Ever since Muhammad Mursi was elected president of Egypt in democratic elections marred by his Mubarakist opponent Ahmad Shafiq's electoral corruption and bribes, a coalition of Egyptian liberals, Nasserists, leftists — including socialists and communists of varying stripes —and even Salafist and repentant Muslim Brotherhood (MB) members began to form slowly but steadily, establishing an alliance with Mubarak’s ruling bourgeoisie and holdover politicians from his regime to oust him from power, fearing that he and his party were preparing a “Nazi-like” takeover of the country and destroying its fledgling democracy.

The scenario they fear is the one that brought the Nazis to establish a totalitarian state in 1933. In July 1932, in the German Reichstag (parliamentary) elections, the Nazi party received over 37 percent of the vote, becoming the largest party in parliament. On 30 January 1933, German President Paul von Hindenburg appointed Hitler Reich Chancellor, wherein Hitler headed a cabinet with a minority of Nazi ministers. A month later, on 27 February 1933, arsonists burned down the Reichstag building in Berlin. Hitler blamed the communists and accused them of a plot to overthrow the democratically elected parliament and asked the President of the Weimar Republic to grant him emergency powers to suspend civil liberties so that he could chase the communists, imprison them, dissolve political parties and close down the press. This came to be known as the Reichstag Fire Decree. On March 23, the Reichstag conferred on Hitler dictatorial powers, establishing the Nazi totalitarian regime and state.

The anti-Mursi alliance, which began to form in earnest in August 2012, started out bashfully but would become proud and assertive by November 2012, after Mursi’s infamous Constitutional Decree, which centralized political power in the hands of the President. With the aid of Mubarak’s judges, the Mubarakist bourgeoisie and the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which had ruled Egypt for a year and four months after Mubarak’s ouster, had already dissolved the post-uprising democratically-elected parliament, which was composed of a majority of Islamists, on technical grounds, before Mursi’s election. They did so to the cheers of liberals and leftists who claimed that they were the real leaders of the 25 January uprising that overthrew Mubarak and who feared the elected Islamists whom they depicted not as part of the uprising but as encroachers on their “revolution.” A few days before the elections, the military also issued a constitutional decree constricting the powers of the elected president and concentrating it in the hands of the military.

The liberals’ and the leftists’ fear was that the MB was Egypt’s Nazi party—they pretend to be democrats until they get elected and then they will refuse to leave power and will eliminate the democratic process and establish an Islamist dictatorship. That the Mubarak-appointed judges were the ones who dissolved the democratically elected parliament seemed not to bother the liberals and the leftists much, but they were horrified when Mursi issued his Constitutional Decree, which aimed to take away the power of Mubarak’s judges whom he had tried to depose unsuccessfully. Indeed the Constitutional Decree was seen as a sort of Reichstag Fire Decree, which it could very well have been. Mursi would soon reverse himself and would cancel the Decree in response to popular uproar. He would more recently express regret for having issued it.

Mursi’s Record

The Mursi government seemed surprisingly pliant and friendly to Western interests, including towards Israel, whose president Shimon Peres was addressed by Mursi as “my dear friend” in an official presidential letter. Contrary to expectations of a burgeoning
friendship with Hamas, under Mursi’s government, the Gaza border in Rafah was closed more times than under Mubarak, security coordination with Israel became more intimate than under Mubarak, and to make matters worse, Mursi, with the Egyptian army and the help of the Americans, destroyed the majority of the underground tunnels between Gaza and Sinai which the Palestinians had dug out to smuggle in food and goods during their interminable siege since 2005 and which Mubarak had not dared demolish. Mursi even went further by mediating between Israel and Hamas during the latest Israeli attack on Gaza, vouching that he would guarantee that Hamas would not launch rockets against Israel but not the other way around. It is true that Mursi refused to meet with Israeli leaders but even Mubarak had refused to visit Israel for years before his ouster and had recalled his ambassador in protest against Israeli policies. One of Mursi’s more major acts before his recent ouster was not the closure of the Israeli embassy, as friends and enemies of the Islamists threatened he would do, but closed down instead the Syrian embassy in support of the ongoing rightwing Islamist insurrection in that country.

