

Arab Spring, Reasons and Challenges - The Case of Egypt

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Abstract: This study aims to penetrate into the depth of the event of Egyptian Revolution of Arab Spring by touching, identifying and analyzing real factors the most important at both internal and external level, who have helped and accelerated the pace of events to reach this critical moment in contemporary Egypt's history. The Egyptian Revolution of Arab Spring or the Revolution of Anger that exploded on January 25, 2011 was one of the most unique events in the modern history of Egypt. The Revolution was not planned but was expected at least on the hearts and minds of Egyptians, because of many motives and reasons from the inside and outside. At the same time, this study will shed light on the most serious obstacles of the phase of democratic transition, or what is known as "the process of real democratization". We can say that the Egyptian case, no matter that it was only one of the domino stones of the Arab Spring, but it is a special case in his background, whether for its reasons, motives, reality or the stage of democratization. For this, and according to this view, this event will be verified and investigated from various dimensions, especially that which was hidden earlier, in order to achieve a fundamental and significant fact of why Egypt and the Arab countries are delayed and remained away from the pace of global democracy.

Keywords: Revolution; Arab Spring; The process of democratization; Ancient Egypt

1. Introduction

No one can deny that the dominance of the principles and values of democracy, justice, equality and human rights are the result of continuous efforts of millions of people for hundreds of years in the past, and are used today as its result. Also, no one can deny that European nations have paid a very high price, estimated at millions of victims who were killed in order to achieve those principles and values that are required by all peoples of the today's world (El Shoubashi, 2011, p. 39). But, research for democracy is the objective of all people in the world. The desired

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democracy is good in itself, because it allows all citizens to determine their own destiny and to get rid of tyranny and detrimental injustice prevailing in most political regimes, but we should remember that democracy cannot occur except in rare social conditions. At that time, all citizens can find a profound impact on their lives (Tilley, 2010, p. 21).

Egypt was not far from what is happening around it, due to advances in information technology and communication in the world. Of course, the young Egyptians of twenty-first century are affected by the ideas, principles and values, that are not lower than those of their counterparts, the young people of Europe and America.

2. Causes of the Egyptian Arab Revolution

Over the past decades, the Egyptian society in general has become tired. So, the political, economic, social and cultural rights have been worsened, and as a result of this situation, the disturbing tensions are spread throughout the community. The social structure has become fragile. The culture and system of values of Egyptian society collapsed. This culture and this system, which have suffered for many years from bad variables that weakened them, especially in the period from the year 1970, where liberal orientations were substituted by the ideology of socialism. Then, the political system has issued the necessary laws to support and strengthen the presence of high grade, at the expense of other classes. As a result of these actions, the natural role of these layers of society, remained and has worsened in all areas (Group of authors, 2012, pp. 29-30).

Social conditions have continued to deteriorate gradually at all levels. On the one hand, the poverty, unemployment and prices have increased. On the other hand, feelings of people against injustice, oppression and humiliation are increased. Each passing day, the state government had looked the people with a kind of ugly arrogance. Government claims directed by ministers to address issues that were problematic and critical, provocative and represents the underestimation of human pains. Thus, on the day of 25 January 2011, in Egypt broke out the Great Revolution, not by trade unions, peasants and the poor people, but by the middle class and the upper middle, who were the beneficiaries of the rule of Hosni Mubarak (former Egyptian President). At a time when Mubarak was putting pressure on lower class, there where 40% of people lived below the poverty line,

according to UN data. Of course, poverty, unemployment and difficulties of life were the most important motives of the revolution, but they were not the main cause. The main cause and engine were young people and many other segments of the people. The Revolution broke out because that the way of life in Egypt was no more acceptable, as it was still in the Middle Ages. The revolution erupted because it was the time for change (El shoubashi, 2011, pp. 35-37). *In fact, the revolution broke under the pressure of three-dimensional stimuli and they are “tyranny, corruption and the dependence of the ruler or system”* (Ismail, 2013, p. 78).

