

Arab Spring - Concepts and Characteristics (Case of Egypt)

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Abstract: This study aims at shedding light on the revolutions of the Arab Spring, especially in the case of Egypt, where the conceptual side will be reviewed and to identify the most important features and highlights of this event. During the second decade of the twenty-first century, the Arab region has marked a flurry of unusual at the political level. This flurry has created a very important phenomenon not only for the Arab region, but also worldwide. This phenomenon is known as the Arab Spring, which came as a result of the ongoing suffering of the peoples of the region from injustice, oppression and inequality in all spheres of life. Thus, to achieve this purpose, revolutionary concepts and the theoretical concept of revolution will be analyzed and studied, a comparison between western concept and the Arab revolution, as well as concentration on a particular focus on the concept of Egyptian Spring and the most prominent features of it. Through this work will be provided insights on the reality of revolutionary concepts and specifically the depth of the dimensions, aspects and characteristics that belong to the concept of the Revolution of Arab Spring in general, and Egypt in particular. There is no doubt that the study of this event cannot be stopped to the limits or the time, and that this event is not just about Arab nations or peoples of the Middle East region, but it has to do will all the peoples of the world living under the pressure of the same reasons and conditions of these revolutions.

Keywords: Middle East; Revolution; Coup; Dictatorship; Democratization

1. Introduction

Arab Spring came as a thunderous explosion. In fact, the whole world was surprised not only for the desire for political change and the elimination of permanent authoritarian rule and corruption, but because this event was an unified phenomenon on its goals, slogans and scenarios, which represents in the same time an unique event in world history and the history of the arabs (Jweideh & Khalaf,

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2012, p. 3). In fact, these revolutions were strong and unexpected, at least at that time. Arab region has not seen an example like this in the past, even decades ago. These revolutions have created a clear way for a modern change, and even slamming the consumed political regimes of dictatorship. Winds of these revolutions, at the beginning came from Tunisia (*Revolution of Bouazizi*¹), then moved into Tahrir Square in Egypt and from there to Libya, Yemen, Syria, Bahrain, at an accelerated pace and strong (Ismail, 2013, p. 71).

The revolutions of the Arab Spring as an important stage in the history of the Arab peoples, are not significant in comparison with the phases of the fight against colonialism and liberation from it. Arabs are united in previous periods of time, as the period of the forties and fifties of the twentieth century against Western colonization. They do the same today in the era of Arab revolutions, but for other objectives such as democratization, freedom and true participation in the future (Jweideh & Khalaf, 2012, p. 3).

Arab countries are lagging behind global transformation under the pressure of miserable political and social conditions, causing the isolation of these peoples away from the aspirations of freedom and prosperity, as many other countries in the world (Jweideh & Khalaf, 2012, p. 4).

2. Concepts of the Revolution

There is no doubt that the concepts or specific definitions of revolution are generally many. But all the concepts converge in a certain definition that means “*a fundamental and comprehensive change of the prevailing conditions, and tendency towards the creation of new situations in its place, widespread. Moving from the painful truth to a desired future or what people aspire*”. Also, revolutionary concepts have to do with the mass popular actions and measures to overthrow and change the existing system to another system. This new system has to be in compatible with the goals and aspirations of the People, as well as to achieve a

¹ Bouazizi or *Tarek Tayeb Mohamed Bouazizi*, a young tunisian. On friday, December 17, 2010, ignited himself with fire, in front of the building of municipal city “Sidi Bouzid” in protest against the confiscation of his wheelchair by the municipal authorities in the city of Sidi Bouzid, which he used to sell fruits and vegetables to earn a living. The municipal authorities have refused to accept an appeal from his side against police Fadia Hamdi, of which slapped the audience and said (in French: *Dégage*) or go away. This question became the slogan of the Tunisian revolution to overthrow the President, and the voice of all the successive Arab revolutions.

huge change in people's lives in general. In the same context, revolutionary concepts may be disclosed as following: “the state of demolition of the prevailing reality and building a new situation, which covers all aspects of life, whether political, economic, social or cultural that means a comprehensive situation and not biased or partial” (Grup Autorësh, 2012, p. 134).

