GALAL AMIN, *Whatever Happened to the Egyptian Revolution?* Trans. Jonathan Wright (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2013). Pp. 296. $29.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY ERIC TRAGER, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Washington, D.C.; e-mail: etrager@washingtoninstitute.org
doi:10.1017/S0020743814000750

Three years after the mass uprising that ended Husni Mubarak's thirty-year dictatorship, many Egypt observers ask the same question that economist Galal Amin uses for the title of his latest book: *Whatever Happened to the Egyptian Revolution?* Indeed, the democratic aspirations that the January 2011 revolt highlighted now seem more distant than ever: the successive military, Muslim Brotherhood, and military-backed regimes that followed Mubarak implemented varying degrees of autocracy, while deepening sectarian and political divisions destroyed the national unity that Tahrir Square once exemplified.

But in this collection of essays loosely framed around various postrevolutionary themes, Amin doesn't blame the military, Islamists, or prevalent political and religious intolerance for causing the Egyptian revolution's apparent failure. Rather, he presents them as symptoms of a greater evil: Western domination, particularly that of the United States and Israel, which, Amin insists, stifled Egypt's development for decades. And in making this monocausal case, Amin offers a remarkably simplistic account of Egyptian history, occasionally embracing conspiracy theories that are common in Egyptian cafes but have no place in academic books.

Amin characterizes the 2011 uprising as an attempt to reclaim national dignity that was lost following the supposedly golden era of 1952 to 1967. During this time, he contends, Egypt thrived economically, reined in elites' corruption, and achieved relative independence from foreign powers. The Free Officers who ousted King Faruq, he writes, "clearly understood in July 1952 that the first step toward creating a real democracy and a break with subservience to the British would be to attack feudalism," so they "tracked down the pashas and the beys of the royal court and clipped their wings" (p. 135). Later, President Jamal ʿAbd al-Nasir—"a great man," according to Amin—deftly played the Cold War rivals off of each other, and thus Egypt "enjoyed freedom of movement" (pp. 228–29).

While this account of Egypt's Nasserist era reflects popular Egyptian mythology, it is disturbingly hagiographic and not particularly accurate. After all, ʿAbd al-Nasir was not interested, as Amin claims, in "real democracy": he outlawed political parties and sent thousands of dissidents to prison. Moreover, when Amin praises the various measures that ʿAbd al-Nasir took to address wealth disparities, such as land redistribution and the nationalization of various industries (p. 246), he overlooks the incredibly repressive means that these policies entailed. Amin also fails to acknowledge the many costly policies that ʿAbd al-Nasir pursued in the name of Arab nationalism, including Egypt's brief union with Syria (1959–61), its intervention in the North Yemen Civil War (1962–67), and the disastrous June 1967 war with Israel.

For Amin, the 1967 war represents a turning point in Egypt's history. ʿAbd al-Nasir's foolish decisions that catalyzed the war, including massing Egyptian troops on Israel's southern border and closing the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, predictably go unmentioned, and Amin portrays Egypt as the outright victim of an Israeli policy aimed to "do away with the strong state, because a strong Egyptian state had many implications for policy against Israel and for Arab and foreign policy." And, according to Amin, Israel's subversion was a smashing success: "The will of the state was paralyzed, corruption proliferated, money came to power, the drive to acquire more wealth controlled the political decisions, and the state gradually succumbed to external forces with objectives that were quite distinct from the interests of Egyptians" (pp. 223–26).

To be sure, Amin chalks up some of the blame for Egypt's post-1967 woes to the political and economic corruption that proliferated under Anwar al-Sadat and Husni Mubarak, and

the vignettes that he deploys to illustrate this corruption are among the book's most compelling chapters. But time and again, he traces these problems back to foreigners' supposed depredations. "Egypt," Amin writes of the post-1967 era, "was not being run in the interest of Egyptians, elections and referendums were constantly rigged, the control of the media continued, freedom of opinion was curtailed, the emergency law was extended again and again on the grounds of combating terrorism, and successive prime ministers were chosen without relying on free elections and without even exploring what people wanted" (p. 46). He thus blames foreigners for Mubarak's police state, writing that foreign companies "have to be confident of 'stability,' and in order to guarantee this stability, phone tapping might be essential" (p. 71). He also blames foreigners for the fact that Egypt does not have "patriotic ministers": "Foreigners may sometimes be interested in reform but in most cases they have a corrupting influence, and so in most cases they choose, or encourage the choice of, people who work against the national interest and do nothing to serve that interest" (p. 147). And he insists that the foreigners' grip is virtually insurmountable—"Egyptians have often risen up and made attempts at national revival, but they have always faced strong reactions from abroad to thwart them" (p. 253).

Even when specific acts can be unambiguously traced back to Egyptian culprits, Amin sees foreign hands at work. His discussion of anti-Christian violence, which exploded following the 2011 uprising, stands out in this regard. Despite some Islamists' incitement against Copts, Amin refuses to blame "religious fanaticism," because "Egyptians, even at their most irrational, do not behave in this manner" (p. 171). And despite the military's use of armored personnel carriers to run over protesters during the horrific October 2011 Maspero massacre, Amin never points fingers at the generals who ruled Egypt for the sixteen months following Mubarak's toppling. Instead, he falls back on a conspiracy theory: "Who benefits?" he asks. He proceeds to list "possible beneficiaries," including Israel, "because one of the things that helps it achieve its objectives is tarnishing the reputation of Islam and Muslims," and the United States, "because it works to serve Israeli objectives and the objectives of Israel's friends in Egypt" (p. 172).

So, whatever happened to the Egyptian revolution? Ultimately, Amin does not answer his own question conclusively. Yet the mix of conspiratorial ideas and monocausal arguments that permeate his book offer an implicit response: there was no revolution. Popular uprisings have catalyzed the ouster of two presidents in three years, but this author still buys the classic defense of dictators, which attributes all domestic problems to foreign enemies.

ADHAM SAOULI, *The Arab State: Dilemmas of Late Formation*, Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Politics (London: Routledge, 2012). Pp. 164. $135.00 cloth, $44.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY ABDUL-WAHAB KAYYALI, Department of Political Science, George Washington University, Washington, D.C.; e-mail: akayyali@gwu.edu
doi:10.1017/S0020743814000762

In *The Arab State: Dilemmas of Late Formation*, Adham Saouli attempts to theorize the emergence and persistence of the Arab state. Thus the main research questions Saouli addresses are why states remain intact during late formation, and how and why they emerge in late formation (p. 2). In order to answer these questions, Saouli adopts a historical sociology approach and necessarily provides a definition of the state. This is not an insignificant exercise—indeed, political (and social) scientists have grappled with it since Max Weber's pioneering definition. As such, Saouli is tackling questions that have perplexed political scientists since the advent of the discipline and utilizing Middle Eastern cases to illuminate these conceptual puzzles. On this account alone, the book merits a close reading.