

FOR FREEDOM OR SECURITY?

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FOR FREEDOM OR SECURITY? A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF EGYPT'S UNFINISHED REVOLUTION

...the bells of glory that announced to the world the good news that the uncountable time of eternity had come to an end.

— *Gabriel Garcia Marquez*

In a revolution, as in a novel, the most difficult part to invent is the end.

— *Alexis de Tocqueville*

ON ORIENTALISM, THE EGYPTIAN 2011 REVOLUTION, AND PARTICIPATORY LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

On the eve of the ouster of Muhammad Morsi, Egypt's first democratically elected president, many Egyptians took to the street to celebrate. They believed that they were reclaiming the revolution of 2011 and ridding Egypt of Morsi's dictatorial grip on power. Watching the news in the west, a different picture emerged: the ouster was understood as an anti-democratic coup against a well-meaning president. The White House was careful not to call the ouster a military coup to avoid jeopardizing foreign aid agreements with Egypt but continued to condemn Morsi's overthrow. After the events of August 14, 2013, when the Egyptian military cleared two Muslim Brotherhood sit-in sites, *The New York Times* published an article titled "Arab Spring Countries Find Peace Is Harder Than Revolution" which suggested that Arab countries such as Egypt fall into violent political competition because of the absence of democratic structures and the strength of the military. The victims here are democracy advocates such as the Muslim Brotherhood, whose members pay a dear price for resisting military tyranny.¹ It's a fate that, from the perspective of the *Times*, Egypt shares with Syria and Libya. In this narrative, Egyptians, like Arabs generally, are hapless and

¹ Ben Hubbard, and Rick Gladstone, "Arab Spring Countries Find Peace Is Harder Than Revolution," *The New York Times*, August 14, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/> (accessed August 14, 2013).

naïve about democracy, essentially zealous and prone to sectarian and ethno-religious violence.

Indeed, in surveying the statements of the White House and the European Union, in addition to liberal western voices, we arrive at a simplistic narrative: Egyptians elect a president democratically. He struggles because Egypt is at a crossroads politically and economically. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), desiring to monopolize power, orchestrates *a military coup against Morsi, the first democratically elected president*. Thus, to the frustration of the American and European do-gooders, Egyptians and Arabs are *incapable of democracy*. This pervasive view has its appeal in that it simplifies the political situation in Egypt by falling back on a pre-packaged orientalist story, while self-righteous indignation allows the liberal west to pat itself on the back for trying to bring democracy to the Middle East. But we cannot understand what happened in Egypt if we situate it in the realm of “unique experiences of the Orient.” The Egyptian experience with Morsi, despite its historical specificities, remains ordinary. Nothing that happened in Egypt stands in marked opposition to what has happened in Latin America, Europe or the United States when each were faced with legitimacy crises or organized religious violence.

In light of the above, my essay aims to clear away misconceptions surrounding the uprising of 2011, the tumultuous Morsi reign and his ouster, and the role of Islamic movements in Egyptian public sphere. In doing so, I will advance the argument that the struggle for a social democracy in Egypt after toppling the Mubarak regime does not speak to an Egyptian incapacity for democracy but to the difficulties that face people who emerge out of political tyranny and find themselves lacking civil society organizations necessary for building a functioning liberal state. My argument departs from the following two points: the uprising of 2011 which toppled the Mubarak regime and demanded a liberal democratic state constitutes a revolutionary moment; and religious organizations have no place in the public sphere and are a hindrance to democracy.

Describing the events of 2011 as a revolution is contentious. It is the case that the leftist conception of revolution sees no room for the state or for electoral politics, arguing instead that direct participation in politics necessitates abolishing both the state and the law that legitimates it and relying instead on grassroots collectives. This is because liberal states in the West such as the United States have proved repressive and hostile to civil society and direct democratic participation. However, this view takes for granted that Western

countries such as the United States and France arrived at liberal statehood only after successive wars and revolutions; it is only after it became evident that the liberal state project has failed that we on the left began to address the limits of the state. But the situation in Egypt is markedly different. Egyptians toppled a tyrannical oligarchic state with a dream of creating a liberal democratic state, which in the history of Egypt has never been achieved. Egyptians took to the streets in 2011 demanding a democracy within the frame of the state and under the guide of a constitution and in the form of elections and checks and balances. This is a radical demand given the history of the Egyptian state, which may be a necessary step toward a liberation project that does away with the state. Furthermore, I believe that we must respect the Egyptian will for autonomy, and the Egyptian conception of the democratic society in which they wish to live.

Secondly, I do not see room for religious institutions in the public sphere. As such, my argument may be read as an attack on Islam. It is not. I understand that for many Egyptians, there remains the belief that Islam can exist in public, and that it can form the basis for law. The argument made is that Islam has been distorted by this or that politician but that its pure teachings carry within them the seeds of social justice. The German Christian Democratic Party and the Republic of Iran are often used as examples of successful religious politics. I have no time to discuss these two cases; it suffices to say that the Christian Democratic Party is still subordinated to the German secular state, and that Iran is not a participatory democracy. More importantly, there has never been a case where religion, be it Islam, Christianity or Judaism, has not been misused by opportunists and cynics to advance laws that disadvantage large sections of the population. For the minute religion becomes part of public life, non-believers become stripped of their moral equality as citizens. On the opposite side, the only way to ensure that Islam is protected from the corrosive effects of politics is to disallow politicians' callous use of the faith to advance their own agendas at the expense of social justice.

This brings us to the tumultuous rise of the Brotherhood to power and the collapse of the revolutionary moment of 2011, a regressive turn for Egypt which is the result of the absence of a strong civil society. I take the position of Jurgen Habermas to argue that the existence of diverse collective organizations, such as labor unions and literary associations, which enjoy relative autonomy from the state and exist as intellectual and political forums for dissent and debate are crucial for maintaining participatory democratic society and restraining the power of the state.

To advance my position in the essay I begin by examining the events that led Egyptians to take to Tahrir Square demanding the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak and note that it was a revolution for both democracy and bread. I focus on the transition to democratic elections and the rise of Islamism to power and suggest that the ascendancy of Islamist parties is the result of the absence of civil society, and that the turn to Islamism is an historic moment which is connected to failed modernization policies. I demonstrate that after it became evident that the Islamist project had failed politically and economically, Egyptians began to organize collectively. I note that the demand for recall was a necessary step for Egyptians who believed that Morsi could no longer be the legitimate leader of Egypt. I argue that while the turn to military intervention is not ideal, it was necessary because of the Islamist turn to violence. I conclude by discussing the challenges that face the liberal social democratic project.

FROM THE MUBARAK REGIME TO TAHRIR SQUARE:

Events at home, at work, in the street - these are the bases for a story.

— *Naguib Mahfouz*

On January 25, 2011, Egyptians took to the streets protesting the Mubarak Regime. The protest, led by young men and women was aptly called “Revolution against Torture, Poverty, Corruption and Unemployment.” It was fuelled by much publicized incidents of police brutality. The police were known for torturing common criminals and bystanders, sexually assaulting detainees, and terrorizing poor and working class Egyptians.² The police’s iron fist rule guarded and preserved Mubarak’s regime. It controlled dissent by planting informants in neighborhoods, fixing national and local elections, and monitoring television news content. It brutally dispersed protests and civil disobedience. But it was the death of Khaled Said which galvanized the masses and came to be a symbol for the struggle of Egyptians against repression. Said, the young man who was fatally beaten by police officers in June 2010 in Alexandria after he was caught videotaping them sharing drugs obtained from a drug bust, had made clear both the police’s entrenchment in the everyday life of Egyptians and its impunity.³

² Jose Antonio Vargas. “Spring Awakening: How an Egyptian Revolution Began on Facebook,” *The New York Times*, February 17, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com> (accessed February 17, 2012); and Luke Harding. “US reported ‘Routine’ Police Brutality in Egypt, WikiLeaks Cables Show,” *The Guardian*, January 28, 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com> (accessed July, 12 2013).

