

365 days of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt: contesting media, activism, and power

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Abstract

Islamic movements, Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and Salafis in Egypt and Al-Nahda in Tunisia have become a majority after elections in Tunisia and Egypt. In order to make a better judgment for of the last 365 days of nightmare in Egypt and understand why the second round of street protests took place, it is important to go beyond naïve belief that Islamic movements are homogenous and have only one goal; going back to 7th century. The traditional wisdom of politics is to offer the public a rhetoric that could make their world better or at least convince them that it is their aims. Regardless, the different approaches and the level of freedom involved, it was selling the idea from the optimistic visions they offered to their people. With time, such approach proved to be delinquent the power and authorities, in particular religious authorities who use politics to be in the centre stage of events. To understand the nature of the Muslim Brotherhood political agenda and tactics, and the implications of its dazzling rise and growing global influence, one needs to probe beyond its freshly made-up benevolent public image. There are a lot of probing questions that must be addressed such as how did they gain so much support from the elections? Is it because of religion? Do they really care about the grassroots in their respective countries? What are their understandings of democracy? Are they doing Taqiyah (hypocrisy) or did they change their understanding about doing politics?

Setting the scene

"New movements express a "silent revolution" in values and attitudes – a shift from the old politics of social and economic security to the new politics of participation, quality of life, individual self-realization and human rights. They seek no material compensation from the welfare state but have to do with 'the grammar of forms of life'"¹

Many people, media and political experts and activists shared one fear for more than three years: will Egypt become an Islamic state, such as Iran under Khomeini or Afghanistan under Taliban.

"There is no such thing as a moderate Islamist, for all Islamists share the same long-term goals; they differ only over means. For example, the *Justice and Development Party* in Turkey is very different from the Taliban in its means, but not so different in its ends. If the party gained full control over Turkey, it could be as dangerous as the Taliban were in Afghanistan."²

Islamic movements, Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and Salafis in Egypt and Al Nahda in Tunisia have become a majority after elections in Tunisia and Egypt. They have been conducting underground politics for at least fifty years, where they were imprisoned, tortured, expelled and even executed by their regimes. Since 2011, unresolved issues until today related to their ability of public governance in politics and their ideologies and even sometimes goals about the future of their countries.³

In order to make a better judgment of the last 365 days of (MB) in Egypt and understand the second round of street protests in 2013, it is important to go beyond naïve belief that Islamic movements are homogenous and have only one goal; going back to 7th century. It is thus important to look into this complex matters away from the traditional Eurocentric or superficial way, or else the assessment will forfeit the whole purpose of the analysis and can never explain why these movements gained support in semi democratic elections.

Islamic movements today in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are key players both politically as well as socially actors, which made them living nightmares for those who are not happy with them and a salvation for those who want to establish "Umah islamalah" (Islamic State).

Media scholars have extensively critiqued the democratic deficits inherent its inequalities of access, representation and political/ideological power, its economic and structural integration with consumer culture. And the sudden awakening of the long silent civil society in Egypt has seen the re-emergence of *media activism* in politically conservative or reactionary directions, organized by 'grassroots' efforts directed to creating or influencing media practices and strategies, whether as a primary objective, or as a by-product of other campaigns in an attempt to change public opinion.

This research aims to fill in the gap, which explains its twofold focus. First, it explores what light existing traditions in social movement theory shed upon the contemporary emergence of political Islam movements in the (MENA) region as democratic media activism (DMA) with the aim of exploring the insights that can be teased out from the various formulations of (MB) and Salafi groups. Second, it unpacks whether media activism as projected by Political Islam points to blind spots and potential new directions for social movement theory in the coercive societies such as in Egypt.

The research does not endorse a linear process, or any rigid distinction between media and society, by rather try to envisage the dimensions of media activism. Some activist groups address the state with agendas for institutional reform, some produce media or try to cultivate more critical audiences, some monitor, critique or intervene in corporate media in efforts to change media frames.

Together, these efforts constitute a variegated, even chaotic, field of collective action.

