ISLAMISATION AND DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION IN THE POST-REVOLUTION EGYPT

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: Centrally, this article aims at exploring the effects of the convulsion toward Egyptian domestic politics and democratic transition. However, it tries to examine whether the spring was for a political freedom or a merely evasive move to saddle brotherhood on governorship.

Methodology: Qualitative data analysis is the approach applied while carrying out this study. Various books, journals and research reports on Egyptian as well as Middle Eastern politics were consulted as sources of information. Current political events in Egypt and other neighboring countries were followed.

Findings: It concludes that democratizing a dominantly Arab and Islamic nation such as Egypt seldom hit the target. More so, the spring's ends those were meant for better Egypt have not yet been achieved.

Application: This research is useful especially for students or readers want specialize on Egyptian or Middle Eastern politics from the shadow of political changes in the region.

Novelty/Originality: The jasmine revolution witnessed across the Middle East and North Africa is the subject matter of this study. The Middle East region, which is the focusing area of this research was popularly dominated by tyrant leaderships especially in the pre-revolution time. This study finds its originality from the fact that lack of freedom and political rights galvanized anger among the Arab youths: from Tunisia to almost all over the region. However, this contributes to the scary literature related to this area specially democratic transition that happened for the first time in Egypt.

Keywords: Revolution, Islamization, Egypt, North Africa, Democracy, Shari'ah Law.

1. INTRODUCTION

For many decades ago, West Asia and North African peoples; from Yemen to Morocco, have been facing excruciating experience by autocratic tyrant leaderships till the first quarter of 2011 when earthquake of political revolution shaken the system (Teti and Garvasio, 2011). Likewise dozens of Sub-Saharan African countries whose dictatorial type of their leaders turns public offices to a vacuum villa of hierarchy instead of free and fair elections, in which all citizens have equal rights to participate in forming the governments of their states. Looking at the region from the ethnic perspective, Africa as a continent contains two major divisions: the North Africa Arab and indigenous black Africans, otherwise known as Sub-Saharans. Arab-Africans are often judged as West Asia in the Arabian Peninsula.

The tyrant regimes of all Ben Ali, Mubarak, and Mu'ammarr el-Ghaddafi have so far galvanized abyss of political lawlessness and violence throughout the region (Abubakar, 2014). Similarly, Arabian societies – for so long – stand in need with liberty, freedom and political rights. They were keen to altruistic governing body, transparency and peaceful transition of power. The basic human wants are so extensively required. The ever historic upheaval led by the Tunisian youths has gone far beyond Maghreb sub-region. Mistreating a young Tunisian man over his vegetable cart in the course of earning his livelihood provoked outrage across the country. This incidence instigated region-wide waves of revolutions and eventually resulted in insurrection that has brought about overthrowing some of the geriatric regimes in the area.

In Libya, the wave swept the forty-year old regime and gave a new title for the country rather than Muammar el-Gaddafi. This heavy political change sparked in the first instance from Tunisia, extended to Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria. The wave however, moved to Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Sudan. Perhaps, this is how liberalism would be the chief judge over non-western Arab populations.

The general perception always remains on the belief that the contents of liberal democracy, especially the synthesis of legislation, sovereignty and law-making processes, are sizeably contradicting the basic fundamental teaching of Islam, where all of the above vest in the Hand of God. Therefore, the issue of legislation in a democratic system has to do with the law-making processes through which sovereignty could be observed so to control and regulate the affairs of government. Again, a truly democratic legislative must be secular.

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Henceforth, many Muslim scholars and clerics argue that the contents of democracy are not possible in an Islamic political system of government, while others see no contradiction between the two. Although the debate appears an old one, but it will always remain a very important point in discussing secular democracy in Muslim nations. A western view point, by contrast, affirms that Islam is opposed to democratic rule, and the assertions along these lines have frequently led to support of authoritarianism in the Arab world. Huntington argued that, Islam and democracy are inherently incompatible because Islam recognizes no division between “Church” and “State” and thus, *Ummah* over single individual (Huntington, 1996). Some scholars like Fukuyama have since, asserted that Islamic law and doctrine are fundamentally illiberal (1992: 45). And many others claim that Islam fosters antidemocratic values among its adherents. Islam is more pluralistic than any other religion (Abdul-Fattah, 2006).