³ Ahram Online. “Khaled Said: The Face that Launched a Revolution,” *Ahram Online* June 06, 2012, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/> (accessed October 9, 2013).

But while police brutality was the immediate catalyst, it was Egypt's deep economic and political problems that fermented the revolt. Hosni Mubarak came to power in 1981 after the assassination of Anwar Sadat. In an attempt to distinguish himself from his predecessor, Mubarak initially relaxed the authoritarian grip of the government. He also adopted populist reform policies, and while he continued the neo-liberal open-door economic policies of Sadat, Mubarak took on infrastructure projects in the 1980s to soften the blow of privatization. Mubarak resisted IMF loans because of the unpopularity of the structural reforms that condition them –until 1991. Falling oil prices and decline in Suez Canal revenues left Egypt in need of financial rescue. The costs were dire. Structural reforms meant slashing pensions and destroying subsidies and welfare. With the unpopular neo-liberal measures, the government turned to political repression. Further, despite Egypt's growing GDP, Egyptians did not reap the benefits of Egypt's growth because of Mubarak's cronyism and nepotism. Wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few, and privatization and liberalization of trade and state assets profited Mubarak's allies and friends. By the early 2000s, his son Gamal Mubarak, a former investment banker, took over the governing party, the Democratic National Party, and became Mubarak's top adviser. In doing so, he too surrounded himself with his allies and friends, all capitalist business elites.⁴ But Gamal was not only interested in capitalizing on Egypt's resources, he also had his eye on the presidential throne. The problem is that by the 2000s the working class was further impoverished while the middle class continued to crumble, and the regime had lost legitimacy opting for everyday police terror. The neat structure had begun to crack.

It became more difficult to keep Egyptian citizens (or any group of citizens for that matter) isolated. Liberalization of trade and finance was concurrent with liberalization of cultural exchange. The telecommunication and media explosion of the late 1990s and early 2000s brought Egypt closer to the outside world. On the one hand, television brought home western life, which even when appearing through the lens of Occidentalism as decadent, was still seen as free, happy and dignified. Telephone and Internet communication with exiled relatives living in the West told of a different world where rule of law prevailed.⁵ In comparison, Mubarak's regime seemed especially suffocating

⁴ Tarek Osman, *Egypt on the Brink: From Nasser to Mubarak* (New Heaven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 134-145, 225-230

⁵ To be sure, we know that the police in the United States targets minorities and repress youth. However, even if we take into account widening inequalities in the west, the material living standard and the (relative) political freedom in the west remain better than they are in Egypt and other Arab countries, at least from the perspective of Egyptians and Arab nationals, and as such become a model for Arab countries.

and ossified. On the other hand, cable news media and YouTube universalized the struggle of Egyptians. Repression often works to prevent collective organization and dissent, so that one's struggles become individualized, but videos of police brutality and harassment shared widely on the internet brought disenfranchised Egyptians closer to one another, and to other Arabs. It became increasingly clear that the regime was out of touch with everyday Egyptians.

World development reports noted that Egypt's unemployment rate averaged at 10.3% from 1993 to 2013. In early 2011, the unemployment rate was estimated at 10%, with youth unemployment at 25%.⁶ This is in addition to stagnated wages, which were unable to keep up with rising costs of life, despite government fuel subsidies and rations. In response to neoliberal reforms and cronyism, Egyptians frequently took to the streets to voice their discontent. Workers, students and middle class professionals had staged protests and sit-ins and clashed with security forces frequently over food subsidies, working conditions, housing and rigged elections, but the protests were always crushed and the demands fell on deaf ears. Egypt began to suffer problems which were largely foreign to it prior to the Mubarak regime, such as the rise of child homelessness and the formation of illegal improvised housing projects near cemeteries, both of which elicited feelings of repulsion and apathy from state officials. The mood of Egyptian popular culture changed with the economic and social downturns of the Mubarak years. Film and soap-operas narrated stories of young and educated men and women unable to secure living wages and become independent adults. Talk shows warned of "moral crises" of hedonism and sex destroying the social fabric of Egypt, a conservative country where out of wedlock cohabitation and sexual relations are prohibited and marriage and children are encouraged. People joked about the government's subsidized bread, made with "nutritious material" such as sawdust, and left on the dirty streets to be picked up by the poor.

It was the confluence of the above factors that lead to the 2011 uprising. When Egyptians took to the streets, Mubarak first opted for a violent police and military response. It was the standard response. Unable to curtail the anger, he introduced superficial political solutions. In an attempt to win the Egyptian people over, Mubarak reshuffled his government, appointed new cabinet members and named a new vice president, Ahmed Shafiq. But it

⁶ Brad Plumer, "The Economic Roots of Egypt's Crisis," *The Washington Post*, July 03, 2013. <http://www.washingtonpost.com> (accessed August 14, 2013)

was too late. Egypt had reached a boiling point exacerbated by revolts in Tunisia, the much publicized police brutality, and the death of protesters in the Square at the hands security forces. The collective mood of Egypt had shifted. By the end of January 2011, the military recognized the legitimacy of the protests, implicitly supporting the revolt. Resisting and warning of forthcoming chaos, Mubarak resigned on February 11, 2011.

During this period a coalition between secular youth protestors and the Muslim Brotherhood formed. While protests are not new to Egypt, they were usually crushed swiftly. This time was different — the protestors had no intention of going home, having withstood the first few days of violence. However, many did not possess the knowhow of protests and opposition necessary to continue to resist state violence successfully. The Muslim Brotherhood did. Operating as underground organization for most of its life, the Brotherhood is experienced at organizing, mobilizing and combat. The Muslim Brotherhood was in Tahrir Square hand in hand with non-Islamist protestors offering advice and practical tips on handling the military and police forces, such as using pavement blocks for self-defense.⁷ Members of the Muslim Brotherhood waved the Egyptian flag and chanted national slogans. They appeared as Egyptians among Egyptians, irrespective of creed. They gained respect and trust, which later translated into political support.

However, any transition to a new government after the collapse of a tyrannical regime is complex. The absence of civil society creates an obstacle for democracy. This is an obvious and circular point. Repressive states prevent the formation of an independent civil society, and an independent civil society, which is necessary to oppose repressive rule, doesn't exist in repressive states. Egypt offers an illustration. Some periods in Egyptian history appeared more tolerant of civil participation than others; however, by and large, collectives and unions remained under the control of the state. Mubarak's era was no exception. While Egyptians have been politically active in organizing street protests, work-site occupations, and university sit-ins, such actions were disparate; those who dared to protest were terrorized by the police. The state and security forces controlled and infiltrated formal collective organizations. These groups were tolerated only if they did not present threats to the regime. All this is not to suggest that Egyptians do not engage politically, but rather that in the absence of autonomous political and social collectives, the Egyptian will for democracy remains fragmented.

⁷ Mona el-Naggar, "The Legacy of 18 Days in Tahrir Square," *The New York Times*, February 19, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com> (accessed August 01, 2013).