Thus, to shed light on the causes and motives that led to the outbreak of the Egyptian revolution, it can be divided as follows:

Internal causes

External causes

2.1. Internal Causes

Arab political systems are often accustomed to supporting the idea of the foreign or external plans, accusing foreign countries (without specification) that they are trying to destabilize the security and stability of these countries. The reason for this is that these systems are trying not to draw attention to their disability, in front of their people. While, on the other hand, these regimes are trying to trick their people that their continuance in power represents the only factor for the stability and security of these peoples (Group of authors, 2012, p. 209).

In fact, the hypothesis of the plot of the outbreak of Arab revolutions in general, especially the Egyptian revolution, is incompatible and inconsistent with the fact that the reality of pains experienced by the peoples of the Arab countries, and that what Egyptian people have experienced, present a situation different of this hypothesis. This reality reflects the degree of pain and suffer from authoritarian practices of previous decades. It was very logical and obvious that people will explode and revolt, even, the revolution came late. In any case, this does not mean that foreign countries did not have any interest and benefit from this situation. These countries are trying to take advantage of this situation and its instability, to intervene and to achieve maximum benefits (Group of authors, 2012, p. 210).

Based on the foregoing, it can conclude a basic fact and rigid, specifically, that the Egyptian revolution came from the bottom of the painful internal reality of Egyptian people, who have suffered for more than thirty years, which is the period of the rule of former President Hosni Mubarak. Here we mention the most

important reasons that led to the outbreak interior of the Egyptian revolution, as follows:

Direct causes;

Indirect causes.

2.1.1. Direct causes

a. Falsification of the Parliamentary Elections of 2010

In 2010, During Parliamentary elections in Egypt, in which the ruling National Democratic Party received more than 95% of the total seats of the Assembly, prompted a noisy outbreak of protests and the emergence of the anger of the Egyptian people. The elections were clearly rigged. Opposition seats in Parliament were empty. After that it was a violation of the rights of the Egyptian supervisors to oversee the elections, as well as the exclusion of opposition parties led by the Muslim Brotherhood, who were prevented from taking part in the elections (El Borai, 2012, p. 70);

b. The death of Khalid Mohammed Said

Khalid was a young Egyptian who died at the hands of Egyptian police on June 6, 2010, after being tortured to death. This incident caused a stir and excitement of many Egyptians, who organized mass protests by denouncing this crime;

c. The bombing of the Saints Church in Alexandria

Twenty minutes after the arrival of the New Year, 2011, a terrible explosion occurred before the Saints Church in the Sidi Bishr neighborhood of Alexandria. The explosion resulted from a terrorist attack that took the lives of 25 people, including Muslims, while 97 others were injured. This terrorist attack hit the whole Egyptian people of all faiths, as well as throughout the world caused a severe concussion. As a result of this terrorist act, Christians staged protests and they were joined by a large number of Muslims. So, everyone began cheering in anger against the police and the rule of Mubarak. Later, it was discovered that the Egyptian Interior Ministry had planned this attack, with the help of terrorist groups under its supervision. The purpose of this attack was to eliminate the political islam, islamists in general, incitement of hatred against them, at home and abroad, as well as their isolation to participate in political life;

d. The murder of the young Syed Bilal

Syed Bilal was a young Egyptian from Alexandria, at the age of thirty. This boy belonged to Salafists. Syed was arrested by State Security officers on January 5, 2011, to investigate him in connection with the incident of bombing of the Church. However, during interrogation, he was tortured to death;

e. The emergence of Mohamed Al Baradei in the Egyptian political arena

The emergence of *Mohamed Al Baradei* had an effective impact on the return of hope and activity for Egyptian political movement. Al Baradei called for legislative changes to ensure a free and fair elections. There were organized groups of young people working in his favor, known as “pro Al Baradei campaign” in order to collect the necessary legal powers to make calls to amend the Constitution in their name (El Borai, 2012, pp. 70-71);

f. The explosion of the Tunisian revolution

On December 18, 2010, the Tunisian revolution broke out, 38 days before the Egyptian revolution. Motives and factors of the outbreak of this revolution are focused on the poor state of political, economic and social. In less than a month, former President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali resigned from the rule of Tunisia, after a 23-year period. The success of the Tunisian revolution had a magical effect on the Arab people, especially the Egyptian people. In fact, the Egyptian people in the revolution found evidence and proof of strength and determination of the people where they can make decisions willingly. Therefore, this revolution is considered one of the important factors and propulsive toward the Egyptian revolution (El Borai, 2012, p. 72);

g. The role of the media, internet and social network sites

The most important example in this context is the role played by a young Egyptian named Wael Ghonim. Wael established a page on Facebook, through it he urged all Egyptians to participate in the demonstrations of January 25, 2011. Also, Wael had made coordination between other young people in this regard (El Borai, 2012, p. 74).