Therefore, the process to Islamize democracy is rooted by some assumptions. The first is that democratic values are not entirely based on Western ideology. Secondly, wisdom is aim of the believer, during the early time of Islam; Muslims were allowed to learn systems of administration from the Persian. Sheikh *Yusufal-Qaradawi*, an Egyptian scholar, attempts to Islamize democracy in one of his works. Addition to that *al-Qardawi* backed the 2010/2011 revolts against Arab corrupt leaders. Many scholars, like Huntington, Larry Diamond, and many more, adduce that there is always incompatibility between principles of democracy and Islamic values. This issue (compatibility and incompatibility of Islam), and transition to democracy across the Arab world and other Muslim-majority countries instigated vibrant and nuanced debates (Huntington, 1996; Larry Diamond, 2010).

As the post-revolution Egypt catches many people by surprise, this paper aims at exploring the historic upheavals brought about by the revolts. The first democratically elected government was seen for the first time in modern history of Egypt. The upheavals soon opened a Pandora Box for democratic transition and chanced the Islamists (Muslim Brotherhood) to form the government under Muhammad Mursi somewhere in 2011. This paper however, aims at disclosing the possible contingency or even the incomes out there when democracy paves the way for Islam to rule over a nation through Islamist party. This paper looks at this recent befuddled state of the Egypt and what follows such as the collapse of Mursi during the court hearing, which has subsequently led to his death afterward.

2. MIDDLE EASTERN CULTURE AND POLITICAL MODERNIZATION

Shahin (1998), Entelis (1997), Crone and Cook (1977), Rubin (2003), argue that there is no clash between the West and Islam in whatsoever circumstance even when the immature democracy of the Arab and Muslim world is put into consideration. Some authors however, argued that North African countries, particularly Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, experienced clear manifestation of Islamic reassertion since the beginning of the 1970s. Islam has resurfaced as a dynamic factor in the affairs of these societies and as vibrant political language expressed by the incumbent elite and protests groups alike (Shahin, 1998).

Both Beinun and Stork (1996) advocate that the genesis of contemporary Islamic ideology presents itself to the non-correct illusion that political Islamization remains among the factors due to which modern Muslims fail. They try to fitfully accommodate European liberal thoughts such as citizenship, the rule law, the drawing lines between Church and State, and secular nationalism. Ayyubi (1991) identifies Islam as a religion of collective morals, which is not particularly political religion. He further clarified that, the main *Quranic* concept of the body politic, is not necessary a religious one, as neither *Quran* nor *Hadith* specify how governments should be formed or what they should look like.

Anthony Black (2011) in his words stressed that the emergence of Islam and its culture, is fully discerned especially if religion, whatever else it may do, as a way of accomplishing some other social desires. Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him) established a new monotheistic religion accommodate the contemporary wants of tribal community, *if* it was to make much valuable to itself. The Prophet had made available the ideology that is currently maintained in Arab world and other Muslim nations.

On this ground, learning much from the Islamic political ideologies could advance an understanding of the history of European political ideas too. Early from the beginning, the European and Islamic political cultures had many similarities in common with one another more what they individually shared with any other cultures. Islam and Christianity are moreover both part of a usually Mediterranean beliefs. Islamic history is intellectually so much closer to Europe in both geography and in content. Therefore, it is very much common to compare Europe with Islamic world when ever need to explain the uniqueness of Europe arise. So many examples that qualify closeness between the two great civilizations are already documented. For instance, in Western Europe, from Spain/Portugal to France and Italy; historic confrontations occurred between Muslim warriors and the armies of this region. Muslim scholars and writers such as *Ibn Rushd* (Averroes, 1126-1198), *Ibn Hazm* (994-

1064), etc. have apparent influences in *al-Andalus* (Muslim Spain [Iberia, modern day Portugal]) after the Muslims' longest conquest lasted for nearly 7 centuries (711-1492).

Islam provides a very clear and typical substitute to Europe. The impactful consequences of the Middle Eastern beliefs (Abrahamic religions) and Platonic ideas specifically upon the two traditions were not at all the same from the entire angles of consideration. Although so much amazing similarities were proved, but the overall patterns were conceptually different. This could make one to assess the cardinal importance of these traditions in the historic tales of Western political philosophy. However, that may support some other factors. For instance, the Roman and Iranian legacies which had virtually shared similar equal importance.