A successful democratic civil society is constituted by diverse collective organizations through which citizens participate in social and political activities. Such associations must be autonomous from the state; they must be forums for the exchange of intellectual and political ideas. In addition, such associations must protect and include minority groups, and they must respect every citizen's right to participate equally and directly in the political process. In short, a functioning civil society must have a vibrant citizenry that can organize collectively to ensure its rights are protected and that the state does not have unrestrained access to power. Civil society makes the political sphere a space where ideas can be debated and contested. It also opposes the split between state and society, which characterizes autocratic and non-participatory democracies today. Civil society does not form overnight, and the collapse of Mubarak's regime and subsequent elections proved how pivotal civil society is for democracy: what we saw in Egypt in 2011 was legitimate anger at a dictator and a genuine will for freedom; however, when it was time to translate the will into action, Egypt was divided along sectarian and parochial lines. The resultant political parties lacked organization, and Islamist enthusiasm took over as majority rule prevailed, leaving political and religious minorities on the margin of politics. The absence of civil society, a consequence of repression, became the central reason for the rise of Islamists to power in 2012.

THE ELECTIONS AND THE ISLAMISTS' RISE TO POWER

When Mubarak was ousted there was a power vacuum. Fearing chaos, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) stepped in. It suspended the constitution, dissolved parliament, and declared a state of emergency until the country held parliamentary and presidential elections. The SCAF's reluctance to hold elections was read by many as an attempt to seize power. The military argued that doing so would protect Egypt from falling into chaos and would grant Egyptian political parties more time to organize. There was a grain of truth to this claim. However, the democratic movement that toppled Mubarak did not want to replace him with one of his cronies. Egyptians feared that the revolution would be betrayed. Once the SCAF stepped back, instead of witnessing a thriving democracy with diverse voices, one saw political Islamism successfully winning over people, while dissenting secular voices were drowned out.

By November 2011, political parties were already campaigning for the People's Assembly, the lower house of parliament which is charged with selecting

the constitutional panel that would draft Egypt's new constitution. Parties formed along familiar ideological lines; Moderate Islamist, ultraconservative Islamist, liberal, and social democratic. Islamists were gaining momentum and popularity by relying on religious slogans. Secular parties ran on civic platforms of economic reforms, but they could not compete with the Islamist parties' promises of Islamic glory, however vague these promises seemed. Additionally, Islamists' history of welfare bolstered their promises of lifting Egypt out of poverty with their "Renaissance Project," an inarticulate project of economic progress with no concrete plans.⁸ The election results came in declaring that Islamists had won the lion's share of People's Assembly seats. The Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party secured 47% of the seats, while the ultraconservative party Al-Nour, won 25% of the seats. Liberal parties such as the Wafd Party lagged behind winning 9%.⁹ The military appointed three women and five Coptic Christians in an attempt to balance the underrepresentation of both groups among the elected body of representatives.¹⁰

After sweeping the parliamentary elections, the Brotherhood secured another victory in June 30, 2012, when Egypt declared Morsi its first democratically elected leader.¹¹ Morsi first entered politics in 2000 as a member of parliament in the Muslim Brotherhood bloc. He was arrested 2008 and again in 2011 during the uprising against Mubarak for political reasons.¹² Emerging as the party's second choice after Khairat El-Shatter was disqualified because of a criminal conviction, he was subsequently pejoratively referred to as the "spare tire," or *istabn*. Morsi was never able to live up to El-Shatter's image, and it seemed that his victory said more about his competition. Morsi won against Ahmed Shafiq, former air force commander and minister of civil aviation whom Mubarak appointed as prime minister in January during the popular uprisings in an attempt to calm the masses. Out of the twenty-three candidates, 10 were disqualified because of technical violations.¹³ The remaining 13 were a mixed

⁸ See Farah Halime, "Egypt's Long-Term Economic Recovery Plan Stalls," *The New York Times*, May 02, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com> (accessed May 02, 2012).

⁹ BBC News, "Egypt's Islamist Parties Win Elections to Parliament," [bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk), <http://www.bbc.co.uk> (accessed August 01, 2013).

¹⁰ The Assembly is made up of 508 seats, 10 of which are reserved for the SCAF, leaving 498 seats up for elections. The military according to the Egyptian constitution has the right to appoint ten members to the parliament. Leila Fadel, "Final Results Confirm Islamists Winners in Egypt's Elections," *The Washington Post*, January 21, 2012. <http://washingtonpost.com> (accessed June 24, 2013).

¹¹ CNN Library, "Mohamed Morsy Fast Facts," [cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com), <http://www.cnn.com> (accessed August 15, 2013).

¹² David D. Kirkpatrick, "Named Egypt's Winner, Islamist Makes History," *The New York Times*, June 24, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com> (accessed June 24, 2012).

¹³ Mohamed Fadel Fahmy, "10 Egyptian Presidential Candidates Disqualified," [cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com/), <http://www.cnn.com/> (accessed August 01, 2013).

bag: some were anonymous novices, while others were seasoned politicians. Egyptians were averse to the latter because of their affiliation with Mubarak.¹⁴ Even then, Morsi's victory was narrow, winning 52% of the vote. In other words, the Brotherhood won because the political arena lacked any real opponents.

The above does not contest the election results, it merely points to the limited political landscape of Egypt after the collapse of the Mubarak regime. The success of the Muslim Brotherhood had many Egyptians erupting with joy. Others were sober. The joyous believed it would usher in economic prosperity. The sober were concerned with the future of Egypt under Islamism. An Islamist-led People's Assembly could threaten to push the country toward conservative Islam, restrict freedoms and marginalize women and Copts. However, the elections were the first free elections in Egypt. The *will of the majority triumphed*, and Egyptians, many of whom never thought they would live to participate in free elections, saw a possibility for change in an Islamist government.

WHY ISLAMISM? A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress
and the protest against real distress.

— Karl Marx

In retrospect, Islamism's ballot victory is not surprising. The conventional wisdom is that the Islamist parties won because they were the most organized. Commentators are correct to note organization as a factor; however, the claim needs to be interrogated further. In reality, the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi rise to power is connected to the general inward turn to religion that Egypt witnessed in the 20th century that gave these groups a strong presence in everyday life. The religious turn is not unique to Egypt. Religious fundamentalism has been global in its reach. Broadly defined, it is a modern religious movement which is "concerned with defining, restoring, and reinforcing the basis of personal and communal identity that is shaken or destroyed by modern dislocation and crises."¹⁵ It seeks to make

¹⁴ Richard Spencer, "Egypt Presidential Elections: The Candidates," *The Telegraph*, May 23, 2012. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk> (accessed July 15, 2013).

¹⁵ Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, "Conclusion: Remaking the State: The Limits of the Fundamentalist Imagination," *Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Politics, Economics, and Militancy*, eds. Martin E. Marty, R. Scott Appleby, John H. Garvey, and Timur Kuran (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 620, and John O. Voll, "Fundamentalism in the Sunni Arab World: Egypt and Sudan," *Fundamentalisms Observed*, eds. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 345-402, 345.

religion's fundamental principles one's guide to dealing with modern life. Fundamentalist movements emerge and succeed during times of anomie and alienation. This may happen in the aftermath of war or socio-economic crises that affect the poor and ails the middle-class. In these moments, the state fails to deliver on modernity's promises of progress and prosperity, creating disaffection and loss. In turn, this affects the legitimacy of the state, leaving open a space for the rise of religious movements. Such movements often succeed in attracting a following because they offer an alternative way of living in the world. If one looks at the history of the Muslim Brotherhood as it vacillates from popularity to obscurity one can see its moments of success paralleling the Egyptian modernization project's moments of failure.

