direct foreign investments.

(8) Eighth internal dignity deficit: *Lack of innovation*

Innovation and independent reasoning in Islamic societies (*ijtihad*), was responsible for the dramatic rise and success of the golden age of the Arab-Islamic Empire centuries ago, and its closure and weakening was equally responsible for the decline of the empire. This continues to some extent to this day. The dependence on oil-related growth of many countries of the Middle East has resulted in structurally weak economies.[84] The region as a whole is not visible in the world economy. Capital investments remain small, unemployment rates are high, regional integration is minimal and diversity low. The performance of productive sectors is generally very poor.[85] The majority of countries in the Middle East are dependent on developed countries: they produce some consumer goods for themselves but important products that require more sophisticated technology are produced outside the region and imported into it. Middle Eastern states are mainly importers, especially for food products, and their agricultural sectors are often neglected. With the exception of Israel and Turkey, no country in the region is a major exporter of any goods other than energy to the West: the Middle East provides the resources that the West uses, alongside technology, to transform into diverse goods that are then exported globally. These issues have recently improved significantly in the Gulf states, although much progress is still needed.

(9) Ninth internal dignity deficit: *Lack of inclusiveness*

Relative inclusiveness – which was far better than anything else at that time, although not acceptable in today's standards – was also important in the rise of the golden age of the Arab-Islamic Empire. Even approaches to the understanding of gender issues were quite sophisticated for this period. Islam was the first to provide for significant and concrete legal women's rights. However, instead of continued development of these issues, as the golden age dissipated and the empire fragmented and weakened, these issues suffered like all other aspects of life. Moreover, some regional (non-Islamic) tribal and cultural elements throughout the Middle East were added, resulting in the worsening of gender issues. This added to the confusion both internally and externally of what was truly Islamic and what was due to tribal and sub-cultural customs thus complicating the view of Islam's role in gender inequality.

Over the last few decades, women's role in society has been changing. Women are increasingly educated. Partly as a result of this, women's participation in the workforce has also been on the rise.[86] Yet, there is still a women's empowerment deficit. On the Global Gender Gap Index compiled by the World Economic Forum, the Middle East and Arab world occupy the lowest position in the ranking, behind sub-Saharan Africa.[87] This bleak picture should, nevertheless, be nuanced. There are specific areas in which the region has made significant progress and, as a result, performs better than in others. This is the case for the educational attainment and health of women.[88] For the moment, advances in these areas have not yet been accompanied with equivalent changes in terms of political and economic empowerment. Middle Eastern women remain largely underrepresented in the economic and political spheres. There are also considerable differences between states. Some perform poorly overall, while others do better and are making real efforts to reduce their gender gap. Some Gulf countries have put in place programmes aimed at increasing women's education levels. These initiatives have borne fruit. Steps have also been taken to enhance political participation. In this respect, Tunisia is the most advanced country in the region.[89] Women have been granted the right to vote in several Gulf states (Kuwait and Qatar, for example). Despite the serious and numerous impediments to women's empowerment that remain in the Middle East, things seem to be moving in the right direction. There is an overall recognition that change is necessary. Indeed, 'the empowerment of women is [actually] at the forefront of the debate over the future of the Arab world'.[90] This is already a positive step towards more concrete gains.

In relation to the inclusion of different ethnic, linguistic and religious groups in society, the UNDP notes that '[t]he homogenising project of the Arab state has never been a smooth transition towards inclusion. Rather, a strong nationalistic trend developed with the objective of masking the diversity of the population and subduing its cultural, linguistic and religious heterogeneity under command structures'.[91] There is a lack of political representation and respect for culturally diverse communities and an uneven distribution of wealth between them.[92] Such inequalities have prompted some minority communities to seek either greater autonomy within or independence from the state. For example, the Kurdish minority in Iraq had been marginalized economically and socially. The desire for independence had been brewing since the end of the Ottoman period. After numerous revolts by the Kurds, under the British mandate and after, the government granted greater autonomy for the Kurdish areas, which still exists today. When Algeria was under French rule, the differences between Berber and Arab populations in the country were exploited for political purposes. After independence, successive governments sought to extend the control of the central government as well as the dominance of Arab culture. In Morocco too, the same path was taken by the government in the wake of independence. However, there, Arabic tended to be more widely spoken.[93]

Tensions and, in some instances, conflicts may occur along religious lines. A number of countries have significant Shia populations – Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Lebanon.[94] However, what may appear to be tensions created due to religion often have their seeds in a lack of channels for political representation and uneven distribution of services and wealth. The August 2010 protests by Shia in Bahrain were sparked by alleged gerrymandering of electoral districts to favour Sunni candidates, for example.[95]

Identity is not a fixed property of a group, but rather a fluid and constructed dimension of human life. How it is expressed is highly context-dependent. Managing diversity is something that states in the region need to do better. Citizenship rights need to be respected both in law and practice.[96] The inculcation of civil values that include good neighbourliness and cooperative relations with other communities within society is also important.