While in power, Mursi and his government continued Mubarak’s policies of contracting the public sector and social spending in a continuing war against the poor and downtrodden of Egypt, who are the majority of the population, and pushed forth neoliberal economic policies that favored the rich and powerful, including an IMF deal (which was never finalized for no fault of Mursi’s), which would increase the already existing austerity measures against the poor. Indeed, he did nothing to change the existing labor and tax laws that favor the rich and oppress workers, middle class employees, and the poor. Mursi neither prosecuted army generals for crimes of which they stood accused (he rather bestowed on them major state honors and awards and made those whom he retired into advisors to the President), nor tried the Mubarakist thieving bourgeoisie in the courts for its pillage of the country for three and a half decades, let alone the security apparatus that continued to repress Egyptians under his rule.

On the contrary, as a president who came out of the rightist and neoliberal wing of the MB (compared to the more centrist ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Abu al-Futuh who also ran for the presidency and lost), he was interested in an alliance between the Islamist neoliberal bourgeoisie, whose most visible member is Khayrat al-Shatir (who was barred from running for the presidency by the Mubarakist courts), and the Mubarakist bourgeoisie. Unlike al-Shatir who is the son of a rich merchant and who made his own fortune in Egypt, many among the Islamist rich, though not all, made their money in the Gulf. They were mostly kept out of a share in the pillaging of Egypt, restricted to the close businessmen friends of Mubarak, now wanted a place at the table to partake of the ongoing pillage of the country. While Mursi won the favor of the military with the US vouching for his good behavior, at least until last week, hard as he tried to convince the Mubarakist bourgeoisie to allow the Islamists to partake of pillaging Egypt, the Mubarakist bourgeoisie would not budge.

The Response of the Mubarakists

The Mubarakist bourgeoisie’s response was that Egypt was theirs to pillage alone (though they have always been happy to include the Americans, the Saudis, the Emiratis, and of course the Israelis) and that they would not allow some Islamist upstarts to move in on their territory. Having shunned Egypt’s poor, its peasants and workers, its low income middle classes, while courting the rank and file of the MB, the Islamist and Mubarakist bourgeoisies, and the military, Mursi had no one but the MB to fall back on when the army abandoned him and the Mubarakists and the coalition plotting with them intensified their attacks on him.

Mubarak’s bourgeoisie set their media empires loose on Mursi and the MB. Week after week, hour after hour, on television, in the press, on social media, especially Facebook but
also on Twitter, a campaign of vilification, exaggerations, and outright lies would ensue. Television anchors would go as far as calling for the violent overthrow of Mursi. Members of the opposition, like millionaire engineer Mamdouh Hamzah, openly called on the army to stage a coup.

Campaigns, which were also supported by the Saudis and the Emiratis, would target Qatar, the sponsor of the MB around the Arab world, as a financial monster trying to buy out everything in Egypt, including allegedly the Suez Canal and the pyramids! The comedian Bassem Youssef (very popular among the Cairo and Alexandria bourgeoisie and middle classes but virtually unknown to the majority of poor and lower class Egyptians in the cities and the countryside who cannot understand the majority of his Western and upper middle class references) went after Qatar with a clever parody of a late 1950s Arab nationalist song which designated Qatar rather than "the Arab homeland" as its object of adulation, on account of the latter's increasing financial investments in Egypt (both real and imagined). That the Saudis, the Emiratis, and the Americans are larger financial monsters and have investments and property in the country that far exceed what the voracious Qataris had been rumored to acquire did not merit any of them a parody song like the Qataris. The irony is that while the Qataris have been the sponsors and engineers of MB takeovers across Arab countries which experienced uprisings, including Egypt, or were sometimes made to experience them by the Qataris, as in Libya and even in Syria, the Saudis and the Emiratis have been the active sponsors of the counterrevolutions and of the ancien regimes.

In the meantime, the media and the pundits kept speaking about Mursi as the new "Hitler" and the MB as the "Nazi Party." The highly westernized Bassem Youssef even unfurled the Nazi flag to his audience in one episode as a reference to the MB flag, thinking that the Nazi flag would be so familiar to most Egyptians that it would produce gasps of horror. Judging from the reaction of his choreographed studio audience, which reacted nonchalantly to the flag, which is not recognizable to most Egyptians (who are, unlike their western counterparts, not avid consumers of Hollywood films about WWII) outside political and intellectual circles, the impact seemed limited. But the Nazi and Hitler analogies would be made also by academics in their op-ed columns, time and again. Indeed, the recently appointed minister of culture was even likened to Goebbels by one columnist, which is not a problem unto itself, but what about the endless and repetitious barrage of propaganda and lies by the anti-Mursi media conglomerates? Does it deserve a comparison with Goebbels?