Can be said that the common or popular concept of revolution is an uprising against unjust rulers. Considering that the revolution in his course and concept may take several types, as follows:

- **People's Revolution**, as the case of the French Revolution in 1789 and the revolution in Ukraine, which was known as the Orange Revolution in November 2004;
- **Military Revolution**, or the so-called “*Military coup*”. In this case, the military takes control of the government and power through the overthrow of the regime by military force, in order to seize power and personal gains. Such coups dominated in Latin America the era of the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century. Also, these coups occur continuously in the Continent of Africa;
- **Resistance Revolution**, in this case, the revolution takes the form of resistance against colonial invaders as was the case in the Algerian Revolution in the years 1954-1962. (Al Meniawy, 2011, pp. 5-6).

Worthwhile to mention what was said by Aristotle in his book “Politics” that all models of governance are prone to revolution, including the two main governing models, they are: *Oligarchy*¹ or *Democracy* (Bishara, 2011, p. 2).

2.1. The Theoretical Concept of the Revolution

The study of different definitions of the meaning and concept of revolution shows that it is based on a number of different dimensions and variables and their interpretation of the phenomenon of the revolution. Thus, some definitions are concentrated in the collapse of the social, economic and political order located between the effort to build another alternative and new system, and some are centered on the need for revolutionary group (which has seized power), to have a program of change that gives them legitimacy. While other definitions believe that

¹ *Oligarchy* means the rule of the minority. It is a form of government so that political power be limited in the hands of a small class of society, which is characterized by wealth, authority or military power. The word “oligarchy” is derived from the Greek word “Oligarkhia”.

the revolution is one of the stages of evolution of the crisis experienced by the political community. However, it was noted that all the different visions of the concept of revolution require the need to connect the revolution with the expected changes, in particular the change in the structure and powers of the state or social institutions. In addition, the concept of revolution is closely linked with the presence of several instances of violence by the masses or political system, or both (Group of Authors, 2012, p. 83).

However, there should be a distinction between revolution as a phenomenon, which eventually results in a change in the structure and institutions of the state, and between the manifestations of popular violence organized or unorganized, which does not reach the level of revolution, as happening in separatist movement.

Revolutions generally have four interrelated concepts, which distinguish them from any other form of community violence, and they are as follows:

1. The process of political and social changes happen through violence;
2. The occurrence of the event (revolution) in a certain time and moment;
3. Programi i ndryshimit të miratohet nga grupi revolucionar. Ky program përfshinë të paktën linjat e përgjithshme politike, ekonomike dhe sociale të nevojshme për ndryshim;
4. Revolution values directly associated with the ideology of revolutionary group, which adopts a process of change (Group of Authors, 2012, p. 84).

2.2 The Concept of Revolution Far From Western Forms and Strategic Planning

Many researchers in their social and political studies, support their interpretation of the concept of revolution that the revolution is the consequence and result of the stronger, unimaginable and unexpected political and social crisis, this on one hand. On the other hand, others as tunisian philosopher *Al Sharni* believes that the revolution is never expected or planned, and not subject to the principle of historical causality. Rather it is a radical change beyond every history, explanatory mind and strategic planning. In this context, Professor Samir Abu Zaid is fully in line with Al Sharni in his opinion, but he believes that the revolution in his concept of scientific means “a state of nonlinear situation and irregular change”, or so-called “complex systems”. This situation (revolution) to be contrasted against the state or social stability, which is known as “linear systems”. When, in the first case,

the social changes cannot be subject of causality or possibility of forecasting the events, for this, they are complex systems. While in the second case, the social changes are subject to principle of causality and predictability. Thus, researchers have been able to achieve some general laws (probabilities) of revolutions, such as counter-revolution law. These laws try to overcome and deal with these changes, and at the same time to determine how to deal in a scientific manner with them, whether at the close level (social change) or wide level (civilizational change) (Participants in a group debate, 2012, pp. 31-32).