To serve that goal, some questions must be addressed: How are we to understand this form of activism – as a new movement, a new style of politics cutting across movements, or through some other imagery? What is its political significance and potential? Is it because of religion? Do they really care about the grassroots in their respective countries? What are their understandings of democracy? Are they doing Taqiyah (hypocrisy) or did they change their understanding about doing politics?

The political crises in Egypt can be explained by the majority of the anti-fascist state as a result of the unregulated succession of power after Hosni Mubarak than any other economic or social crises. The attribution of whatever has lead to the 365 days of radical religious fascism in Egypt not only affects how the MB is perceived and also how communicating this year of political Islam was shaped. The fascist religion placed itself alongside traditional religion, and tried to syncretise it within its own sphere of values as an ally in the subjection of the masses to the state, although it did stress the primacy of politics⁴.

The researcher argues that the unfolding of events in Egypt was a reaction to the abrupt shift in the political equation that instigated a more disruptive precipitant of successions than

cultural or economic problems⁵. Political Islam was suddenly moved from a banned movement into centre stage that branded its political rhetoric that outreaches the majority of the uneducated, poor and illiterate population with a better world, regardless the level of freedom involved. With time, such approach proved to be delinquent the power and authorities, in particular religious authorities who use politics to be in the centre stage of events.

Most scholarly and public perceptions and analyses of political Islam are beset by prejudice and misunderstandings. The majority of media narratives presented (MB) as irrational and obstinate, stubbornly refusing to change despite the circumstances with rigid beliefs and political tactics with an anti-democratic orientation⁶. To case back against this backdrop to explain the happenings over a period of a year of their rule, and the implications of its dazzling rise and growing global influence, one needs to probe beyond its freshly made-up benevolent public image.

Since 2011, (MENA) has experienced continuous cycles of violence, political upheavals and waves of popular protest that swept (MENA) that are inadequately explained to result from economic hardship, political oppression and social inequalities. Gendered dynamics of poverty, income gaps, unemployment and illiteracy as well as the gender relations, yields a revised understanding of protests and movements.

It is thus believed that (MENA) has fallen into disarray with continuous negative human development indications that range from being the lowest personal income in the world, declining productivity, poor scientific research, decreasing school enrolment, and high illiteracy, and with lagging health conditions behind comparable nations⁷.

These domino effects that that brought down most of the dictatorships in MENA that ranged from Hosni Mubarak, Geddafi and Ben Ali might not have been started by political Islam in contrast to what most of the local and international media have narrated.

But many critics of political Islam and youth activists emphasize that (MB), successive Egyptian governments had banned them since 1954, did not initiate the change, and though they have used their well-funded and organized opposition groups to quickly take advantage of the popular protests. In fact, (MB) endorsed the demonstrations and their active participation at a later stage to provide them with a legitimate voice in the emerging political leadership. The mediatisation of events gave them an excellent stage on which to enact its masquerade as a benign, freedom-loving organization.

Away from the typical conspiracy theory ideas, media and political commentators looked for new alternatives to the old regimes in (MENA), which made them either ignore or deliberately misinform the public about the real agenda of the group and the serious threat its rising influence poses to the West.

Social movements, media activism vs. deliberate enclaves

In this section, the research considers some of the relevant conceptual ideas that relate to the issue understudy that witnessed the transformation of (MB) as a "grassroots" of mosque-inspired narrative into fundamentalist dogmatic narrative, which elevates death as the foremost contribution to advance Islamic global rule, makes it difficult to defeat.

The present traditions of social movement theory are typically discussed under the rubric of two paradigms: the mainly *resource mobilization approach* (RMT) and the new social movements (NSMs). *Resource mobilization theory* focuses primarily upon *how* movements form and engage in collective action; new social movement formulations focus primarily on *why* specific forms of collective identity and on their socio-political significance.⁸

RMT emphasizes the *shared interests* and forms of *social organization* that underlie and also issue from processes of mobilization as a social group engages in the pursuit of its common interests. NSM views movements less as organizations of common interest and more as new forms of *collective identity* engaged in discursive struggles that not only transform people's self-understandings but also contest the legitimacy of received cultural codes and points of view.⁹

Media activism connotes the connection between processes of progressive change in all social spheres not only media. But it is crucial to differentiate between democratization *through* the media through the use of media, whether by governments or civil society actors, to promote democratic goals and processes elsewhere in society, and the democratization of the media themselves¹⁰.