Abdelilah Belkeziz (2009) pronounces that the problematic matter of the nation state for Islamic Reformism in its first and second generations; the problematic of the state of *al-Khilafah* for Rashid Rida (which al-Azhar *Ulama* had defended in their battle against Ali Abd al-Raziq), then the problematic of the Islamic state according to *al-Banna* and the Muslim Brotherhood and lastly the problem of theocratic state as viewed by *al-Mawdudi*, *Qutb* and *Khomeini*, and subsequently the jihadist *takfiri* movement. These problematic produced the four primary discourses in modern and contemporary Islamic thought: Reformist discourse, *salafist shar'e* discourse, Muslim Brotherhood discourse, and then theocratic discourse: discourse of '*al-Hakimiyah*', '*wilayat al-Faqih*' and *Jihad* within the '*dar Al-Islam*'.

Upon consideration of the singularity of the Islamic philosophy, modern Muslim *Ulamaa* have several times attempted to enlarge the intellectual understanding and learning of modern Islamic thought from merely the Arab world to more widely Islamic world instead. However, diverse of the Islamic cultures in more than one country were, and in consideration of the impossibility of understanding many givens of this thought – in the Arab circle itself – without casting some light on some of its orientations and movements in the Islamic milieu, especially in the post-Second World War period in which the connection between Arab Muslims philosophy would strengthen with non-Arab and non-Muslim thought.

Although we did not address this thought in many major Islamic regions such as Turkey, Indonesia or Malaysia, or smaller ones such as (Africa) – which we admit as a major academic gap that needs to be addressed by us or others, we, however, presented other Islamic texts (especially Iranian ones) and to a lesser degree Indian and Pakistani, to break the rule of confinement to Arab-Islamic thought only: which is the case in many Islamic intellectual studies in Arab world.

The idea of the state (*al-Dawlah*) – in modern political thought – gestated in the idea of Reform (*al-Ihsan*), and it was among its theoretical fruits. It was not put forth – in the consciousness of the Reformers (*al-Islahiyun*) – as being an independent conceptual matter, but rather it was carried along in tandem with thinking about the sum total of causes that had led Arab and Islamic societies to a state of manifold delay: lagging behind the age, and lagging behind referential past; just as it was carried along with thinking about the sum total of possible means of attaining to the causes of advancement and renaissance, and positive entry into modern civilization. In every case, it was Islamic Reformism (*al-Islahiyah*) which first formulated a thesis about the state (*al-Dawlah*) and the political question since the locking of the gates of discussion for subjects of 'Islamic legal politics' (*al-Siyasah al-Shar'iyah*) in the Islamic Middle Ages, consecrating itself as the sole repository of knowledge on the subject for successive generations of *fuqaha*

3. POST-REVOLUTION NORTH AFRICA, MORE CHANCES FOR ISLAMISTS

Pollack, Byman, and Al-Turk (2011), argued that, in some countries, Islamists have only grown stronger in the wake of the revolutions. The opening of political space means that Islamist parties will proliferate and those non-Islamist parties, if they want to win, will need to adopt policies and positions that more closely align with the conservative sentiments of voters. They however, adduce that even if Islamists underperform in elections, they will invariably contribute with much important duty for the future of the societies. If they are not leading governments, they will be part of them.

As far Abd-Rabou, the army's impenetrable absent in the politics especially after it seized power and ousted Husni Mubarak have not anyways limited their interruption in the Egyptian political atmosphere. The first post-revolutionary elected president Muhammad Mursi was handed over the affairs of the country by the military in July 2012. In the subsequent 12 months of the transition, Egypt witnessed another tale of incidence as military once again knocked the door only to oust the democratically elected civilian president declaring a roadmap for future Egypt. The new interim government is set up; parliamentary and presidential elections are rescheduled. The perplexing move was that the majority of Egyptian people who were part of the revolts against Mubarak as geriatric military leader countenanced military coup and interruption led by el-Sisi immediately after the elections that make wrangling debate on the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood, and bewilder both Egyptian and

international academia on how to name this military intervention; was it a revolution championed by Egyptians that ousted another dictatorship regime just like the earlier one, or was it just a coup? (Abd-Rabou, 2014),

Mursi's winning declaration, which makes thousands of protesters to occupy *Tahrir Square* once again celebrating the result of the then recent held elections, indicated that Mursi was the candidate backed by the popular revolution. The newly elected president was officially handed over affairs of the country in front of huge crowds of Egyptians and in front of the Constitutional Court Judges, coincidentally. It however showed that he won the support of the revolutionary forces. The new administration under Mursi could restructure some government machineries so to attract much of public support. When he took up the office, there were no hopes that the military will ever be back to the Egyptian political stage. His sluggish moves in terms of economic and even political policies have instigated general public and attracted the military governorship instead of civilian one.

