

# Democratisation in Egypt From A Historical Perspective: Problems, Pitfalls and Prospects

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## ABSTRACT

*History of democratisation in Egypt could as best be dated back to 1970s. But little democratic progress was achieved in Sadat's and Mubarak's tenure until the Arap Spring. There are many handicaps before democratisation in Egypt: the elite's stake in the authoritarian rule, widespread political extremism, structural problems within the political culture of the country in terms of democracy etc. This article ultimately argues that Egyptian democratisation process seems to be a painful and bloody process, but in the long term after the Arab Spring, the clock is ticking in favour of democracy.*

**Key Words:** democratisation, Egypt, military, Muslim Brotherhood

**JEL Classification:** Z19

## Tarihi Bir Perspektiften Mısır'da Demokratikleşme Süreci: Sorunlar, Tehlikeler ve İhtimaller

### ÖZET

*Mısır'ın demokratikleşme tarihi en uygun olarak 1970'lerden itibaren başlatılabilir. Arap Baharı'na kadar, Sedat ve Mübarek'in başkanlık dönemlerinde demokrasi açısından oldukça sınırlı bir ilerleme kaydedilmiştir. Mısır'ın demokratikleşmesinin önündeki engeller çeşitlidir: Elitlerin otoriter yönetimde menfaatlerinin bulunması, yaygın siyasi aşırılık, ülkenin siyasi kültürünün haşin olması vs. Bu makale nihai olarak Mısır'ın demokratikleşmesinin uzun ve sancılı bir süreç olduğunu, ancak Arap Baharı'nın getirdiği tecrübenin sonucunda ülkenin demokratikleşme serüveninin ağır aksak da olsa uzun vadede devam edeceğini iddia etmektedir.*

**Key Words:** demokratikleşme, Mısır, ordu, Müslüman Kardeşler

**JEL Sınıflaması:** Z19

### I) Introduction

The term 'democratisation' was on the edge of disappearing from the studies on Middle East when self-immolation of a street-vendor in Tunisia ignited a shocking revolution which would later be called as Arab Spring. For decades, the so-called Middle East exceptionalism was in question – no use for studying democratisation in Middle East; better to study how authoritarianism reasserts itself in that part of the globe. Even though the world was witnessing what Huntington (1997) called 'third wave of democracy' in 1980s-90s, Middle East wasn't affected much. But after the Arab Spring, discourse of democratisation restarted.

This article will firstly handle the issue of democratisation in Egypt before 2000s. As the visible efforts towards democratisation, if any, could be discerned after the onset of the presidency of Anwar al-Sadat in 1970 in the political history of modern Egypt, this study starts with that year. Secondly, the

article will examine the political regime of Egypt after 2000s from in terms of democracy. It aims to show how the Mubarak administration lost the opportunity to democratise the system in order to avoid a political turmoil, which is the issue of the third section. There, the question how the regime collapsed in a matter of days will be handled. Fourthly the trials for democratisation after the revolution will be analysed. Till that point, it is aimed to show that there are many factors that inhibit a truly functioning democratic system in Egypt and those factors are to be articulated in the sixth section. The controversial incongruence between Islam and democracy is also handled in this part. Lastly the future of democracy in the country is speculated. The primary argument of the last section is that there is little prospect for democratisation in Egypt in the short term but sooner or later, as the passionate wind of democracy is also and at last felt in the Middle East, Egypt will probably have democracy, the kind of which is unknown, either Islamic, if it means something, or authoritarian or liberal.

## **II) Democratisation before 2000s**

A study of democratisation in Egypt could be best started with the ascent of Anwar al-Sadat to presidency after the death of Gamal Abd el-Nasser in 1970. Giving an end to the socialist policies, clearing the country of Soviet influence and turning its face to the West, al-Sadat started a process of liberalization, although it was limited (Canbegi, 2013: 137). In that respect, one of the first things al-Sadat did was to release Muslim Brotherhood members from the prisons.

Al-Sadat was killed by Islamist militants in a military ceremony in 1981 and Hosni Mubarak replaced him immediately. Mubarak continued many policies of al-Sadat in terms of democracy. The regime could be called as populist authoritarianism in 1980s and early 1990s. Between those periods, Mubarak played the nationalist card to earn legitimacy from the public. The largest organizations in the society were the military and the bureaucracy, which mean that the elites of the society had huge stake in the regime. There was only one party, The National Democratic Party (NDP), whose influence permeated significant sections of the economic and social life. The intelligence service (*Mukhabarat*) had a tutelage over the public – any means of opposition was suppressed brutally by the security forces (Saikal, 2011: 531-532).