Media played and still do a decisive role as the catalyst of fear, which was projected in the religious groups engaging in a collusive 'politics of fear', which was routinely used in extreme manipulation of media¹¹ that is transformed through cumulative effects fear into a cultural perspective through which society makes sense of itself.¹² This polarized media played a significant role in utilising 'oppositional metaphors' ('us' vs. 'them') linked to internal and external issues or 'threats' facing the nation¹³. This has escalated the fear of national threats of 'perceived similarity'¹⁴

In this destabilizing media hostile environment and the fluid political situation in Egypt over the years, it was rational to have increasing radical tone in political voices and new modes of political engagement. This has certainly extended through horizontal civic communication, as well as through vertical communication between citizens.¹⁵

'Radical media' of various sorts have lengthy and complicated histories¹⁶ most groups appear to have arisen from several social sources in terms of three concentric circles. At the centre are groups within and around the media industries such as media workers, journalists and communication researchers, while the second circle comprises subordinate social groups, whose lack of social, cultural, economic or political capital is paralleled in the mass mediated machinery and at the outermost circle comprises more diffuse sectors for whom communication policy and practices are not a central concern, but who mobilize around perceived threats.

The fragmented public spheres in Egypt reflected the meeting of the 'like-minded' individuals, which led to a more fragmented public sphere of 'deliberative enclaves' where group positions and practices are reinforced rather than openly critiqued.

In such setting, (MB) advocated information and interaction that reinforce their positions, while excluding any real confrontations with difference,¹⁷ putting politicians and political institutions at mercy with media,¹⁸ which magnified a dual implication of the media-politics relationship in political agenda-setting.¹⁹ On the one hand, the substantial agenda-setting effects by (MB) established basic parameters of the opposition-government game to promote the (MB) as the initiators of 2011 mass protests in spite of this false claim. On the other hand, the weak opposition in Egypt enhanced an easy narrative of collective identity of Egyptians that often used a much broader reach than radical terrorists have. In this narrative, Islamist is anyone who believes, and actively attempts to implement, the notion that the *Qur'an* and the tradition of the *Hadith*, which includes a large spectrum of Muslims, from *Justice and Development Party* (AK) supporters to Osama bin Laden.

The problem that such counter narrative to the atrocities of (MB) and Salafi groups extended the political description of fascism or communism that has labelled and stigmatized a religious, political, and cultural framework that addresses the concerns of Muslims, serving as a more attractive alternative to past Arab ideological movements that failed to deliver what ordinary Muslims need. However, such prejudice position excludes completely the profound disagreements among Islamists, though the idea of implementing "shari'a" (Islamic law) is very popular in (MENA) and within a percentage in Egypt, there are many different formulations

regarding how that should be done, some very narrow and dangerous, but others much broader and more tolerant.

This narrative ignores the real reasons behind the establishment of political Islam doctrine, which was a response to the struggle to make sense of a troubling world, in this case using religion. It is also part of a drive to restore the identity and dignity of the Muslim world. The tensions between the West and the Muslim world are not a result of a clash of religions; they are rather a symptom of deep-rooted clashes of interest and certainly lack of any mutual understanding of the contenders.

It is no doubt that (MB) leaders are talented spin doctors, who realized some time ago in their march to power that people have lost faith in ideologies. So instead of restoring the notions of citizenship and unity etc., they have decided to repackage their agenda in a frame of protection against "otherness" that might refer to other religions, other sects, other ideologies or simply other than following to the letter their rules. (MB) claim to protect the Egyptians from evil, conduct social and religious cleansing to protect the purity of "Ummah" (Islamic State), sinners and anyone who would not comply with their law without questioning.

