



ARAB LIBERAL THOUGHT AFTER 1967

*Old Dilemmas,
New Perceptions*

Edited by MEIR HATINA & CHRISTOPH SCHUMANN



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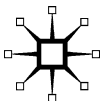
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Meir Hatina and Christoph Schumann

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*In memory of Christoph Schumann,
colleague and friend*

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Acknowledgments

The year 1967 constituted a turning point in the history of the Middle East. The Arab defeat by Israel marked the collapse of the revolutionary ideologies embodied by Nasserism and the Ba'ath Party and the return of Islam to the political realm. Islamic movements and post-1967 authoritarian regimes were the two main topics that occupied scholarly research during this period, while other, more open and liberal voices were marginalized. This volume aims to shed light on these neglected ideologists and their sustained vitality, while providing comparative perspectives from Turkey and Israel, thereby enriching our understanding of the intellectual and political history of the modern Middle East.

The book developed as a result of an international conference, titled "Liberal Discourses in the Middle East after 1967: Old Dilemmas, New Visions," conducted at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg in June 2011. It was designed as a continuum of a previous conference (2005) in the same venue, which explored liberal ideas in the Eastern Mediterranean from the late nineteenth century until the 1960s, and was followed by the publication of two volumes.

Professor Christoph Schumann, a renowned scholar of political ideologies in the Middle East, and I joined forces to edit the 2011 conference research volume. Tragically, Schumann passed away in September 2013 at age 44. He managed to pass on his intriguing chapter for my inspection beforehand. The importance of the research of liberal thought in the Middle East, which was so close to Schumann's heart, impelled me to complete the task of bringing the volume to print. The book stands as a worthy memorial to him. His mentor, Professor Thomas Philipp, a leading expert on Arabic thought in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, contributed a fascinating outline of Schumann's scholarship profile to the volume. Sadly, Philipp passed away in June 2015 at age 74.

The 2011 conference and its resulting volume would not have been possible without the financial support of the following bodies: the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, the Gerda Henkel Stiftung, the Luise Prell Stiftung, and the Fritz und Maria Hoffmann-Stiftung. I am grateful as well to all those who were involved in the production of this volume, first and foremost, the contributors themselves for their efforts and patience in the

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MEIR HATINA

A Note on Transliteration

The English transliteration of Arabic and Hebrew words in this volume follows standard academic rules as stipulated by the new edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam* (EI3) and the *Encyclopedia Judaica*. The transliteration of Turkish words and names (in Lutz Berger's article) generally follows the system used in modern Turkish.

All Arabic, Turkish, and Hebrew terms are italicized except for words that occur often, such as shari'a, 'ulama', Torah, and Halakhah.

For the sake of convenience, and in order to make this volume more accessible to nonspecialist readers, diacritical marks and macrons for long vowels have not been used in the text. Anglicized place and corporate names are given in their familiar form (Cairo, Baghdad, Tehran), and dates are given according to the Western calendar.

Christoph Schumann 1969–2013

Thomas Philipp

The untimely death of Christoph Schumann was a great shock for all of us who knew him and were close to him. He had been for many years first my student, then colleague, finally successor, and always a friend. We both enjoyed historical approaches for analysis. But he was also very much attracted by the theories political science had to offer. He still belonged to a generation that concluded studies with a *Magister* in two or three fields. One of those was *Islamwissenschaft*, the German equivalent of Islamic Studies. But I do not think that he considered himself an *Islamwissenschaftler*. His concern was writing about the modern period of the Middle East with the tools and methods history and political science had to offer.

To my knowledge Schumann never wrote on Islam per se, but included it wherever it played a role in modern history. Thanks to his knowledge of *Islamwissenschaften* and his excellent Arabic he could analyze contemporary issues as only a few other political scientists in Germany, who had made the Middle East their topic, were able to do so. He was an excellent political scientist and historian of the modern Middle East.

Christoph Schumann's doctoral thesis, completed in 2000 at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg,¹ raised an important question: Why would people of the same generation, sharing similar social experiences and living in the same general region, identify with different (but in all cases more radical), parallel variations of Arab nationalism, that is, with Lebanese, Syrian, or pan-Arab nationalism? He applied the discourse concept of Foucault to nationalism, analyzing texts as well as symbols and rituals. Schumann dealt with the question of power by analyzing the symbols and concepts used by various thinkers and leaders, how they were made acceptable, and in what historical contexts.

