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Violence in the Arab Revolutions: The Paradigmatic Case of Egypt

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Violence in the Arab Revolutions: The Paradigmatic Case of Egypt

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Abstract

Arab Revolutions promoted non-violence (*selmiyah*) at their outset, in conjunction with the dignity of the citizen (*karama*). These mottoes did not resist for a long time against the violence of the Deep State, the intolerance of the revolutionary actors, and the geopolitics of the region, with the notable exception of Tunisia, where geopolitics were not paramount. This article aims at analyzing the manifold features of violence during the transitional period, from the ousting of the President Mubarak in February 2011 up to the third anniversary of the Revolution in January 25, 2014. It purports to show that grass root level actors (the Black Bloc made of Football fans, the secular youth building up the social movement Tamarrod...) and institutional ones (the Judiciary, the security forces representing the Interior Ministry, and the military at the highest level) rejected the new President from the Muslim Brotherhood. The latter acted in an inept and partisan manner, dialogue becoming impossible and violent rupture becoming unavoidable. The two types of violence (from below and from the Deep State) made democratization impossible. The door was opened for a new period of authoritarianism under the aegis of the army. The article does not deal with the geopolitics and their role in the radicalization within the Egyptian society.

Keywords: Egyptian Revolution, violence, secular movement, Islamist movement, Muslim Brotherhood

Violencia en las Revoluciones Árabes: El Caso Paradigmático de Egipto

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Resumen

Las revoluciones árabes en sus inicios promovieron la no violencia (*selmiyah*), conjuntamente con la dignidad de la ciudadanía (*karama*). Estos lemas no duraron mucho tiempo ante la violencia del Viejo Estado, la intolerancia de los actores revolucionarios y la situación geopolítica de la región, con la excepción notable de Túnez, donde la geopolítica no jugó un papel tan destacable. Este artículo pretende analizar las múltiples caras de la violencia en Egipto durante el periodo de transición, que va de la salida del presidente Mubarak en febrero de 2011 al tercer aniversario de la Revolución el 25 de enero de 2014. Intenta mostrar que los actores de base (el Black Bloc formado por fans de fútbol, el aumento de jóvenes seculares, el movimiento Tamrrod...) e institucionales (la judicatura, las fuerzas de seguridad representantes del Ministerio del Interior, y los militares al más alto nivel) rechazaron el nuevo presidente de los Hermanos Musulmanes. Éste último actuó de una manera inepta y partidista, el diálogo fue imposible y la ruptura violenta fue inevitable. Los dos tipos de violencia (desde abajo y desde el Viejo Estado) imposibilitaron la democratización. Se abrió la puerta a un nuevo periodo autoritario bajo la tutela de las fuerzas armadas. El artículo no se adentra en la geopolítica ni en su papel en la radicalización de la sociedad egipcia.

Palabras clave: Revolution Egiptia, violencia, movimiento secular, movimiento islamista, Hermanos Musulmanes



The Change in the Status of Violence

The status of violence largely changed within the Arab Revolutions during the last three years, from the end of 2010 when the Jasmin Revolution broke up in Tunisia and the Egyptian 25 January Revolution put an end to Mubarak regime up to the beginning of 2014, after a military coup put an end to the constitutional yet inept presidency of Morsi, the first legally elected President in Egypt.

The first Arab Revolutions, the Tunisian and Egyptian, had a dual leitmotiv based on non-violence and peacefulness, crystallized in the Arabic word *selmiyah* as well as the dignity of the citizen (*karamah*). Violence was the *modus operandi* of the Power that Be. Even during the Jasmin Revolution (Tunisia) and January 25 Revolution (Egypt) violence could be qualified as “moderate”, taking into account the standards of the region and the long tradition of State repression in most of the Muslim world: in Tunisia, the death toll was around 338 people ([Associated Press, 2012](#)), and in Egypt, 846¹ during the revolution proper. This relatively limited number of deaths was in part due to the swift overthrow of the autocratic governments (28 days in Tunisia, 18 days in Egypt). The precipitate Tunisian-Egyptian model of revolution was not replicated in the other cases and the death toll was by far higher: in Yemen, more than 2.000 up to the departure of the President Ali Abdullah Saleh ([Al-Haj, 2012](#)), in Libya, around 30.000 ([Karin, 2011](#)), and the civil war in Syria caused more than 100.000 deaths up to June 2013 ([Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 2013](#)), and the end of the crises in the Arab world is not in sight. In some cases, after the overthrow of the old regime, the death toll continued to rise, as in Egypt where few hundreds died after the end of the Old Regime, before the military coup of the 3rd July 2013. After the Coup d’Etat, over 80 Morsi supporters were killed in a clash with the Republican Guards on 8 July, and over 70 were killed during protests towards the end of the month ([Crisis Watch, 2013](#)).

In Egypt, the symbolic status of violence changed after the revolution, and one could distinguish three major periods, with distinct features:

- the period from February 10, 2011 (the ousting of Mubarak) up to the election of the President Morsi in June 2012. During this period, the armed

4 *Khosrokhavar – Violence in Arab Revolutions, Egypt*

forces ruled the country through the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF).

- the period extending from the election of Morsi to his overthrow, the elected Parliament being dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood's political wing Freedom and Justice Party, and the President coming from its ranks.

- the period beginning with the overthrow of Morsi by the military, in alliance with a large part of the secular opposition parties joined by the Salafi Nour party, Ahmed el-Tayeb the head of al-Azhar Mosque, and the Coptic Pope Tawadros, after large demonstrations launched by the opposition and a new born association, Tamarrod that alleged having gathered millions of signatures for the demise of the President. In this period, a new chapter opened up in terms of violence: the military joined by the opposition alleged that the dismissal of the late president was a legitimate act of insubordination in continuity with the spirit of January 25 Revolution, in order to prevent Morsi's dictatorship under the banner of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). The followers of the deposed President rejected this view and called his removal a military coup. Their reaction has been so far sit-ins and large demonstrations in large towns and cities, in particular in Cairo and Alexandria, the military shooting and killing more than hundred people and maiming many hundreds. Violence changed in its nature: it was not anymore due to the inability of the Muslim Brotherhood's representatives to tackle the unruly situation after the revolution, but to a new type of government willing to impose its diktat to the rest of the society. The new type of violence put into question the claim by the opposition to follow a democratic line of conduct, the military yielding the ultimate power. At the same time, repression by the military made the MB a "martyr political institution", its status changing from and arrogant, inept and "total" organization into a persecuted, unjustly mistreated human group. There was a "symbolic rupture" in the status of the MB based on the rapid change of mood and vision in the revolutionary situations: during the interim period when the Egyptian army ruled the country, its incompetence and defying attitude caused it to be abhorred by the people and in particular, the "Tahrir youth". After the election of Morsi, a year after, the same vilified army became a savior and many of the Tahrir youth members called for the military intervention under the banner of the Tamarrod movement. More

generally, the rupture in the general mood in Egypt resulted from the situation of instability and opaque political future that induced many young people to change rapidly their view on the major actors of the revolution: the revolutionary youth, the MB hierarchy, the opponents....