1980s witnessed a change in the tactics of the regime (Kılınç, 2011: 136-137). Not only with the advancement of the information technologies and complexity of the social life, but also with the population explosions, Mubarak regime began to transform into what is called as ‘post-populist, competitive authoritarianism’ (Landolt and Kubicek, 2013: 2) or ‘liberalized autocracy’. Liberalisation started first in economy under the rubric of *infitah* (opening) with the intentional breeding of crony capitalists who would relieve the economic stagnation in the public sector. The new bourgeoisie would be dependent on the state; that is, on the regime, on rents and untransparent clientelist networks. *Infatih* was followed by political liberalisation. Greater room was allowed for press, civil society and non-governmental organizations. New opposition parties

were allowed although the constitutional article which regulates founding political parties restricted it heavily. All these measures were taken not to democratise the political system but to substitute for democracy and pose obstacles to democratisation (Hinnebusch, 2006: 384-386).

In 1990s, a marginal Islamist movement, *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya* (the Islamic Group) waged a war against the regime. There happened violent, bloody attacks in various cities, killing dozens of both Egyptians and foreigner tourists. Regime's retaliation came in a way that all Islamist groups, no matter they are moderate or radical, were harshly suppressed, which also meant that Muslim Brotherhood that had significant social impact among the Egyptian society was also oppressed. Any chance of agreement between the regime and Islamists was hijacked by the radical militants. Mubarak ordered his officials to take back some of democratisation steps in the war against militants, giving start to a short period of de-liberalization. Egyptian economy was also badly affected by the lethal attacks to the tourist sites by the *Jama'a*. The more the *Jama'a* attacked, the more Mubarak retaliated with massive force. By the late 1990s, going through fiscal and organizational hardships, the *Jama'a* showed signs of exhaustion. Therefore it declared the end of its violent attacks. At the same time, Mubarak was oppressing other voices from moderate Islamist, the foremost of whom are the members of Muslim Brotherhood. Law 100 of 1993 aimed to diminish the augmenting presence of the Brotherhood in the syndicates. Till 1994, nearly 20,000 Egyptians were put in the prisons in the hunt for Islamists. Although the Brotherhood members asked for the license to become a political party, the regime turned down their request. In that period, the regime's attitude against the Islamists was 'zero tolerance' policy (Brownlee, 2010: 476-478).

Mubarak era, on the other hand, witnessed five multi-party elections until the next millennium. There were five legally-registered political parties: regime-supporter National Democratic Party, leftist National Progressive Unionist Party, the Wafd Party, the Liberal Party and the Labour Party. All parties, except National Democratic Party, were socially baseless parties whose foundations were allowed by the regime since they didn't represent a remarkable portion of the society. Out of 444 seats in the parliament, on average they took less than a dozen seats in total. The National Democratic Party claimed almost all of the seats and won every time without exception due to many reasons such as the gerrymandered districts, disproportional election system, the fact that other parties had no social base in the society, extremely low participation of the citizens in the elections and most significantly, widespread election frauds (Brownlee, 2010: 480).

### **III) Democratisation after 2000s**

When the *Jama'a* surrendered in 1999, the regime grasped a golden opportunity to democratise itself. For the first time since 1930s, there was no violence-using political group in the country. *Al-Jama'a* declared that they adopted the socio-political program of the Brotherhood and about 7000 members of the group were released from prisons. But the regime stopped here and took no

democratic step forward. On the contrary, political attempts of the Brotherhood were curbed by undemocratic elements of the political system (Çağlayan, 2011: 247-248). In the elections of 2000, the Brotherhood won seventeen seats with its candidates, some of whom were independent and some of whom were nominated in other parties. The political elite raised more than one eyebrow at this success and some measures were taken, one result of which was the loss of parliamentary seats of two Brotherhood members. In the elections of 2005, the Brotherhood won 88 seats – a number which exceeded the Mubarak administration's guess and which invited harsh deterrence from the regime (Wickham, 2011: 211). When the regime began to suppress the Brotherhood, they began to protest peacefully in 2006. Moreover, Mubarak thought of a constitutional amendment which aimed to restrict any political activity based on religion – a measure that directly but overtly targeted the Brotherhood. The amendment would also remove the judicial supervision of the elections. The amendments of 2007 furthered the de-democratisation of the country for the sake of the regime's stronghold over the politics (Brownlee, 2006: 481-482).