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna, who believed that Egypt's subservience to British colonialism was the result of abandoning Islam. The message of the Society was uncompromising: Islam must be in the everyday life of Muslims. Only then can Egypt gain its true independence as a Muslim nation.¹⁶ While they were able to garner support by preaching in mosques, cafes, and public squares, their success was primarily due to building mosques, hospitals, schools and small industries, meeting the material needs of many Egyptians who had felt the brunt first of the Depression, and then of WWII.¹⁷ The Brotherhood was repressed by Nasser for most of his rule; however, the Six Day War of 1967, which wrought heavy losses upon Egypt, created a space for Islamic fundamentalism. The War was construed in religious terms for both Israelis and Arabs. In Israel, Jewish fundamentalist groups believed that the victory would usher in "the messianic age and the recreation of the kingdom of Israel."¹⁸ In the Arab world, for many Muslims and Christians, the event was a punishment from God for straying from religion. In such tumultuous times, fundamentalist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood found legitimacy among Egyptians both of lower-class and middle-class background who were disillusioned with secularism and nationalism.¹⁹

The call to Islamism continued under the regimes of Anwar al-Sadat and Hosni-Mubarak. Sadat's policies marked a turn from Nasser's socialism and pan-Arabism. Sadat turned to privatization and the "open-door policy" to foreign investment and trade. To quell communists and leftists, Sadat

¹⁶ Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (London: Oxford University Press 1969), 1-10.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8-11, 34-35.

¹⁸ Jeff Haynes, *Religion in Global Politics* (London and New York: Longman, 1998), 134.

¹⁹ Voll, "Fundamentalism in the Sunni Arab World", 345-402, 376.

pardoned formerly imprisoned Muslim Brotherhood members and allowed the Brotherhood to publish its popular magazines and organize welfare programs.²⁰ His tolerance toward the brotherhood was a political maneuver to broaden his political appeal, but it also allowed the Brotherhood to assume welfare functions which the state could no longer fulfill –the Brotherhood softened the blow of neoliberal policies while at the same time shed light on the limits of the secular state in meeting people’s needs. A similar pattern occurred under the reign of Mubarak, with welfare relief efforts used by the Brotherhood and other Islamist groups, as a means to disseminate Islamist ideology. What is often left untold is that many Brotherhood key members are wealthy entrepreneurs and investors who benefitted handsomely from Sadat’s and Mubarak’s neo-liberal policies, a fact which allowed them to engage in charity and missionizing efforts. During the Mubarak period, the Brotherhood, having been a source of relief for Egyptians, was able to call for political participation as an avenue to solve Egypt’s woes the Islamic way. By the 1980s, many Egyptians had already made the full turn to Islam, and liberal and leftist intellectuals had abandoned secularism. It was a ripe moment for the Brotherhood, and indeed, when presented with the opportunity to run for parliamentary elections, they often were able to secure wide support.

Thus, political Islam’s appeal lies in the fissures of state-citizen relations. The disillusionment with the failure to conquer an enemy or break imperial ties, or the alienation produced by modernizing projects which entail privatization and dismantlement of welfare and infrastructure, provide the space for religious fundamentalists to reach out and preach their message. Those who have been alienated by the state see Islamist organizations reaching out with material support and an opportunity to belong to a community of brothers and sisters, and thus come to identify the possibility to meet those needs with Islamism. By the time Mubarak’s regime collapsed, secularism was understood by many as oppressive and heretical. Hunger and destitution were understood by Islamists and their followers to be the result of abandoning Islam and relegating it to private life. The promise Islamists brought was that politics and policies based on sharia would surely rescue Egypt from all its social and economic woes. It is perhaps not surprising that many Egyptians, having lived through Sadat and Mubarak’s darkest years, would have sought hope in Islamist politics.

²⁰ Voll, 345-402, 377-80

Yet, Islamists did not simply win over people with welfare. They engaged in heavy propaganda efforts to defame non-Islamist opposition. To ensure that Islamists would win elections and referenda, affiliated sheiks and television preachers began a fierce campaign denouncing liberalism and secularism, and warning of their dire consequences on Egypt. Sheik Hazem Shouman warned Egyptians that those who want Egypt to be a civil democracy are threatening the fabric of Egyptian society because “liberalism...means that [his] mother will no longer be able to veil... because [veiling] will discriminate between Muslim and Christian women and [liberals] want a state free of discrimination...because liberalism is antithetical to worshipping God...” Sheik Mohammad Yacoub, in the lead up to parliamentary and presidential elections, likened voting to a battle, calling it the “battle of the [ballot] boxes,” where Islamists are guaranteed a victory against a transgressive enemy. Sheik Yousef al-Qaradawi encouraged Muslims to vote yes on the constitutional referendum in his Friday prayer sermons claiming that it would be a vote that would alleviate Egypt’s problems.²¹

FROM SECULAR TO ISLAMIST TYRANNY: THE MORSI REIGN

You are not a benevolent society, nor a political party, nor a local organization having limited purposes. ... You should feel yourselves the bearers of the burden which all others have refused.

— *Hasan al-Banna*

Soon after the Islamist rise to power, Egyptian politics began to devolve, while its dreams of social and economic justice were fading. The drafting of Egypt’s post-revolution constitution “Constitution of the Revolution,” Morsi’s expansion of his powers at the expense of the legislative and judiciary branches, and his inability to improve Egypt’s economy remain the most glaring examples of his failure. It should be recalled that soon after the People’s Assembly was elected, representatives formed the Constituent Panel in charge of drafting the constitution. The panel of 100 members featured 66 Islamists. Half of the panel was selected from the People’s Assembly itself. Confirming the fears of Copts, secularists and women, Islamists working on drafting the country’s constitution deliberately excluded them. Egyptians again took to the street in protest. Non-Islamists members of the People’s Assembly boycotted the parliamentary sessions and called for judiciary intervention into what it deemed an assault on Egypt’s diverse makeup. The

²¹ Contact author for video links, which are in Arabic.

Administrative Court disbanded the Constituent Panel because it contained members of the People's Assembly.²² On June 12, 2012, the People's Assembly along with the Shura Council elected a new Constituent Panel. In an attempt to make the Panel representative of Egypt, four seats were reserved for the Christian Churches, including the Coptic Church. Nonetheless, secularist and Coptic members of the Constituent Panel boycotted the drafting sessions. The Panel still featured members of the Assembly, a fact which by November had again placed the new Constituent Panel under threat of dissolution by the Supreme Constitutional Court.²³

The conflict did not end there. On June 14, 2012 the Supreme Constitutional Court dissolved the People's Assembly, days before the presidential electoral results were announced. The Court argued that one-third of the chamber's seats, which should have been reserved for independents, had been won by candidates with party affiliations. Islamists argued that the decision was politically motivated — the Court and Supreme Council of Armed Forces sought to weaken the Islamist political influence by dissolving the parliament because they anticipated a Muslim Brotherhood presidential win.²⁴ The decision angered Egyptians of different political persuasions who feared that legislative power would consequently be placed at the hands of the military, or the anticipated new president.

In the midst of this legitimacy crisis, Morsi began his presidency by making his presence known. He defied the court's ruling and issued a decree ordering the Assembly to convene, only three weeks after it had been dissolved. The Court nullified Morsi's decree, but showing contempt for the Court, Morsi insisted that it had no authority to nullify presidential decrees. It was a symbolic victory for Morsi as he appeared decisive in the face of what he believed was a politicized judiciary. Morsi soon reversed his position, accepted the Court order, and assumed legislative powers until the formation of a new Assembly.²⁵ In reality, Morsi was testing the limits of his power. On November 22, 2012, he issued another decree protecting his decisions as well

²² Leila Fadel, "Liberals and Leftists Resign from Constitution-Writing Panel in Egypt," *The Washington Post*, March 25, 2012, <http://washingtonpost.com> (accessed June 24, 2013).