External dignity deficits

External actors are also responsible for contributing to the dignity deficits in the region. They have a positive role to play in guaranteeing

human dignity needs within the Middle East and, by so doing, would contribute to a decline in anti-Westernism.

(1) First external dignity deficit: *Prevalent dogma*

In the West, there is a general lack of knowledge about the history of the Arab-Islamic world and its achievements, and the complexities within Islam. The history of the West tends to be taught in a way that eclipses and obscures the positive interactions that took place with the Arab-Islamic Empire. The trajectory of the West is assumed to be that of Ancient Greece, followed by the 'Dark Ages', the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. Written in this way, the West directly inherited the knowledge of the Ancient Greeks. Yet many of the most important Ancient Greek texts were translated from Arabic. During Europe's 'darkness', the Arab-Islamic world was at the centre of learning and scholars at the major seats of learning, such as Oxford and Cambridge, required a knowledge of Arabic in order to further their own attainment of knowledge. Some of the most eminent Arab-Islamic scholars built upon the ancient texts, thereby furthering knowledge within the natural sciences as well as philosophy.

While most people in the Middle East are aware of this, few in the West are knowledgeable about the sophistication of the Arab-Islamic world at its height and the intellectual debt owed to it. There are many reasons for this 'lost history' as Michael Hamilton Morgan has aptly referred to it.[97] The construction of European identity and Christianity against the backdrop of the expansion and appeal of Islam as a competing monotheistic religion was undoubtedly a significant factor that contributed to the reticence to acknowledge mutual influences between the Europe and the Arab-Islamic Empire.

School curricula in the West ought to include the history of the Arab-Islamic world and its relations with the West that predates the end of the Ottoman and beginning of the colonial period. External actors also need to reduce destabilizing, alienating and demeaning rhetoric about the region and its history in the media and political debates, while eliminating the politics of the blame game and seek to create more balanced texts in schools, so shaping the attitudes of future decision-makers towards the Middle East.

(2) Second external dignity deficit: *Lack of security*

States in the Middle East were, relative to other regions, under colonial control for a short period of time. Nonetheless, this experience left important marks – both political and economic – on colonies in the

region and helps explain differences in historical evolution and political culture between North Africa, Egypt and the Arabian peninsula. The effects of colonization are still visible in some places (Kurds), though some countries – Saudi Arabia, Oman and Turkey – completely escaped colonial influence. These include colonization/post-colonization chaos, post-cold war imbalances of power and insecurity, a pervasive sense of imposed economic/technological dependence on others rather than self-sufficiency (creating a buying region rather than a producing one). Broken promises, a lack of trust and perception of double-standards, a sense of betrayal (embodied by the Sykes-Picot Agreement), a lack of international will to resolve regional issues, brutal episodes of colonization (for example, Algeria in the 1960s), abuses of Muslims in the Balkans in the 1990's all have explanatory power. All this has contributed to disillusionment with the Western model.

The indiscriminate demonization of Arab and Islamic societies, their culture and religion after the September 11 events (and the unfortunate humiliating abuses of Abu Ghraib prison and Guantanamo) has shaped perceptions and attitudes, notwithstanding that the 2001 attacks were carried out by a few deviants, unrepresentative of the region, its religion or culture. This, along with a sense of deliberate distortion by others of the greatness of the Arab Islamic civilization and its place and contribution to human history, especially as the source of the European renaissance, reinforces a sense of siege, in which civilization and history, culture, religion and ethnicity are perceived to be under direct and deliberate attack.

During the cold war the Middle East was an arena of competition between the US and Soviet Union and respective allies. This had a significant impact on the interregional relations, creating client states, such as Iran under the Shah, competing for funds and support. After the Second World War, the progressive involvement of the US Eisenhower's doctrine offered aid to Middle Eastern countries. Lebanon, Iraq and Saudi Arabia accepted: 'In general, these US actions did more to strengthen the nationalist/neutralist trend in the Middle East than to reassure the pro-Western elements.'[98] At the same time, the Soviet Union helped with financial and military assistance to its cold war allies – Democratic Republic of Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Libya. Syria was also orientated more towards the Soviets, but to avoid open problems favoured alliance with Egypt. The cold war also increased the strategic importance of oil production.[99] Interestingly, Western democracies were not interested in encouraging liberalization in the region. Indeed, their policies rather hindered the liberalization movement. In particular,

although the US was anti-colonialist, it favoured anti-Communism over democratization efforts (because of the realization that democratic transition carried with it the risk of destabilization).