On the other hand, there were some reforms in favour of democracy in 2000s. Article 74, 34 and 76 of the constitution were amended. According to these changes, the president would be elected by popular vote instead of a parliamentary plebiscite in the National Assembly. Plus, and more significantly, executive power is somewhat restrained. The president has to consult with the prime minister and with the speakers of the chambers of the parliament before initiating a state of emergency. Furthermore, the president's power to dissolve any houses of the legislative was removed; the parliament was given the right to discuss and vote on the budgetary issues; the parliament gained the right to dismiss the cabinet with a no-confidence vote, which meant that the parliament was given more power in the system. However, there were also some other constitutional amendments made in favour of the ruling elite and sustain their incumbency (Feuille, 2011: 243-248). Amendment of Article 76 in 2007 restricted the right of any individual to run for presidency. Only those who served at least for one year as the leader of a party could be nominated as presidential candidate from a party that has at least one seat in the parliament. Article 88 was amended in a way that the duty of monitoring of the judiciary over the elections was removed and this task was given to the electoral commission (Sika, 2012: 183-184).

At the same time, Mubarak administration was also suppressing the secular but anti-regime elements in political arena. A distinguished politician named Ayman Nour founded a new liberal party with the name 'Tomorrow (*Al-Ghad*)' in 2002 but was prevented from gaining influence. Ayman Nour himself ran against Mubarak in the country's first presidential elections but lost bitterly due to the unfair election system and the electoral frauds. In the elections of 2008, the regime blocked 99% of the Brotherhood candidates and oppressed other religious and secular political fractions. Further in the same year, in the district of *Mahalla al-Kubra*, widespread labour protests began. The regime retaliated with a

harsh crackdown (Brownlee, 2006: 483-484). Arab Spring approaching, there was little sign on the side of the regime showing that it is willing to democratise the system.

In 2010, the revolution was simmering beneath the relatively peaceful façade. Although the revolution that began in Tunisia with the self-immolation of Muhammad Bouazizi shocked the world, there were enough reasons to believe that the regime was extremely and dangerously fragile. Kuran (2013) long before has shown how autocratic regimes of Eastern Europe collapsed in a matter of days if the ‘secret public opinion’, a term that Kuran coined himself, is too anti-regime. It may appear that there is a peaceful social life in an autocracy but the hidden anger of the society, as it could not be measured since there is no way to display it through democratic means, could be ignited by a simple event in such a way that the seemingly-unshakeable regime collapses in an unimaginably short time. The revolution might be brewing under the surface, like dynamite that is ready for explosion by an unexceptional event. In this sense, when Bouazizi inflamed himself, Jasmine Revolution took place. Immediately afterwards, there was rumour that there might be a domino effect which was a correct prediction. Why and how it happened is the subject of the next section.

#### **IV) The 25<sup>th</sup> January Revolution**

Public protests are not new phenomena in Egypt. Since the Egyptian society has given birth to many radical groups throughout the modern history, there have always been bloody or peaceful protests in the country. In 1977, for instance, an uprising occurred against al-Sadat’s economic austerity measures. Central Security soldiers of the Ministry of the Interior rebelled in 1986, which was suppressed by the army. There was a wave of *Jihadist* movements, as aforementioned, attacking various places in the country in 1990s. In early 2000s, Egypt witnessed peaceful protests against the Israeli policies in Palestine and against American invasion of Iraq. When approaching to 2010, a social protestation movement appeared called *Kifaya* against Mubarak’s hereditary succession plans. Although not enjoying popular support, this movement broke the barriers of fear in the eyes of many to criticize Mubarak and the regime. Also in the first decade of new millennium, many labour protests broke out in various parts of the country against the economic policies of the regime as well as against the regime’s grip on labour activists. Only in 2007, more than 1000 protests including the smallest ones happened throughout the country. Most of them were economically-oriented – against unemployment and other widespread economic problems. In 2010-2011, about 25% of the population lived below the poverty line according to the states Central Agency for Mobilization and Statistics. At the same time, as mentioned before, there were many political protests made by leftists, seculars, liberals, nationalists and especially by the Islamists of the Muslim Brotherhood, against not only Mubarak’s hereditary succession plans but also to the regime’s harsh grip over any kind of civil organization aiming political change (Mady, 2013: 325-328).

