

*Revolutions and State-building:
A Historico-Political perspective
on the political outcome of
revolutions.*

Done by: *Mariam Waheed.*

*Teaching Assistant at the Faculty of
Economics and Political Science, Cairo
University.*

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Abstract:

Revolutions are rare and distinctive events. They are all about transforming political regimes by definition. Revolutions have played a critical role in the course of history. Though a revolution is an extreme act of democracy when masses take over power and people topple down ruling regimes, it doesn't often lead to a democratic regime and revolutionaries don't always take over power.

The question then directly arises: "Why did some revolutions generate open regimes while others generated closed regimes?" In other words and in a better phrasing, "Why some revolutions give rise to more democratic regimes while others give rise to more authoritarian ones? "

And that is the problematic which I will tackle in the research paper. Based on historical experiences, I will analyze the conditions in each country either economic, political and social conditions that led to the establishment and consolidation of a democracy. Moreover, there are different explanations of how revolutions breed democracies and the important factors leading to that. This paper aims at tracing those factors through presenting the literature of different political scientists such as Barrington Moore who emphasized the " Bourgeois effect " while Hannah Arendt had another explanation positing the " aim of revolutionaries " as an important factor .

A qualitative historical methodology is used in tracing a number of revolutions that took place across the globe and in different historical periods as the characteristics of revolutions differ on one hand and on the other hand there are differences in the criteria of democracy measurement. I'll try to shed light on those experiences and showcase the similarities and differences between the 2011 Egyptian revolution and those other historical experiences in order to find notions and theories that will help us understand and explain the current path of political transition and state-building in Egypt.

*In this research study , I will seek an answer to the following questions :

First: Approaching a definition of a revolution?

Second: Can the Egyptian protests since 25th of January 2011 be considered a revolution?

Third: In what way historicity as a method can help us understand the political outcome of the Egyptian revolution?

Fourth: Which revolutions can be compared to the Egyptian revolution?

Fifth: Can we consider the Egyptian revolution a successful example among other revolutions in history in terms of achieving democratic gains?

Introduction:

There were many sayings that the revolutions have ended going along Fukuyama's arguments of the "end of history". On the contrary came the arguments that the discourse of revolution may be changing issued by John Foran and other scholars . He realized that the international loci and foci may be moving (with the demise of the Soviet Union and the tentative consolidation of democracies in Latin America) and that the actors may be changing (with more women and ethnic minorities active; though both have long histories of revolutionary activism)-all of this may be (arguably) true. So he argued that revolutions are going to be with us to the end of history, and that's why Francis Fukuyama's insight is not totally correct.

Foran also emphasized that complete social revolutions as issued in Theda Skocpol's now classic sense of 'rapid, basic transformations of a society's state and class structures...accompanied and in part carried

through by class-based revolts from below' are in fact relatively rare events by virtue of the deep degree of transformation they entail . ¹

So Foran was against explaining all revolutions in the light of a theory of world revolutions only and that might help us explain the Egyptian revolution in the light of other eastern revolutions which had a smaller scale .

First : Defining revolutions:

There were many attempts by scholars to define revolutions , from them :

A revolution according to Huntington can be defined as *"a rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change in the dominant values and beliefs of a society, in its political institutions, social structure, leadership , and government activity and policies ."* ²

According to Zimmermann a revolution is" *the successful overthrow of the prevailing elite(s) by a new elite(s) who after having taken over power (which usually involves the use of considerable violence and the mobilization of masses) fundamentally change the social structure and therewith also the structure of authority .* ³

1) John Foran , The future of revolutions at the fin-de-siècle , **Third World Quarterly**, Vol 18, No 5, pp 791-820, 1997 , p.791 .

²) Samuel Huntington , **Political order in changing societies (An adaptation)** , (Bombay : Vakils , Feffer & Simons Private LTD , 1975) , p. 148

³) Ekkart Zimmermann , on the outcomes of revolutions : some preliminary considerations , **sociological theory** , Vol.8 , No.1 m (spring 1990) , p.39

Second: Can the Egyptian protests since 25th of January 2011 be considered a revolution?

Applying Huntington's and Zimmermann's definitions of revolutions. The Egyptian protests of 25th January 2011 can be considered a true revolution though it has specific characteristics making it different from the great world revolutions that took part in the western hemisphere . The main characteristics defining the Egyptian revolution are that it was a Leaderless revolution , First revolution to rely on technology and electronic means such as facebook and twitter , The date of the revolution was released before it began so it wasn't confidential , the revolution included large numbers of people and including all categories of Egyptian social classes , It started peacefully though in later phases there were violent clashes and also protesters didn't depend on foreign support from abroad.