The Three Periods of the Egyptian Revolution

In Tunisia and Egypt, before and during the revolution the most visible revolutionary actors were secular² in their outlook, young in age, belonging mostly to the middle classes, some to the Arab Diaspora in the West. In Egypt, the protesters gathering at Tahrir Square in Cairo were mostly secular Muslims, jointly celebrating prayers with Christians (Copts) in order to show their non-sectarian view of citizenship ([International Crisis Group, 2011](#)).

After the overthrow of the authoritarian regime, a new type of activist became prominent. In the first period, the protesters were anti-authoritarian and pro-democracy, whereas many post-revolutionary actors regarded themselves as engagé Muslims, identifying with either the Muslim Brotherhood, or the Salafis. These actors came as a shock to the predominantly “secular” and “liberal” Muslims for whom religion was not the major issue in the mobilizations that ended the autocratic rule ([Khosrokhavar & Nikpey, 2009](#))³. Members of the Muslim Brotherhood were more familiar to the public, the organization having had a long history of political opposition, dating back to 1928 when it was founded by Hassan el Banna. Salafis were more of a surprise as social and political activists to many people (the MB included), since under Mubarak the group defined itself as nonpolitical, and promoted Islamization from below, rejecting political activity as illegitimate against the Islamic ruler, adopting thus a quietist version of Islam.

Compared to the secular, modernist youth that was at the heart of the incipient revolutionary movement, the MB and Salafi actors presented another picture of the revolution. The actors of the first period gradually became convinced that the revolution “was stolen” by the Islamists who in their eyes betrayed the ideals of the popular uprising ([LeVine, 2011](#)).

6 *Khosrokhavar – Violence in Arab Revolutions, Egypt*

Political parties became more autonomous towards their respective religious associations, as for instance in gender equality, MB inclining towards the limitation of women's freedom in the name of religious orthodoxy, whereas the Freedom and Justice party, the political branch of MB, took a much more ambivalent stance (Kirkpatrick & El Sheikh, 2013). Secular, liberal parties denounced the Islamists' dichotomy between their political and religious stance as hypocrisy and double game.

After the presidential elections in Egypt, in which Morsi from the MB became the head of the State, in less than a year a process of polarization set in. Political opposition, in many ways divided, was able to wield a semblance of unity under the banner of an alliance, the National Salvation Front, rejecting Morsi's rule and finding no common language with him to salvage democracy. Morsi's presidency was marked by the lack of dialogue with the opposition, the refusal to find compromise with it on the new constitution and on the "ruling style" of the new government. In November 2012 he issued a Presidential decree granting him temporarily powers reminiscent of the Mubarak era, beyond the reach of any court within the prevailing juridical system. The decree made it possible to draft, through an Assembly dominated by the MB, to hastily draft a constitution that was rejected by the opposition as being too much dominated by the MB Islamism and too inauspicious towards religious minorities (the Copts) and women's freedom.

Thus initial mutual suspicion at the beginning of Morsi's presidency gave way to utter distrust and frontal rejection, Morsi's inability to rule with respect to the political continuity of the government being brandished by the opposition as utter signs of failure by the MB, not only to promote democracy, but also, to assure the management of the bureaucracy: the contradictory rules set by Morsi as to his rights to yield absolute power before revoking it partially in November 2012, then the question of bombing Ethiopia for the Dam being built on Nile, a discussion that was supposed to be secret but was shown on TV... (Egypt Independent, 2013).

As for the personal freedom, many cases of police torture, denial of habeas corpus, arbitrary sentences (Bassem Youssef, the star of the satirical TV show *El Bernameg*, *The Program*, was prosecuted for having maligned the President in January 2013), street violence against the protestors and

other breaches of the law were recorded on an almost daily basis by the media or through the blogs. MB was accused of attempting at “brotherizing” (putting under the aegis of the Muslim Brotherhood) the educational sector (Abdel-Hamid, 2013). Secular women were also suspicious of the MB presidency of attempting at reducing their rights in the name of an orthodox Islamic view (Kirckpatrick & El Sheikh, 2013). On the international Women’s Rights Day, March the 8th, demonstrations were held against the MB statements putting into question the legal equality of men and women in the name of the religion, after Ikhwanweb, the official website of the MB criticized a United Nations’ text on violence against women, characterizing it as a cultural invasion by the West against Muslim countries (Frémont, 2013).

Intellectuals protest over the “Islamization” of the culture by the MB ministers, showing their suspicion over the government’s bias against secular values in the name of which, they believed, the Egyptian revolution was made.

The MB government purported to curtail the power of the judges, many of whom were suspected of sympathy towards the remnants of the Old Regime (the “Folul”) or the secular opposition. The Shura Council, dominated by the government, endeavored to limit the power of the judiciary whose members refused to abide by the new restrictions imposed on the judicial authority on May 2013.

Many major artists rebelled against the newly appointed Minister of Culture Alaa Abdel Aziz who had removed Ines Abdel Dayem, the head of the Cairo Opera House, and Salah el-Meligy, the head of the Applied arts Department at the ministry, holding a sit-in inside the ministry on June 5, 2013, demanding his dismissal (Iskander, 2013). In the same fashion, students, long time allies of the MB under Mubarak regime, reject the government’s rule in the name of their new democratic vision. In the election of the students’ trade union on March 2013, the MB lost its majority to the “liberals” (Al-Naggar, 2013).

Many districts in the major towns and cities take the bits in their hands. In Port Saeed, on March the 3rd, in clashes with the protestors, three policemen were killed, the army taking the sides of the demonstrators and separating them from the security forces. In Alexandria, on March 29,

demonstrations swept the governorates against the MB crackdown on freedom and the recent interrogation of opposition activists. The supporters of the MB clashed with the demonstrators in a district of Alexandria, Sidi Gaber, in the evening, both sides using Molotov cocktails and stones. Violence erupted as well in another district of Alexandria against the MB headquarters. In Suez, activists gathered in Arbaeen Square after Friday prayers, to demand the prosecutor general's resignation and the restriction of freedoms. In Kafr al-Sheikh City, Dostur Party and Kefaya Movement members staged a protest (MENA, 2013). In Nasr City, April 6 Youth Movement staged a protest in front of Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim's home, and four of its members were arrested (Al-Youm, 2013). The same was repeated in many other towns, denouncing the MB policies, the muzzling of freedom and the MB's appointment of authorities with no competence or allegiance to the MB. Clashes between the pro and anti-Morsi erupt in Alexandria on April the 5th 2013, each side hurling stones against the other, security forces firing teargas to disperse them. Protesters called on the military to return to power and remove Morsi from office (Al-Youm, 2013).