Mohamed el-Baradei's return to Egypt in pursuit of political change was also an important challenge against the regime. Enjoying remarkable popularity by winning the Nobel Prize, el-Baradei formed the National Assembly for Change (NAC) with seven specific demands including having free and fair elections and putting an end to the decades-long state of emergency. NAC activists throughout the country participated and organized many peaceful demonstrations (Mady, 2013: 329).

Just before the Arab revolution, in 2000s, impressive developments in information and media technologies happened. Facebook, Twitter, blog sites and other social media apparatus as well as the development of smart phone and touchpad technologies provided the individual with the strength for resistance against the state, eroding the state's monopoly on the circulation of information (Storck, 2011). There was also increase in the number of satellite channels, of the users of these devices and of the independent newspapers. The April 6th Movement, a prominent youth movement in Egypt, used Facebook intensively to organize protests against the regime (Rayman, 2013: 12-13).

When Bouazizi burnt himself in Tunisia and the following demonstrations proved to be influential enough to topple Zein el-Abidin Ben Ali, many Egyptians were poured into the streets to protest against the regime, shocking the political elite. Social media was widely used as a means for organizing the demonstrations, most of which were made in Tahrir Square (Lynch, 2011: 303). Almost all sections of the society, namely the liberals, seculars, socialists, nationalists, the poor and the weak middle-class poured into the streets chanting the slogan 'Leave Mubarak!' and brandishing Egyptian flags. Wael Ghoniem, who is a famous internet activist and took important roles during the revolution, would be later listed in 'Times 100' most influential people of 2011 list. Omar Afifi, who is another important figure of the revolution and a former Egyptian police officer, took active part in the social media. Al-Jazeera gave overt support to the demonstrators in its coverage. Although there was widespread protestation, it was striking that these demonstrations lack a leader (Mady, 2013: 331-332). On January 25, being unable to resist against both internal and external pressures, Mubarak declared his resignation.

#### **V) The Trials for Democratic Transition after the Revolution**

It could be disputed whether a real political revolution happened in Egypt. Mubarak was toppled but all elements of the regime resisted to change and new incumbents who are soldiers didn't use much different methods than the former regime (Canbegi, 2013). Nonetheless, the toppling of Mubarak is called as revolution for the prevailing tendency in the literature is in that way.

Soon after the ousting of Mubarak on 25<sup>th</sup> January, SCAF took the reins of Egypt by dissolving the parliament and suspending the 1971 Constitution. Then it declared that it aimed to give the political power to the civilians that would be elected by free and fair election in the shortest time possible. A few days later, it appointed a Constitutional Reform Committee to amend some of the articles in the old constitution and prepare a new one. The Committee consisted of

8 people, one of whom was from the Brotherhood, Tarek al-Bishri – something which was widely criticised by other political groups in the country, especially by the seculars since only the Brotherhood was represented in the Committee while none of other political groups were not. The Committee submitted the amendments that articulated the provisions for candidates for presidency. Other amendments were about the deputies of the People's Assembly, how the judicial supervision of the elections would be made, the president's appointing a vice president in a determined time period, the conditions under which a state of emergency may be declared and adoption of terrorist laws. There was also one amendment ordaining that the new parliament that would soon be formed would choose a 100-member commission to draft the constitution that would be subject to referendum (Varol, 2012: 346-348). Although most liberal and secular groups, as well as Copts, campaigned against the amendments, since the Brotherhood and the SCAF gave full support, the referendum result was in favour of passing the new amendments. 77% 'Yes' vote was the result of the referendum. Subsequently the SCAF declared that the parliamentary elections would be held in September 2011. The new amendments didn't change the famous second article of the old constitution saying that *Shari'a* (the Islamic law) is the source of legislation and Islam is the official religion of the state (Mustafa, 2006: 7). New amendments also determined the rules for foundation of political parties and eight parties, three of which are Islamist parties, were founded until July 2011. After the amendments, SCAF decreed some laws. Law 73/1956, for example, regulated the candidacy process for parliamentary elections. Another law greatly decreased the role of the Ministry of Interior and Justice in the voting process in parliamentary elections. One law rescinded the quota of 64 for women deputies in the parliament, a provision that was introduced in 2007. Furthermore, mixed electoral system was introduced. The candidates in the elections would be immune from any judicial or administrative constraint, a democratic step that smoothed the way for the candidates towards the parliament. The electoral system for parliamentary elections was adjusted in a way that it fostered better representation of the minorities and the women. One law lowered the provisioned age for elections to open the way for the young contributors of the 25<sup>th</sup> January Revolution (Maugiron, 2011: 44-51).