Third: In what way historicity as a method can help us understand the political outcome of the Egyptian revolution?

My task in this paper is to explore the predictive utility of the comparative-historical revolutionary record, and to reflect on the current conjuncture of the Egyptian revolution in the light of the elements of history.

According to the advocates of the historical approach, political events can be only understood when the historical factors like the age, place and the situation in which it is evolved are taken into consideration. As the name of this approach is related to history, it emphasizes on the study of history of every political reality to analyze any situation. History not only speaks about the past but also links it with the present events. History provides

the chronological order of every political event and thereby helps in future estimation of events also. Hence, without studying the past political events, institutions and political environment it would be wrong to analyze the present political scenario/ events.

Fourth: Which revolutions can be compared to the Egyptian revolution?

Revisiting the past , building the present :

The study tries to rest on the cases that would deem similar to the Egyptian revolution in order to be able to draw some similarities regarding the outcomes of the revolution. I chose the Iranian and the Indonesian revolutions as might be similar to the Egyptian case based on the following similarities : Those revolutions took place in muslim-majority society – Those revolutions took place at closer periods of time unlike the western revolutions which were historically earlier – They can be termed eastern revolutions unlike the western great revolutions .

As not all revolutions breed complete change in the structure of societies in a violent way , those revolutions and from them the Egyptian revolution are very different from the " great world revolutions " that took place in the western hemisphere . Huntington distinguishes between western and eastern revolutions . The western revolution is usually directed against a highly traditional regime headed by an absolute monarch or dominated by a land-owning aristocracy . The revolution typically occurs when this regime encounters severe financial difficulties , when it fails to absorb the educated classes and other urban elites . In the western revolution , the main struggle is usually between the moderates

and the radicals , in the eastern revolution it is between the revolutionaries and the government .⁴

In general a revolution is the result of crucial political opportunities or effective actions made by the leaders of the revolution which are provided within its course. It is these same opportunities and actions which determine the future of revolutions or what they eventually bring about.

So the characteristics of revolutions (how the revolutionary action was generated , how it was organized) and the management of the transitional moments and who will make use of the new political opportunities generated out of the revolution will all affect the outcome of the revolution.

In the coming part , I will shed light on how the characteristics of both the Iranian and Indonesian revolutions affected the outcomes of both revolutions .

Iranian revolution 1979 :

The Iranian revolution's characteristics :

1) Islamic revolution (Islamism as an ideology for the revolution):

One of the reasons that Iran's revolution has been Islamic was the existence of various religious institutions that operated independent from the government but played a significant role in organizing the revolution.

⁴⁾ Samuel Huntington , **Op.Cit.** , (Bombay : Vakils , Feffer & Simons Private LTD , 1975) , p.156

Also that revolution started with Khomeini as its' leader and he had a pure Islamic project .⁵

2) Single leader and an organizational structure :

Organization in the Iranian revolution had a structure with Khomeini leading revolutionaries ⁶ who was an effective, religious leader at the head of the Iranian revolution .⁷

3) Neopatrimonial nature of the regime which sidelined the army to a big extent :

The neo-patrimonial nature of the regimes of the Shah made the army declare neutrality in the revolution .⁸

Soldiers from the Isfahan artillery unit publicly declared that when they accepted their commissions they had sworn to defend the nation and its people, not kill civilians. They announced their refusal to support a regime engaged in massacring its own citizens and pledged instead to support Ayatollah Khomeini.

The outcome of the Iranian revolution :

Ayatollah Khomeini called for “Islamic government” but went along with an Islamic republic.⁹

5) Farzad Poursaeid , A comparative study on Iran's Islamic revolution and Egypt's revolution , <http://en.merc.ir/default.aspx?tabid=73&ArticleId=441> ,p.136 .

6) Ibid. , p.136 .

7) Ibid. , p.140 .

8) Ibid . , 140

In the early days of the Iranian revolution . Khomeini claimed that he would secure all the rights and freedoms but he soon attacked those rights . As only two months after the revolution , a referendum took place asking people to choose between the old regime and the new one without defining the pillars and the characteristics of the new one . but before this referendum was held , he cancelled a law protecting the family . under that law men were not allowed to choose a second wife without taking permission from the first wife . and later Hijab became compulsory so women rights and freedoms were attacked . At that time there were opposition movement in Iran which was mainly leftist led by some communist parties as the Tudeh party and leftist movements as the March 8 movement but those movements couldn't counter the Islamist project offered by Khomeini and that's why it was applied with minor opposition later . ¹⁰

Indonesian revolution 1998 :

The Indonesian revolution's characteristics :

Students and workers ignited the Indonesian revolution .