Al-Jazeera is one of the many (MB) propaganda tools. Organization members have mastered the use of modern technologies to spread their Islamist message. The Brotherhood promotes its agenda in the print media and on radio, television, and the Internet. In addition to (ikhwanonline.com), its official Web site, the Brotherhood sponsors many other venues to reach all segments in society. For example, it sponsors a special Web site, (awladnaa.net), to indoctrinate children with a jihadist message.

Today, Egypt is a dangerously polarized and on the brink of collapse and deeply divided the society on what to do next to stop this nightmare. It is thus not surprising that a 2007 Pew poll had revealed that (98 percent) of Egyptian men and (99 percent) of Egyptian women said that religion plays an important role in their lives, while (64 percent) of the population said that Shari'a should be the only source of legislation. In addition, more than (54 percent) favoured public separation of men and women, and the vast majority (82 percent) believed persons convicted of adultery should be stoned, while (84 percent) favoured the death penalty for anyone Muslim who converts from Islam to another religion.²⁰

The paradox is that (MB) waited for more than 80 years to be in office and practice their hegemony, though it lost it after only one year. Such shock made them angry and willing to go to any lengths to cause trouble if they will not be in the lime light of power²¹.

Since June 30, 2013 most of the western media and *Al-Jazeera* seem to sympathetically spin a master narrative of the suffering of the (MB) that are portrayed as gunned down in the streets of Cairo by armed police and soldiers seeking to end the (MB)'s attempt to put Mohamed Morsi back into power²². This was most likely the largest protest in Egypt ever and one of the largest in the world. This was organized by the Rebel Campaign (*Tamarod*) over several months. But the 'innocent victim frame' seems to ignore the fact why the majority of Egyptians, who went to the streets in millions to support and approve of the military's actions in response to what the Islamist thugs have caused in the Egyptian streets, by terrorizing the civilians and banning all sorts of voices that criticize them

For months (MB) and its allies used all divisive religious rhetoric to further their political goals, by a trend that reached new heights following Morsi's ouster, with sectarian vitriol frequently emanating from one of the two squares that (MB) use for demonstrations and in most cases as a head quarters of their attacks of dozens of Christian churches, monasteries, schools and facilities across the country that were burned down in an excessive wave of violence.

Torture was and is still wide spread, though it is the main demand of the revolution "Bread Social Justice and Freedom" that is being used not just by the interior ministry, but by (MB) supporters. During the protests in front of the "Al-Athadiah" (Presidential palace) after the presidential declaration MB leaders ordered their followers and militias to attack, and torture any opposition. In addition, there has an escalation of sectarian violence, especially the

plight of (Copts and Shias) who have been killed in many occasions. In addition, the faltering economy, (the price of everything is rising and everything seems to be falling apart) to reiterate, the popular demand of a majority of Egyptians was to oust Morsi²³.

In contrast, local media has completely changed its position to criticize the (MB) without allowing a space for diversity of disagreement; by whipping up chauvinistic nationalism and instigating a wave of state worship that has gripped the country. Egyptian media coverage is remotely critical of the opposition and is overwhelmed with vicious rhetoric from all sides, manifesting itself on the streets as a rising number of attacks on journalists, particularly foreigners²⁴.

On February 1, 2011, senior Egyptian (MB) leader Muhammad Ghannem stated on the Iranian Arabic TV network *Al-Alam* that the new government would demand the closure of the Suez Canal as soon as the organization gets into a position of power.²⁵ His statement alone spiked the oil price. His further declaration that Egypt should go to war with Israel was unsettling as well.

It is impossible to predict the future of (MB) in (MENA), or ignore their tremendous power surge, especially with their exponential growth in the past years, which was supported by their vertical and horizontal networks, partners in the international nongovernmental organization community, and sympathetic regional regimes. The fact remains that (MB) has successfully deceived audiences at least for a period of time through their well-strategized time-tested techniques, though demonstrated ignorance and naiveté, by many political and media actors have in their assessment. Undoubtedly, (MB) exploited those weaknesses and used even the Western democratic rules to gain inroads into all aspects of life in the West that intimidated most of their critics into silence.