Although having declared that it would not nominate a candidate for the presidential elections, the Brotherhood nominated Khayrat Shater. But on 14th April, Supreme Council for Elections nullified Shater's candidacy. Afterwards the Brotherhood nominated a figure of lower-level profile from amongst its members as its presidential candidate: Mohammad Morsi (Varol, 2012: 74). He was elected to be the president of Egypt in June 2012, thereby being Egypt's first democratically-elected president.

Morsi encountered massive opposition from all elements of the older regime, especially from the judiciary, media, business world, the Copts and other well-educated elite. Morsi dived into power games with these circles but although he tried to become moderate in his decisions in his first months, as the former

regime agents increased their campaign against him, he has taken radical steps. Once he tried to change the Attorney General and appointed him as the ambassador of Vatican but even though he has the *de jure* authority, the Attorney General didn't go to his new post and continued his office with the support of the resisting regime. Thus Morsi had seen that it was very difficult to punish the undemocratic supporters of the former regime with legal ways; he would have to try to do it by political means but he couldn't keep the balance. The radical decisions he took were boycotted by the judiciary and the democratic transition was blocked (Telci, 2013: 85-87). His most controversial decision was a constitutional decree that put him temporarily above judicial supervision. Criticization against him got gradually louder. Anti-Morsi protesters filled Tahrir Square chanting 'Dictator Morsi!', 'Presidential Tyranny!'. The decree was removed soon afterwards due to the reaction but the stain on Morsi's charisma lingered much longer. EU also criticised Morsi for being too slow in the reform process highlighting the steps that weren't taken in favour of the unprivileged groups in the society such as the women and the minorities as well as criticizing his attitude toward civil society organizations (Pinfari, 2013: 463-464). Morsi's relations with military also got worse due to his radical steps against the military. He scrapped, for example, the three highest-level military generals from office for retire after their intervention in politics – a bold decision that stunned the political observers and that would prove to be wrong in terms of his relations with military.

The protesters in Tahrir Square became gradually more tumultuous and wanted the resignation of Morsi. They were mostly from secular, leftist and Coptic groups. The protesters started a popular movement at the same time called '*Tamarrod* (Revolt)' collecting signatures for Morsi's resignation and calling for early presidential elections. By the end of June, life in Cairo was stuck with the protests. Morsi offered partial concession that was not accepted by the protesters. Military gave a 48-hour ultimatum to Morsi but even then he refused to resign. On 3 July 2013, the head of the Egyptian Army General Abd al-Fettah al-Sisi declared the removal of Morsi from presidency and his detention as well as the suspension of the constitution. Although the EU and USA condemned the violence and wanted a quick and peaceful transition to democracy, they avoided to call the military intervention as a coup d'état. Varol (2012: 356) calls it as 'democratic coup'.

Since the coup, the Brotherhood has been making nationwide protests against which the military junta retaliated with bloody crackdowns. More lately, the Society of Muslim Brotherhood was outlawed and its members were put into prison, about many of whom the life sentence was asked for. The democratic transition took a severe blow and the country rolled into a vicious circle of violence.

## **VI) Factors Inhibiting Democratisation in Egypt**

### **A. Islam-Democracy Debate**

It has for long been argued by many scholars, such as Huntington and Fukuyama for instance, that Islam and democracy are incongruent; viz., Islam is

inherently undemocratic, or even anti-democratic (Haynes, 2010: 140). Orientalist studies, especially before Edward Said's seminal work 'Orientalism' (2010), had consistently argued that Islam lack much of Western values that are seen as universal political norms such as human rights, individual freedom and the like. Lewis, for instance, argued that there had been no direct equivalents of the words such as 'citizen' and 'citizenship' in Turkish, Persian and Arabic languages until recently (Volpi, 2009: 27). Accordingly, human rights abuses such as tortures and wild oppression of the peaceful protests, lack of transparency in state system, lack of pluralism, the blurring of the line between the private and the public are widespread phenomena in modern Middle East. At this point, a methodological disagreement arises: Is Islam essentially inconsistent with liberal democracy or is the inconsistency on the surface only contingent and therefore temporary?