From the characteristics of the revolution :

- 1) An Islamic majority as revolutionaries .
- 2) It had strong economic aims that was against suharto's monopoly of economic resources .
- 3) The role of the military :

9) Asef Bayat , **Life as Politics : How Ordinary People Change the Middle East** , (Amsterdam : Amsterdam University Press , 2010) , p.226

¹⁰⁾ Araz Bagban , Egypt in Light of the Iranian Revolution: The Restoration of a Dictatorship? , <http://www.socialistproject.ca/bullet/748.php> , 22-12-2012

During Mr. Suharto's last days, the Indonesian military refused to crack down on protesters and agreed to a lessening of its own political power.¹¹

The revolution in Indonesia started as a series of mass protest that was then supported by the army .

Suharto left only after being pressured by their own militaries while handing over power to close confidantes. In Mr. Suharto's case, Vice President B.J. Habibie took over power . Until he was removed by the Islamist opposition leader.

The outcome of the Indonesian revolution :

In Indonesia, although there is a commitment to the process of democratic reform, evidenced by the general election of 1999 and the emergence of multiparty competition for political legitimacy, a number of problems remain , there are challenges to achieve a smooth and orderly transition toward democracy in the midst of economic hardship and widespread sectarian violence will be a challenge.¹²

Indonesia witnessed the collapse of authoritarian government in the 1990s. it embarked on a process of democratization. There were structural changes in the political system in favor of democracy, the invocation of multiparty politics, transparent and accountable policy making, and the preservation of fundamental liberties of expression and

¹¹) Jay Solomon , In Indonesia, a Model for Egypt's Transition , <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704329104576138490822239336.html>

¹²) N. Ganesan , Appraising Democratic Developments in Post-authoritarian States: Thailand and Indonesia , **Asian Affairs** Vol. 28, No. 1 (Spring, 2001), p.14 , pp. 3-17.

association. Mass media and NGOs representing plural and independent interests have also come into being.¹³

But still the situation in Indonesia is complicated by the military's deep permeation of state institutions and its territorial deployment; by widespread sectarian violence, sponsored by disenchanted elites .¹⁴

Post-Suharto governments were particularly successful because they co-opted Islamist parties that emerged following the dictator's fall. Indonesia is said to be one of the most promising exponents of Western-style liberal governance.

Fifth: Can we consider the Egyptian revolution a successful example among other revolutions in history in terms of achieving democratic gains?

There are multiple approaches to understand the outcome of revolutions. Cultural factors that lead to not developing a democratic state. other scholars pointed out to the importance of the international context .

In general , regime-specific characteristics of democracies such as inclusion , contestation and guarantee of civil liberties .

For a revolution to achieve its' goals, it takes a very long time. A revolution is not a singular event; it is a multi-faceted process. It is empirically difficult to determine when it ends. Revolutions aim partially at regime change but this is not the end of a revolution; it is rather an essential requirement. Regime change, in theory, allows a revolution to

13) Ibid , p.15

14) Ibid. p.15

actualize its objectives, depending on what they are. In the case of Egypt, sadly, even that first requirement has not been fully achieved yet. And this makes things complicated.

Asef Bayat argues that the Egyptian revolution as not yet a revolution but as a " re-folution " in terms of the mixture between a revolutionary struggle and a reformist trajectory . and that it makes it a bit similar to the eastern european color revolutions though the Egyptian revolution has a remarkable revolutionary struggle .¹⁵

The Arab world and Egypt is no exception has not experienced great revolutions that resemble the ones that took place in the western world.¹⁶

Some analysts say that because neither the EU nor the WB not the IMF granted any aid to Morsi's government , that will not lead the government sustain economically and also politically . and develop a democratic regime .

Some observers see the Arab revolts and from them the Egyptian revolution as postmodern revolutions, diffused and leaderless, with no fixed ideology. Others view them as the next wave of democratic and liberal revolutions.

So those Arab revolutions proved that the Islamist politics that reigned in the region just a few years ago will not be able to dominate the arab

¹⁵) Rana Khazbak , Q&A with Asef Bayat: 'Not yet a full-fledged revolution' , <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/qa-asef-bayat-not-yet-full-fledged-revolution> , 22-1-2012 .