Furthermore, Schumann investigated individual reasons and circumstances determining specific identification with a particular variation of Arab nationalism. He adopted Bourdieu's concept of social space and the

“habitus,” which establishes the theoretical link between the social conditions of a person’s origins, the processes of his socialization, and his political formative development. He chose autobiographies as source material for this investigation, albeit with a keen awareness of their limitations for intellectual history. He had a unique talent for consistently linking theoretical approaches with a critical reading of historical evidence.

In 2003/2004 Schumann was awarded a Feodor-Lynen scholarship from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation to spend a year as a visiting scholar at the Center for European Studies at Harvard University. He was at the time engaged in a major project comparing Turkish immigration to Germany, starting in the 1960s, with Arab immigration to the United States after World War I. He continued to work on this project in Bern. The results were published in several articles that deal with partial aspects of the project.

In the last ten years or so Schumann’s main focus shifted to the issue of liberalism in the Arab world. This was not just another critique of Hourani’s *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (1962). He relied on his insightful theoretical analysis of the term “liberalism” to uncover the methodological flaws arising from a certain misunderstanding of the term.

Schumann argued that liberalism did not present another “world view as a consistent philosophy or world view with one particular principle or particular mode of argumentation at its center,” such as “nationalism,” “Islamism,” “Fascism,” or “communism.” He therefore deliberately avoided the term “liberalism” and spoke of “liberal thought” or “liberal attitudes.” Nationalism might be liberal, but it might also lead to authoritarianism. The same is true for the relation between democracy and liberalism, which might but does not necessarily coincide. The introduction of constitutionalism is no guarantee for liberalism, and certainly not is the introduction of the “rule of law.” Schumann postulated study of each instance of these worldviews and concepts as applied to actual politics, evaluating what liberal elements might and might not be juxtaposed with illiberal elements in the same political order. He opened up a whole new way to detect liberal thought as experienced in Middle East and to mine its sources for new views on Arab intellectual and political history in the modern era.

After having taught for two years as assistant professor at the University of Bern, he was appointed four years ago professor of Politik und Zeitgeschichte of the Middle East at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg. It was one of the very few positions on the modern Middle East in Germany not anchored in *Orientalistik* or *Islamwissenschaft* but in political science or history, applying the methods and theories of these two disciplines to the topic.

During these four years Schumann developed a program for PhD students and, together with some of his graduate students, an outreach program for the general public. He also published the proceedings of two international conferences that he had organized in Erlangen.² In his new official function

he initiated an interdisciplinary collaboration with colleagues from other universities. While trying hard to find time to work on his own research, he managed to take on additional administrative tasks.

Schumann became more interested—most likely stimulated by the events of the so-called Arab Spring—with the definition of political systems and an analysis of their sustainability in the Arab world.

A very promising scholarly career cut short shockingly early! Christoph Schumann had combined in unique ways theoretical approaches, much influenced by political and social theories, with a sharp mind for analysis and the historian's obligation to provide evidence for the links between theory and practice. He was an inspiring teacher and a dedicated guide to his PhD students. But it is not only they who will miss him. His death is a great loss for the field of modern Middle East studies in Germany and for the whole academic community interested in the region.

We miss him dearly.

Notes

*This obituary was originally published in *Die Welt des Islams* 54/1 (2014), pp. 1–3.

1. Published as *Radikalnationalismus in Syrien und Libanon: Politische Sozialisation und Elitenbildung 1930–1958* (Hamburg: Deutsches Orient-Institut, 2001). An article by Schumann about this topic, “The Experience of Organized Nationalism,” appears also in the volume we edited together: *From the Syrian Land to the States of Syria and Lebanon*, Beirut Texts und Studien 96 (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2004).
2. The first conference was titled “The Roots of Liberal Thought in the Eastern Mediterranean,” and was published as two volumes: *Liberal Thought in the Eastern Mediterranean: Late 19th Century until the 1960s* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); and *Nationalism and Liberal Thought in the Arab East: Ideology and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2010). The second conference (organized with Meir Hatina) was titled “Liberal Discourses in the Middle East after 1967: Old Dilemmas, New Visions,” and its discussions are published in this volume.

Introduction

Meir Hatina

In the introduction to his volume *Liberal Thought in the Eastern Mediterranean* (2008), the late historian Christoph Schumann stated presciently: “Looking at the political realities in the Eastern Mediterranean today, the project of publishing a volume on liberal thought seems to be daring, to say the least.”¹ The political realities that Schumann referred to then were American military rule in Iraq, Islamist inroads in Egypt in 2005 and Palestine in 2006, and the war between Israel and Hizballah in Lebanon in 2006. These events, in his estimation, turned hopes for political liberalization and democratization in the Near East into “a grand delusion.”