In the post-cold war era the regional imbalance of power and transnational sources of insecurity came to dominate the Middle East agenda, as external incursions and power competition continued in another form, as did the pattern of economic dependence. The Middle East as a global region continued to have little impact on political and economic international governance, although its role in oil production was as important as ever. At present, the strategy of Western powers remains ambiguous and uncertain. The current US strategy appears to aim for 'constructive instability' through support for opposition groups. The involvement of the world powers in the region appear to be less concerned with political reform than securing energy supplies and protecting Israel. In the case of US policy and external intervention, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan, the result did not help with the promotion of political change in an evolutionary and peaceful manner. The apparent lack of political will of global powers to check the destruction of Palestinian and Lebanese homes and lives by Israeli security forces serves to further increase cynicism in the Middle East about the priorities of the West in the region.

(3) Third external dignity deficit*: Human rights abuses*

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights is accepted almost universally. Yet, the double standards and hypocrisy of world powers has been evident in relation to human rights in the region. While apparently paying lip service to promoting the expansion and protection of human rights in the region, major powers quietly tolerate human rights abuses by Israel and some regimes in the region. Again, their interest in ensuring their own energy security, preventing Islamic parties from coming to power and protecting Israel at all cost seem to override concerns for human rights. Cynicism about the sincerity of world powers about promoting human rights was also reinforced by flagrant human rights abuses in Abu Ghraib and Guantanomo. The US especially, has appeared to tolerate or ignore unspeakable human rights abuses by Israel in the occupied territories. This has added to frustrations and confusion in the region. In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech in December 2009, Obama claimed that

> the promotion of human rights cannot be about exhortation alone. At times, it must be coupled with painstaking diplomacy. I know that

> engagement with repressive regimes lacks the satisfying purity of indignation. But I also know that sanctions without outreach – and condemnation without discussion – can carry forward a crippling status quo. No repressive regime can move down a new path unless it has the choice of an open door.[100]

Whether this indicates a significant change for the region remains to be seen.

(4) Fourth external dignity deficit: *Lack of accountability*

Double standards are practiced when it comes to nuclear weapons proliferation in the region. Israel is known to have nuclear weapons, although it has never made a declaration that it is a nuclear state. However, it has never been subject to the same pressure that Iran, for example, is currently being subjected to. The international community is also unable or unwilling to hold Israel accountable for its unrivalled human rights abuses. At the same time, the international community for a long time refused to recognize the grievances of Palestinians and equated their national liberation struggle with terrorism.

Global powers were not held accountable for the non-UN sanctioned 2003 invasion of Iraq. Obama's Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech does, however, indicate a willingness of this US administration to abide by international standards governing the use of force: 'America cannot insist that others follow the rules of the road if we refuse to follow them ourselves. For when we don't, our action can appear arbitrary, and undercut the legitimacy of future intervention – no matter how justified.'[101] Obama also indicated that the US will seek to adhere by international standards governing conduct during war,

> [w]here force is necessary, we have a moral and strategic interest in binding ourselves to certain rules of conduct. And even as we confront a vicious adversary that abides by no rules, I believe that the United States of America must remain a standard bearer in the conduct of war. That is what makes us different from those whom we fight. That is a source of our strength. That is why I prohibited torture. That is why I ordered the prison at Guantanamo Bay closed. And that is why I have reaffirmed America's commitment to abide by the Geneva Conventions. We lose ourselves when we compromise the very ideals that we fight to defend. And we honor those ideals by upholding them not just when it is easy, but when it is hard.[102]

This is certainly a positive development that would help to mend the US's credibility gap and reduce anti-Americanism in the region.

(5) Fifth external dignity deficit: *Lack of transparency*

Many people in the Middle East feel that ambiguity surrounds the actions of global powers. There is a general sense that the persistence of some autocratic regimes results at least partly from the support of external powers. External players, the argument goes, have supported undemocratic countries and not pressured for political change in order to preserve both regional and international stability. This account contains some elements of truth. For the last two centuries, the Middle East policy of many Western powers has, indeed, been driven more by strategic interests than by democratic ideals. Very often, the preservation of regional stability has prevailed over the establishment of democratic regimes, mainly from fear of the negative effects of unstable transitional periods. For sure, such a strategy has had considerable impacts on regional political developments: 'Arabs resent America not for what it is but for its policies, but they *do* notice and react when those policies appear to change.'[103] Reversing double-standards would, therefore, have a positive impact.