The essentialists argue that Islam is incongruent with liberal democracy. Accordingly, Islam isn't concordant with the fundamental tenets of liberal democracy, one of which is, for instance, that sovereignty is vested in the society; it rather argues that sovereignty belongs to God (*Hakimiyyat Allah* doctrine). On the other hand, the contingentists argue that, given the proper circumstances, Islam and thence Muslim countries may get democratized since there is not a unique and ubiquitous understanding of Islam. Turkey is the best example in this sense. The contingentists argue that the classical orientalist claims are too broad generalizations to be correct (Volpi, 2009: 27).

Accordingly, some experts argue that not specific religions but religiosities should be examined in terms of congruence with democracy. That means, it is not the religion itself that is incongruent with democracy but it is the politicization of the religion that is incongruent therewith. In this respect, Jamal argues:

*“The politicization of religious belief as the major or all source of social and political authority based on the divinity of the faith could become a major hurdle for democratisation, undermining two major principles of democratic power structures. These are, first, limited power, that makes political authority submissive to the rule of law and, secondly, transitive power that makes political power submissive to change according to the will of the people. Nonetheless religiosity does not have to be secularised, privatised or suppressed in order to be compatible with democratic forms of government. Ensuring that religious belief does not translate into the state blocking freedom of conscience or dismissing public reasoning and deliberation is theoretically sufficient for the reconciliation of state and religion in one democratic regime (Jamal, 2009: 1145).”*

In this respect, it is not Islam that is inconsistent with liberal democracy as the essentialists argue. It is the specific understandings of Islam, the particular religiosities, which cannot get along with democracy (Tessler, 2002: 233). In Turkey, there has developed a peaceful religiosity that is congruent and thus coexistent with democracy but, for instance, Taliban's religiosity is quite anti-democratic. That drives us to the examination of the religiosities of the political actors in Egypt.

Article 2 of the Egyptian constitution states that Islam is the official religion of the state and principals of *Shari'a* are the principal source for legislation. Not only Islam is the official religion, but also it is the popular religion; about 90% of the Egyptian population is Muslim whereas the rest 10% are Coptic Christians and other religious groups. Islam is institutionalized under the state. *Al-Azhar*, the official source (*Dar al-Ifta*) for issuing *fatwa*, is directly under the presidency administratively. Moreover, the grand *Mufti* (*fatwa*-issuer) has the right to review decisions of the government and the courts on religious issues (Jamal, 2009: 1153). The ruling elite; Mubarak family, high-level bureaucrats, crony capitalists and the high-level military officials are generally secular people who don't mingle Islam and politics much. But at the same time, Islam, being the religion of the state, provides legitimacy to the state and thus to some extent, sustains political stability, even though it is autocratic.

Secondly, the religiosity of the biggest socio-political group in Egypt, that of Muslim Brotherhood, should be examined. Members of the Brotherhood are generally defined as moderate Islamists. Although having rejected democracy in the beginning in 1930s, they have embraced it later by participating in parliamentary and local elections since 1984. In 1970s, Brotherhood members called for full application of *Shari'a* in all parts of the daily life and state affairs but, since early 1980s, they have been supporting democratic reforms. But some analysts argue that they are using a democratic discourse merely for the sake of their political strategy, that is, without internalizing democratic concepts (Wickham, 2011: 207).

However, Muslim Brotherhood is not a monolithic entity. Since early 2000s, it has been obvious that there are three basic factions in the movement. The first, the so-called *da'wa* (inviting) faction, is the elderly members who are over their 70s. Although they constitute the smallest faction in numbers, they are quite effective by exerting power in decision-making process of the Society as they are strongly represented in the Guidance Bureau of the Muslim Brotherhood. Muhammad Badi', Brotherhood's current Supreme Guide, Rashid al-Bayumi, Mahmoud Hussein and Mahmoud Ezzat, all having position in the Guidance Bureau which is the decision-taking office of the Society, belong to that group. Second faction is the pragmatic conservatives. Constituting the mainstream wing of the Society, they emphasize democratic reform and are concerned with preserving Egypt's current Islamic culture, thereby keeping it away from Western influence. Muhammad Morsi, Muhammad Saad al-Qatatni and many other long and short-term parliamentarians belong to that pragmatist conservative group. The third faction is the reformers who put stress on the progressive interpretation of Islam and push for change. They welcome the discourse on the rights of the women and of the minorities like Coptic Christians. Some of them have loose contact with the mainstream wing of the Society whereas some others broke the ties and found new party titled *al-Wasat* (the Centre) Party. Abd al Mun'em Abu Futuh and Ibrahim Zaafarani, two leaders of the reformers faction are a source for

inspiration for a considerable portion of the Egypt's new generation (Wickham, 2011: 209-211).