However, the popular uprisings in the Arab world in 2011 (the Arab Spring), led to the collapse of the entrenched research paradigm regarding the endurance of authoritarian regimes. They also pointed to the political maturity of the masses, especially of young people, to the potential of Arab civil society, and to the Middle East as an integral part of the global village, widely exposed to technology, electronic communication, and Western ideas. Significantly, two key notions in contemporary Arab public discourse are freedom and democracy.²

These trends refuted the image of Arab exceptionalism, the view of the Arab region as caught in an impasse and under the strong grip of authoritarian regimes that prevent it from initiating significant processes of change such as occurred, for example, in Eastern Europe in the 1990s. The Arab Spring reinforced efforts aimed at liberal democracy, although it also witnessed renewed efforts at authoritarianism. Evidently, bringing down dictatorial leaders in Tunis, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen alone would not suffice to mold a culture of democracy and liberal-democratic institutions. However, a historic watershed had been reached, removing the barrier of fear, restoring the people (*sha'b*) to center stage, and paving the way for the struggle over the image of the polity.

The contemporary demand for freedom and democracy in the Arab world is not entirely new, but rather it accrued gradually, permeating public awareness over time, and intensified by globalization and dissident agents of

change, including in liberal circles. In light of the 2011 uprisings, a discussion of liberal thought in the Middle East, therefore, is no longer a daring undertaking, but rather an obligatory one.

* * *

Over the last 40 years, liberalism and liberal thinking seemed to be anathema to the Arab world. Some scholars, such as Nadav Safran (1962), P. J. Vatikiotis (1969), Bernard Lewis (1986, 2002), and, to a certain extent, Fouad Ajami (1998), fostered a “crisis” paradigm, namely, a sharp decline in the liberal-parliamentary experiment during the 1930s and the rise of totalitarian ideologies, embodied, for example, by pro-Fascist voices and Islamist reactionism.³ What went wrong? as the title of one of Lewis’s later books suggests, was, essentially, the failure of Arab and Muslim society in facing the challenges of modernity. Lewis wrote:

In the course of the twentieth century it became abundantly clear in the Middle East and indeed all over the lands of Islam that things had indeed gone badly wrong. Compared with its millennial rival, Christendom, the world of Islam had become poor, weak and ignorant. . . . Modernizers—by reform or revolution—concentrated their efforts in three main areas: military, economic, and political. The results achieved were, to say the least, disappointing. . . . Worst of all is the political result: The long quest for freedom has left a string of shabby tyrannies, ranging from traditional autocracies to new-style dictatorship, modern only in their apparatus of repression and indoctrination.⁴

Other scholars, such as Elie Kedourie (1994) and Samuel Huntington (1996), questioned the compatibility of Islam and Western values altogether. Kedourie argued that there is nothing in the political traditions of the Arab world that might make the organizing ideas of representation, elections, and constitution familiar. Rather, Arab politics adhered to another European style of government, enlightened absolutism, which resembled the traditional Oriental despotism and in which the state was stronger than society.⁵ Huntington, for his part, defined Islam as a religion of the sword going back to the period of the prophet Muhammad, demonstrated historically by intense rivalry and bloody borders between Muslims and non-Muslims.⁶

Viewed from a less dichotomist or politicized perspective, however, liberal-democratic values were in fact hotly debated in the Arab world during the early decades of the twentieth century. Constitutions, elections, and civil rights became important in the Arab political lexicon during that period and provided support for protest and defiance when such rights were violated or threatened. Liberal values were a vital part of an emerging public sphere, typified by proliferating opinions and organizations, most of them operating in a political

parliamentary context and observing the legal rules it dictated. The presence of colonial mandatory regimes as in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, only served to reinforce the claim for a more open milieu.⁷

As recent research has shown, this liberal streak did not quite end with the rise of Nazism in Germany and Arab pro-Fascist sentiments during World War II. Intellectual and political reactions to the totalitarian challenges of Europe were in fact rather critical at that time, rejecting Nazism and fascism as totalitarian, racist, and in fact merely a new, more oppressive form of European imperialism.⁸ The liberal ethos in Arab political culture eroded with the rise of revolutionary ideologies and takeovers by authoritarian rulers in many states of the region in the 1950s and 1960s.

The revolutionary experience was intensive and dynamic, but its results were destructive, reaching a turning point in the history of the Middle East with the Arab defeat by Israel in 1967. The event marked the collapse of the revolutionary ideologies embodied by Nasserism and the Ba'ath Party, as aptly described by Fouad Ajami:

An era in Arab politics had ended, and the struggle for the shape of the Arab order had begun....Yesterday's radicals—the Ba'ath Party and President Nasser—were the principal victims of the defeat. Whereas they once had stood for revolt against an older, more traditional, more compromised leadership, they themselves were now on trial.⁹

A major source of criticism in the aftermath of the defeat (*al-naqd al-dhati*) were Islamists, who claimed that the rout was attributable to a loss of religious faith that turned the Arabs into easy prey for the Israelis. The slogan “Islam is the solution” (*al-Islam huwa al-hall*) was translated into a political agenda that guided its spokesmen's quest for a public presence and state power.