We should bear in mind that the Nazi accusations have been often used in world politics to justify all kinds of actions. In fact, Mursi is not the first Egyptian president accused of being a Hitler. In 1954, and in light of the Lavon Affair, Israel dubbed Nasser "Hitler on the Nile" for prosecuting Israel's terrorist spies. The French and the British followed suit during their preparation for the 1956 invasion of Egypt massadcoverclaiming that they were fighting a fascist Nasser and that their anti-fascism trumps his anti-imperialism. Western liberals who supported the US invasion of the Arabian Peninsula in 1991 and Iraq in 2003 to remove Saddam also argued that their anti-fascism trumps the anti-imperialism of opponents of the invasion. Husni Mubarak, in contrast, who served as tyrant for three decades was never called Hitler by the opposition press. Ironically, the only Egyptian president who ever flirted with Nazism was none other than Anwar Sadat who had been a pro-Nazi enthusiast in his youth.

In the case of Mursi, the media campaign against him and the MB, most prominently on CBC and ONTV satellite channels (both owned by members of the Mubarakist bourgeoisie), far outstripped anything that the CIA-financed El Mercurio could do in its anti-Salvador Allende campaign before the CIA-sponsored coup toppled him in 1973 Chile— which is not to say that Mursi is an Allende but rather that many of his powerful
enemies are not unlike Allende’s (after all, middle class women carrying pots and pans, members of the truckers’ union, among other sectors, would march and strike against Allende’s rule).

Rumors had it also that the anti-Palestinian and increasingly anti-Hamas Mursi government was giving the poor and besieged Gaza Palestinians electricity (which it was not) that it was allegedly stealing from the Egyptian people and causing massive shortages in Cairo and around the country. Other rumors had it that Mursi was ceding the Sinai to Hamas and the Palestinians. More rumors would have it that Hamas elements were being brought in to harass Egyptian liberals and leftists who opposed Mursi’ policies. Just a week before his ouster, we were told without a shred of evidence that Mursi had imported 1500 Hamas elements to attack the anti-Mursi demonstrators set to stage their massive rallies on 30 June demanding that Mursi step down. The media-whipped hysteria gripping the country was of such magnitude that even usually levelheaded liberal and leftist academics abandoned their critical faculties altogether and immersed themselves exclusively in the world of Facebook rumors and yellow journalism, which became their primary source of information and education.

The Confrontation

The Mursi government was clearly adamant in its plans to push ahead, with blunders and all (and its stupid blunders let alone its neoliberal policies and its utter incompetence in running the country are sufficient on their own to discredit it), including its courting members of the MB and other Islamists for key positions in the government, in constitutional committees, and in the bureaucracy. It is true that Mursi invited many in the opposition throughout his year in power to join committees, the cabinet, the bureaucracy, and even his team of advisors (and some accepted for a while), but most of them rejected these offers, fearing, legitimately in many cases, that they would be used as fronts for what they expected would be a program of "Ikhwanization" (the MB in Arabic are truncated to "Ikhwan") of the state, which has been astronomically exaggerated by the Mubarakist media. Others resigned advisory positions they had accepted because Mursi refused to heed their advice, something, according to reported MB sources, he also did with MB advisors.

But the incompetence of the MB presidency was not the only reason the country deteriorated in the last year. Everywhere Mursi turned, the Mubarakists put obstacles in his way. The government bureaucracy refused to cooperate with him, the judges fought him every step of the way, and the police refused to redeploy in the streets. The Mubarakist bourgeoisie, as is increasingly being revealed in the international press, fabricated an energy crisis causing massive shortages in fuel and electricity, which miraculously disappeared upon Mursi’s removal from power.