At this point, the question who will take the reins in the Society will be decisive for Egypt's democratisation process since the Brotherhood is the biggest and most influential socio-political organization in the country. The *da'wa* faction had been the most influential one until the new millennium, which gave the regime the pretext of the danger of political Islam. But after 2000s hitherto, the pragmatist conservatives have been more and more influential on the policies of the Society, which made it more democratic not only in its internal decision-making processes but also to the outside, viz., before the regime. If the reformer faction, either within the Society or those who left the Brotherhood to found new parties, becomes popular on the political arena and among the public, the democratisation in Egypt seems to be easier.

### **B. Specific Factors Hindering Democratisation in Egypt**

A plethora of reasons for the lack of democracy in Egypt are mentioned in democratisation studies. The reasons are so many and so entrenched in the social and political life that it seems very difficult for the country to be a well-functioning liberal democracy in a decade. Though difficult, it is not impossible when the Latin American and Eastern European countries' trajectories are recalled. The hurdles before the democratisation process in Egypt will be analysed in this section.

To begin with, the ruling elite's unwillingness to liberalise the system is decisive. Peaceful democratisation in any part of the world almost always happened when the ruling elite reach a compromise with the opposition forces. This compromise might either come after a guarantee given to the elites about their somewhat privileged positions or after an external force compelling the elite to democratise the regime. In Egypt, neither is present. The ruling elite, a coalition of the Mubarak family, the high-level bureaucrats, crony capitalists and the military, are not willing to democratise the system as they don't want to lose their privileged position. Furthermore, in a liberal democratic regime, militaries do not have such a strong grip over the politics and economic life. As the entrance into bureaucracy depends on loyalty instead of meritocracy, the current bureaucrats cannot probably hold their offices. The crony capitalists will lose their rents as the macro-economy functions on the basis of rents and clientelist networks. All in all, the privileged elite have a strong stake in the regime and are strictly against democratisation.

Regime's unwillingness being the first obstacle before democratisation, the external support given to the Mubarak administration is the second reason. USA was happy to exchange liberty for stability in the region and in particular in Egypt (Neep, 2003: 77). Mubarak regime, having peaceful relations with Israel, securing smooth transport through Suez Canal and preserving political stability in the region was simply desirable vis-a-vis the so-called threat of political Islam. So, it was all about strategy (Lust, 2011: 168). The regime has always used the argument of Islamist threat in its relations with the West. The famous 'one vote,

one time' argument (Mady, 2013: 318) has been used as a reasonable pretext by the regime in relations with the West. Accordingly, the Islamists are not by heart democrats; to the contrary, they are reluctant democrats using the democratic discourse just to convince the regime to apply free and fair elections. If elections are held in a democratic way, the Islamists will ascent to power and immediately afterwards will dissolve the democracy in return for theocratic autocracy. Therefore for decades, the West and the regime have coalesced against the 'Islamist threat' – a coalition that hampered the process of democratisation in the country (Pace, 2009: 44).

Thirdly, it is widely argued in the literature that oil and democracy do not coexist in any part of the world (Fortna & Huang, 2012: 803; Abbasi, 2012: 9). Although it is generally accepted in democratisation studies that democracy is easier to flourish in wealthy, developed countries, there is a weird correlation between democracy and oil. Latin American oil exporting states and Gulf States with rich oil resources recalled, this argument is apparently correct. But the fact that the West wanted to secure its oil supplies and therefore gave not only economic but political support to the autocratic regimes of these oil exporting states places a mediator variable between the independent and dependent variables, thereby blurring the relation between oil and democracy. What is more, Egypt is already not an oil-rich country but has the potential to deeply influence oil exporting countries of the Gulf both economically and politically, given the strategic importance of the Suez Canal and the nearly 80 million population of Egypt.