On the whole, the period after the Presidential elections was one of the most troublesome in the history of Egypt. In terms of demonstrations, between January and May, Egypt witnessed 5.544 demonstrations, the highest number in the world. In May alone, 1.300 protest movements were recorded, an average of two protests an hour, 42 a day, and 325 a week, according to the democracy index published by the International Development Center (Egypt Independent, 2013). During the Morsi's presidency, 9.427 protests were recorded (Taha, 2013). This seminal period as the transition from the old authoritarian to a new political system was interspersed with many disillusionments on the part of the activists who strongly came to believe that the revolution was betrayed by the MB, and the solution was another revolution, toppling Morsi from power. The widening gap between the anticipations and the political reality made a stable political system almost impossible, every social group finding fault with it, students, workers, jobless people, middle class seculars, the political elite with the exception of the MB members, secular women, young activists...

Two types of protest movements took place, each sapping the fledging democracy: large scale protest movements and small one's called by the authorities, in a derogatory manner, the small-group protests (*ihtijajat fi'awiya*), in reference to working class movements, and the large demonstrations (Sallam, 2011). The most fragile people (working class, peasants) witnessed their incomes dramatically decreasing due to the regression of the economy. Authorities referred to the small-scale protest movements based on special interests (corporatist interests) to characterize those advancing demands related to the redistribution of wealth (higher wages, improved working conditions...). After the Egyptian revolution, authorities, be it the army or the MB leadership following Morsi's election, denounced these claims as anti-economic, accusing labor movement as undermining the fragile post-revolutionary economy. This is due in part to the fact that after the revolution, from May 2011 up to April 2012 the total number of labor protests rose to 1.137 cases, almost twice as the 584 protests in the previous year (Abdalla, 2012). According to another set of data, the Egyptian labor strikes and protests during the year 2012 rose to 3.800, most of which occurred after the election of Morsi (Ibrahim, 2013). The rising expectations due to the revolution as well as the frustration of the working class people in conjunction with the deterioration of the general situation of the national economy embittered many sectors of the Egyptian labor against Morsi. Added to the revolutionary youth's deep mistrust of the MB and the deteriorating economic situation, the road was opened to the military coup.

Typology of Violence

After the Egyptian revolution, street violence in different forms spread in many towns and cities. One can propose a typology of it.

Violence against Women

The distinguishing feature of the Arab Revolutions is not so much that women took part in them. They did so since long ago, for instance in the Algerian independence movement (1954–1962), in which official estimates

put them at around 3% (about 11,000) of the total number of fighters. Some women fighters like Djamila Boupacha achieved international fame. But they did not don the status of a leader, even at the local level, being mainly foot soldiers or grass root activists. The situation changed with the new Arab Revolutions in which some women achieved the status of local or even national leaders. In Egypt Asma Mahfouz became one of the few street leaders, even before the protest movement that led to the overthrow of Mubarak in January 2011. In Yemen, Tawakul Karman, a journalist activist, became one of the opposition leaders against President Saleh. She won the Nobel Peace Prize for her global action.

The paradox of women's place in the revolutionary periods in Egypt (but also Tunisia) is that many female participants played a significant role, achieved individual fame and showed capacity for leadership during the protest movement proper that led to the overthrow of the despotic governments but did not translate it into political organizations that could defend their cause against the Islamic patriarchy. Women, individually speaking, were present not only as foot soldiers, but also as leading figures (Al Jazeera, 2011). Organizationally, however, they were weak and had no say in the political matters, due to their lack of close ties with political parties that might defend their cause. Individually strong, collectively weak, the new generation of women was at best fragile in the political aftermath of the Arab Spring, although they were highly visible and conscious of their revolutionary role in bringing down autocracy in the initial street protests.

The scarcity of women as social actors in the Arab world, be they secular or Islamist, is related to the patriarchal prejudices, but also to their own inability to build up prominence within the political structures and parties. Political leaders do not consider them as assets to defend (Daily Motion, 2012), since they have not been collectively active within associations and political groupings on the political scene.

In the parliamentary elections after the Egyptian Revolution, women held 2% of the seats, down from the 12% in the last elections held under Mubarak (Fadel & Hassieb, 2012). But the 2010 elections were rigged according to many contenders, the outcome being still perceived by secular women as a positive step towards the recognition of their status as citizens. Institutionally, the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions seem to have pushed

secular women towards a regressive political and social status, whereas they heightened at the same time their self-awareness as citizens. The number of women in the parliament dwindled after the revolution and women felt they were losing their gains in terms of legal equality at the hands of the Islamists. Still, there were few exceptions and a beginning of self-awareness that might bear its fruits in the future (Eriksen, 2011).

Violence against women began before the overthrow of the Old regime. In Egypt, women were molested by thugs (Baltajiya), the army submitted them to virginity tests (Ortiz, 2011), and female journalists were mistreated in order to intimidate them, be they from the Diaspora, or Egyptians. In June 2011, the popular writer Mona Eltahawy brought to light the issue as part of a strategy by the military hierarchy to prevent women from participating in the protest activities. The case of Samira Ibrahim, the 25 year old Egyptian human rights activist became widely known after she filed a legal case against the military.

In reaction to the violence against them, women demonstrated, in particular in Cairo, close to the symbolic Tahrir square, to protest against military rule and the harsh treatment of female protesters by the security forces. Many men joined them on December 20, 2011 out of sympathy for them⁴.

After the revolution, Salafis pushed toward the exclusion of women from the public sphere. Women Salafis became involved in promoting Sharia (Islamic law) and putting pressure on those women who asked for gender equality, violence against activist women finding tacit approval among them.

In the mobilization by Tamarrod and the opposition political parties against Morsi's presidency, women did play a significant role, but still, they were not able to convert it into political clout, partly awed by the global movement against Morsi, partly divided between Islamists and secular, family dependent, unable to build up autonomous feminist groups with the exception of small groups within the secular women.

Another factor favoring violence against women was their massive appearance on the public sphere during the Arab revolutions. Since Salafis became politicized as well and sought to appear on the same public sphere, their first acts of self-vindication was violence against women who "dared" dispute them their primacy by breaking down the barriers with men. Their

violence took varied forms, physical, psychological and moral. The army too, was keen to resend women to their homes in order to violently dispute with men the hegemony. Women, present on the public sphere, were trouble-makers, those who disputed the gender frontiers and therefore, put male tradition in question. Post-revolutionary male actors usually take to heart the reassignment of women to a less prominent place in terms of visibility, so as to exclusively occupy themselves the public sphere and give their hegemony a symbolic basis. In Egypt, virginity tests against women, their rape, their mistreatment during and after the demonstrations, all these actions had a common denominator: pushing back women to the private sphere and restoring the old order, threatened by women's meteoric emergence in Tahrir Square. The function of violence, in this case, in the four phases of the Egyptian revolution (overthrowing Mubarak, the transition period under the aegis of the army, Morsi's reign, and the coup d'Etat against him) was to push back women to their previous places and cleanse the public sphere of them. Women, on the other hand, had a relatively easy game to assert themselves during the revolution proper, but they did not build up adequate mechanisms (political parties, NGOs, clubs...) strong enough to defend their cause against the Salafis, the army and all those institutions that militate against gender equality.