¹⁶) Samuel P. Huntington , **Op.Cit.** , (Bombay : Vakils , Feffer & Simons Private LTD , 1975) , p.p. 148-149 .

Egypt in the days of Mubarak can be said to be an authoritarian regime according to Linz's definition as it was not totally a totalitarian regime . Mubarak's regime offered a restricted democracy where there was limited political pluralism and where there was absence of intensive mobilization .¹⁸

What happened in Egypt regarding " the path of transition " can be said to be a " pacted transition " which was common in latin American countries . The pacted transition can be depicted in terms of political balance and compromise agreements between the military and their civilian opponents . O'Donnell and Schmitter point out that sometimes the military is as strong as the civilian group but some other times the military is in a weaker political power and that's why it relinquishes power without securing mutual guarantees .¹⁹

During pacted transitions , the ruling military is matched in political strength with opposition and it recognizes its' need to secure some electoral legitimacy . And here explicit and implicit negotiations (mutual guarantees) and agreements in what can be called " pacts " . Here there is a promise of limited democratization .²⁰

17) Asef Bayat , The post-Islamist revolutions : What the revolts in the Arab world mean ? , <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67812/asef-bayat/the-post-islamist-revolutions#> , 26-4-2011

18) Paul Brooker , **Non-Democratic regimes** , 2nd edition , (Hampshire and New York : Palgrave Macmillan , 2009) , p.23 .

19) Ibid .p.p.208-09 .

20) Ibid ., p.211

The process of a transition that saw two elections and the enactment of different law was thus a reflection of the “foundational” bargain between the army and the Muslim Brothers .

This foundational bargain bore all the future flaws or “birth defects” that perpetuated the SCAF–MB monopoly and sidelined other democratic opposition actors.²¹

The revolution in Egypt can't be coined as a secular revolution as it started as a collection of different social categories from mosques and people wanted God to be beside them while toppling Mubarak's regime and kept praying for that and also when protesters in Tahrir heard Mubarak stepped down , some of them were praying El Maghreb and praying to God in order to grant them the power to remove Mubarak . But despite that , no body was asking the other in Tahrir about his/her religion . So revolutionaries either Muslims and Christians are religious but they didn't call for a religious state .

The Muslim Brothers wanted to apply (God's Shari'a) and they were a faction of tahrir protesters during the 18 days . but that application is against the will of a great number of Egyptian revolutionaries which means that they need support from either the regional powers or the international powers .

The monopoly of the Muslim Brotherhood what is " God's Shari'a " is purely an autocratic vision and is not democratic even though they came to power through elections as Egyptian voters didn't elect them for that

21) Hanaa Ebeid , The Egyptian Path: A Pact of Conservatives , Timo Behr And Patrycja Sasnal (Ed.S) , Still Awake: The Beginnings Of Arab Democratic Change , [http://www.fiaa.fi/assets/news/Still_Awake_-
_The_beginnings_of_Arab_democratic_change.pdf](http://www.fiaa.fi/assets/news/Still_Awake_-_The_beginnings_of_Arab_democratic_change.pdf) , p.19

cause . Also the rejection of some salafist parties as " Al Nour party " to the Muslim brotherhood policies manifested in some incidents such as Ahmadinejad's visit to Egypt as an introduction to the Shii presence in Egypt . And on 23 April 2013 that Mohamed Fouad Gad Allah , the Salafist advisor for the president on legal affairs resigned as a result on the ongoing debates in the country over the Muslim Brothers attempt to exclude thousands on judges .

Also Dr. Younes Makhyoun , leader of the Nour Salafist party said that " we agreed with the Muslim Brothers on a partnership between us whether in the government or the governorates, and they promised us that they will preserve the Islamic Shariia as the basic source for legislation, and they didn't give us anything in the constitutional committee for drafting the constitution, and all their promises flew in the air, and we remained the only ones who demanded applying the Islamic Sharia" ²²

In Egypt procedural democracy without concentrating on the essence of democracy that entails respecting the others' opinions , protecting minority rights . Egypt took the path of " Elections First " then " Constitution second " and with minor international interference , unlike the Libyan case where the interference of NATO besides the Libyan transitional council led to toppling Qaddafi's regime and his death .

The latest events on the Egyptian scene suggest that this regime won't endure because of the insistence to brotherhoodize the scene based on the fact that Mohamed Morsy was elected as a president . This led president Morsi to insist on appointing a minister of culture " Alaa Abd El Aziz " though most intellectuals were against him and that led them to sit-in in

²²) Nasser Al-Azzazi , Al-Nour Party Chairman speaks against Muslim Brotherhood , <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/06/01/al-nour-party-chairman-speaks-against-muslim-brotherhood> , 1-6-2013

the ministry for weeks as well as insisting on clashing with the judges .
This led to lots of confrontations on the Egyptian scene .