Islamic movements—mainly radical—and post-1967 authoritarian regimes were the two main topics that occupied scholarly research during this period, while more open and liberal voices were marginalized. Once again, it was Ajami who argued that none of what happened after 1967 improved the prospects for liberal ideas and politics. Now, a younger generation, for whom liberalism had become another word for Western colonialism, adopted a new outlook embodied by Islamic revolutionary models.¹⁰

Indeed, a review of Western historiography during this period reveals recurring disappointment, frustration, and a pessimistic assessment of Arab liberals and their role historically, as viewed by various Western researchers. The liberals were mainly criticized for being indecisive and insufficiently activist in protesting political injustice, a viewpoint that reflected a broader critique of Middle Eastern and Third World intellectuals. Such views conveyed impatience and a near obsession with action and concrete results. Moreover, they are, arguably, overly harsh.¹¹

A closer historical examination sheds light on these neglected ideologists and their sustained vitality, thereby doing historical justice to exponents of Arab liberal thought. Moreover, liberal discourses crossed geographical and national boundaries and were not confined solely to the Middle East heartland—Egypt and the Fertile Crescent—but also appeared in such regions as the Arabian Peninsula, the Persian Gulf, and North Africa, testifying to a transnational liberal discourse community.

Thus, for example, monarchies in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Morocco encountered liberal dissent that advocated democracy, civic virtues, and human rights issues. In Saudi Arabia, especially from the 1990s, liberals with links to various media and cultural salons (*diwaniyyat*) demanded an independent judicial system and civic forums for debating public concerns, with the ultimate goal of forming a constitutional monarchy that would limit the power of the executive authority. They also criticized the close affiliation between religion and state, as well as the monopoly of the ‘ulama’ (Islamic scholars) over religious life. Although these critics lacked genuine institutions and political backing, and some were aware that reform could come only from the top under the aegis of an “enlightened despot,” this cultural phenomenon in an authoritarian state based on shari‘a law was remarkable.¹²

This perception is applicable to Morocco as well. As a result of the liberalization of the political system instituted by King Hasan II in the mid-1990s, the Moroccan monarchy evolved into a regime that combined authoritarianism with electoral competition and a multiparty system. This more pluralistic political climate also influenced the liberal milieu as well as the religious discourse of such Islamic movements as the Justice and Beneficence movement and the Party of Justice and Development (PJD). The PJD defined itself as a civic party and omitted the demand to implement the shari‘a from its ideological platform. It also took part in parliamentary elections.¹³ The events of 2011, especially in Tunisia and Egypt, also nurtured a coalition of forces in Morocco, which was influenced by liberal ideas such as civil rights, the division of authority, and the independence of the judiciary. These groups demonstrated in the streets with demands for political, economic, and social reforms, obliging the king to announce a reform of the constitution in an effort to sustain his image as a liberal reformer.¹⁴

A facilitating factor in forging a transnational liberal milieu was the new communication technology, which served as a platform for addressing and debating sensitive issues on the Arab public agenda.¹⁵ The new media also enabled Arab liberal publicists living in the West, both transient and permanent, to reach Arab audiences while also constituting a lobby for the liberal cause where they were based.

To this may be added the role of human rights organizations in the Arab world. Despite the inner tension between commitment to the universality of human rights and allegiance to local values and cultures, these organizations contributed to laying the foundations of Arab civil society. They advocated

such issues as gender equality, minority rights, freedom of speech, and the abolition of emergency laws and unlawful detentions, thereby enhancing the liberal agenda in public discourse.¹⁶

Defining Arab Liberalism

While there is agreement in the revisionist research regarding a sustained Arab liberal thought from the late nineteenth century, with its core values of individual freedoms, civic rights, democracy, and constitutionalism, there is some dispute regarding the identity of its spokesmen and the very definition of a liberal. In this context, three main approaches may be discerned—two that are radical and one positioned in the center—which are represented by various chapters in this volume.