²³ David D. Kirkpatrick and Mayy E Sheikh, "Citing Deadlock, Egypt's Leader Seizes New Power and Plans Mubarak Retrial," *The New York Times*, November 22, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com> (accessed November 22, 2012).

²⁴ Jeffrey Fleishman, "Egypt Court Dissolves Parliament, Keeps Mubarak Ally on Ballot," *Los Angeles Times*, June 14, 2012, <http://latimes.com/> (accessed June 24, 2013).

²⁵ Jeffrey Fleishman and Reem Abdellatif, "A New Turn in Egypt's Power Play Clash with Troops," *Los Angeles Times*, July 11, 2012, <http://latimes.com> (accessed June 24, 2013).

as the Constituent Panel from judiciary oversight. Ignoring protests from critics and opponents, Morsi issued the decree to speed the process of writing Egypt's new constitution. A draft was hastily written by the panel without the input of non-Islamists, and presented to Morsi on November 29, 2012. Hiding behind the clout of the revolution, Morsi put the constitution draft up for public referendum.²⁶

In the period leading up to the referendum, Islamists accused the opposition bloc of holding the country's progress hostage. But the opposition had grounds for concern. To be sure, the constitution is a document of law that is supposed to realize democratic ideals. A democratic modern constitution therefore must ensure the freedom and legal equality for all citizens; thus, guaranteeing that citizens cannot infringe upon each other's basic rights, including the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression. It also must guarantee protection from arbitrary exercise of state power by placing limits on the state's relationship with its citizens, and by creating equal and independent branches of government at the executive, legislative and judiciary levels which are subject to checks and balances. None of this can be achieved legitimately without first granting equal political participation to all citizens, and second by opening a space for deliberation where ideas have to be rationally justified in secular terms not religious ones.²⁷ The above goals are indeed difficult to achieve. They entail working with legal experts, in addition to various delegates and representatives of the civil society organizations. Yet, this is precisely what was absent from the panel writing Egypt's constitution. The process was dominated by Islamists with no political or legal expertise and little regard for pluralism.²⁸

In the absence of deliberation the Islamists succeeded in writing a constitution that had made Sharia the foundation of Egyptian legislation, subverted the power of the constitution to lawmakers, and expanded the president's authority at the expense of the other branches of power. For instance, Article 2 states that the principles of Sharia are the primary basis of legislation. Article 4 notes that al-Azhar is the sole authority on Sharia and must be consulted on matters relating to Sharia. Aside from the problem of Sharia

²⁶ Aya Batrawy and Maggie Michael, "Egypt Votes in Final Phase of Referendum on Islamist-Backed Constitution as Vice President and Central Bank Governor Stand Down," *The Independent*, December 22, 2012, <http://www.independent.co.uk> (accessed June 27, 2013).

²⁷ Jurgen Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (New Hampshire: Polity Press, 2008), 120-21.

²⁸ Jeffrey Fleishman, "Egypt Adopts Draft Constitution after Marathon Session," *Los Angeles Times*, November 29, 2012, <http://latimes.com> (accessed July 12, 2013).

being contentious, granting al-Azhar this power subordinates legislative and judicial branches of government to al-Azhar — a religious institution that according to the same Article is independent of the state. Finally, Articles 139 and 147 extended the president's powers by allowing the president to appoint the prime minister, civil servants and military officials. Article 176 subverts the judicial authority to the executive branch by allowing the president to appoint Supreme Constitutional Court judges without legislative approval. The constitution which is supposed to set the foundation for laws to limit the tyranny of government had become a tool for Islamist authoritarianism.²⁹

On December 22, 2012, the Islamist constitution was approved by 64% of voters in a two-round referendum in which only 32% of Egypt's eligible voting population participated.³⁰ This is of note because it demonstrates the inefficacy of crude majoritarian rule. Despite the low turnout, the vote bolstered the Islamists who touted that the majority has spoken, and that this is the democracy the liberals want. But it is precisely what the opposition in Egypt did not want — Majority rule cannot be a legitimate form of democratic engagement in societies that have “permanent minorities,”³¹ the will of whom would always be ignored and swallowed up by the votes of the majority. In a country that is 90% Muslim, and 10% Christian, a majority rule with no legal limits to protect the rights of the Christian minority is illegitimate and oppressive. If we take into account the fact that there are cultural, religious and political differences between and within Muslims and Christians in Egypt we arrive at a country that is characterized by pluralism which cannot be encompassed by a narrow Islamist constitution. The political and cultural diversity in Egypt requires a form of democracy that goes beyond simple majority rule; thus, the opposition was correct in insisting on subjecting the constitution to judicial review.

²⁹ For the full text of the constitution see State Information Service, “The Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt,” *State Information Service: Your Gateway to Egypt*, <http://www.sis.gov.eg/newvr/theconstitution.pdf>, (Accessed August 25, 2013).

³⁰ Abdel-Rahman Hussein, “Distrust and Apathy Hit Disputed Referendum in Egypt,” *The Guardian*, December 22, 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/> (accessed December 23, 2012).

³¹ Anthony Arblaster, *Democracy* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) 70-71.

THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF ISLAMISM WITH THE LIBERAL STATE PROJECT

It is clear Egypt lacks a strong civil society, which reduces electoral politics to a tool for individuals to act in their own interest, with little regard for their fellow citizens. Apologists may note that religious institutions such as mosques and churches constitute a part of Egyptian civil society. However, we must be cautious advancing this view. Participation in the public sphere requires exchange of ideas in a language that is both accessible to all citizens and open to contestation. Religious institutions hold views which are otherworldly; thus, sacred and beyond doubt, and as such cannot enter the public sphere on equal footing as secular ideas. Participation in the public sphere assumes equality and freedom of all citizens, irrespective of their religious belief system or lack thereof. The process of political deliberation is necessarily supportive of dissent and difference. For religious institutions, those who deviate from religious dogmas cannot be seen as moral equals, which necessarily excludes them from the common space of political participation.³² Furthermore, collective organizations use the public sphere to bring forth ideas that are subject to debate by citizens who can speak freely and without fear. The existence of religious institutions could undermine freedom of expression, since criticism of religious convictions is often equated with contempt that warrants punishment.

If we look at Egypt during the Morsi reign, we can see that Islamist participation in the public sphere repeatedly violated the above conditions. Islamists refuse secular deliberation of ideas and hide behind “Sharia” to silence the opposition. Furthermore, they do not accept liberals and Copts as equals; thus, their political input is delegitimized, so that the thought of a liberal or Coptic president or vice president is laughable and absurd. During the Morsi period, those who spoke against the Islamists faced threats of violence, character assassination in media outlets, and lawsuits based on accusations of insulting Islam. None of this suggests that all religious associations and organizations, Muslim or Christian, are going to be as intolerant as fundamentalist Islamist groups; however, it does point to a conflict between secular contestable ideas and religious infallible convictions, which inevitably makes religious organizations’ participation in public problematic.

³² Habermas, 120-27.

Like most religious fundamentalist groups, the Brotherhood and other Islamist groups use both non-violent and violent means. Political pragmatism is only one tactic of fundamentalist groups. The Brotherhood and its supporters have utilized both violence and pragmatism as they have seen fit. This is because the Brotherhood's agenda is to bring Islam to the core of politics. At times, it encouraged political participation as a means to make Islam the basis for Egyptian legislation, and at other times it engaged in violent destruction of state institutions and assassinations of political persons.