Even though the above political shaking remains true but many doubt on the golden value of these particular waves of protests. By the time protests started to pose a real challenge to Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, few was on the opinion that the revolts may definitely spread to other nearby Arab nations. Hence, the turmoil kicked off and moved to go round across the region: Yemen to Egypt, Jordan and Syria. Of course, many presumed that Arab leaders could be well-arranged and prepared to face the riots aiming to escape the fate of Tunisian regime. With huge works executed by typhoon of the protests, still they fail to dismiss many autocratic regimes.

4. THE TWO ARGUMENTS ON ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY

The world's largest democracies are dominantly non-Muslim communities. United States, India, and European countries including UK with more than 1.5 billion people; are non-Muslims. Except for India, the influx of Muslims into Europe was so much through heavy modern immigration somewhere in the 1960s from different parts of the Muslims world: North Africa, Asia and Turkey. Muslims are significantly large in size in the West. In Europe, they account for about 5-6 percent of the entire populations.

Europe according to Fuller shapes a unique borderline for Muslims, unlike China, Russia or even India. Throughout Europe, Muslims left their homelands as modern immigrants for works and other financial advantages. The decision is often temporary, as other opportunities present itself, soon the decision become permanent: they seek citizenships through some legally different possible means, and willingly accept the status of minorities. Consisting of well-established ancient European identities as well as cultures, present a rigidly conservative ways of life unlike North America. Europe was for long, familiar with the Muslims as historical foe when their forces had been repelled away from Spain by Europe under the King Ferdinand in the 1492. This had, of course, terminated the longest Muslims' leadership of seven centuries in Spain. Ottoman forces, in yet another Europe-Muslims rivalry, had been thwarted by Polish armies during the siege of Vienna in 1683. Likewise, Europe expended its control and occupied almost the then entire Muslim countries in different places (Fuller, 2012).

These battles were over the course of ideology, civilization, culture, or ethnicity and tribe. But now, by the splash of the 20th centuries, the emphasis is given to the new world order. The dawn of freedom and liberty; the tale of democratization emerges to champion the affairs of the world governments. Muslims scholars maintain multiple stances on whether Islam and democracy can operate side-by-side.

It is clear that there are inherently two main paradigms on the thematic domains: Islam and democracy (Huntington, 1996). One argument is that there is incompatibility between political Islam and democracy. There Islam is presented as a pre-reformation and pre-industrial ideology, which stands on the way of modernity including liberal democracy (Fukuyama, 1992). In the alternative paradigm cases of old Islamic states or Caliphates are cited to show that Islam places much emphasis on the community (*Umma*), which is above the rulers (the Caliph or *Imam/Khalifah*). Old Islamic states (at least some) are portrayed as being benevolent and democratic. It is also argued that the ideology of Islam puts much emphasis on equality, which is basic principles of Islam from its foundation in the seventh century, and an attribute of democracy (Lewis, 2005).

Bouma and Sayed Khatab (2007), suggest that Islam can't anyway accommodate proper condition of human rights neither democracy. This in turn, raises a concern for well-meaning Western policy makers and politicians. Additionally, the fear is that the hard-won human rights enjoyed by Western societies for many decades could be dismantled should Muslims by any chance become part of Western integrated societies. Thus, the issue of Islam and democracy is part of a global or larger contestation affecting nation-states, political and religious stripes.

5. MODERNITY AND REINTERPRETATION OF SHARI'AH LAW

Based on the Islamic perspective, there are different arguments about world system, which is believed by political scientists to be on a state of fermentation. Hence, the political agendas in promoting human values and absolute free-will of choice are traceable fundamentally in the Qur'an and the life of the Prophet. By so doing it portrays that democracy and even liberty – as being the subject of debates – could suitably fit Islam, if a precise interpretation of modernity can be carried out by some competent *Ulama*.