A monolithic approach, represented, *inter alia*, by Wael Abu-'Uksa, categorizes the liberal discourse as a metanarrative or full-fledged paradigm with firm ideological and political boundaries that separate it from other ideologies in the Arab Middle East, such as political Islam, Arab nationalism, Marxism, and socialism. It is a challenging but problematic approach when researching the history of ideas, especially in a region that is saturated with geographical, ethnic, and political diversity, which also nurtures diverse voices in the liberal milieu and interaction with other ideological camps.¹⁷

The opposite approach, represented by Charles Kurzman, Roel Meijer, and Christoph Schumann, rejects the notion of liberalism as a consistent worldview or philosophy, and instead presents it as a liberal discourse that is diffused and eclectic and can be discerned in all the ideological streams in the Arab world. Kurzman defines the term "liberal" as a category that is too rigid, and tainted by Orientalism and value judgments reflecting Western standards. Instead, he proposes the term "liberal Islam," which in his view permits an appreciation of intellectual variety in Islamic discourse, in that it harbors not only religious fanaticism but includes a long line of writers with diverse opinions as well.¹⁸

Meijer, for his part, holds that neither liberalism nor any other ideologies exist in pure form in the Middle East. While there are individuals who can be called liberals, it is difficult to find purely liberal currents, or any other pure currents for that matter, in the region. Thus it would be hazardous to limit research on liberalism or other ideologies by ascribing them to individual thinkers. Rather, ideologies in the Middle East must be regarded as composites in which elements of liberal, republican, and communitarian premises are often combined.¹⁹

Schumann adds another, more systematic, element to the open approach in the research of Middle Eastern liberalism by pointing to the absence of any genuine Arabic equivalent for the English word "liberal," and commenting

that even those who take pride in their identification as liberals are scarce. Thus, only the adoption of an eclectic approach that refrains from focusing on a single ideology or narrative can reveal liberal manifestations. Moreover, Schumann argues that the discourse about Arab liberal thought should not have to be framed in the context of Western liberal theory and its influence on local thinking, but rather in the context of the concrete experience with authoritarianism, which in most cases leads to the adoption of liberal values.

These perceptions are applied by Schumann to two dominant groups. The first is Arab nationalists, who as a result of disillusionment with the vision of an authoritarian state as a condition for the formation of a proper society and full Arab unity, eventually, advocated liberalization and democratization.²⁰ The same disillusionment also occurred within the second group—political Islam—especially in the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

In Schumann's view, Islamism developed in its most radical form in Egypt during the 1960s and 1970s due to a period of violence and repression evoked by the struggle between secularists and Islamists over the nature of the state. Following the escalation of the struggle and the assassination of Anwar al-Sadat, the Egyptian regime combined a policy of harsh repression of the militant wing of Islam with the provision of a semilegal status for the more moderate Muslim Brotherhood. The passage of an amendment in Article 2 of the Egyptian constitution, enshrining the principle that the shari'a should be the main source of legislation, paved the way for the break between the moderate mainstream and the militants. The new jihadists turned jihad into a primary means of purifying Islam, while the moderates renounced violence in inter-Muslim conflicts by rejecting the principle of *takfir* (denouncing someone as an unbeliever).

By the 1990s mainstream Islamism had developed into a reformist rather than a revolutionary movement. The fact that the shari'a was defined as a key principle of the Egyptian constitution attenuated the conflict over secularism considerably. In this context, the Brotherhood's old slogan "Islam is the solution" sounded like an appeal to realize the basic principle of the constitution rather than a call to replace the existing state by a theocracy. Furthermore, Schumann argues, civil rights and the notion of freedom gained a new prominence in the platform of Islamic parties in Egypt (as well as in Turkey). This ideological shift came about not by a new intellectual engagement with the theory of Western liberalism but by the conclusion that was drawn from negative experiences with ideologically based state power.²¹

Schumann does, however, acknowledge the limitations of the liberalization of Islamism, due to the difficulty in defining a clear dividing line between ethics, morals, and state law. In this regard, liberal values conflict with the communitarian-collective tendency of the Islamic parties. These parties shun a clear answer to the question of whether the state should have the responsibility to foster, or even enforce, the observance of Islamic norms

in the public space, such as the ban on alcohol, modest dressing, and fasting during Ramadan.²²

Such reservations do not blunt Schumann's arguments, and those of others, that liberal thought runs through the entire spectrum of Arab ideology. This heuristic approach crosses ideological camps in tracing liberal voices, but conceivably such an approach is also its methodological Achilles' heel. It dismisses the existence of these camps as analytic categories, thereby hindering the researcher's ability to better comprehend Arabic thought. It also ignores individuals or groups who define themselves as liberals and identify with the basic ideas of liberal theory, not only in institutional terms (constitutional, parliamentary), but also in ethical terms of personal liberties and tolerance, including religious freedom. The ethical aspects are those that are most criticized by both Arab socialists and Islamists.²³ Moreover, the fact that liberals constitute a numerical and ideological minority²⁴ is an insufficient reason to disqualify them as a topic for separate research.