Sectarian Violence

In Egypt, sectarian violence primordially expresses itself through the opposition between the Islamists and the Christian minority (the Copts) who make up around 10% of the population, and to a lesser degree, with tiny minorities, Shias and Bahais. The roots of the tension are old but the role of modern politics in igniting it is undeniable (Osman, 2013). During Sadat's presidency, Islamist groups who targeted the Copts were used as a means to fight against leftist activism. In 1981, during his reign, 81 Copts were killed in the Cairo working-class neighborhood, Zawiyah al-Hamra. During Mubarak's presidency, Islamist groups were severely repressed but Copts became somehow hostage to the regime that infused them with a sense of insecurity in order to assure their obedience. The fear of Islamists was further used to insure the Copts' support to the regime. In the post-

revolutionary era, the attacks against the Copts were initiated by the Salafis, but in some cases, the army was directly involved, as in 9-10 October 2011 demonstrations, when the army attacked Coptic protesters near the Maspero state TV building, 28 people being killed, most of them Copts (Carr, 2011).

After the January 25 Revolution, sectarian violence erupted again by the Salafis will to impose an ultra-orthodox version of Islam. But violence was specific in each event, involving the police and more generally, the security forces, the army, the sympathizers of the Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Copts, and radicalized groups on all sides. The case of Khosous, a town in the Delta governorate of Qalyubia, shows this complexity, once we look at it in detail (Afify, 2013). There, sectarian clashes erupted on April the 5th, 2013, spilling over the next days to other towns and cities. In Khosous, Christians regarded the police as not protecting them, most of the time withdrawing from the scenes of violence rather than assisting them against the assailants. On the day of the incident, two coffee shops were entirely destroyed and many buildings bore scorch marks. The stories and the interpretations of the people were different, influenced by their identification with one side or the other, and their presence at one moment or another, at the scene of the violence. In most cases of sectarian violence in Egypt, personal conflict between few people turns into a sectarian street clash and escalate into an all-out attack. The fight might be between two individuals on petty affairs, but it can become a clash between a Muslim and a Christian. On Friday, April the 5th, a small incident swell progressively and two days later, on Sunday, ended up in the large scale attack on St Mark's Coptic Cathedral in Cairo's Abbassiya district.

In many cases, a family or a group of people are identified as being at the core of the conflict. On April 5, the family of the lawyer Samir Iskandar, formerly affiliated with the Mubarak regime, was involved in a dispute involving Christians. A Muslim was killed. Then, Muslims in the area attacked and killed four Christians, apparently at random. According to eyewitnesses, a Muslim man harassing a Christian woman set off the feud. For a third group of eyewitnesses, Muslims were provoked by a drawing of a cross on an Islamic center, belonging to Al-Azhar. A fourth group put the blame on thugs from outside the district who created the turmoil against the Christians. A fifth group, made of women who lived in the corner and had

witnessed the clashes from their beginning, alleged that Farouk Awad, Iskandar's cousin, who lived in a building facing the Al-Azhar's Islamic Institute where the clashes began, shouted at a group of children playing with a can of paint in the adjacent building. Their drawings on the building close to the Islamic Institute bore names and nicknames like Mostafa and a sign close to a swastika that children drew without knowledge of its meaning. Children refused to listen to Awad and he became furious, starting to fire his gun in the air in an attempt to scare them away, accidentally shooting a Muslim bystander who died later on. A woman yelled in the street that her son was shot and in a few minutes, a massacre happened. Weapons being available to the people and the security forces being absent, the feud escalated. Muslims began targeting randomly Christians around the town, capturing a Christian and setting him ablaze in the middle of the street.

Then rumor was spread that a cross was put by Christians on the Islamic Institute. The authorities, without inspecting the scene of the events, officially stated the story of the cross on the building as the cause of the deadly events.

Another interpretation by the people put the blame on an unknown individual who transformed a feud between two families involving an accidental shooting into a sectarian conflict. The ninth interpretation claimed that it was the local mosque's imam who announced the death of the Muslim victim over a loudspeaker and urged Muslims to massacre Christians. Rumormongering and local tensions play a significant role in these feuds, the authorities becoming most of the time one of the rumormongers, rather than an impartial arbiter.

Clashes in Khosous were renewed on Sunday evening with the attacks on the funeral of the four Christian victims of Khosous at the Abbasiya cathedral in Cairo. The clash at the cathedral transformed local sectarian dispute into a national one. Security forces fired tear gas into the Cathedral and two deaths resulted in the afternoon, continuing into the night. In Khosous, on Sunday, Muslims and Christians became entangled in a battle with weapons on both sides, each targeting the business owned by the other. The police fled the scene, according to the eyewitnesses, and the lights in the areas were cut off.

The official reaction to the clashes by Essam al-Haddad, one of the spokesmen of the Presidency, put the blame on the Christians for igniting violence in both Khosous and Abbasiya, espousing the argument that Christians painted an insulting graffiti on the wall of an al-Azhar building in Khosous.

Another type of sectarian violence is generally based on rumors concerning a Muslim woman forced to convert to Christianity or one who would like to convert to Islam and is prevented from doing so by his family or the Christian community. On 8 May 2011, just few months after the Egyptian revolution, a night of street fighting between Muslims and Christians left at least 12 deaths, six Christians and six Muslims, around 220 people wounded, and two churches set ablaze in the Cairo suburb of Imbala. According to the eyewitnesses, fighting opposed one group of begrudged and jobless youth against another. Rumors gravitated around the interfaith romance. A young Muslim came to fetch his former Christian wife, who had converted to Islam and had married him, but she had recently disappeared and according to him, she had been kidnapped and held in the Church of St. Mina⁵. This pattern of a convert to Islam, whose community refuses her new faith and imprisons her is recurrent in the sectarian clashes in Egypt. Christians in the neighborhood said that no such woman was in the church and the local police agreed.

Mobile phone technology is put at the service of this sectarian violence: people call each other to come to the street in defense of their community and their number swells, making the confrontation bloodier.

The resurgence of sectarian violence is in a large part due to the emergence of the fundamentalist Salafis who believe that Islamic Sharia should be applied in relation to the other faiths in Egypt. The crisis of the state and the disorganization of the security forces as well as their taking sides with the Salafis against the Copts, render the problem the more insoluble.