From back stage to centre stage

Since 1928, (MB) has frequently adopted new strategies, allowing it to grow and become a global organization with deep horizontal networks in more than seventy countries, ²⁶ by the Egyptian schoolteacher Hassan al Banna. (MB) is the first mass-based, overtly political movement to oppose the ascendancy of secular and Western ideas in (MENA) with the pretext that it entails the root of the decay of Islamic societies in the modern world, which called for a return to true Islamic dogma as a solution to the ills that had befallen Muslim societies.²⁷

The influence of (MB) is felt almost everywhere in (MENA), though initially based in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which has welcomed waves of well-educated professional Egyptian dissidents since the 1950s. In 1961, dissidents affiliated with the movement persuaded King Saud bin Abdul Aziz to establish an *Islamic University* in Medina to help to indoctrinate foreign students with *Saudi Wahhabi* Islamic ideology.²⁸

The funding for MB in Egypt and elsewhere comes from tithes from members' annual income, complemented by generous funding from Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, and wealthy Muslim individuals worldwide. The Brotherhood operates on doctrines of proselytization (*da'wa*) and deception (*taqiyyah*), which claims to be indoctrinated in Islam and often depicted as being superior to other universal military virtues such as courage, fortitude, or self-sacrifice.²⁹

The global (MB) is a secretive organization that has many affiliates and various offshoots; though no specific figures can be mentioned here. (MB) remains as the most influential Islamist movement³⁰ with its slogan "al-Islam howa al-hal" (Islam is the solution) and its core belief that Allah decreed the ideal social and political organization for mankind, as described in the Qur'n (Islamic holy book) and its interpretations (*sunnah*). The main goal of (MB) is to actualize Islam's manifest destiny starting by reclaiming the Islamic Caliphate that once spanned from Spain to Indonesia.³¹

Despite religious differences, the Brotherhood, which is Sunni, has maintained close ties to Shiite Iran, where it has also gained many followers, especially attracted to Qutb's advocacy of political Islam. Qutb was an acknowledged influence on major Iranian Islamic revivalist figures such as the Ayatollah Khomeini, who launched the 1979 Islamic Revolution, and the current Iranian leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Ties persist through Iran's funding, training, and arming of several Palestinian terrorist groups such as the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO),³² Islamic Jihad, and the Palestinian branch of the MB, Hamas.³³

The movement's most influential ideologue was Sayyid Qutb, the author of *Milestones* (*Ma'alim fil-Tariq*) and a 30-volume commentary on Islamic law and theology, *In the Shade of the Qur'an* (*Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*). Together with Banna, Qutb set the agenda for (MB), a revolutionary movement that rejects Western values and influence.

In the words of a former leader Mohammad Mahdi Akef: "[T]he Muslim Brotherhood . . . [is] an all-encompassing Islamic organization, calling [for] the adoption of the great religion that Allah gave in his mercy to humanity. We are in the global arena, and we preach for Allah according to the guidelines of the Muslim Brotherhood. All the members of the Muslim Brotherhood in the international arena operate according to the written charter that states that Jihad is the only way to achieve these goals. Ours is the largest organization in the world. A Muslim in the international arena, who believes in the charter of the Muslim Brotherhood, is considered part of us and we are considered part of him."³⁴

In an effort to insert themselves into politics, members sought election as "independent" candidates and in 2005 won (88) seats in the *People's Assembly* (*Majilis al-Sha'ab*), amounting to about (20 percent) of Egypt's parliament.³⁵ But (MB) refrained from participating in the 2010 elections, which they claimed would be corrupt.