A third approach, which falls between monolithic and heuristic, and which is supported by, among others, the author of this introduction, views the liberal current as a discourse group and an analytic category. This current is not reflected in organized parties or powerful mass movements, but rather in the multiple forms of the new media and the transnational spaces between the Arab world and the West.

The liberal discourse has a corpus of values and a historic legacy that go back to the nineteenth century, comprising inspirational founders, followers with vision and fervor, and new members who were mainly from the Arab left. The term "the new liberals" (*al-libiraliyyun al-judad*), which was adopted in the 1990s, was not merely semantic but also concrete, and was accompanied by ideological manifestos. These elements defined the liberal thought, molding its self-image and setting it apart from those of other political groups such as Arab nationalists, leftists, and Islamists.

Ongoing rivalry, sometimes bordering on ostracism and physical attacks against liberal spokesmen, served to sharpen the differences between these groups.²⁵ Yet there were also zones of convergence, dialogue, and even collaboration between the liberal discourse and other streams, without blurring the lines that separated them.²⁶

Echoes of the various approaches in the research of liberal thought in the Middle East are to be found in this volume, providing additional testimony to the complexity of the topic methodologically as well as historically.

The Structure of the Book

Introduced by an overview of scholarly approaches to Arab liberalism, each of the three parts of the volume explores selected themes in liberal thought and practice in post-1967 Arab Middle East, with comparative perspectives

from Turkey and Israel. The various chapters contribute to an integrative and intriguing discussion on core issues of liberalism. They also aim to counter the image of the Middle East as a region that is fraught entirely with authoritarianism and totalitarian ideologies, giving voice and space to political discourses that endorse the right to dissent, question the status quo, and offer alternative visions for society.

Part I sets the scene with a methodological and historical framework for the evolution of liberal thought in the Middle East. Meir Hatina highlights the historical endurance and intellectual vitality of Arab liberal discourse despite internal ruptures and a challenging environment, and in contrast to the prevailing assessments in Western literature. This resilience, which in the long run empowered alternative visions for Arab society, invites comparative analyses regarding continuity and change in Arab liberal thought in terms of its human profile, geographic span, and ideological content. Hatina points to discernible differences in emphasis between the formative and post-1967 liberal discourse. The post-1967 liberal discourse, which is more daring and far-reaching, for example, in contesting the authority of the Qur'an, defying Arab politics or advocating peace with Israel, raises the issue of the Arab liberals' attitude toward what Albert Hourani called the liberal age of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Exploring some of the liberals' published work, Hatina reveals a complex attitude imbued with nostalgia for a flourishing past legacy and an eagerness to revive it, alongside criticism and defiance.

Christoph Schumann's chapter adds an additional element to the historical and methodological discussion, focusing on the relationships between democratization and liberalization in the Arab world, mainly in the 1990s, an issue that gained momentum following the Arab Spring of 2011. Schumann points to complex reciprocal relationships between democratization and liberalization, with neither side necessarily leading to an embrace of the other. Democratization can lead not only to a liberal system, but also to other political results, such as secession (South Sudan) or federation (Iraq).

Moreover, the nature and pace of democratization and liberalization are dictated largely by the nature of the polity's embedded system. Monarchical regimes such as those in Morocco, Jordan, Kuwait, and Bahrain have both a king and a parliament, both claiming to represent the nation, resulting in tension and power struggles between them. By contrast, in republican regimes, such as Egypt and Tunisia, a democratic principle was implanted, which established the people as the source of sovereignty; however, its content was not liberal, as demonstrated by the elevated status of the institution of the presidency. Schumann concludes from this that liberal and illiberal components can coexist in a single political system, and that a constitution, the rule of law, and the separation of powers are insufficient to guarantee liberal democracy.

Similarly, the notion of citizenship as an organizational principle in state-society relations, designed to grant privileges to the citizen, such as access to

state resources, social security, freedom of expression, and political association, does not necessarily constitute a basis for a liberal system. On the contrary, citizenship can suffer from conceptual and practical difficulties, as can be learned from its implementation in the Middle East.

Roel Meijer questions the identification of the notion of citizenship (*muwatana*) with liberalism, which he views as nonexistent, in its pure sense, in the Middle East. While there are individual liberals, he asserts, some were tainted by elitism, insisting on educating the masses about the virtues of liberal citizenship before they were introduced to democratic politics. Following this preliminary critical observation, Meijer surveys the history of the widespread perception of citizenship in the Middle East and concludes that the problem is not the absence of a demand for civil rights, but rather a perpetual struggle over their extent, content, and depth. Civil and political rights appeared during the first decades of the twentieth century, but they were collective rather than individual, reflecting struggles for national independence from the colonial powers. The notion of citizenship suffered a harsh blow under the authoritarian regimes of the mid-twentieth century and thereafter. These regimes suppressed political rights while promoting social rights such as education, health, and employment.