Feeling alienated by the Morsi government, and insecure for the defense of their churches and houses by the MB authorities, Copts turned against the latter and in the street demonstrations for toppling the government, they actively participated. After the overthrow of Morsi, the ire of the MB sympathizers turned against them. Many churches were burnt (according to

the NGO Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights), since August 14, 2013 at least 25 churches were set ablaze and many Coptic schools, houses and shops were attacked in 10 out of the 27 provinces of Egypt. The Youth Maspero Movement put the numbers much higher, 39 churches being attacked in many different towns and cities.

Violence Between the Secular and the Islamist Actors

True or not, secular people in Egypt believed that they were the main actors of the revolutionary wave that overthrew the Mubarak regime. This perception was put into question when they lost the first parliamentary elections to the Islamists (the Muslim Brotherhood and to a lesser degree, to the Salafis) (Husain, 2012), held between November 2011 and January 2012. The Freedom and Justice Party (the political party affiliated to the MB) obtained 37,5% of the votes, the Al-Nour Party (Salafis) 27,8%, and the rest was split among numerous political parties, some belonging to the secular-revolutionary trend. The feeling of a “symbolic violence” was strong right from the moment the Muslim Brotherhood held the majority in the Parliament and was further intensified with the election of Morsi as the President of Egypt.

Since Morsi’s presidency in June 2012 and his attempts, regarded as imposing a new Constitution that betrayed the revolution’s ideals from the Seculars’ viewpoint, violence against the Muslim Brotherhood became one of the constant features of the street protests in Egypt. In Alexandria, at the end of March 2013, demonstrations swept in protest against the government’s crackdown on freedom and mistreatment of the opposition activists. In Sidi Gabi, a district in Alexandria, the clashes ended up with the two sides throwing Molotov cocktails and stones at each other. On the evening of Friday March 29, 2013, dozens of protesters skirmished with security forces at the MB headquarters in Zagazig district of Alexandria. Protesters targeted them in a march, but large number of MB sympathizers and members were stationed there to protect the building (MENA, 2013). These affairs and the way they were dealt with was regarded as the sign of Muslim Brotherhood’s direct implication in the matters pertaining to the government. In most cases the police and the military refused to intervene in

order to defend the MB centers. The movement against President Morsi and the MB radicalized gradually. On Friday March 29, 2013, a small number of activists marched from Tahrir Square to the High Court late afternoon, demanding the fall of Morsi, the dissolution of the Muslim Brotherhood and Prosecutor General Talaat Abdallah's dismissal. At the High Court, altercations broke out when some protesters began chanting for army rule, saying: "The army is ours, the supreme guide is not". Other demonstrators objected to the chants.

Central Security Forces were deployed to the High Court's main lobby mid-Friday afternoon, reinforcing the already heavy security presence in place since this morning. Hundreds of demonstrators continued to flock to the area, assembling in front of the prosecutor general's office in the court complex. Dozens of protesters began gathering outside the High Court earlier on Friday afternoon in preparation for a protest they called, "We are not to be intimidated". They chanted, "We will not go, he (Morsi) shall go", "The people want to bring down the regime", "I am not a coward, I am not a (Muslim) Brother", "Morsi, leave!" and "Secular, secular, we do not want a Brotherhood [state]" ([Egypt Independent, 2013](#)).

Thus the opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood, the President Morsi and the Islamists by secular forces tended to blend in a single protest movement that threatened to mutate street violence into a general civil war.

Representatives of 12 youth groups, including the Dostour Party, Free Egyptians Party, the Kefaya Movement, the Second Revolution of Anger and Maspero Youth Union, held a meeting Tuesday, March 26, 2013, at the Youth for Freedom and Justice Movement headquarters to discuss their Friday plans. They announced that they would perform Friday prayers outside the prosecutor general's office at the High Court in Cairo ([Egypt Independent, 2013](#)). They demanded the dismissal of Prosecutor General Talaat Abdallah, Justice Minister Ahmed Mekki and Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim after Abdallah issued arrest warrants for five activists accused of inciting clashes near the Muslim Brotherhood headquarters in Moqattam the week before. They also called for the public prosecutor to summon Brotherhood members involved in violent incidents around Moqattam and the Ettehadiya President Palace, and accused the judiciary of bias and unfairness.

Radicalization of the secular and leftist political parties demanding an end to the President's rule and their direct confrontation with the security forces in the name of the revolutionary ideals frequently ended up in physical violence. Disrespect for the "rules" became an almost permanent feature of the demonstrations, security forces acting more or less arbitrarily towards them, between the sheer absence of police forces to the disproportionate repression of the protesters.

The deep frustration of the secular forces pushed them towards activism, first street activism, then alliance with the military to overthrow Morsi. Tamarrod movement became symbolically very important against Morsi, a high number of signatures (claimed without any tangible proof to be around 22 millions, a number by far superior to the 13 million people who voted for Morsi) being gathered that asked for his resignation.

The number of the people taking part in the street movement on June 29 was highly overblown, mythical numbers of people being supposed to have taken part in the street protest⁶. Disinformation and widespread distortion of reality found a large echo in the international media who uncritically reproduced the excessively inflated number of protesters, unwillingly legitimizing the military coup that toppled the government. Violence and hundreds of deaths were the outcome of the coup, with an enduring political crisis.

Violence and the Security Forces

Police stations, under Mubarak, were the local representatives of power, mostly inspiring fear. After the revolution, the police was targeted as one of the main culprits, having allegedly tortured or caused the death of many citizens during the 18 days demonstrations that overthrew the Mubarak regime. Citizens awaited the trial of the culprits among the security. Disappointment overcame many activists who did not see any major prosecution against the police forces, nor any change of their harsh style of repression.

Since the election of Morsi in June 2012, a new type of tension between the MB and the police on the one side, the opposing activists on the other took place. On March the 3rd, in Port Said, three policemen were killed in the

street protests. Violent clashes opposed demonstrators and policemen at the Tahrir Square. The same phenomenon took place in Suez, Kafr al-Sheikh, and Qalyubia. In these demonstrations President Morsi was perceived as the Trojan Horse of the MB, instrumental in assuring its hegemony on the government (Al-Tahrir, 2013).

After the military coup in July 2013, many thousands of MB members or sympathizers were arrested (around 8000 according to some estimates), and around 1000 demonstrators against the coup d'Etat were arrested, the "worst Mass Unlawful Killings in Country's Modern History" happening on August 14, 2013 killings, the death toll amounting to 638 people, of which 595 civilians and 43 police officers, with at least 3,994 injured, according to the Egyptian Health Ministry (Human Rights Watch, 2013). However, the Muslim brotherhood and National Coalition for Supporting Legitimacy (NCSL) put the number of deaths from the Cairo's Rabaa al-Adawiya Mosque sit-in alone at some 2,600.