For instance, in the early 1940s, the liberal Wafd government briefly co-opted the Muslim Brotherhood, preventing al-Banna from running in elections in exchange for advancing anti-alcohol and anti-prostitution legislation.³³ After WWII, the conservative Sa'adist government used the Muslim Brotherhood as an instrument to repress communism and the Wafd party. The Brotherhood provided intelligence to the government to help arrest suspected communists in universities and labor unions.³⁴ Focusing on advancing Sharia and fighting immorality, the Brotherhood has been politically shrewd at times. In sociological terms, the Brotherhood's strategy of political participation is one of "world transformation."³⁵ That is, instead of opting for conquering its world and forcing people to adhere to its message by terror, the brotherhood utilizes political vehicles such as elections and coalitions to reach the masses. However, the Brotherhood has also opted for "world conquest" as a model of action, where it took armed struggle and violence to reclaim power or assert its message of Islam.³⁶

The late 1940s witnessed a militaristic turn by the Brotherhood. While the exact date of its formation is not known, it is well-established that the Muslim Brotherhood has a secret apparatus created to carry out Muslim Brothers' armed and political operations beyond the public eye.³⁷ The Brotherhood, among other militant groups, began targeting government and colonial officials, Egyptians suspected of treason or Zionist sympathies. Clubs and newspapers affiliated with the government were bombed. In an attempt to contain the violence, the government dissolved the Society. The

³³ Mitchel, 27, 38-40.

³⁴ Ibid., 32-40.

³⁵ Gabriel A. Almond, R. Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan, *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms around the World* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 168-179.

³⁶ Ibid., 151-68.

³⁷ The apparatus is known inside the Society as "the Special Section" (al-nizam al-khass), and outside of it as "the Secret Apparatus" (al-jihaz al-sirri). See Mitchell, 26-30 and 54-55.

dissolution order cost the Prime Minister at the time Mr. Nuqrashi his life, as he was assassinated by a young Brotherhood member.³⁸ This led to mass arrests and seizure of Brotherhood property. In response, al-Banna issued a clandestine pamphlet in which he argued that the Society cannot be held accountable for the actions of its members. He blamed atheism, communism, foreign intervention and corrupt governance for the persecution of the Brotherhood. In 1949, al-Banna was assassinated by the secret police.³⁹ Al-Banna and subsequent Guides were never able to subvert the authority of the secret apparatus.

By the time Gamal Abdul-Nasser and the Free Officers led the July 23, 1952 revolution against the reign of King Farouk, the Brotherhood had returned to politics. The Free Officers formed the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), the executive body of the government and established the Republic of Egypt in 1953. The Brotherhood celebrated the revolt calling it the “blessed movement.”⁴⁰ However, the alliance was short lived. The Society does not compromise on the role of religion in politics, and was alienated by Nasser’s strategy of “Religion is for God, and the nation is for all.” Nasser believed that the task of expelling the British and building Egypt’s economy required the support and loyalty of all Egyptians, irrespective of religious identity. Sidelined, the Brotherhood turned against Nasser and called for parliamentary elections — a pragmatic move. However, the Brotherhood continued to have a functioning armed secret apparatus. The secret apparatus refused to disband and disarm, thus posing a serious threat to the stability of the state. Regardless of the legitimacy of an armed struggle against the state, a state cannot function successfully without monopoly over legitimate use of violence. In response, the RCC began a campaign of arrests of brotherhood members with charges of plotting against the revolution. In retaliation, the secret apparatus, with the knowledge of key Brotherhood members, carried out a failed assassination attempt against Nasser in 1954. Six men were executed and thousands arrested, and the RCC dissolved the Brotherhood.⁴¹

While the Muslim Brotherhood took a pragmatic turn during the Sadat and Mubarak regimes, other Islamist groups, some of which had sprung from

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 64- 70.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 68-78

⁴⁰ William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 3rd ed (Boulder, CO: West View Press, 2004), 306.

⁴¹ Mitchell, 158-162.

the Brotherhood, assumed a more militant character. During the Sadat years, the Party of Islamic Liberation kidnapped a government official from the Ministry of Islamic Trusts and killed him when their demands of releasing detained members of the groups were not met. To curb Islamist violence, Sadat dissolved Islamist groups, and arrested and executed their leaders. However, extremist groups continued to form. Al-Jihad, for example, formed with the idea that Egypt was in a state of ignorance because it was led by “infidel pharaohs”. The group successfully assassinated Sadat in 1981.⁴² Interestingly, the Muslim Brotherhood appeared sympathetic to militant Islamist groups during the Morsi presidency. Aside from giving these organizations key positions in civil service, Morsi issued pardons releasing some of the organizations’ members from prison. This included two men arrested for their role in the assassination of Sadat. Morsi even attempted earlier in his presidency to pressure the United States to release Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, one of the plotters of the 1993 World Trade Center attacks.⁴³

ISLAMISM’S ECONOMIC FAILURE

For our part, if we were forced to make a choice between the barbarians of civilization and the civilized men of barbarism, we should choose the barbarians.

— *Victor Hugo*

Observers of Egypt argued that Morsi could not have rescued Egypt from its economic problems in just one year. The Washington Post’s “experts” tried to “walk us through” the Egyptian crisis by tallying the country’s economic woes from unemployment to deficit suggesting that the Morsi government needed to be more heavy handed about implementing necessary restructuring programs, such as a \$4.8 billion IMF deal approved in November, 2012, but never finalized.⁴⁴ Egyptians were blamed for being unreasonably hostile to IMF loans. The reality is that IMF loans are generally unpopular and undemocratic everywhere, and slashing infrastructure funds and social security tends to send people to the streets to protest. Part of the reason why Egyptians revolted against the Mubarak regime in the first place was the dire consequences of his neoliberal policies. If we should credit Morsi’s

⁴² Voll, 380-84.

⁴³ Bradley Hope, “Morsi’s pardon of 26 Islamists Suggests Where His Sympathies Still Lie,” *The National*, August 02, 2012, <http://www.thenational.ae/> (accessed June 27, 2013).

⁴⁴ Ezra Klein, “Confused about Egypt? An Expert Walks You through It,” *The Washington Post*, July 08, 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/> (accessed July 12, 2013).

presidency with one thing it would be delaying the IMF's restructuring demands.⁴⁵ Morsi's ouster, unlike Mubarak's, was not primarily motivated by Egypt's economic conditions. It is correct to observe that Egyptians have grown frustrated with chronic unemployment and low wages, but they were also aware that there were no immediate solutions. What delegitimized the Morsi regime were not Egypt's economic problems but the way in which Morsi mishandled them.

Upon his presidential win, Morsi resigned from the Muslim Brotherhood as a way of saying that he represents all Egyptians. Yet, in May, 2013, Morsi reshuffled his cabinet, replacing non-Islamists with Islamists in an effort to strengthen the Brotherhood's hold over executive power.⁴⁶ The belief was that the Brotherhood's expertise would help Egypt rise against economic odds. But, the Brotherhood's "Renaissance Project" stalled –an obvious outcome given that it lacked specific measures to achieve it. In addition, the Brotherhood leadership are the benefactors of the Sadat and Mubarak years primarily because they were able to accumulate vast wealth as a result of privatization and liberalization of trade. Their wealth came from the dispossession of the rest of Egypt — they would not know what social justice would look like. As Egypt was struggling economically Morsi continued to make baffling appointments to key civil positions. Two weeks before he was ousted, Morsi appointed a member of al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya governor of Luxor, a city the economy of which is based on tourism. Al-Gamaa is the Islamist group which was responsible for massacring 58 tourists in Luxor in 1997. This appointment came even as tourism revenue, an industry that employs one in ten Egyptians, was suffering because of the country's instability.⁴⁷ In the one year Morsi was in office he demonstrated that he had neither the interest nor the capacity to lead the country.