According to Meijer, an important turning point in heightening the demand for civil rights took place in the 1970s in the wake of a policy of economic and political openness adopted by Arab regimes, continuing into the 1980s and 1990s, with civil rights organizations also playing an important role. A climax was reached with the 2011 events, which demonstrated the return of the masses as an active agent in the demand for civil rights, dignity, justice, and employment security, and the rejection of the politics of exclusion.

In a discussion of the odds of establishing liberal democracy in the Arab world, Turkey's place as a source of inspiration and as a model worthy of imitation must be considered, especially in terms of the synthesis that it created between Islam, modernity, and democracy. However, research about Turkish liberalism passed over the Kemalist era of the 1920s and 1930s, and the repressive one-party regime that was in place, and focused on the 1970s and onward. The main emphasis was on the Islamic discourse of the Sufi orders (e.g., the Naqshbandiyya) and the Islamic parties (Welfare, and Justice and Development), which were strongly involved in the the public sphere and in politics and highlighted their commitment to democracy, religious freedom, and equal opportunity. Foci on other venues of liberal discourse in Turkey during the twentieth century were absent in the research.²⁷

The historian Hasan Kayalı contended in 2008 that the transitional years from empire to a national state (1918–1923) witnessed the expansion of the public sphere in Turkey, with diverse opportunities for the expression of political and intellectual liberties and the revival of liberal political institutions. However, the spring of 1923 ended the liberal era with the dissolution

of parliament and the establishment of the People's Party, which signaled the beginning of authoritarian rule under Mustafa Kemal.²⁸

Lutz Berger's chapter challenges this prevailing assumption. It explores the fate of Turkish liberalism under the Kemalist regime and throughout the twentieth century, thereby highlighting an overlooked issue while also providing a comparative perspective on liberal discourses in the Arab world. Berger points out that Turkish liberalism, largely inspired by the West, was, and still is, weak, mainly due to the lack of a social base, such as an urban capitalist bourgeoisie independent of the state, as in the West. Moreover, Turkish liberals were exposed to systematic repression, beginning with the Young Turks, continuing with Kemalism, and ending with the military revolts during the 1960s and 1970s.

Nevertheless, liberal thinking and policies regarding a free market, democracy, human rights, and civil society did play a significant role in modern Turkey. Indirectly, liberal values served various nonliberal politicians and parties who had a wider public base to neutralize political rivals or to voice opposition to various contentious government policies. For example, the Progressive Republican Party and the Free Republican Party opposed the centralized economic system that was promoted by the Kemalist government in the 1930s. Liberal ideas reemerged on the Turkish agenda upon the restoration of the multiparty political system during the 1950s and thereafter. Some of these ideas were implemented by President Turgut Özal, who enacted liberalized political and economic measures in the 1980s, and by modernist Islamists such as those in the Justice and Development Party in the early 2000s, who neutralized the involvement of the army in politics. Notably, however, former president, now prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan developed authoritarian tendencies in recent years. In summary, Turkish liberal thought, like Arab liberal thought, has demonstrated ideological and practical vitality, both during the liberal age (1798–1939) and beyond.²⁹

Part II of the volume shifts the discussion to critical debates over religious, cultural, and ideological heritages in the Middle East. It reveals vigorous alternative readings of Islamic sources aimed at dismantling taboos and molding a more inclusive political community.

The appeal for a return to the authentic Arab heritage as a solution to Arab malaise, especially after the defeat of 1967, and under the influence of the religious resurgence, resonated mainly with Islamist circles. These circles focused on the hard core of Islam, namely the holy scriptures—the Qur'an and the Sunna—and the era of the prophet and the four "rightly guided" caliphs (632–661), who were identified with purity, power, and expansion. The demand for cultural authenticity became the symbol of the Islamists and the point of departure in their quest for political power.