Symbolic Violence

Many types of violence intermingled in Egypt after the revolution, one of them involving irony and desecration of the Power-that-be, in the very person of the President Morsi. In a situation of relative calm where institutions would work properly, this type of violence might reinforce civil society and remind power holders of their conditional legitimacy in the eyes of the public. But in a situation where street violence had become almost endemic, symbolic violence through irony and sarcasm became a tool reinforcing the crisis of legitimacy. One prominent case was the popular TV satirist Bassem Youssef. On March 30, 2013 he was accused by the public prosecutor of insulting the President Morsi and denigrating Islam. Filing suit was regarded by the opposition as a sign of authoritarianism by the government, acting according to the old autocratic style. A week earlier, the public prosecutor ordered the arrest of five activists, charging them for the use of social media in order to incite violence against the MB. This attitude raised the scepter of press censorship in the eyes of many revolutionary actors (Fahim & El Sheik, 2013).

Majority political figures became the target of the attacks, Morsi but also some of his ministers and more generally, the MB hierarchy. Symbolic and physical violence were combined in order to dethrone the President and the MB as an organization.

In an incident regarding Morsi, activists spread clover plants across the presidential yard, a symbolic suggestion that he was an animal that needed common livestock feed. Mourad Ali, the Freedom and Justice Party's media advisor, the political party created by the MB, posted a statement on the FJP Facebook page: "What they did by raising underwear in front of the interior minister's house is [a sign of] moral collapse that is even worse than what they did last week, attempting to insult the President by scattering Egyptian clover in front of his house" (Al-Youm, 2013).

Security forces arrested four members of the April 6 Youth Movement on Friday March 29th, 2013, during a protest staged in front of Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim's home in Nasr City. According to the security officials, dozens of protesters illegally penetrated into the minister's house at midnight, some with Molotov cocktails. Early in the morning, the protesters raised underwear and vilified him as a "slut". A source from the Cairo security department said the troops fired tear gas to disperse the protesters, but April 6 accused security of firing bird shot as well, injuring some of their members.

In the eyes of the opposition, the figureheads of the President and his major ministers as well as the leadership of the MB had been irreparably destroyed at the symbolic level, before being demised by the military coup.

Violence against Civil Society Organizations

This type of violence consists in attacking, repressing or simply closing down civil society organizations. Before the election of the first new President, the military ruled Egypt, between February 2011 and June 2012. During that period, human rights and pro-democracy organizations were targeted. Some of them were funded by American donors and were closed down (like National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute, both affiliated with the two major US political parties, the Freedom House), others by German ones (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung). They were

officially suspected of spreading unrest in the country. 17 civil society organizations were thus scapegoated by the military, to vindicate their repression against the “foreign” institutions that spread unrest into the country (Beaumont & Harris, 2011).

Jihadist Violence

With the toppling of Morsi government, Egypt witnessed the significant return of jihadist violence, first and foremost in the Sinai desert areas, and then in major cities. After the demise of Morsi by the army on July the 3rd 2013, the repression against the MB began swiftly, ending up in August 14, 2013 with the killing of more than 1000 people at the Rabaa al-Adawiya Mosque (official estimates, 638 people killed, according to the MB, more than 2600). Gradually, part of the MB youth, angered by the lack of action by the organization’s officials separated and joined violent groups, mainly Jihadist ones.

Besides that, the Arab Revolutions released from jail or received from exile thousands of Jihadists and in Egypt alone, around 1200 militants could join Islamist militant groups (Dettmer, 2013). The latter, mainly al-Furqan Brigades, Ansar Beit al-Maqdis and the Jamal Network were reinforced, first through the conciliatory attitude of the Morsi government that tried to persuade their members to join peaceful movements and then, after Morsi’s removal, found a new legitimacy among part of the revolutionary youth who revolted against the military coup against the democratically elected Morsi government. According to the major Jihadist ideologue Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, the Egyptian army’s coup demonstrated “the soundness of the Jihadi project and the choice of the ammunition box over the ballot box” (Dettmer, 2013).

In December 2013, prior to the third anniversary of the Egyptian Revolution (January 25), many attacks occurred, in Mansoura (Nile’s Delta) on December 24, killing 15 people. On December 26, a bomb exploded in Cairo, killing 5 people. On December 29, an attack against a military building in the province of Charakiya, in the Nile Delta, wounded at least four soldiers. They were claimed by the jihadist group Ansar Beit al-Makdis, a jihadist organization that began its operations in the Sinai desert with the

insurgency there on February 2011, just after the Egyptian Revolution. It bombed many pipelines carrying gas from Egypt to Israel, claimed responsibility for an attack on a military intelligence building in Ismailia in October 2013, as well as the 24 January 2014 Cairo bombings.

Jihadist violence, in particular in Sinai, has become frequent and the military's repression of Morsi's legal government gives them a surplus of legitimacy.

The army's repression has not been able to curb it significantly and the worsening economic situation of the tribal groups and the proximity of Israel making any peaceful solution improbable. A crescendo in violence is in perspective.

Violence against the Students

Since the Egyptian revolution, students have become one of the major social activists. During the Mubarak era, students played a significant role in opposing the autocratic rule, many of the members of the April 6 Movement belonging to them. Still, in the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, students became involved as individuals, not as a major social group. Since the school year of 2013, universities became the locus of protest movements against or for Morsi. In the 2013 Egypt's Student Union elections, independent students won against the MB candidates and Mohamed Badran became its president. He has shown support for the new draft of the constitution backed by the military, alienating many students, opposed to the military coup.

After Morsi's overthrow in July 2013 students have become social activists as such, in particular within universities, within many new associations. The Students against the Coup (SAC) was formed after the so-called "3 July Coup" and is dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood students and their sympathizers, calling themselves Rabaaweya in reference to the mosque where more than 1000 people were killed in a sit-in by the security forces on August 14, 2013. Ain Shams university is one of the major theaters of their action. The boycott of exams on December 28, 2013 was another major action promoted by SAC. Still, in many universities the examination process went on normally. Another group of student activists, mainly secular

and leftist in their political leanings was constituted composed of the 6 April Youth, the Revolutionary Socialists, Misr al-Qawia Students and the Manifesto Group. They have been acting as a student branch of the Revolutionary Front created in September 2013, critical towards the MB as well as the military (AbdAllah, 2014). El-Midan Student Group belongs to the al-Dostour Party but it marked its autonomy from the political office back in 2012 when the students criticized many figures participating in the National Salvation Front of which al-Dostour party is a member, and then, when the party supported the police and the military in July 2013 to combat “terrorism”.

Violence against the students by the military has been going on crescendo since the military coup, within and without the universities.

One of the major universities to protest against the military coup of 2013 has been al Azhar whose president Mohamed al-Tayeb officially sided with general Sissi after the demise of Morsi. The demonstrations reached their peak during the midyear examinations when Students against the Coup (SAC), mostly sympathizers of the Muslim Brotherhood, announced their boycott of the exams.