3. Definition of the Revolution in the Egyptian Case

The word revolution by *Nicolaj Kopernikus* in his book “*De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*”, represents an astronomical term. This thesis scientifically explained the revolution within the accurate Latin meaning as follows: “The Revolution as an astronomical term, represents the usual circular motion of the star and because this movement is outside human influence, it can not be resisted” (Arendt, 2008, pp. 57-58).

In this context, the idea of revolution, which has preoccupied the minds of revolutionaries, has determined that the revolutionaries are the process agents in order to eliminate safely the end of an old world and to achieve the birth of a new world (Arendt, 2008, p. 58).

Thus, the Egyptian revolution as one of the most important revolutions of the Arab Spring and the revolutions of the modern era is not far from the previous understanding. Egypt's Revolution, which broke out on January 25, 2011, came as a result of political theory “*political accumulation*”, in work and on the movement. As is known in the science of politics that output it is the product of *input and interactions*, as well as the output repetition ultimately leads to continuous accumulation, driven by force to achieve change process. In fact, this is what actually happened in the case of Egypt. Revolution does not come from nothing, and does not break due to the outbreak of the other revolutions in neighboring countries. Otherwise, the Iranian Islamic revolution led by Imam Khomeini in 1979, had the same cause and the impact of the outbreak of revolutions in all Arab countries. However, the concept of revolution in Egypt's case can be estimated as a result of the reality of painful social movements, moving against helpless people. This reality reflects a power failure during the past several years, from one station

to another station until it reached the highest point of failure. This point is actually at the same time, a turning point of the people, the way to express their claims that are occupied by an authoritarian system. This tyrannical regime has failed in all stations to respond to the simplest and most necessary rights. For this was a natural manifestation of mobility of angry people to achieve the process of change (Group of Authors, 2012, pp. 138-143).

Robespierre says that violent movement of the revolution, is continuously growing due to the "*crimes of tyranny*" on one hand, and with "*the advance of freedom*" on the other. Thus, both factors pushes and strengthen one another, to be along a movement or the so-called "*developed violence*" (Arendt, 2008, p. 66).

Thus, we can say that the Egyptian revolution on January 25, 2011, in its concept is:

- Massive and peaceful popular event;
- Case of categorical change to the existing deplorable conditions;
- Case of destruction of reality that prevails;
- Case of building a new situation in all aspects of life;
- Different case from social movements and revolutionary sided movements;
- Completely different case from those coups, because it has sought a complete rejection of the old terms and expressed the strong need for the structure of a state and the reality of the new social order to achieve the expectations of the people to pass on a better social life (Group of Authors, 2012, pp. 134-135).

People's revolution of 25 January 2011, has given Egypt not only a new twist to modify it but other benefits are numerous, the basic meanings of the concept of a peaceful world revolution, because of what has been shown by a significant increase in war and ongoing human quest for a better life under conditions of freedom and justice. The concept of peaceful Egyptian revolution has imposed itself in political thought and attention of philosophers, writers and analysts. As stated for example in the book of writer Brian Urquhart *A revolution without violence*, "the revolution of the Egyptian people is one of the most important revolutions and uprisings that the world has experienced in the last three decades, in the way of seeking freedom and justice" (Alhefnawi, 2011, pp. 46-47).

3.1. Characteristics of Revolution

Ibrahim Ghali says: *“People's revolutions are a repetition era in the history of nations and peoples. They exist between phases, previous historical periods, and an era of widespread at the time of the outbreak of the revolution, and in the middle of a next phase build on analyzing the details, events, principles and objectives of the revolution”* (El Borai, 2012, p. 289).