This set the scene for the massive mobilization that a new “movement” calling itself “Tamarrud” (which actually means “Mutiny” and in some contexts “Rebellion,” but not “Rebel” as its founders, supporters, and the western media erroneously translate it), which called for the demonstrations on June 30, the first year anniversary of Mursi’s assuming the presidency. The entire spectrum of the coalition, which had formed and consolidated itself since Mursi’s election, including the National Salvation Front, which was hastily put together following the issuance of Mursi’s Constitutional Decree, joined in demanding that Mursi leave office. They would be successful in mobilizing millions in the streets culminating in the 30 June demonstrations.

A deal was brokered with the army (and the Americans), by which the army declared a coup, ousted Mursi, and began a witch hunt, in which it is joined by enthusiastic members of the public eager for the chase, against the MB. MB office buildings were burned down
around the country by the “peaceful” demonstrators, including its headquarters in Cairo. The coup was not called a coup, and members of the popular coalition that support it consider anyone who calls it a coup “an enemy of the Egyptian people,” as many have been posting on twitter and Facebook. While Islamist and MB television stations were closed down minutes after the coup was announced, Mursi was abducted by the military and placed under arrest in an undeclared military location, and top members of the MB were arrested or have become fugitives. Top member of the National Salvation Front and charisma-less Mohammed El-Baradei has defended the military repression unhesitatingly to Western leaders and politicians and is awaiting his appointment in the post-coup government in recognition of his efforts to sell the coup as a democratic revolution or even as a “recall election.”

One of the first acts of the coup leaders was to shut down indefinitely the Gaza border crossing, effectively strangling the Strip and its Palestinian population. They have also immediately resumed demolishing whatever underground tunnels have escaped destruction since the last campaign. Xenophobia in the country against Palestinians, and increasingly Syrians and Iraqis is taking on Fascist proportions. The coup leaders issued an announcement threatening members of these nationalities resident in the country with legal prosecution if they joined any of the demonstrations.

The current popular festive scene in Cairo is ironically reminiscent of triumphalist fascist festivities in the Europe of the 1930s rather than of democratic ones. But it is not the MB who declared the coup, as we have been prepared to expect for a whole year, nor was it they who put the opposition in jail and closed down their TV stations, burned down their headquarters, and are chasing them in the streets and calling on people to hand them over to the police and report on them.

Indeed, during the one-year rule of Mursi not one television station or newspaper was closed, even and especially as many of them would call for open rebellion and for the violent overthrow of the democratically elected government. True, some journalists were prosecuted for insulting the president (and no sitting president in Egypt or arguably in any other country has ever had to endure a small fraction of the daily if not hourly insults and ridicule Mursi endured during his tenure, let alone the type of media language used to humiliate him) by paying fines. Though he could not successfully interfere with the privately owned media, Mursi did take over all state-owned newspapers and replaced their editors, many of whom were Mubarakists, but a number of whom were elected editors, with his own appointments.

One feels the terror of the witch-hunt on the streets of Cairo, and the targets are not just card-carrying members of the MB. Pro-coup doormen of posh buildings in the upscale neighborhood of Zamalek, to take a small example, taunt and threaten other doormen who are accused of supporting the MB. The latter are staying indoors, fearing for their lives after the coup was announced. What is happening in more divided middleclass and poor neighborhoods and in smaller cities and the countryside is far worse with fire exchanges, shootings and outright killings in which all sides are involved. The army itself shot and killed tens of pro-Mursi demonstrators who oppose the coup. As the fascist adulation for the army and police have been adopted popularly in full force, this could very well spell the beginning of a much-feared civil war and massive pogroms against those identified as “enemies” of Egypt and the Egyptian people.

The Liberals and The Leftists

How can one explain that liberals and leftists would support a coup against a democratic order for which they fought, would stage a “revolution” against “democracy,” in alliance with the Mubarakist bourgeoisie and with the very military they condemned so hard just a
year earlier until it ceded power to an elected government? The military and the bourgeoisie and Mubarak’s judges have evidently not changed, but the liberals and the leftists have. Their rationale is one reminiscent of the futurist and dystopic Hollywood movie Minority Report wherein the authorities prosecute people for “pre-crimes” – i.e. crimes they would commit in the future if they were not caught before they committed them. They allege that the MB was going to stage an anti-democratic coup of sorts and begin to repress them, and for this future crime, which the MB and Mursi were expected to commit, the anti-Mursi coalition had to intervene and punish them now to prevent them from canceling democracy in the future!