If parties come to power through the ballot box, they should be understood to hold legitimate power and so be engaged with as legitimate interlocutors. Doing otherwise reduces the credibility of global powers in the region and increases cynicism about democracy promotion in the region and the intentions of external actors. The West's rhetoric about democracy promotion is viewed as an example of double standards. On the one hand, the desire to help foster democracy within the region is coupled with a lack of willingness to deal with popularly elected political Islamic parties. The US, for example, has refused to engage with mainstream Islamic parties and political movements even when they have demonstrated a commitment to participating in national elections.[104] This has been particularly notable in the cases of the FIS in Algeria. The second round of elections in Algeria in late 1991 was suspended following the success of the FIS in the first round. The political situation was perceived by Western governments as a war between the state and Islamic extremism.[105]

A similar attitude was adopted when Hamas was popularly elected in Gaza. Both the US and the European Union (EU) refused to recognize the Hamas-led government and used economic sanctions to try force the Palestinian people to alter the outcome. Yet, this amounts to a refusal to recognize the human rights of Palestinians, which will

hardly lead to greater stability or security. Moreover, Hamas has actually become more pragmatic since it was elected.[106] It has accepted the idea of a two-state solution. This is a significant shift in the position of Hamas that had called for the destruction of Israel in the past. The US will lose the chance of boosting its credibility and positive image in the Middle East if it fails to begin engaging Hamas. If the Obama Administration does not engage in talks with Hamas, it risks being seen as a continuity of the administration of George W. Bush.[107] The aim ought to be to understand how Hamas can play a positive role in peace negotiations and not to dismiss elected parties, even if unpopular, if long-term stability and credibility (about the promotion of accountable governments in the region) is to be attained. The common criticism that Hamas was a stooge of Iran was the result of the failure of the US and the EU in dealing with it as an elected government, which pushed it to find alternative allies. The limited interests of the US and its Western allies in democratic outcomes in the Middle East has induced considerable outrage and renewed cynicism about the objectives of democracy promotion in their region. The wiser approach would have been to deal with it and modify its hard-line policies through diplomacy rather than isolation:

Ayman Al-Zawahiri – in a videotape broadcast by Al Jazeera television in October 2005 – felt able to assert that 'the Americans will never permit any Islamic regime to assume power in the middle of the Islamic world, unless such a regime is in full collaboration with them, as is the case in Iraq'. But just imagine what it would do to the credibility of the jihadi movement if Zawahiri were proved wrong – if the West and the world did decide to respect the democratic will of the Arabs and the Muslims.[108]

(6) Sixth external dignity deficit: *Lack of global justice*

Global justice is needed if human dignity needs are to be met. Humanitarian aid to those in need is an essential element of global justice. Justice is all too often forgotten in the formulation of foreign and security policies. Yet, the consequences of leaving injustices unchecked may itself become a security issue, because of resulting humiliation, anger and frustration.[109] It has an important role to play in reducing the appeal of violent extremism in Islam and their efforts to exploit anti-Westernism in order to recruit members. 'Humiliation and alienation stem from undertaking actions that do not fit with one's own sense of worth or potential. In such situations, people suffer from a fractured identity as a result of the way in which people define or treat them.

Being treated as inferior or denied agency is likely to lead to attempts to re-establish a positive identity and sense of self-worth.'[110]

There is a general sense in the Arab-Islamic world of being treated unfairly. People in the Middle East tend to be preoccupied with unequal power relations between the region and the political West. This partly stems from the experience of colonialism. However, people of the region also feel alienated from the current global order. This sense of alienation is partly related to the perceived lack of governance mechanisms through which they can challenge the policies of hegemonic foreign powers.[111] The persistent refusal to alleviate the suffering and humiliation of Palestinians in the occupied territories is a major issue fuelling the sense of injustice and outrage felt in the region. Israel's illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip since 2007, for example, was not met with effective pressure from the international community:

> In fact, the only effective pressure was applied by the US on the Egyptian government – to seal its border with Gaza … The tunnels under the border separating Egypt from the Gaza Strip bring food and material relief to the people under siege. Yet, under US supervision and with the help of US army engineers, Egypt is building an 18-metre-deep underground steel wall to disrupt the tunnels and tighten the blockade.[112]

This continued persecution, humiliation and statelessness of the Palestinians is immoral and will not lead to a stable and peaceful Middle East, nor is it in the national interest of any state, and must be addressed urgently.

(7) Seventh external dignity deficit: *Lack of opportunity*

There is a general feeling within the region that the Western powers seek to maintain the Middle East as a contained, inferior and dependent purchaser of goods, particularly of military equipment and mega-construction projects and trade deals. As already noted, one of the problems contributing to people's grievances in the region is the lack of adequate public services. Too much money is being diverted to the military and security services in order to ensure regime survival from legitimate internal and external threats in a troubled region with unresolved chronic conflicts. The fact that governments spend large sums of public money on buying military hardware from the West only serves to generate greater disillusionment with both local governments and Western powers. The security of external actors would be better ensured

through aid for education and other development needs. This should include investment in the region's universities.[113] Initiatives designed to transfer technical know-how need to be part of an overall commitment to helping the countries of the region improve the quality of and, in some cases, access to education.