⁴⁵ Abdel-Rahman Hussein, "Egypt's IMF Loan Deal Postponed after Mohamed Morsi Scraps Tax Increases," *The Guardian*, December 11, 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/> (accessed July 12, 2013).

⁴⁶ Jeffrey Fleishman, "Egyptian Cabinet Shuffle Strengthens Muslim Brotherhood," *Los Angeles Times*, May 07, 2013. <http://latimes.com/> (accessed June 24, 2013).

⁴⁷ Patrick Kingsley, "Egypt's Mohamed Morsi Appoints Hardline Islamist to Govern Luxor," *The Guardian*, June 17, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com> (accessed June 24, 2013).

THE OUSTER: TAMAROD AND THE CALL FOR RECALL

It is in light of Morsi's abysmal record and authoritarianism that people began to call for his ouster. As early as January 2013, the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) warned Morsi that Egypt's stability was threatened by disunity. Morsi continued with business as usual, accusing foreign hands of meddling in the country's affair. In the face of Morsi's refusal to address the people's concerns about the future of the country, forces of the opposition called for a recall. They chose Morsi's one year anniversary, June 30, 2013 to bring millions of Egyptians to the street to express their discontent. With news of imminent protests, Morsi began to appear at forums and events sponsored by the Brotherhood to bolster his image. In an address to his supporters at the Cairo International Stadium in June, 2013, during the Ethiopian-Egyptian water crisis, Morsi opted for supporting "jihad in Syria" against the Alawites, the Shiite minority to which the Assad regime belongs. Fellow speakers incited violence against Shiites in Egypt.⁴⁸ Similarly, Morsi's television sheiks intensified their attacks on the opposition; threatening protesters with violence and targeting Christians with especial scorn should they take to the streets to voice dissent. With Morsi opting for what Egyptian commentators have called "a strategy of thick skin,"⁴⁹ the SCAF gave him a 48-hour ultimatum to address the political crisis, lest it step in to save the state from collapse.

As protests failed, the call for recall intensified. Tamarod Movement or Rebel, a grassroots movement formed in May, 2013, aimed to collect 15 million signatures to be submitted to the Supreme Constitutional Court demanding early presidential elections and withdrawal of confidence from Morsi. The movement had no religious identification. It was joined by secular and liberal political parties, in addition to youth organizations and social justice movements, some of which had supported Morsi's presidential bid. Egyptians marched in solidarity rallies across Egypt to show support for the movement.⁵⁰ The number of protestors who took to the streets on June 30 to support Tamarod is hard to determine, but estimates have ranged in the millions, not just in Cairo but all over Egypt. The movement that called

⁴⁸ In June Ethiopia began plans to build a dam that could cut Egypt's water supply causing water shortage and crop failure. See Nouran El-Behairy, "Morsi's Syria Speech Angers Opposition," *Daily News Egypt*, June 16, 2013 <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com> (accessed July 03, 2013).

⁴⁹ Moataz Abdul-Fattah, "Could Article 142 Be the Solution?" *Elwatan News*, July 03, 2013, <http://www.elwatannews.com> (accessed July 20, 2013).

⁵⁰ Ahram Online, "Several Thousand Rally in Tahrir to 'Rebel' against Morsi," *Ahram Online*, May 17, 2013 <http://english.ahram.org.eg> (accessed June 27, 2013).

for Morsi's ouster was more democratic than his elections or the referendum. It tried to capture the spirit of civil society. But Morsi and the Brotherhood insisted on the legitimacy of the elections, and warned of dire consequences if Morsi was forced to resign. Reaching an impasse, the military stepped in on July 1, 2013 and deposed Morsi. It suspended the constitution and appointed the head of the Supreme Constitutional Court interim president.

In response to the ouster, western commentators denounced Egypt and argued that it must allow Morsi to complete his term. Answering western critics, Egyptian writer and activist Alaa Aswany correctly reminds us of the Peru's former president Alberto Fujimori in 1992, who upon facing political opposition, dissolved parliament, purged the judiciary and assumed dictatorial powers. The United States was quick to condemn Fujimori and cut non-humanitarian aid.⁵¹ The fact that Western politicians are of two minds on non-Western democracies is nothing new, but it is worth noting. More importantly, the negative response to the ouster reveals a serious disagreement on what constitutes democracy. The West conceives of democracy as a political method through which the masses elect representatives who then form the ruling political class. In addition but subordinate to electoral politics, social and political goals can be met by the formation of interest groups which reach out to the governing bodies and exercise influence over political decision making, thus ensuring that different voices in society are represented.⁵² This model limits the extent of democratic participation by concentrating political power in the hands of the elected rulers, fragmenting civic solidarity, and marginalizing the role of direct democratic participation. It also reduces democracy to a political process of voting, making any contestation of voted officials a threat to democracy. In the face of anti-democratic measures, citizens in the west can protest, but elected officials are under no obligation to respond.

⁵¹ Alaa' Al-Aswani, "Who Remembers Fujimori?" *Almasry Alyoum*, July 22, 2013, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com> (accessed August 25, 2013).

⁵² Arblaster, 52-55.

ON THE NECESSITY OF MILITARY INTERVENTION

As mentioned earlier, military interventions are not ideal. It is important for the military to remain subordinate to government and refrain from political play. But, in Egypt's case, it was a last resort. The military needed not intervene had Morsi accepted the call for recall, which would have been a judicial process that challenged Morsi using non-violent means. Despite the fact that Egyptian law does not offer recall as an option, the constitution clearly states that the source of the president's legitimacy is the people. Such legitimacy is lost when the people are excluded from power. Morsi was no longer the head of a democratic state, but a dictator. Force was necessary to remove him. Western countries will and do use violence and the military to protect their democracies. What happened in Egypt would not be the first time in history that a military intervention was necessary to protect a democracy. For instance, the United States has had to rely on the military to protect African Americans in the South from lynching during Reconstruction.

Islamists denounced the democratic will and the military intervention which proved necessary to enact it and occupied public squares in protest. The two main sites of protest Nahda and Rabaa Squares became the focus of an international outcry after being cleared by the military. Documentation of violent clashes by western media was used to condemn Egyptians and remind them that ousting Morsi was an undemocratic military coup. Their coverage insisted that the sit-ins were peaceful and that the military used excessive force. However, sit-in sites were not simply peaceful acts of demonstration. Rabba Square became a platform from which sheiks promised a holy war against the opposition. They spoke of the necessity of militant "jihad" against the infidels, those who oppose the presidency of Morsi.⁵³ The speeches which were broadcasted on Al-Jazeera prompted the military to reach out first by distributing pamphlets in the squares noting that killing fellow Egyptians amounts to murder, and asking the protestors to abandon the language of religious extremism. It advised the protestors to leave the square and promised not to target or arrest Brotherhood members.⁵⁴ It was only when it became apparent the protestors were armed and ready to engage in an armed struggle against the military and the police that clashes erupted.⁵⁵

⁵³ Diia' Rashwan, "The Last Ordeal of the Muslim Brotherhood," *Almasry Alyoum*, August 25, 2013. <http://www.almasyalyoum.com> (accessed August 25, 2013).

⁵⁴ Al Arabiya, "Army Helicopters Drop Fliers on the Protests in Raba Square," *alarabiya.net* <http://www.alarabiya.net/> (Accessed August 25, 2013).

⁵⁵ Al Arabiya, "Army Helicopters Drop Fliers on the Protests in Raba Square," *alarabiya.net* <http://www.alarabiya.net/> (Accessed August 25, 2013).