2.1.2. Indirect causes

The Revolution had imposed its will, with the strength of millions of people, took to the streets chanting “the people want the downfall of the regime”. Over time, the hearts of the people were filled with anger and frustration, giving birth to a strong

feeling among failure and despair during the period of a corrupt and authoritarian system. The reasons for this despair reform, the transition to a state of frustration and general destruction, are as follows:

a. Individual (personal) reasons

Inability to provide basic necessities for life, food, clothing and shelter, due to lower revenues and higher prices, led to a sense of hopelessness and sadness at the same time. Ordinary individual found himself facing a huge pressure, difficulty and individual challenge, through his obligations for the realization of the basic needs of his family. In fact, the individual became unable to meet these challenges, due to the waiver by the state to help him. Therefore, it was natural for the individual to oppose the system, and even revolt against it;

b. Collective causes

These include community services, which have deteriorated dramatically, while the government has done nothing to improve them. For example, the deterioration of health services, education and water infrastructure, electricity, sewage, traffic services, hygiene and other. The deterioration of these services collectively led to the transformation of society to live in a state of chaos and lawlessness because of the general feeling of the lack of state and its duties to the people;

c. National causes

These reasons are classified under what is known as the national feeling or duty of the individual for his homeland, so that this nation would be in a prestigious position. In this context, it should be noted that Egypt was in a prestigious position and had an outstanding leadership in the region. But during the rule of Mubarak, its role was clearly weakened up to neglecting which is known as strategic issues related to the national security of Egypt. For example, neglect of the problem of water furnizumit associated with states that possess sources of the Nile, which seek to reduce the use of water from Egypt. Despite that the part of Egypt was set in the historic treaty between the countries possessing the resources of the Nile and Egypt (Kabel, 2012, pp. 135-136);

d. Other varied reasons, of most important as follows:

- Increase of tyranny and authoritarianism;
- Suppression of public freedom and human rights;
- Exercise of authoritarianism policies and the monopoly of power by the family of Mubarak and the ruling National Democratic Party;

- Exercise of policy restrictions on the political activities in all aspects;
- The intervention of the security forces and intelligence in public affairs;
- Violation of the rule of law and the Constitution;
- Falsification of the will of the people to express their opinion, in choosing their representatives in parliamentary or local elections;
- The lack of judicial independence, the disappearance of the separation of powers and the domination of the executive authority in all aspects of life;
- Prevention of freedom of the press and media;
- Monopoli i mediave;
- The imposition of emergency provisions and special military Laws;
- Lack of legal and constitutional guarantees of a fair trial;
- Limitation of freedom of scientific research;
- Privation of women from their natural rights;
- Ignoring the demands of the community and civic organizations and opposition (Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 2010, pp. 23-24);
- Extension of the scope and areas of corruption in the state including various sectors, mainly in the following sectors:
 1. The state system in all areas of administrative, educational, health, etc.;
 2. Telecommunication;
 3. Privatization, the sale of public companies and the evaluation systems of public assets;
 4. Banks and credit system;
 5. Press, its institutions and employees;
 6. Stock Exchange, the stock market and insurance companies (Farouk, 2011, pp. 29-30).

2.2. External Causes

Egyptian revolution in his features was not limited, but can be considered as a multifaceted revolution. In fact, the revolution of 25 January has erupted three revolutions in Egypt and the Arab reality, and not only a revolution, as follows:

1. *Political Revolution* (changing the old political system);
2. *Social Revolution* (changing the format of the dominant values);

3. *Cultural Revolution* (changing the systems thinking) (Group of authors, 2013, p. 95).