(8) Eighth external dignity deficit: *Lack of innovation*

Political reforms have been slowed down or even hindered due in part to the desire of external powers to maintain the political status quo in countries across the region. Following the events of 9/11, the situation has slightly changed. Global powers have attempted to encourage political reform in the Middle East as a means of reducing violent extremism in Islam, but not because it is the appropriate thing to do for the progress and well-being of these states.[114] When political reforms have been promoted, external powers have tended to equate political reform with secularization, which also hinders the emergence of indigenous solutions to the need for reform. In the economic realm, external actors could encourage innovation and scientific and research collaboration, which they have been doing more of recently.

(9) Ninth external dignity deficit: *Lack of inclusiveness*

Western countries have an important role to play in reducing the appeal of violent extremist fringe movements in Islam. Yet, their responses have been driven by a general aversion and fear of political Islam in general, which affirms the perception that they have anti-Islamic tendencies. Attempts to encourage the development of Western-like political systems and the secularization of politics are likely to fail and to radicalize greater proportions of society within the Middle East. When Islam appears in the mass media, it is all too often in relation to the activities of violent extremist movements, which helps to generate an image of Islam as inherently violent and antagonistic towards the West. Some elements in the West have in certain instances acted irresponsibly by actively encouraging the demonization of Islam. The publication of cartoons satirizing the Prophet Mohammed in the Danish newspaper *Jyllandes-Posten* in 2005 helped to fuel Islamophobia in Europe and to reinforce the narratives of violent extremist movements in Islam, both in Europe and the Middle East.[115] Attacks on Danish and Norwegian embassies in Damascus, protests in Teheran, Cairo and Beirut, as well as in London, Paris and Copenhagen and the deaths of 11 people in Afghanistan were reported in international media sources. The violence that the publication of the cartoons generated took Denmark as well as

other European governments by surprise and has presented them with a dilemma:

> [t]hey were forced to consider whether the freedoms of thought and expression were unconditional or whether they could be limited, as well as the relationship between those freedoms and the responsibility not to incite hatred. In addition, governments were forced to consider their relations with the Muslim world, including ways to bridge the growing divides in terms of values, religion and culture.[116]

This understandably increases reticence towards the Arab-Islamic world as well as a fear of the visibility of Islam within the West. In Europe, the latter manifested itself in the 2004 ban on the wearing of the *hijab* (headscarf) in state schools in France. At present, the ruling party in France wants to ban the wearing of the *burqa* (full veil), although it is worn by a tiny minority of Muslim women in the country.[117] It was also evident in the Swiss constitutional amendment banning the construction of minarets, which was passed in a national referendum in November 2009. These decisions take place against the backdrop of growing support for populist, right-wing extremist parties and concerns about immigration in many countries in Europe. Measures of this kind, that marginalize and discriminate against Muslim communities that form part of the societies in question, serve to generate frustration, anger and feelings of rejection. They also reinforce the discourse of violent extremist movements within Islam that seek to draw on these sentiments and a sense of disenfranchisement. Most countries now comprise a number of different linguistic and cultural groups. Societies are therefore made up of people with multiple and overlapping identities. Governments in the West need to be conscious of the need to promote better relations between the various communities that make up their societies. Better, more balanced and responsible media coverage needs to be inclusive, non-divisive and non-demonizing or exclusionary.

Lessons learnt: Addressing dignity deficits

The lack of good governance paradigms in the region and the failure of states in the Middle East to generate societal cohesion, political participation, create employment, reduce economic inequalities, provide essential public services and manage cultural and linguistic pluralism are central causes of the region's problems. The region desperately needs to see improvements in educational systems at all levels. In some places, access

to education is a problem and should be rectified. However, in the majority of countries in the region it is the quality of education that requires improvement. More highly qualified teachers, a greater emphasis on critical thinking, science and technology and improved facilities are required. What is needed is a vibrant and diverse private sector, accountable and enforceable regulatory oversight in order to diversify the means of wealth creation and to generate a more even distribution of economic resources. Greater investment in science and technology in educational institutions and research and development are needed to diversify wealth creation within the economy. Greater inclusion of cultural and religious minorities, as well as women in the public sphere is also necessary.

Another major factor contributing to the crisis of legitimacy is the failure of existing regimes to open political systems and enable civil society organizations and the media to function with greater freedom. The only chance of seeing authentic accountable governance that is perceived as legitimate by the majority within society is through accommodation with liberal and Islamic political parties that renounce violence. Including the latter may even convince some more hard-line organizations that renunciation of violence could bring them tactical gains. At present, government efforts to suppress internal opposition have resulted in a disproportionate amount of public funds being allocated to the military and security services. Security sector reform (SSR) is required to help 'right size' the military and state security agencies as well as to increase transparency and accountability within the security sector. The judiciary needs to be free from political influence and oversight must be independent of the executive branch. Human rights abuses have suffered greatly as a result of political repression employed with the aim of suppressing political opposition and social unrest. Protection and promotion of human rights, which encompass civil, political and social as well as cultural rights, must be improved in the region through the development of transparent and accountable security apparatuses, judicial and media independence and an opening of the political system to opposition forces.