The Engineering Student Union at University of Zagazig, the capital of at Ash Sharqiyah governorate, engaged in a strike on November 16, 2013, asking for the release of the detained students and the resignation of the Dean, among other claims. On the same day Security forces stormed into the university after the authorization by its President, detaining number of students believed to be MB sympathizers. The attacks triggered protests at other faculties in the university. Other universities joined the strike, among them Ain Shams faculties of Engineering, Medicine, Helwan Faculties of Engineering... Students belonging to the MB demonstrated in different universities, commemorating 100 days after the “Rabaa massacre” of August 14 in al Azhar, Cairo, Zagarig, Helwan and Beni Suef.

In January 2014, before the third anniversary of the Revolution, many protest movements by students were crushed by the security forces. In Assiut University, on Sunday January 5, 2014 demonstrators were met with birdshots by the security forces, leading to more than 50 students injured. Police stormed into university campuses.

All in all, during the Morsi Presidency and the interim government after the military coup, students became one of the major activists against the Powers that be. Violence towards them within and without the university became one of the salient features of the new regime, after the coup.

Conclusion

One major motto of the Egyptian revolution was peacefulness or lack of violence (*Selmiyah*). After the revolution, the combination of the Islamists' winning the elections, and the inability of the new political actors to reach a compromise resulted in mutual distrust and demonization, culminating in a military coup.

There was a growing sense of impatience towards the political stalemate, and Morsi's inept and sometimes arrogant style of government pushed the opposition towards radicalization. A new attitude among many opposition groups became prevalent, regarding violence as legitimate against the government. Part of the revolutionary youth engaged in street violence that became endemic in some cities. Violence became even bloodier with the Military coup, the prospect of a peaceful transition to democracy becoming dim after the overthrow of the first democratically elected President, Morsi. The military coup opened up a new era of ordeal for the MB. This political organization, one of the oldest in modern Egypt and one of the most influential in the Muslim world, had been, for more than half a century, a political body used to clandestinity and repression. At best, the organization was partly tolerated (as around 2005's parliamentary elections), by Mubarak. But its public activities were short-lived since its inception in 1928 and the old organization returned invariably to its semi-clandestine, semi-public status after short periods of open activity (in the 2010 parliamentary elections the Muslim Brotherhood was denied the facilities of 2005). The Egyptian Revolution of 2011 gave the MB the opportunity to become a public organization with a central political role. But the semi-clandestine apparatus did not easily mutate into a political organization and the old reflexes and suspicions remained among its members, except for a thin layer of the youth among them, the latter being marginalized by the old MB members within a gerontocratic hierarchy. The MB remained, up to the very

end, a Janus bifrons: it oscillated between the old attitudes of opacity and secrecy represented by parts of its members and the new necessities for openness and communication in an era of turbulence and revolutionary impatience. The identity crisis was the deeper as the MB took the helms of power almost by “enchantment”. It sent its members to the parliament and became the largest political party in Egypt (more than 40% of the members of the new parliament belonged to it), then its candidate for Presidency was elected (with the fourth of the votes, due to the split among the opposition groups), all of this without the MB’s being prepared to take the reins of the government by having a clear vision of the future for Egypt. More precisely, the MB took power without having any political program, strategic vision or economic platform to address the major challenges facing the post revolutionary Egypt (Hassan, n.d.). At the same time, most of Egypt’s Deep State (Levinson & Bradley, 2014) (at the top of which, the interior ministry, the largest part of the security forces, the ministry of justice’s organizations headed by the judges, more generally, large parts of the state bureaucracy) refused to cooperate with the MB and went on an implicit strike during the entire period of Morsi’s presidency.

Comparing the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 to the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979, one has to recognize that more than three decades after the debacle of the secular classes in Iran, in Egypt secular classes have become more self-conscious than before. When ayatollah Khomeyni took the reins of power, he found a disunited and a divided secular middle class, whose members were deeply suspicious to each others in ideological terms: leftist revolutionaries versus non-political technocratic middle classes. The leftist ideology minored the role of the Islamists who were supposed to be the members of the traditional “petty bourgeoisie” with whom the revolutionaries should cooperate more willingly than with the class enemies of the “liberal bourgeoisie” who were “counter-revolutionaries”. Ideologically blinded leftist secular middle classes were more sympathetic to the Islamists’ views of religion and daily life than to their fellow members of the middle classes whom they accused of an imaginary subservience to the “imperialist international bourgeoisie”, this blindness continued with the Iranian Tudeh (the Communist Party) cooperating with the Khomeynist regime until they were liquidated by it. The “Islamist” dimension of the

revolution was thus minored and treated as an insignificant “superstructure” against the “infrastructure” of the economic relations that should determine “in the last resort” the political and social allegiances (the Khomeynist “petty bourgeois” regime was supposed to be more inclined towards working class people than the mythical Iranian “grand bourgeoisie” that would side with the imperialist West). With the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions, after two years of Islamist rule (by far less stringent in religious terms than the Iranian Theocracy), the secular classes refused submission to Islamist norms restricting one’s daily life in the name of the Sharia. Although the opposition Secular/Islamist does not give a comprehensive picture of the military coup in Egypt in July 2013 and the public attitude of the secular middle classes in Tunisia, still, this dimension remains one of the major axes around which opposing actors evolved before and after the military coup in Egypt and during the period extending from the murder of the two secular leaders in Tunisia (Shukri Belaid’s killing on February 6, 2013 and Mohamad Brahmi, on July 25, 2013) until the resignation of the Ennahda Prime minister and the adoption of the new secular constitution on January 26, 2014. Secular, middle class or “would-be” middle class actors henceforth refuse to play the role assigned to them by the radical Islamists who view “revolution” as the restoration of coercive religious values, in particular towards women’s modesty and their “decency”, whereas the new generations view their personal freedom as paramount and reject being imposed those religious norms that would jeopardize it. This tension structured the large protest movements against Morsi in Egypt and in a less radical way, against the Ennahda Party in Tunisia during the entire year of 2013.

By overthrowing Morsi, the Egyptian army and the opposition epitomized violence as the major means of achieving their political goals. The use and abuse of the words “terrorists”, “terrorism” and the like, to characterize the MB by the media supportive of the army and the opponents to Morsi is reminiscent of the intolerant language of authoritarianism that was fought by the revolutionaries at the outset of the January 25 Revolution. The lesson might not be forgotten in the future crises, the “political memory” privileging the use of violence to the detriment of the legal and institutional means every time discontent simmers against the political leadership.