Thus, to shed light on the factors or external causes and the extent of their impact in Egyptian revolution, we can say that there are two thoughts or tendencies:

The first tendency: believes that the Arab revolutions and protests are completely domestic product, which does not have any connection or an external role. Proponents of this trend go further and think that the West, particularly the United States are not happy by the Arab revolutions, but are treated as a *fait accompli*;

The second tendency: believes that the role of external factor is present in a very strong way and has a significant and effective impact on the movement of Arab people to realize the changes. Supporters of this trend are based on confidential documents exposed on "WikiLeaks", believe that the United States has paid millions of dollars to organizations that support democracy in Egypt. More than that, some analysts believe that these documents had an active role in what has happened in the Arab world, because these documents has revealed many hidden things about the rulers and their escorts, as and the size of the corruption that exists in these countries. Well, there was a great influence in wrath of the peoples of this region (Wadi, 2014).

3. Why Others Have Achieved the Democracy While Arabs are late?

On July 26, 2008, at St. Catherine's College at Oxford University was held the eighteenth annual conference for project-studies of democracy in Arab countries. This conference focused on basic and important subject that has to do with the transformation into a democratic political regime through the use of the comparative method in political systems. The theme of the debate was unfolding purpose of the reasons that have contributed to the success and experiences of some countries in the world in this regard. Specifically, the transition from autocracy or rule of the elite, in the rule of democracy, and the reasons for the failure of Arab political systems to date in achieving this success or change. Results of research and debate came as a very important fact about the painful Arab reality. The fact is that the Arab countries are delayed and remained away pace of global democracy, in the case of major deficiencies in various aspects of life in countries and Arab communities. These shortcomings are the direct cause of delays

and setbacks. The most important points of this delay are as follows (Group of authors, 2009, p. 7):

- Evolution of the political transition from the phase of a formal or figurative transformation to another real democratic phase in a country, depends primarily and largely on reconciliation and consensus of political forces on the scene, which seeks to amend and achieve this transformation through peaceful means. This compliance has been lacking and is still lacking among the political forces within the Arab countries;
- Urgent need that the political forces which require achievement of democracy in the Arab countries, must be loyal to democracy not only in words but also in deeds;
- Necessity of political discourse between all political forces is characterized by moderate approach and an open mind to all political forces, in all grades and categories of them, this on one hand. While, on the other hand, we have full commitment by all political forces to use peaceful means as a key and the only mechanism to resolve any political conflict that may arise between them, in order to expand human and loyal base in the application of democracy as a system of political rule. In fact, this has often missing in Arab societies;
- Given that in one way or another that Arab reality is far from the real, effective and required pressure over the ruling political elites. This pressure is intended to undermine the cohesion of those elites forcing them to make concessions and accept democracy, particularly legislative and policy reforms needed in this regard;
- Lack of Arab reality in the quality of fair political leadership, which have special skills and necessary in order to achieve political reform process and to implement the desired democracy. For example, the role of leader Nelson Mandela and Frederik Willem de Klerk in South Africa, Lech Walesa in Poland, Aquino in the Philippines, Suarez in Spain, and others (Group of authors, 2009, pp. 8-9);
- Powerful need to unite political visions, collective actions and mobilizing all national political forces by guiding their force to stop the military and security institutions within countries, to promote or support the ruling political systems in Arab countries;
- The need for consensus of domestic political forces through the efforts and joint actions between them, to encourage and put pressure on the international

powers that support political systems (non-democratic) in power, to change and abandon their policy, or at least to not oppose the process of democratic transformation;

— The need for Arab political reality to mobilize all domestic political forces in order to focus on the importance of addressing the deteriorating of economic factor in the Arab countries, showing negative effects in Arab communities. Thus, this factor can be used as an internal pressure against the existing deplorable political systems, which can also be achieved until the later stages (revolution) by changing the leadership and political system;

— Focusing, in particular, on the importance of building the Arab countries that are in dire need for multiple attempts at creating a more suited internal atmosphere to achieve a real democratic transformation;

— The need to confront and eliminate some of the harmful and unwanted phenomena in communities of Arab countries, such as financial and administrative corruption, which represents a powerful obstacle on achieving the democratic process. Where groups of interest that benefit from this corruption make every effort and every way to deter and prevent the achievement of the desired democracy and the elimination of social differences that are harmful for society (Group of authors, 2009, pp. 9-10).