At the same time, external powers need to promote foreign policies that stress universal values rather than their narrowly defined national interests. Such powers need to practice introspection, critical analysis of the self and the other without assuming superiority. This entails the acknowledgement of failings, weaknesses and recognition of successes and the causes of success. In short, trust-building dialogue and tolerance would minimize the sense of siege, and promote transcultural synergy. Such an approach is to reaffirm that human civilization as we know it today is not the exclusive right of any one people or culture or religion,

but rather the end product and hybrid of endless and timeless interactive mutual borrowing, and synergistic ideas of all of humanity and that each group of people(s) have contributed in various degrees to our collective human perils and potentials.

It is a sad and tragic irony that perhaps trust-building dialogue and transcultural synergy will have a greater chance of being accepted only in the context of the catalytic consequences of another critical turning point. Catastrophes – pandemics, food and water shortage, natural disasters, climate change, nuclear, chemical disasters, financial meltdowns, cyber and terrorist attacks and disruption to energy supplies – are already having an impact on state norms and attitudes towards, for example, the responsibility to protect and humanitarian interventions.[118] Institutional consensus can evolve in the face of new catastrophic challenges, but the way in which international assistance and aid is provided, the nexus between recipient and donor societies, states or regions is also be critical.

Sudden shocks tend to focus attention and generate intense mediatized crisis learning: catastrophes, therefore, can significantly alter our thinking towards the use of force, as well as partnerships and alliances. Shared transnational, regional or global catastrophes can set in motion a process of convergence of strategic norms within groups of states or regions. Increasing interdependence and connectedness suggests that globalized interdependent security will become a dominant paradigm for the twenty-first century and one within which states in the Middle East can participate. For this reason, burden sharing, an idea at the heart of *Symbiotic Realism*, a theory of interstate relations proposed by Al-Rodhan in 2007, may provide the most appropriate framework through which to manage potential problems and opportunities in the future of the Middle East.[119]

Symbiotic Realism recognizes that state-centric paradigms hinder policymakers in their comprehension of the complex and globally interconnected nature of the challenges that we collectively face today. Symbiotic Realism goes beyond the realist paradigm of international relations and aims to link this wider conception of security that goes well beyond the state as an 'object of security' to include individuals, large collective identities and the biosphere with the neurobiological substrates of human nature (basic needs, ego, fear) within a 'globally anarchic world of instant connectivity and interdependence'.[120] Indeed, the dynamics of the global system are believed to be the result of the four interlocking elements of neurobiological substrates of human nature, global anarchy, interdependence and instant connectivity as a result of the processes of globalization.[121]

Symbiotic Realism is based on a conception of human nature that understands morality as circumstantial and unlikely to prevail in situations where people's basic needs are not met. People are conceived as neither entirely egoistic nor innately moral or altruistic. Instead, circumstances are thought to determine people's behaviour. In situations of uncertainties, political and economic, social and identity turmoil (such as in the current Middle East), human beings are at their most vulnerable, often deprived of basic needs, including not only shelter, access to basic medical care, clean water and sufficient food, but also a positive self-identity and sense of belonging. Fear, want and humiliation risk generating aggression, the pursuit of power, egoism and greed. Thus, ensuring that people's basic survival needs – conceived in this broad sense – are met is a fundamental requirement of security and stability.[122]

Yet, a state's ability to ensure the security and well-being of its population increasingly depends on policymakers' mastery of complex relationships between issues, sectors and networks, as well as work with other states and non-state actors. Preventing, mitigating and dealing with the aftermath of the next critical turning point therefore depends upon a shift away from state-centric paradigms, the adoption of a broader conception of the global system as well as a more cooperative approach to international affairs due to absolute gains enabled by interdependence. Moreover, since interests and preferences are not assumed a priori, in contrast to realism, the importance of confidence-building measures and the establishment of best practices and norms are given a high priority in Symbiotic Realism. Multilateralism is, therefore, attributed a significant role in advancing a more just and environmentally sustainable global order.[123] Thus, by optimizing rather than maximizing the role of the state, by recognizing that resources can be both material and ideational and that scarcity in both domains can be avoided through resource substitution, allows for a cooperative shared control-generating paradigm that has legitimacy and is sustainable.

The following is a summary of actionable points for addressing the current state of the Middle East and preventing an seventh critical turning point.