In summary, at the beginning of the Arab revolutions, almost everywhere dignity of the citizen (*karamah*) and non-violence (*selmiyah*) were the two inseparable notions singling out these uprisings from the Nationalist and Islamist ones in the past⁷. The evolution of the movements challenged the fragile dignity of the citizen, violence emerging as the only appropriate response to the government repression and ineptitude, be it in Yemen, Syria or Libya. With the exception of Tunisia where a sense of compromise prevailed and the Islamist government subscribed to a consensual new Constitution (in part for fear of suffering the same fate as the MB in Egypt), almost everywhere two factors combined to debilitate the new movement for the dignity of the citizens: the authoritarian state and geopolitics. In Egypt, the Morsi government was insensitive to consensus. Youth's revolutionary impatience was also detrimental to the preservation of dignity since it promoted violent street action that in turn put into question toleration and politics according to the supremacy of the law. Dignity divorced from non-violence, exerting a disruptive impact on social dialogue. In Egypt, the military coup opened a chasm between dignity and peacefulness, each side begrudging the other's violence. The "dignity revolutions" found in Egypt a tragic ending, the major notions around which they evolved being sharply questioned by the street violence and the Coup d'Etat.

The military coup has been alternately interpreted in two divergent manners. For the first version, it was not a coup from above but what a popular movement aspired to, the military being only the performers of a composition written down and played by the people. According to this understanding, the "Neo-Seculars" salvaged the Egyptian society from the lasting domination of the MB who intended to impose Islamist rule on the people. Within this framework, the coup was a political-military action of the Egyptian society against the inept and hegemonic MB.

The second reading regards the military coup as an illegitimate act of violence against a fragile but burgeoning democracy that was suppressed by the alliance of intolerant groups who did not submit to the majority rule.

Both of these views can lay claim to a partial truth. But the democratization process has largely suffered from the military intervention, many groups preferring the authoritarianism of the army to the unruly

democratization process that was open-ended and created chaos and uncertainty.

The rising expectations of the lower classes after the 2011 revolution as well as the fear of the secular classes towards the MB as an Islamist party inclined to “brotherize” (*ikhwanah*) (that is, to put under the aegis of the Muslim Brotherhood) the state apparatus blended into a protest movement manipulated by the powerful military establishment, resulting in the overthrow of Morsi and the return to power of the military. Since then, three major events have taken place:

- the protest movement by the MB’s supporters continued unabated up to February 2014, more and more vigorously repressed by the military, ending up with numerous deaths (more than thousand) and arrests. With the military’s aim at imposing its rule on the street (prohibition of demonstrations without the authorities’ leave), part of the secular revolutionaries who were opposed to the Muslim Brotherhood, joined the new loose opposition to the new State (among others, the April 6 Movement...). In December 2013 the Egyptian government declared MB a terrorist organization and seized the remainder of its assets, all its activities becoming illegal.

- a tiny part of the MB’s youth joined the jihadists and became involved in the violent action against the military and the police. In Sinai almost on a daily basis and in the large cities more or less sporadically, a nucleus of a new jihadist group took shape that fights through violent means against the military rule.

- the large majority of the revolutionaries, especially the youth, is in a state of despair and apathy, the ideals of the 2011 Revolution being more and more put into question by the new regime, the majority claiming more security and stability even at the detriment of freedom, due to the desperate economic situation of the lower classes. The Constitution, approved by the overwhelming majority of those who went to the polls (more than 98%) with a turnout of 38,6% of the voters gave a large clout to the army. Those who demonstrated against the vote were harshly repressed, especially in the third anniversary of the revolution (49 people died, 1079 were arrested ([Kingsley, 2014](#)) and the day before the January 25th, explosions killed 10 people and injured around 80 close to the Cairo security directorate building, the attacks

being claimed by a Jihadist group, Ansar Beit al-Maqdis). Prominent figures of the 2011 Revolution are in prison (Ahmed Maher, Mohamed Adel, Ahmed Douma, Alaa Abdel Fattah) and prominent members of the Mubarak regime coming back to the political stage (the so-called *fulul*).

The need for security and stability is valued by the silent majority over the turmoil that was prevalent for three years since the revolution, during which no perspective of compromise between the power holders and the radicalized activists loomed on the horizon. The military rule opened up a new era, xenophobia and suspicion towards any dissent finding their justification in an attitude of passive acceptance of the military rule by the voters, the army being regarded as the only dependable institution within a society in deep crisis.

Notes

¹ The official fact-finding mission investigating the death toll of Egypt's revolution announced that at least 846 were killed and 6,467 injured. See www.egypttoday.com/news/display/article/artId:269/coping-with-the-revolution/secId:6

² The claims by the revolutionaries in Egypt as well as in Tunisia had no direct bearing to religion. In Tunisia, the young Bouazizi who committed suicide did it without any regard to religion (generally speaking, Islam condemns suicide and his act had no direct bearing to martyrdom). On the Tahrir Square in Cairo, none of the slogans had direct religious justification or claim to it. The revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia were "postislamist" in the sense that social demands supposed, in their formulation, a social realm distinct from the religious one, this division of the spheres being not regarded as anti-Islamic by the protagonists. What was at the center of the claims was the end of autocracy, corruption and exclusion of the people from the political arena. The "secular" side of these two paradigmatic revolutions point to this fact. This view is however different from the secular ones in the West in that it leaves in limbo all those aspects of "democracy" that can become conflictive with Islam, like the citizenship issue (should non-Muslims have the same political rights as Muslims?), the question of the "apostasy" (*ridda*), of banking (the notion of *riba*, usury)... Those who set off the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt "ignored" these questions, they were not frontally anti-religious, nor atheists, but "secularized believers" for most of them (besides part of the Diaspora that had adopted Western secular views).

³ The word "secular" with its Western connotations is difficult to use without caveats. By secular Muslims (or Secular) I mean those who were distinct in their worldviews from the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis, who did not believe that major reforms should adopt a mould according to the Sharia' and who were mostly "non-practicing" Muslims, without denying to Islam its moral and social legitimacy. They were "secularized" in an ambiguous manner, not against Islam, but by loosening their ties to the religious prescriptions. Only a tiny minority were "secular" in the Western sense, mostly among the upper middle classes or the Diaspora. Still, religion was not at the forefront of their claims, social justice and

political opening being their major concern. See for the ambivalence of this type of secularization in the new generations in Iran.

⁴ Glen Johnson and Luke Harding profiles at The Guardian:

www.guardian.co.uk/profile/glen-Johnson, www.guardian.co.uk/profile/lukeharding.

Retrieved on Tuesday 20th December 2011.

⁵ David D. Kirkpatrick 8/5/ 2011 New York Times

<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/k/david-d-kirkpatrick/index.html?inline=nyt-per>

⁶ Anti-Morsi authorities estimated the number of the street demonstrators against him on June 30, 2013 ranging from 14,3 to 33 millions. According to the calculations made by taking into account the surface of the places where demonstrations took place, the maximum number of the people around Tahrir Square and the adjacent streets would be less than 700.000. The reference by the sympathizers of the military to Google Earth was unsubstantiated and the total number of the people in the streets in the major cities would be by far less than 2 millions (MEMO, 2013).

⁷ See for a discussion about these three types of social movements in the history of the Muslim world (Khosrokhavar, 2012).

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