But it is the liberals and the leftists who helped stage the coup, and who ended extant electoral democracy, and who are persecuting and prosecuting the MB for real and imagined crimes, not the other way around. That their coup was popular, they insist, means it is what the people want. But the people also wanted Fascism and they also wanted Nazism? How is this an argument for democracy, which they claim it is? They assert in response that workers and the poor joined in their marches. But workers and the poor also joined the Fascist and Nazi rallies. They are also part of MB rallies.

The leftists are claiming that their support for the coup and their alliance with the Mubarakist comprador bourgeoisie are actually anti-imperialist in nature and are railing against the Western media for its current “orientalist” coverage of their coup (as if the western media has ever been anything but orientalist in its coverage of our part of the world at all times), which they deem hostile, and for Obama’s possibly having to cut off military aid in keeping with US laws that prevent him from extending aid to coup leaders in the Third World (Carter and Reagan found a way around this in the 1970s and 1980s when they subcontracted Israel to aid America’s anti-democracy allies in Central and South America and in Apartheid South Africa, and Obama will find a way too). At any rate, US military aid to Egypt for 2013 was already disbursed and the 2014 aid is not scheduled for a Congressional vote until the fall. Not to worry though, top Israeli diplomats are lobbying the White House and the US Defense Department to continue military aid to Egypt.

Another legitimate argument that the liberals and leftists offer is that when they and others staged an uprising in January and February 2011 that led to the removal of Mubarak and the take-over by the army who ruled the country directly afterwards, few referred to what happened as a “coup” but called it a “revolution,” whereas now that there was another massive uprising and the army also intervened but without designating themselves as rulers, many are claiming this as a “coup.” This of course is correct though not accurate, as it sidesteps the central issue. In February 2011, the army refused to obey the orders of an unelected dictator by not shooting at civilians, thus helping to topple him, while in July 2013, they overthrew a president that more than half the Egyptian electorate voted for in democratic elections.

The coup-supporting liberals and leftists are mad at the Americans and crying imperialism for the alleged failure of the Americans to support their revolt against democracy unequivocally, oblivious, it seems, to how much the Americans had actually helped in brokering the coup behind the scenes. Publicly, Obama has been attempting all kinds of verbal acrobatics to accommodate the liberals and leftists by not calling the coup a coup. Their misplaced anger at the Americans, however, is not necessarily anti-imperialist, but is rather elicited by a narcissistic injury that the United States (like the Egyptian Army) had allied itself, if temporarily, with the MB and not with them, even though the US (like the Egyptian Army) had clearly abandoned the MB and given the green light to the coup. Their fulminations are their way of courting the Americans back to their camp where the Americans already are. The Wall Street Journal has already expressed its hope and expectation that General Sisi will be Egypt’s Pinochet. Some amongst the liberals are
complaining that had the Republicans been in power, they would not have given this “soft”
response to their coup that the Democrats have allegedly shown. But the Americans have
not tarried at all in this regard!

The Americans are allies of all parties in Egypt and they are willing to let Egyptians choose
who will rule them so that the US can then give them their marching orders as they did
with Mubarak and the MB. All the Americans care about is that their interests are
protected, and no member of the current anti- or pro-Mursi coalitions has dared threaten
those interests. They are all vying to serve American interests if the Americans would only
support them. In the last two and a half years, the Americans have been floundering
trying to determine who among those competing to serve them in Egypt will be most
successful in stabilizing the country so that the US can continue its dominance as before.

Nazis, Islamists, Liberals, and Leftists

For a year, we have been told that Mursi is Hitler, the MB are Nazis, and that they are
consolidating their power so that they could later crack down on everyone else. Perhaps
they were planning to do so, but no shred of real evidence has been produced to prove
this. What happened, however, was the exact opposite; it was the coalition of liberals,
Nasserists, leftists, Salafists and the Mubarak bourgeoisie who called for, and cheered and
supported the coup by Mubarak’s army. Unlike the MB who never controlled the army or
the police, the latter two continue to be fully answerable to the Mubarakist bourgeoisie
with which the liberals and leftists are allied.