National level

Each state in the region should be a sovereign, independent and stable state and strive to employ the tenets of sustainability (as suggested in the sustainable history philosophy described above), where the aim is to guarantee the nine human dignity needs (described above) for all of their citizens at all times and under all circumstances. This should

be achieved through the development of accountable and transparent state security institutions, independent judiciaries and medias and more open political systems as part of endogenous, inclusive and culturally appropriate good governance paradigms (as described above). These, however, must be in keeping with local cultures and histories and must meet common global governance criteria to ensure maximum international political and moral cooperation.[124]

Regional level

At the regional level, security and stability will depend on cooperation and peace between neighbouring states, as well as respect for other cultures.

1. Collective and sincere efforts by local states, regional organizations, international organizations like the UN, and the centres of global power in resolving regional problems that include the just and comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict with the creation of a viable Palestinian state.
2. Israel needs to realize that the outdated and nationalistic narrow policies of the right wing that advocate maximum land and minimum Palestinians are not viable, and that a just and comprehensive peace with its neighbours is in its own national interest and longevity; that its future security and prosperity are linked to justice, peace and acceptance by its neighbours, and that this will not happen through continued occupation, humiliation, racism, persecution and the arrogance of a colonial power; and time is not on its side and it needs to come to terms with reality and acceptable international norms of justice and peace.
3. Iran needs to realize that its revolutionary rhetoric is outdated, and that prestige, security and prosperity for its people cannot be ensured by the development of weapons of mass destruction, ethnic nationalism, sectarian violence, inciting regional instability and general antagonism in attempting to punch above its weight; the way forward is through the development of an inclusive good governance paradigm that can be based on Islamic principles or even sectarian specificities, but that this does not have to be the cause of regional problems or constant meddling. It needs to realize that its future security and stability are tied to peaceful, respectful and cooperative relations with its neighbours.
4. The resolution of nuclear proliferation in the region by making the whole Middle East free from weapons of mass destruction, while agreeing to the region's states to the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.
5. Non-state militant actors need to realize that they must merge their talents with their home countries to ensure their stability and sovereignty,

and that their use or misuse by other states or entities will not be sustainable. That they can fight for what they believe in through peaceful advocacy of civil society institutions that they can help build.

6. Violent extremists need to realize that their violent actions are not in keeping with any religion and that they will fail sooner or later; that they only represent themselves and are deluding themselves if they think that they speak for cultures or religions, and that their game is exposed and transient; and that the connectivity and interdependence of global states and cultures demands cooperation, respect and synergies and that alternatives are, ultimately, impractical.

Global level

At the global level, a number of measures should be taken to help create the conditions for endogenously developed good governance paradigms to be developed:

1. Promotion of sustainable, equitable and mutually beneficial relations between the international community (especially the dominant global powers) and the states of the region, according to the principles of the theory of Symbiotic Realism (described above), where *absolute gains* are allowed through cooperative non-conflictual interstate relations. That the days of manipulation and exploitation are over and any attempts in that regard will be transparent and counter-productive.
2. Aiding the empowerment of Middle Eastern states through economic reform, educational reform, technology transfer and the development of sustainable, accountable and transparent military and police forces, and independent judiciaries and media. Civil society should be supported, including non-violent Islamist organizations.
3. Allowing and encouraging the states of the region to develop their own specific good governance paradigms in an evolutionary endogenous manner that is in keeping with local cultures and histories, while meeting globally acceptable standards to maximize moral and political cooperation.
4. Global powers need to become honest brokers and avoid double-standards and hypocritical actions when dealing with the region, especially in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The US, in particular, must develop a new approach to dealing with Israel.
5. Global powers need to work to diffuse transcultural schisms and fractures and ensure that their collective security actions are truly anti-extremist and not anti-Islamic.
6. Western states need to encourage the inclusion and respect for the cultural specificities of Islamic communities in the West, especially in

Europe, without insisting on superficial symbolisms like dress, which is then interpreted as cultural antagonism.

7. The demonization and securitization of Islam needs to cease. Increased understanding of the complexities of Islam and the significant historical role of the Arab-Islamic culture in advancing human knowledge, achievements, including the rise and renaissance of the West, should be promoted through school curricula, the media, academia, think tanks, the entertainment industry and inclusive political statements and actions.
8. The global powers must acknowledge that the world has changed and that international relations can no longer be seen through zero-sum paradigms. They must also recognize that globalization and the information technology revolution have produced instant connectivity, interdependence and made security, economic and environmental threats transnational. This has made the world and its dynamics a multi-sum equation,[125] which implies that all states and cultures in the world have to succeed if humanity as a whole is to triumph.[126]

These recommendations, if followed by governments within as well as outside of the region, offer a step in the right direction of avoiding the growth of the seeds of a potential seventh negative critical turning point from coming to fruition and generating an eighth, and so on. They provide a genuine chance of doing so because they address internal and external dignity deficits that have continually blocked the Middle East's potential from being realized.