However, liberal and secular intellectuals voiced a similar appeal in an effort to preempt the Islamist monopoly over historical memory as well as to demonstrate their own legitimacy as nourished by internal rather than, as claimed by their rivals, foreign Western sources. Their reading of past legacies was revisionist, challenging, and wide-ranging, seeking to establish this legacy as a basis for Arab renewal and progress. In this context they also wished to prove the existence of an early secular perception, leading some writers to call for the separation of religion and state. Ultimately, deconstruction of the past was part of a sustained effort to accommodate Islam with liberal and democratic ideas and to bridge the gap between shari‘a law and cultural openness.³⁰

Three chapters discuss the Arabic concept of *turath* (heritage) in the Arab world. Wael Abu-‘Uksa and Clemens Recker, in their respective chapters, examine the intellectual reconceptualization of the *turath* by focusing on two prominent liberal thinkers. Abu-‘Uksa deals with the works of Egyptian writer Sayyid al-Qimni (b. 1947), a sharp critic of political Islam who viewed it as a type of modern fascism. Al-Qimni redefined the chronological framework of the *turath* as not limited to the Arab Islamic period only, but rather as including the ancient history of the Nile Valley and the Mediterranean as well, namely Pharaonic, Greek, Christian, and Roman history. This broader chronological approach made the *turath* more pluralistic and universal, in which various cultures, monotheistic and nonmonotheistic, coexisted in harmony and with mutual influences. Al-Qimni thus sought to confer a more open political identity than that of an exclusive and segregationist political Islam as a basis for a national identity in Egypt and the neighboring Arab countries. History and politics were intertwined in his revisionist construction of the *turath*.

The quest to establish an epistemic background for a liberal worldview was also reflected in the work of the Lebanese writer Nasif Nassar (b. 1940), as discussed by Clemens Recker. Nassar, in contrast to al-Qimni, aimed to achieve this goal in the philosophical rather than the historical realm. Liberal political philosophy, distinctively presented by Nassar, did not receive much attention in the research literature, underscoring the importance of Recker’s discussion all the more. Nassar attacked the domination of ideology over Arab thought—the view of man as a social creature and as part of a collective, thus limiting his liberties. Instead, he called for the replacement of this ideology with a philosophy that views man as an individual with rights, yet with responsibility toward his surroundings, guided by rationalism and argumentation. These virtues, Nassar pointed out, gained historical verification from the greatest Arab philosophers, such as al-Farabi, Ibn Rushd, and Ibn Sina, who maintained close and fruitful contact with Mediterranean Greco-Roman philosophies. The restoration of the philosophy of freedom in

Arab thought, Nassar held, could also be the basis of a second Arab *Nahda* (awakening), which would eradicate the crisis of the 1967 era and integrate Arab culture into the modern world.

In calling for a second *Nahda*, Nassar indicated not only continuity with the early liberal discourse, but also differences and criticism. In his view, the first *Nahda* attained important but partial accomplishments. Its spokesmen lacked depth and consistency and failed to develop a comprehensive approach to the theory of freedom, which had a negative effect on liberal discourse during the decades following World War I. Remedying these failures, he believed, will pave the way for the second *Nahda*, which will promote the formation of a free society that will interact with the processes of modernization and globalization.

Both al-Qimni and Nassar tended to view the Islamic tradition as an obstacle to Arab progress. Other approaches, however, focused on forging harmony between the Islamic tradition and a progressive ethos, as discussed in the chapter by Michaelle Browers. Browers traces two shifts in the discourse of secular intellectuals in the 1970s and 1980s regarding the concept of *turath*. The first shift, mainly in the 1970s, was away from the tendency to regard *turath* in an entirely negative sense as an obstacle to progress, which ought to be removed, to a more positive view as part of the modernization enterprise. A second shift came to the fore in the 1980s by intellectuals from Arab nationalist and socialist backgrounds who urged studying the *turath* in conjunction with a study of Western heritage and the present situation, which together would form the basis for the renewal of Arab political thought and practice. This proposal, Browers argues, was the product of the tension between the claims of authenticity vis-à-vis modernity, the desire for identity vis-à-vis progress, and the efforts to bridge these concerns.

An outstanding intellectual who sought to ease this tension was Mohammed Abed al-Jabri (d. 2010) of Morocco, who is the focus of Browers's chapter. Al-Jabri developed authentic modes of thought, while remaining faithful to modernity. His ethos absorbed liberal values of democracy, human rights, and intellectual freedom alongside communitarian values linked to local beliefs and practices with the aim of restraining liberal individualism in order to guarantee the general interest as well.

This ambivalence toward liberal values brings the discussion to the third part of the volume, which explores liberal thought and practice that emerged in ideological camps that do not describe themselves as "liberal." The contributors examine leftist and Islamist circles, which over time—and in light of their encounters with authoritarian regimes, repressions, and sectarian strife—absorbed liberal values such as political freedom, human rights, the division of power, and accountability. This phenomenon was evident in post-Marxists in Syria and Lebanon, and in such Islamist movements and parties as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. An essay in