In November and December 2010, Wikileaks published diplomatic cables that revealed that Arab dictators are increasingly alarmed at the MB's rising influence and radical Islamic worldview. A March 3, 2008, cable quoted the deposed Tunisian dictator, Zine al Abidine Ben Ali, predicting that the Brotherhood would take over Egypt, calling the environment there "explosive."³⁶

On January 18, 2011, (MB) "spiritual leader" Yusuf Qaradawi arrived in Cairo after three decades of exile in Qatar. He addressed a huge crowd celebrating the first week since Mubarak's ousting. After congratulating the Egyptians for starting the revolution, he urged them to continue their jihad until they "re-conquer al Aqsa" (Jerusalem).³⁷

Taking advantage of the new junta's promise of elections that would represent all Egyptian parties, (MB) Chairman Mohammed Badie announced on February 26, 2011, that "in a gesture of democratic representation," the group had established "a political party named the *Freedom and Justice Part*," and stated that "party membership will be open to all Egyptians who accept the party's program and policy direction."³⁸

The political arm of (MB) gained an electoral victory in the 2011-2012 Egyptian Parliamentary elections that was thought of as a step in the process of re-Islamization of Egypt into the establishment of a tyrannical theocratic regime akin to that of Iran, which aimed over a period of a year to quickly implement "shari'a" (Islamic constitution) in the context of the modern Egyptian state, though it was unclear about the institutional framework that would regulate its interpretation.³⁹

Over a period of a year, (MB) disclosed their apocalyptic vision of a disease that was spreading from the West throughout the world, and called it "Jahilliyah" (a state of barbarous ignorance). People are not aware that they were infected, though they believe that they were free, and that their politicians were taking them forward to a new world. But in fact, they were regressing to a barbarous age. *Taqiyah* under these circumstances are used as a way of fighting the enemy and is justified and legitimate, and in fact has a kind of existential weight, because somehow it's doing God's will on earth. The adoption of "*Taqiyah*"⁴⁰ (lying) for

political gains that were endlessly done by ousts Morsi and the rest of (MB) leadership to justify using force and violence against the potential enemies everywhere.

Since the 1952 coup d'état Egyptians have been struggling to cast off tyrannical regimes, though it is not yet clear what kind of democracy the most powerful and best-organized forces of rebellion in the region are hoping to establish⁴¹. But one fact remains valid is that the juxtaposition of the (MB) and its splinter groups in the Egyptian political arena epitomized the opposing ideals of a civil society and a good society.

The research does not propose or assume that the compatibility of political Islam and democracy, but rather follows a learning process of democratic practices by means of participating in the public sphere⁴². One learning lesson is how the (MB) has taken advantage of the ambiguity of the vulnerable political landscape after the fall of Mubarak and changed their positions from refuting to take part in the 2011 protests into key players and negotiator on the centre stage.

Wrong start and bad ending: past, present and future

One can explain the difference between the first to the second revolution in the light of what Jean-Paul Sartre proposed in *The Reprieve* (1945) that what separates the well-off from the working class is that the latter simply do not give in. The poor and uninvolved waited endlessly for those supposedly religious good to protect them and help them, but when they realized that they were deceived, they fight as long as it takes, not because they are without doubts, but because they weren't fighting, they would be occupied at other hard, physical labour.

Egypt turned its back on a secular dictatorship only to fall into the arms of what looks like a budding religious fascism dictatorship that made many of those who the streets in the first revolution wish that the good old days of Mubarak would come back by comparison. This resonates with what the acerbic 19th-century satirist Ambrose Bierce defined the revolutions as "an abrupt change in the form of misgovernment."

As stated by Elias Canetti in his book *Crowds and Power* (1960) that the most blatant tyranny is the one which asks the most blatant questions, and discerned six ingredients necessary for oppression: secrecy, physical brutality, swift reaction, the right to question and to demand answers, the right to judge and condemn, and the right to pardon and show mercy⁴³.

Mohamed Morsi and his clan, it was an integral component of his rhetoric in all his public speeches, during 365 days, which were clearly black days of the history of Egypt that brought on daily bases new horrors, nightmarish scenes that Egyptians could never have imagined. Nuns paraded on the streets like "prisoners of war." The typical day included urban warfare with hovering choppers kicking up dust. Citizens opening fire on one another, and people jumping off bridges to avoid bullets, but ending up dead that emphasized an unprecedented scale of human loss is staggering and with both sides vowing to escalate, worse days surely lie ahead.