Concluding remarks

At the outset of the book, we posed the question 'What is wrong with the Middle East?' given its former excellence in being ascendant, tolerant, innovative and progressive? Numerous answers to this question have been advanced. During the twentieth century, following the Second World War, the problem was viewed within the Middle East as continuous direct and indirect rule by the colonial powers. The appropriate response was believed to be national liberation and each country subsequently pursued individual independence strategies. This was largely successful, giving the peoples of the region greater control over their own territories and destinies. Colonization of Palestinian territories and other Arab lands by Israel, with the tacit approval of the West, however, persists and remains a major cause of humiliation, frustration and instability in the Middle East. Pan-Arabism ultimately failed to create greater unity among the newly independent states and to

shake off continued Western influence in the region. Pan-Islamism was partly successful in that it brought Islamic countries together in a new organization – the Organisation of The Islamic Conference – for the first time. It helped to increase economic, educational, cultural and political cooperation between states, as well as people. Nevertheless, it failed to adequately mediate between Islamic countries and did not emerge as a major regional bloc, though there are signs that it may improve the way it functions and become more influential in the global arena.

Secular Arab nationalism did not deliver the economic development and independence from Western hegemony that it had promised. A lack of transparency, accountability and political participation, as well as the continued presence and influence of the West in the region fed frustrations with governing elites. The limited and controlled democratization that took place in some countries has largely failed to significantly transform the region. Indeed, in some cases, it was even reversed. The stagnation of democratic reforms in some countries has served to generate even further frustration and disenfranchisement, causing some people to turn to extremist Islamic fringe elements for answers and an alternative vision of the appropriate regional order and its relationship to the rest of the world.

The dominant narratives on the state of the region employed by centres of global power during the twentieth century aimed at managing and rendering the region 'useful'. While Muslim intellectuals at the beginning of the twentieth century may have found certain aspects of the modern West congenial, these values were not promoted in the region.

Hence the famous remark of Muhammad Abduh, Grand Mufti of Egypt (1849–1905), who said, provocatively, after a trip to Paris: 'In France I saw Islam but no Muslims; in Cairo I see Muslims but no Islam.' His point was that the modern European economy had created conditions of fairness and equity that came closer to the Quranic ideal than was possible in the pre-modern economies of the Muslim world.[127]

Creating colonies and then protectorates kept the region relatively stable and exploitable. However, the development of economies within this framework tended to serve the interests of the colonial states, and the political systems that took shape were based on Western models without accommodating Islam. In the period following the independence of Middle Eastern countries the manipulation of these countries' economies and politics persisted. This was particularly the case within the context of the cold war.

Within the contemporary context, four narratives that offer overarching explanatory frameworks for the current state of the Middle East

tend to dominate. The first, deviant violent extremism, identifies the weakness and lack of legitimacy of elites, exacerbated by external support for entrenched regimes, as the source of instability in the region. It prescribes a return to the Caliphate. The second, neoconservatism, argues that the source of the region's instability is a lack of democracy. It prescribes democratization through regime change as a means of rectifying the problem. The third, pragmatic realism, views the region's problems as primarily caused by Iran and the spectre of political Islam. It seeks to maintain, above all, stability by balancing regional powers against Iran and supporting incumbent regimes. The fourth, secular liberalism, identifies a lack of development, hindered by internal and external obstacles to political liberalization, as being at the heart of Middle East's impediments. It contends that development is the most effective means to overcome it. The first narrative is misguided and based on an erroneous reading of the history of the Arab-Islamic Empire that, contrary to the rhetoric of violent extremists in Islam, prospered in large part because it promoted learning, innovation and tolerance. Neoconservatism and pragmatic realism fail to fully comprehend the interconnected nature of internal and external factors that contribute to instability and insecurity in the region. Secular liberalism, the fourth narrative, though recognizing the need for endogenously generated solutions to the region's problems that are in keeping with the region's cultures and history, does not articulate a framework and a 'theory of change' through which this can be enacted.

Our proposed narrative, Endogenous Good Governance, suggests that breaking the spiral of negative critical turning points that have plagued the region for so long will be dependent on the generation of good governance paradigms in the Middle East that can square the circle: be authentic and true to the region and conform to globally accepted standards and norms. This, we have suggested, can be achieved through the formulation of good governance paradigms that aim to meet nine fundamental human dignity needs (reason, security, human rights, accountability, transparency, justice, opportunity, innovation and inclusiveness). However, overcoming the cumulative effect of interlocking internal and external factors that have resulted in a lack of confidence, anti-Westernism, a persistent crisis of governance and state fragility, a volatile regional security system and the challenge of violent extremism will also be dependent upon actions to address dignity deficits taken at regional and global levels.

Notes

1 Introduction

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2 The Historical Legacy – The Rise and Fall of the Golden Era

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5 The Six-Day War and its Consequences

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Index

***References to diagrams and tables are printed in bold**

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

I

J

K

L

M

N

O

P

Q

R

S

T

U

W

Y

Z