From what has been analyzed above, it is clear that there are many factors and reasons that were and still are today, which represent an obstacle and challenge towards the realization of the dream of the peoples of the Arab countries in achieving democracy, as experienced by the prosperous western countries. Perhaps the process of democratization is not an easy mission, but at the same time is not a mission impossible. In fact, the democratization of Arab society does not just need more time, but there is a need also for more sacrifices.

3.1. Obstacles to Transform the Egypt into a Democratic System of Governance

Since the revolution of 25 January 2011, Egypt has entered a new stage of political development. The Revolution had a clear request for freedom and the downfall of the regime. This regime had the main features of tyranny and corruption. Although it was reached the rate of decline of the head of the regime, but the challenges of democratic transformation in Egypt are very difficult and complex. Thus, Egypt has lived under the authoritarian regime which was highly centralized, so that controls all the authorities within the state. Where executive power had many

powers and “undemocratic” laws, and the ruling party in Egypt had unilaterally dominated political life in general. This party had holistic organizations that dominate and control all aspects of life in Egypt over the past decades. From here, we can consider the most important and most serious obstacles of democratic transformation, as follows (Hanefi, 2011):

Firstly, synthetic nature of the structure of the apparatus of power in Egypt, who has been active over the thirty years. The dangerousness of this governing body is focused on the selection of its leaders on the basis of continuity of internal heritage from the heart of this body, on the basis of political, personal and safe loyalty;

Secondly, urgent need for a democratic and fully integrated Constitution, not a constitution that is partially changed. This Constitution shall be in accordance with the aspirations of the principles in the post-revolution phase;

Thirdly, because the Egyptian state apparatus has great influence so that the executive power dominates the legislative and judicial powers, which are considered as a necessary supervisory authority for each democratic experience. Thus, the presence of dominance of the executive power, directly affects the performance of the other two powers and their role in supervisory level;

Fourthly, one of the obstacles of democratic transformation in Egypt is also the quality of Egyptian political elite. Political elite at the Mubarak's time was followed by him, and represent an integral part of the dominant political system at that time. In fact, this elite during its political practices, has confirmed that it does not do anything about democracy, whether in its opinion or practice;

Fifthly, from most important obstacles facing the process of democratization in Egypt is the post-revolution period. This period is considered as one of the most critical phases of change, which represent a state of political instability, which can expose to risk of national security of Egypt. Although, Egypt is not the first country that has gone through this phase after the explosion of democratic revolutions, but the transition to democracy, leads in addition to the extensive participation of the peoples and helps in economic and intellectual pluralism. However, with the outbreak of the Egyptian revolution, even more demands have appeared that are expected to be fulfilled (Hanefi, 2011).

Democracy, from the standpoint of the authoritarian political system ruling before the revolution of January 25, has represented a national security issue. In the sense that, if it will allow citizens to exercise their freedom of fair and effective elections,

in Egyptian power can come undesirable political forces with muslim or liberal ideology, which can be faithful to the international factors. Thus, the democratic transformation, poses a direct threat to Egyptian national security and should be prevented by all means possible (Group of authors, 2009, pp. 201-202).

4. Conclusion

Egypt, like other countries of the free world, and as integral part of the global system cannot be away from the goal of achieving political and democratic changes under unprecedented technological communication;

Over the past few decades, because of the suffering of the Egyptian people and society as a whole from a marked deterioration in all aspects of life whether political, economic, social, cultural, human rights, etc., all this has created favorable climatic reasons for the outbreak of the revolution of January 25;

The causes and motives that caused the outbreak of the Egyptian revolution, can be divided into the internal causes and external causes;

Through the review of internal factors and external that influenced the revolution of 25 January, may be noted that, if the role of external actors was present before the revolution, but this was not the decisive factor in its explosion. The decisive factor was the interior, which represents the reality of the suffering of the Egyptian people from within. Through the painful reality of their inhumane life. In fact, external causes or factors were not the ones that called for revolution, but they were a motivating factor for internal reasons for the outbreak of the revolution;

The case of the suffering of Arab society in general, and Egypt in particular, in all aspects of life will continue to deteriorate and cause its failure in the pace of global progress and civilization. Thus, this will happen if the ruling authoritarian regimes does not respond to the voice of their revolutionary people and their demands to achieve a better life, freedom and social justice.

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