Based on the foregoing, we can say that what happened on January 25, 2011, was an unparalleled event in the history of Egyptian political movement, a date when the masses came out to express their anger against the miserable general conditions. At that moment, people have freely expressed the dissatisfactions of a terrible era of accumulation of many problems in all aspects of life, for more than thirty years. In fact, the revolution broke out, and with it broke out all the pain and suffering of the people during that period. There is no doubt that this revolution is unique and different from what preceded, in many spheres. The most important characteristics of this revolution can be defined as follows (Amin, 2011, pp. 7-11):

- The size of the masses involved in the demonstrations and protests have been extremely large and unprecedented in the history of Egypt;
- The repetition of demonstrations and protests at the same time in many countries, as in big or small cities, and not only in the Egyptian capital Cairo or Alexandria. This happened only during the revolution of 1919;
- Significant contribution of the intellectual class, educated people and students, who belong to different social classes;
- The presence of a major change in the motives of the revolution of 25 January compared with the motives of previous Egyptian revolutions. While the previous revolutions were focused on the expulsion and evacuation of occupiers in order to achieve freedom and independence, the revolution of 25 January was intended to achieve freedom, social justice, protection of human rights and to achieve a better life for citizens. Therefore, this revolution was regarded as *“Revolution on typical Egyptian personality”* (El Borai, 2012, p. 289);
- Parties, political organizations and syndicates have played a very small role in this revolution, and the greater role had the youth;

- This revolution is considered a revolution against the Lafraain rule, that has to do with the rule of a tyrant, which lasted for more than thirty years. This was the people's revolution and for the benefit of the people. That means: reaching the simply understanding of democracy (El Borai, 2012, p. 290);
- A new generation of revolutions. Maybe it was the urgent need to use social networks, in order to get rid of the restrictions imposed on the Egyptian people, who have prevented them to express directly their opinion, and deprived them of the exercise of democracy lost many years ago. ***People are driven to support revolution because they have not found another solution.*** In fact, democracy prevents violence and revolution. In the presence of democracy, violence and revolution become unjustified. Even they regarded as irrational actions, chaos and destruction. In the presence of democracy, people enjoy security and stability (Al Ahmari, 2012, p. 201);
- The emergence of the movements of political Islam and their coming to power as a result of natural movement under conditions of persecution and political oppression for years before the revolution (Tlady, 2012, p. 12);
- Attractive spontaneous revolution, because it was a revolution without planning and without previous targets or specifics, but more than that, it was a revolution without a leader. Simply, was a revolution of young people, to achieve the requirements of all classes of people, whether inside or outside the country;
- This revolution is the revolution of all sects of the community, regardless of economic, social and religious inequalities of community. This revolution swept together the young people of all political forces and the community of intellectuals, Muslim and Christian clerics, classes of rich, middle and poor people, workers and peasants, men and women;
- The most important feature of this revolution is that the demonstrations were peaceful, so it was known as the "*White Revolution*". Although the crowds were millions, but violence was disappeared by the protesters, who were eager to voice their demands in the advanced and civilized way (El Borai, 2012, p. 291);
- Is a revolution of the abolition of fear. The Egyptian people has suffered for more than thirty years before the revolution, and in particular at the end of that

period, from the fear of the ruling National Democratic Party, dishonest businessmen and internal security forces;

- Finally, this revolution is regarded as the “revolution of the fall of the Arab Berlin Wall”. Through this revolution it became clear that the Arab nations urgently need freedom, justice and democracy imposed from within and not from outside. Through this democracy, which if achieved, Arab countries could unite in perfect shape, and in no way from other Western regional projects, as i.e., European Union (El Borai, 2012, p. 292).

4. Conclusion

Over many years, countries of the Middle East have suffered from the scourge of foreign occupation, losses and theft of their resources and assets. But today this region is suffering from the occupation, but of another kind and serious one. This type has to do with domestic occupation or in other words, the invasion of corrupt dictatorships spread to every corner of the state and government. The seriousness and danger of this type focuses not only on the theft of resources, wealth and goods to these countries, but trying to permanent possession of such goods, and above all attempt to leave them as an inheritance.

All concepts related to Revolution agree a certain sense with regard to the definition of revolution, this definition means “complete and radical change of the prevailing conditions, and tend towards the creation of new situations in its place, widespread.”

The case of the Egyptian revolution has represented a unique and different from the revolutions of the Arab Spring in other countries in many features, such as the percentage of scale which reached several times for more than twenty million people at the same time by all categories and sects of people in a peaceful way, increasing the role of Islamists dramatically and their arrival at the head of the Egyptian rule and the lack of presence of the leader of this revolution and other.

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