

After President Mohammed Morsi was removed from power, Cairo was plastered with huge posters of Gen. Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi.

The truth is simple: Egypt's people had looked forward to a secular democracy taking roots in the country after the fall of Hosni Mubarak. Instead they got, first, a fundamentalist regime and, now, one more soldier in high office. Political liberalism as an idea has been aborted.

leaders, considering his act as one of treason, boycotted him. On the anniversary of the 1973 war in October 1981, soldiers of the Egyptian army killed him as he took the salute at an elaborate military parade in Cairo.

In more ways than one, Egypt under Nasser and Sadat was an embodiment of pride and courage for people outside its frontiers. The country's slide began with the presidency of Hosni Mubarak, a former air force chief, after Sadat's assassination. In his long stay in power, Mubarak, his clan and his cronies reduced Egypt into a kleptocracy and would not loosen their grip on the country. When, eventually, the Tahrir Square revolution forced Mubarak from office, the expectation naturally was that democracy, in that liberal, pluralistic manner of speaking, would take hold of the country.

And it did, to some extent. A democratic exercise of the vote catapulted the rightwing Mohammad Morsi to the presidency. That was all right, for it had come about through the electoral support of Egypt's people. The tragedy for Egyptians, though, is that Morsi was not allowed to function. Besides, he made things difficult for himself through giving out clear ideas that he was on his way to implementing an Islamist agenda for the country. There was too an ambitious army which stood ready to upset things. And it did, to the consternation of the world. General Sisi carefully orchestrated a campaign to have himself placed in power. And he is there now.

And the Tahrir Square revolution? The truth is simple: Egypt's people had looked forward to a secular democracy taking roots in the country after the fall of Hosni Mubarak. Instead they got, first, a fundamentalist regime and, now, one more soldier in high office. Political liberalism as an idea has been aborted.

It all reminds you of the struggle secular Iranians, largely in the form and shape of their communists and socialists, put up for years against a repressive Shah. In the end, Iran's revolution was commandeered by Ayatollah Khomeini and his fellow clerics.

Or look around you: a secular, socialistic Bangladesh, having arisen out of the fire and fury of war, was in fewer than four years pilfered by the forces of communalism and crass commercialism. And look how far we have come in our collective misery as a people.

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