In addition, pro-Morsi supporters engaged in acts of violence by attacking churches and police stations, and killing police officers in the style of public executions and dismemberment.⁵⁶ Upon losing political power, the Brotherhood turned to violence to undermine the state and create instability, believing that what they are doing constitutes acts of jihad against infidels who betrayed them. Those who argue that the violent actions committed by the Muslim Brotherhood against the churches amounts to civil war are overestimating the popularity and perceived legitimacy of the Brotherhood. In reality, the Islamist violence against churches and police stations is an example of an asymmetrical war. Disparate, fragmented and opposed by most Egyptians, their actions are terroristic. As such, it may indeed be the case that the military has overreacted in dealing with the Brotherhood and protestors in the square; however, the state typically responds with great violence to groups which challenge its sovereignty and legitimacy using terrorism. It is not hard to imagine that countries such as the United States or France would respond similarly to an armed organization attacking state institutions in protest to policies they see as unjust or a regime they deem illegitimate. It is with incredible arrogance that western commentators refuse to accept that the Egyptian state has the right to defend itself against tyrants and terrorists.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: EGYPT'S UNFINISHED REVOLUTION

O Egypt rise and gather your strength
I can make your wishes come true
Neither oppression nor darkness will make me fold

— *Naguib Shehab El-Din*

When one makes a Revolution, one cannot mark time; one must
always go forward - or go back.

— *Vladimir Lenin*

The experience of Egypt has shown us that democracy cannot exist in the absence of a thriving citizenry and an autonomous and free civil society. The election of the Islamists was perhaps an inevitable mistake given the absence of real political choice — a legacy of the Mubarak years. Soon after assuming power, Islamists demonstrated their inability to engage in politics. Relying on religious language they tried to close the space for political deliberation.

⁵⁶ Al Arabiya, "Video Shows the Kerdasa Massacre Committed by the Brotherhood," *alarabiya.net*, <http://www.alarabiya.net> (accessed August 25, 2013).

Quickly, they alienated wide factions of Egyptians, including observant Muslims who realized that an Islamist regime is suffocating. Islamists also proved beyond doubt that they do not possess the expertise necessary to bring about the socio-economic changes demanded by Egyptians. Interested in power, the Islamists insisted on the legitimacy of their rule even as millions of Egyptians called for recall and withdrawal of confidence. Inept at democracy, they construed dissent in terms of heresy and apostasy, making killing their fellow citizens a religious goal. Given their contempt for rule of law and call for religious terrorism, the military had to intervene.

Yet, the events in Egypt also offer a difficult lesson in democracy. I believe it is important to take a moment to reflect on the western liberal hegemonic conception of democracy, rethink the role of citizenry vis-à-vis the state, and learn from Egypt's experience with Morsi. The liberal western discourse sees no value in direct democratic participation. It is in fact threatened by it. If we accept the western model of democracy, which confines participation to the ballot box, we would then construe what happened in Egypt as anti-democratic. But if we conceive of democracy as popular power or self-government we arrive at a different conclusion. Tamarood protested the concentration of legislative and executive power at the hands of the Muslim Brotherhood, the executive disregard of the judiciary, and the Islamist constitution, all of which alienated non-Islamist Egyptians. The movement wanted Egypt's rulers and policy makers to answer to their constituents and fulfill their promises of democratic governance. The movement demonstrated that democracy is not simply a matter of electing unaccountable politicians.

POST SCRIPT: EGYPT SINCE THE OUSTER:

And yet, Egypt has not yet arrived at democratic governance. The triumph of ousting Morsi has distracted Egyptians from what lays ahead. There are three obstacles pushing Egypt back to dictatorship: the absence of civil society, the lack of wide reaching social and economic integration policies, and the dominance of military power in the political arena.

Today, the Egyptian government, which has been dealing with a serious threat of religious violence, has expanded security measures to suppress free speech and political activities. By and large, measures have been accepted by many Egyptians as exceptional and necessary, with few dissenting voices and others silent. Western media that suggests that such repressive measures are unique to countries in Latin America or the Middle East ought to note

that what is happening in Egypt today is not too dissimilar to the American expansion of security measures in the aftermath of 9/11. Under the guise of protecting citizens governments create “states of exception” where civil liberties and due process are suspended. The danger is that such measures are intended to be permanent and from what we have seen, are often accepted with little collective resistance. This is the result of the lack of functioning civic collectives that are autonomous from the state and capable of confronting its repressive tendencies. Thus, what is needed in Egypt is an active citizenry to hold their political delegates and representatives accountable. The picture today is one of a closed political space in the name of security, a situation that undermines Egypt’s project for democracy.

In addition, there remains the question of economic and social integration. Social democratic states are responsible for the costs of social reproduction, which include providing education, healthcare, and jobs. The state integrates and invests in its citizens who in turn form collectives and participate meaningfully in the public sphere. Such high unemployment rates and a widening polarization of wealth between the wealthy and the poor in Egypt will prevent the country from realizing the democracy it has been fighting for since 2011. Citizens abandoned by the state often disassociate from collective organizations, feel disinvested in their country, and as I have shown in this essay turn to religious fundamentalist groups for answers. The government will have to create jobs or otherwise improve wages and living conditions. It will have to insure that Egyptians are not at the mercy of neoliberal measures of privatization and austerity. This should not be taken lightly. If the new interim government and subsequent governments do not address jobs and living conditions they will continue to deal with popular anger and extremism. In fact, without social and economic integration, the looming threat of religious terrorism will not fade away. At the moment, it seems that the government’s tactic is to target and incarcerate extremists and suspects of terrorism. But we know from Egypt’s history with religious extremism that incarceration further radicalizes members of such groups, who continue to galvanize and inspire the disenfranchised from behind bars. None of this suggests that the Egyptian government should not prosecute persons engaged in criminal activities such as bombing police stations, however, the sustainable long-term solution would be to make religious fundamentalism irrelevant in Egypt. If the government works to socially and economically integrate the disenfranchised young men and women who have been seduced by the language of extremism it will be able to neutralize the threat of terrorism by making the material conditions which gives rise to it disappear.

Finally, the project of social democracy faces is challenged by the dominance of the military in Egyptian politics. Historically the military has held a dear place in Egypt largely because of its role in defending the country against successive imperial interests. Nasser and Sadat are recognized not as just as presidents but strong military figures who were able to protect Egypt against American and Israeli geopolitical projects. Thus, there is a tendency to glorify the military and equate support for it with patriotism and national pride. Today, it continues to garner respect. Many Egyptians are demanding greater military presence in politics because of its role in combating religious terrorism. In fact, many Egyptians are hoping that General Al-Sissi will run in the upcoming presidential race. This is a setback if Egyptians are still hoping for a civil state. What Egyptians must consider is that their fight for freedom and democracy will not be won as long as they are seeking security through military leadership. The military has to return to its proper function as protector of the state against foreign intervention.

Thus, the society that the Egyptian revolution dreams of will not be achieved without creating a thriving civil society and a transparent state that is not run by military leadership. I know that leftist criticism will point to Egypt's desire for a liberal state as its biggest obstacle to achieve genuine democracy. I am not in disagreement with such criticism. However, to paraphrase Walter Benjamin, sometimes we have to go through the machine. In 2011 and in 2013 Egyptians demanded a social democratic state grounded in participatory electoral politics, a project which we know from the Western experience has not had great success. But Egyptians, like citizens of the West, must experiment with the project of the liberal state in order to see its limits (and make the left turn, upon further reflection). However, without addressing the turn to the security state, dreams of democracy and freedom are untenable.