Goodly innocent interpretation is valuable in the realm of government and law. Islam is, and never against modernity neither its law does. The clash is always drawn by contradictions between secularism and Islamism; of course that is the genesis of the differences. However, these heated debates on whether Islam and modern democracy accommodate one another have been a source of frustration for many. In different parts of the world, religion has re-penetrated politics through different means. Even though in case of Islam particularly, separation between State and Religion is not well recognized. This draws red-lines between Islam and Western societies.

Frankly speaking Western see the Ayatollah's claim during the Iranian Islamic revolution that called for theocratic form of government, with generic basement on the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, a system that does not apply, at least not in the terms understood in the Christian West. The wills that support exploring some issues in a Western frame are referred to Milbank's work, which insists on an ontological basis for ethics and the analysis of social order but does not promote theocracy, realizing that what has passed for theocracy in each of the religions of the book (i.e. Jews and Christians) amounts to rule by self-appointed clergy who place themselves beyond accountability to the people they rule (Ismael, 2013).

Secular is another Western category that sits uncomfortably with this presentation of the theory/theology of Islamic governance. It is possible to argue that the forms of Islamic governance outlined here represent a pre-differentiated form of statecraft which has been left behind in the West for an extreme form of differentiation between the state and religious organizations. Yes, the West has made this transition, but is that form of differentiation necessary, or just peculiar to the West? The problem is that both the forms of the state and the forms of religious organization are different.

6. CONCLUSION

Since the ancient time, Egypt is renowned for being a hosting home of different civilizations that are said to control global affairs (Rawlinson, 2018). The last civilization that had conquered Egypt was Islam. However, throughout many centuries, Egypt remains a border of three Abrahamic faiths: Islam, Christianity and Judaism; between Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel and Palestine. Obviously, revolutionary upheaval could definitely be abysmally apocalyptic condition ever a country can experience, even though such a happening is not so grotesque in the history of Egypt.

In yet another case, the risen poverty rate and declined per capita GDP throughout Arab countries including Egypt; unemployment coupled with dozen – plus – regimes with questionable legitimacy, from Yemen to Morocco, galvanized heat anger and bulging with restive by millions of protesters who occupied streets demanding freedom, rights, and legitimate ruling systems and equal participation in political life. These opportunities have been blocked for them by geriatric ruling tyrants for so many decades. One of the most entrenched leaders, Hosni Mubarak, a modern Pharaoh of Egypt is toppled down by the forcing wave of protests. Demonstrations and mass riots will never be seen as strangers to modern Egypt; neither are the strong typhhon of nationalists and freedom fighters' movements (Peters, 2011).

These series of revolutionaries soon transit Egypt into a version of democracy through a historic election that brought about a new model of Egypt under Morsi led administration. Morsi, the first post-revolution elected president toppled down a year after the elections and subsequently imprisoned over multiple charges including order of arrest of protesters, and espionage in Qatar related case. In one hand, the struggles to ensure freely elected government in the country make a way for Islamizing systems in the entire region and trying to maintain modernity, and democratic transition through re-writing the history of the region in the other. These protests of course, influence the way of doing things as they are also a doorway for both potentials and challenges to Western societies. They are real waves that seek to change political landscape and leadership at large. This remains one of the real potentials for the Arabs to boost up their political and economic well-being, whereupon rebuilding nations in post-revolutions, restoring peace, law and order and democracy remain among the top challenges for the regional governments.

Mubarakism has finally gone forever; it was then dawn of the Islamist, Muslim Brotherhood under Muhammad Morsi. The Islamist group in the name of Muslim Brotherhood has been the longest and the largest opposition group in Egypt. The post-revolution victory of the Brotherhood was seen by many as a state of dilemma for the

Western pro-democracy countries as stated by Blake Hounshell (2011) that by the time when Islamists political groups occupy elections in both Egypt and the Palestine, the U.S. has coincidentally lost its enthusiastic ardor for democratization in the Arab world (Hounshell, 2011).

Abdul Fattah el-Sisi confiscated the power from Morsi with ostensible claiming of identifying key development areas so that the demands of the Egyptian people would be given much consideration. This move sadly opened a Pandora's Box of so many internal uncertainties including ruination of democracy, which was seen for the first time, and the juicy apple of the 2010 revolution. Hence, the future of democracy in Egypt, especially after the new amendment passed by the Parliament that allows el-Sisi remains in power for the next another ten (10) years is uncertain. By one way or the other, the position of the West in terms of supporting democratically elected civilian government – which could be championed yet by the Islamists – would more or less be somehow a dilemma.

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