According to Asef Bayat ,The Egyptian revolution can be resembled to Georgia's 'Rose Revolution' of 2003 or Ukraine's 'Orange Revolution' of 2004–05, where in both cases a massive and sustained popular movement brought down the corrupt incumbents. In these instances, the trajectory would, strictly speaking, be more reformist than revolutionary.²³

And actually up till the 1990s, three major ideological traditions had been the bearers of 'revolution' as a strategy of fundamental change: anti-colonial nationalism, Marxism and Islamism.²⁴

A principal difference between the Arab uprisings and their 20th-century predecessors was that they occurred in quite altered ideological times.²⁵

The Egyptian project didn't come with a single project for change , it came up with liberalism in what has been expressed in the revolutionary slogan as " liberty " and socialism embedded in notions as " bread and social justice " and nationalism in the notion of " dignity and slogans as raise your head , you're an Egyptian " . So being proud as an Egyptian not necessarily a muslim was what revolutionaries were seeking . but on the background revolutionaries are socially religious but mostly non-politically religious and didn't have a political Islam project .

The Egyptian Muslim Brothers are working on dictating what politics should be and that through the interference of religion.

23) Asef Bayat , Revolution in bad times , New Left Review 80, March-April 2013 , p.51<http://newleftreview.org/II/80/asef-bayat-revolution-in-bad-times>

24) Ibid , p.54

25) Ibid . p.54 .

There are many scholars who tackled the prospects of the Arab revolutions. From them Olivier Roy in his essay " The transformation of the Arab world " in the July 2012 issue of the " Journal of democracy " , when he provided a threefold argument which is skeptic towards what can the Muslim brothers apply in Egypt .

First : The circumstances in which the Brotherhood and other Islamist groups such as the salafists have reached power have put them into a political space formatted by certain constraints .

Second : The Islamists are aware that they have changed and at least they understood that the world has changed .

Third : If Islamists don't accept the demands of the democratization process .. They will find themselves sidelined. "So whether the Islamists cooperate or not, democratization will triumph."²⁶

It is now clear that the Muslim Brothers didn't know anything about Olivier's words as in the past few months they sought to dictate their own laws upon the opposition through issuing a constitution on a referendum that passed through and issuing some constitutional declarations expanding president Mohamed Morsi's powers against the will of the opposition . The constitution in general was full of articles which ignited polarization between the different societal and ultimately clashes at (Al-Ittihadeyya palace) .

26) Hillel Fradkin , Arab Democracy or Islamist Revolution? , **Journal of democracy**, volume (24), No. (1), January 2013.

Conclusion :

It is so early to judge the Egyptian revolution whether it will breed democracy or autocracy.

This paper proved that there is no one single theory explaining the outcomes of revolutions as Zimmermann mentioned in his study that there are mainly four generations of theories explaining revolutions mainly their causes , there are a lot of theories aiming to analyze the outcomes of revolutions . but revolutions are largely treated as the dependent variable with less systematic attention paid to the outcomes of revolutions .²⁷

He mentions that there are different stages in any revolution . first when the traditional institutions are gradually losing their authority . second when the revolutionaries take over power and topple the Ancien Régime . Third : when the new and consolidated revolutionary regime leaves its mark with a series of policy outputs . Fourth: when outcomes are under study.

It's too early to judge the Egyptian revolution in terms of outcomes but there are some policy outputs that I mentioned throughout the paper that can help us estimate what the future can be like. ²⁸

27) Ekkart Zimmermann , on the outcomes of revolutions : some preliminary considerations , **sociological theory** , Vol.8 , No.1 (spring 1990) , p.33

28) Ibid , p.34

This paper attempted to evaluate the consequence of the Egyptian revolution . From the cases we witnessed either in the western or the Eastern world . The fruits of the revolution weren't compatible at all with the seeds . They did not promote liberties and a democratic regime till that moment but on the contrary they promoted more violence resulting from the extreme lust for power between the different revolutionary forces and the dictation of laws by one specific political forces but the opposition forces are very strong in Egypt which can be manifested in "Rebellion " Tammarrod " campaign " which seeks to remove president Morsi from power aiming to have a democratic regime in Egypt similar to many liberal and democratic regimes around the world .