Hasan al-Banna, the charismatic leader and founding father commanded them to use terrorism, though (MB) became increasingly frustrated after each attempt to reform the Egyptian population failed. It is thus their strategy to use violence to advance their agenda, and then distance themselves from those groups, while presenting a "reasonable" alternative on their side such as Abdel Moneim About Fotouh⁴⁴, and enjoy the accolades of the very people you are trying to destroy⁴⁵.

This research attempts to unpack predetermined views about a region and a country that is surely in crisis. In the research *Street Republic in Egypt: From Ballots to Bullets*, an attempt was made to explain how parliamentary and presidential elections have become manipulated events indistinguishable from corporate advertising campaigns to sell the branding of the righteous religion and punishing of a malaise regime not really making a choice, in which

candidates regularly made pronouncements that are obviously insincere or flat-out false but vital to placating millions of voters on hot-button emotional issues.

The irony might lie in the fact that Egyptians, compelled in 2011 the former president to leave and he remained in the country without ordering to kill the civilians, while when more than thirty-three million Egyptians took the streets in the largest human demonstrations demanding the ouster of the MB and the youth women raised the slogans, Mohamed Morsi "we would send you to jail," he refused to step down⁴⁶.

The first revolution in Egypt marked the so-called "Arab Spring," which is a nice catch-phrase by western media to describe the political transformation in these coercive societies. In 2011 Cairo's Tahrir Square (Liberation square) emphasized that there are many people in Egypt who prize liberal freedoms and institutions. But what is even more important that people lastly felt that their voices are being heard and echoed across the globe, though many non Arabs followed the rhetoric that it is the savvy young Egyptians who used social networking to make it happen that only reflects ignorance and lack of vision, while even some of the Arabs seized the moment to emphasize the romantic idealism of what they wish to happen, especially that the situated has ended up with more atrocities and new tyrannies will be further destructing the already troubled societies in the region, especially by oppressing the minority groups.

Egypt started down the path toward democracy in 2011 with a high risk of civil war that might be bloody and confusing⁴⁷ for the public, who are still ill prepared for the journey. Elections were opened up without orienting the institutions to accommodate with the political competition. Egyptian authorities have always resorted to violence to manage legislative elections in particular within the absence of a basic framework of law, effective government and consensus on which political colour gets to exercise the right of self-determination, elections only became an opportunity for political-baiting.⁴⁸

This reminded me with a conversation that I shared with a boat owner in Aswan in the Southern Egypt in December 2012 in Aswan, Southern Egypt, when a boat owner, whose name is Mahmud, told me that they (poor) did not fight in the first revolution (2011) because they thought that the MB would help them, but if they fail them and not fulfil their promises, they will be kicked out.

While it is easy to confuse the recent attacks on Egypt's churches by the radical groups including St. Mark Cathedral in Cairo is just more of the usual, because these attacks have great symbolic significance, and in many ways bodes great evil for Egypt. But another question keeps probing: Why?

There are at least two main reasons for such directed violence against Christians: The first relates to the vulnerability of Christians as a minority in repeated attempts to make the position of the religious minority untenable. Such violence serves a goal of exercising power and control and that it is still a viable force in the country's streets to remind Egyptians that the Islamists are still a force to be reckoned with. Second, the attacks are an inextricable part of their worldview as they seek to transform Egypt into their own view of "Ummah Islamiah" (Islamic Nation) that has no room for Christians, or even secular Muslims.

From Cairo with tears

Media activism cannot be said to have simply carved a niche for itself within the ecology of contemporary movements. The media activism in Egypt is more about constructing a 'politics of connections,' especially with the lack of clear, regularized collective identity that radical coalition politics requires. This has clearly made (MB) to see democratization as a crucial counter-measure against the shifting forms of control and domination that, in collapsing boundaries between public and private, also politicizes the personal.

