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Why do the flags of the Arab states* look so alike? Is there a story behind this? Yemen: ■■■ Egypt: ■■■ Iraq: ■■■ Syria: ■■■ Jordan: ■■■ Palestine: ■■■ Sudan: ■■■ Kuwait: ■■■ Yes, there is. Here's a thread on what happened.

1. *Arab states = Middle East and North Africa (MENA) For the purposes of brevity, I've only chosen the 8 flags that bear the most resemblance to each other.
2. First: The colours. The Arab flags comprise black, red, white and green. It all began with one common flag they all shared, given to them by Britain. Britain wanted to unite the Arabs under one state (pan-Arabia) to defeat the Ottoman Empire. Here was the flag of that state: <https://t.co/UQNX64xbA3>
3. The Ottoman Empire Also known as the Uthmaniyyah or Turkish Empire. It controlled a big part of the world, from West to East, and became most powerful in the 15th-17th centuries.
6. Arabs in the Turkish Empire became alienated and excluded from power due to Turkish nationalism. This later became the Ottomans' downfall.
7. Remember: Exclude one person, and you make one enemy. Exclude a whole group, and you make a union of enemies.
8. To counter their alienation, Arab nationalism grew stronger, and Arabs spoke of forming an autonomous state of their own.
9. The British Empire seized the opportunity to weaken the Ottoman Empire, by unifying the Arabs against the Turks. Britain signed a deal with the Sharif of Mecca, Hussein bin Ali, promising to support his dream of a pan-Arabic state. In Mecca in 1916 the Arab Revolt was born. <https://t.co/8ZzTQB9mgM>
10. Heard of Lawrence of Arabia? TE Lawrence was a young British officer with a golden reputation. The Arab Revolt was not going well, and the British wanted out, when Lawrence insisted on going to help the Arabs fight the Turks. He was a spectacular guerilla leader. They won. <https://t.co/49xytH9Okp>
11. However, after winning their independence from the Ottoman Empire, the Arabs did not get the help that Britain had promised them. Britain had made a separate agreement with France. Instead of unifying pan-Arabia, they divided it up in ways the Arabs had not agreed to.
12. (This wasn't Britain and France's first time doing this. They, and other Western powers, had done the same to the African continent in the 1885 Berlin conference. This always creates confusion and conflict wherever it happens.) <https://t.co/EI8DCUePea>
13. The Sharif of Mecca, Hussein bin Ali, had been betrayed. After the Ottoman Empire surrendered in 1918, France and the British Empire took control of Lebanon, Palestine, what is now Syria, and Mesopotamia (now mainly Iraq, but also a bit of Syria, Iran and Turkey).
14. The pan-Arabia dream was broken. But in the 1950s, Gamal Abdel Nasser - Egypt's 2nd President, and one of the most influential Arabs of modern history - successfully championed pan-Arabism again. Under Abdel Nasser, Egypt and Syria together formed the United Arab Republic. ■■■ <https://t.co/DidxCHZ9NO>
15. This republic lasted until 1971, but Abdel Nasser remained one of the most prominent leaders, not just in MENA, but in the world. He was a charismatic and memorable figure. Syria kept the flag of the United Arab Republic. Coming back to the flags of the Arab states today -
16. The flags of these countries kept the colours of the original pan-Arabia flag designed by Britain. Although attempts to unify the Arabs have failed, they have honoured that dream through a unity in their separate flags. <https://t.co/TtpIKfGq9x>