Egyptians have been flooded with images that the “Islamofascists” were going to destroy
the culture of Egypt and its identity with their intolerance, narrow-mindedness, lack of
inclusivity, and anti-democratic policies. But it has been the liberals and the leftists,
perhaps some would call them the “secularofascists,” who proved to be less open, less
tolerant, and certainly less democratic than the “Islamofascists.” In the United States, the
saying goes that “a conservative is a liberal who got mugged,” indicating in a proper
American classist manner that the mugging of a well-to-do liberal by the poor turns the
liberal against them, thus becoming a conservative. In the case of Egypt, one could easily
say that “a secularofascist is a liberal democrat who lost to the Islamists in democratic
elections.”

The army coup, which the leftists, among others, support, was not a coup by middle rank
socially conscious anti-imperialist army officers who were supported by progressive anti-
capitalist forces to overthrow imperial and local capitalist control of the country and the
dictator that runs it (when the Free Officers staged their coup in 1952, within a few weeks
they enacted laws that undercut the feudal lords of Egypt and redistributed the land to the
poor peasants), but rather by top army generals who receive a hefty sum of US imperial
assistance annually, and who have always been the protectors of Mubarak and his
bourgeoisie. It is this army leadership that overthrew a democratically elected president,
his incompetence and services to local and international capital notwithstanding.

Some of the leftists who are cheering on the coup seem to feel that their mobilization was
successful because people are now educated and aware of their rights which the MB was
undercutting. But the education that the members of the anti-Mursi coalition have been
subjected to, including the workers and the poor who joined its rallies, is an education
imparted to them by the Mubarakist bourgeoisie through their media empires. It has not
been an education emphasizing the MB’s neoliberal anti-poor policies, stressing workers
rights, peasant rights, the right to a minimum wage, etc. The Mubarakist media empire’s
imparted education is an education that is not for the liberation of the poor, the workers,
the peasants, and the lower middle classes of Egypt from capitalist and imperial pillage of
their country and livelihoods but rather one for the liberation of the “secular” Mubarakist
bourgeoisie and its partners from the competition of the neoliberal MB bourgeoisie and its Qatari sponsors.

That the King of Saudi Arabia and the foreign minister of the United Arab Emirates, the sponsors with the Americans of the Mubarakist bourgeoisie, were the first to send their congratulations to the coup leaders, minutes after the coup took place, clarifies who, they believe, was liberated from whom. Within hours of the coup, the Mubarakist bourgeoisie also celebrated. On Thursday, the 4th of July, Egyptian singer Muhammad Fu’ad, who had cried on TV two and a half years ago to express his sadness and despair over the toppling of his beloved Mubarak, was invited to open the Cairo stock market, which has been gaining billions of pounds since the coup. If the Qatars and the MB bourgeoisie won the first battle against the Saudis with the fall of Mubarak and then the second battle when the MB was elected, the Saudis and the Mubarakist bourgeoisie intend their latest battle, which they won by the removal of the MB, to be the final victory in the war for Egypt.

The goals of the Egyptian uprising from the outset included social justice as primary. Both the Mubarakists and the MB have a unified policy against the social justice agenda of the uprising. But the anti-MB coup, which has driven and will drive many of their supporters to openly violent means now that peaceful ones have been thwarted, has transformed the uprising from one targeting the Mubarakist regime and its security and business apparatus to one that has joined Mubarak’s erstwhile war against the MB. If the goals of the liberals and the leftists are to bring about a real democracy with social security and decent standards of living for the majority of Egyptians who are poor, then the removal of the MB from power by military force will not only prevent this from happening but is likely to bring about more economic injustice and more repression.

Whether the leftists’ and the liberals’ calculations, that their alliance with the Mubarakist bourgeoisie and the army is tactical and temporary and that they will be able to overcome them and take power away from them as they did with the MB, are a case of naïve triumphalism or of studied optimism will become clear in the near future. What is clear for now, however, with the massive increase of police and army repression with the participation of the public, is that what this coalition has done is strengthen the Mubarakists and the army and weakened calls for a future Egyptian democracy, real or just procedural.

Gripped by popular fascist love fests for the army, Egypt is now ruled by an army whose top leadership was appointed and served under Mubarak, and is presided over by a judge appointed by Mubarak, and is policed by the same police used by Mubarak. People are free to call it a coup or not, but what Egypt has now is Mubarakism without Mubarak.