It was only in 2012, when Egyptians elected Mohammad Morsi as the first ever democratically elected president after ousting Hosni Mubarak, who was a corrupt and brutal autocrat. The

picture seemed utopian in the presence of ratifying a new constitution, setting up a sound democratic system and conducting an exemplary non-violent election, which made Egypt look like a successful model that all pro-democracy revolutions could emulate. But in less than 365 days, the picture became bitter and dim that made abroad-based public frustration to boil over as a result of three possible reasons: First, the dire economic situation that has been reaching a point, where employees did not take their salaries and many economic sectors were put to hold making life unbearable to the majority of the people who voted for Morsi. Second, the arrogance and the religious discrimination against everyone who not support them made them hated by almost everyone. It might be the result of the accumulation of group thinks of a previously banned group and a newly emerging political powerhouse who carried the agony and psychological scars of suffering from decades long of institutional persecution was overly scrutinized.

In that context, their impressive show in the provisional and parliamentary elections, and subsequent winning of the presidency and successfully changing and democratically ratifying the constitution has projected them as the giant that must be restrained.⁴⁹

Morsi's novice and non-charismatic leadership skills worsened the situation, in particular with his stiff rhetoric, occasional rants, and some ill-advised political decisions that he himself has recently confessed to. Third, the euphoria of political victory was quickly overriding the real priority and the tone of the "Al-Sharaa al-Masri" (Egyptian Public Opinion but literally means Egyptian street), which made his one year rule lack any tactful navigation in gauging the mounting oppositions. The main goal that MB has focused on is to deconstruct Mubarak system, thus creating more enemies.

It is sad to see the massacre and debacle going on in Egypt in contrast to what the fellow Egyptians have done for each other in the first revolution, when Christian protesters acted as body shields for their fellow Muslim protesters to allow the Muslims protesters say their daily prayers at the protest ground. That was certainly a true sign of unity and religious tolerance.

Many of the revolutionaries who fought the country's successive authoritarian regimes from Mubarak, then the Supreme Council of Armed Forces, and finally the (MB) marginalized and out of the discourse and forced to watch as the bloodletting continues. In contrast to the vibe of the transformative revolutionary moment that exploded on January 25, 2011, things have become faint glimmer, in danger of being extinguished completely.

A good lesson from the unfolding of events in Egypt is never to let the euphoria eclipse our good judgment; though I admit that is easier said than done. Many Egyptians and non-Egyptians around the world still relate to what might be history's most spectacular grassroots political confrontation. However, they are also willing to downplay the detrimental finale that profoundly undermined democracy in Egypt and far beyond- the military tipping the scale in favour of the opposition and removing a legitimately elected president. This was the last tweet out of the presidency before being ousted.

It is quite difficult to explain the complex situation in Egypt with all the public antipathy and ineptitude that has grown in the last year against the radical Islamic nightmare president or (MB), yet one has to be careful in this dangerous period that might utterly unfathomable even if a civilian institution is used to carry such gross violation against democratic principles founded on constitutional law.

The Egyptians have been penned in for years, and when the gates open in 2011, it was a very rough ride. Islamists won the first elections, but could win the second if the nightmare is not ended? When (MB) failed to deliver once they were in power, they failed; but they might have learnt from the hard lesson.

It was the biggest mistake to have accepted the rule of tyrants, and later the religious fascist state out of a fear that the alternative would be worse: Islamists, Salfi groups and (MB) or other hostile forces. It is very timely to focus on encouraging democratic development, but in small, gradual steps. This means building civil societies in which the rule of law operates

freedom of speech and assembly develop, local elections take place, and so forth. National elections would be the capstone to these changes.

I strongly believe that reversing this order or moving abruptly from rigid authoritarianism to national elections without first building civil society another time, will run the risk that Egypt will be hijacked by Islamist forces again.

At the end, I think that "Despair is betrayal" is a mantra that has echoed throughout Egypt during the many tough times over the past two and half years could make people forget these worst 365 days of (MB) nightmare and could focus in retaining Egypt with its harmonious society.

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