Fourthly, it is again argued in the literature that there is a strong correlation between economic underdevelopment and democracy (Fortna and Huang, 2012: 803). Wealthy countries, those in Western Europe, USA and Japan are better with democracy whereas the poor African, Asian and Latin American countries have mostly bad records thereof. It seems, for instance, easier to make military coup in poorer countries. Apparently wealth is somewhat a prerequisite for democratic values but the correlation should not be seen very strong since the Gulf States that are very rich with the oil incomes are pure autocratic monarchies whereas some former British colonies which are not rich such as Barbados and Papua New Guinea are quite well-functioning democracies (Lijphart, 1999: 27).

Fifthly, the unending security issues of Middle East pose great threats to democratisation (Fortna and Huang, 2012: 802). Modern history of Middle East is full of wars fought along either politico-economic or religious lines. Plus, there have been many coups as well. All these tumultuous happenings caused the regimes to use the security issues as a pretext so as not to liberalize the political system. Arab monarchies and autocrats have historically taken good use of 'Israel and colonialist Western threat' – a policy to substitute for the lack of legitimacy. The military didn't have much difficulty to preserve its privileged position in political arena under this perceived threat. In Egypt, the society was kept under constant emergency law after 1967 Arab-Israeli War until the Arab Spring, except for a short break of about one and half year in 1980. The perceived 'Zionist and

colonialist threat' has always become a great hurdle before democratisation in Egypt.

Violent political culture is another obstacle. Democracy flourished in mild political atmospheres but in Middle East, violence is widely utilized as a means of gaining political power. In 20th century, Middle East witnessed a plethora of births of marginal groups and radical organizations that politicized a particular creed, mostly Islam, in a way that they justified the use of violence for political gains. Owing to many reasons ranging from colonialisation to the presence of Israel, Egyptian society gave birth to a dozen of marginal political groups that used violence. *Qutbists* in 1960s and 1970s, *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya* beginning from 1960s up until 21st century, the *Jihadists* in 1980s made bloody and lethal attacks, killing hundreds of people and terrorising the society (el-Verdani, 2011). Their revolutionary aims failed, even when some members of the *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya* killed Anwar al-Sadat in 1981. Although being unsuccessful in their aims, the attacks they made gave the regime the pretext to suppress moderate elements in the society, thereby curbing the development of civil society that will provide the ground on which a liberal democracy would be founded. In this respect, the moderate religious socio-political movement of Muslim Brotherhood has also been suppressed in the regime's combat against religious extremism, which delayed the democratisation of country.

Another obstacle before democratisation in Egypt is the military's role in politics, which has to do with the political culture of the country in which there have been a number of wars and coups. When there are acute security issues in a country, consecutively military earns political power, which means bad news for democracy. Egyptian military enjoys a considerable economic wealth as well as having almost half of the seats of the parliament. When Abd el-Nasser allocated half of the parliamentary seats to the farmers and workers in the frame of his socialist policies, it was welcomed by that time's public opinion but soon after his death, these allocated seats were generally given not to the farmers and workers but to the retired generals and other internal security personnel by the single functioning party, National Democratic Party (Martini and Taylor, 2011: 3). Throughout Mubarak era, the military preserved its tutelage over the socio-political and economic life. Mubarak won the loyalty of the generals and other internal security personnel such as the intelligence and the police by giving them great amounts of rents in state bids. After the Arab Spring, the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) took control of the state to secure a peaceful and smooth transition to a democratic civilian rule (Martini and Taylor, 2011: 1) but it didn't happen in that way as detailed in the section on post-Arab Spring period.

Other factors curbing the democratisation are entrenched ethno-religious interests, weakness of the civil society, a weak middle class, widespread suspicion about all kinds of Western principles including democracy itself, Egypt's being not a nation-state (Pratt, 2005: 81), utilization of the religion by the regime for compensation of the legitimacy deficit (Mustafa, 2006: 3), the political culture of powerful charismatic leadership (Haynes, 2010: 138-146), orthodox-Sunni

emphasis on obeying those in power (Neep, 2003: 77), nepotism, overt discrimination and widespread corruption (Banai, 2013: 426), unending emergency laws, inflation and economic stagnation, unemployment, police brutality, lack or weakness of all kinds of freedoms, forged political parties that compensate for real ones and lastly, regime's getting savvy in authoritarian tactics. All in all, Freedom House ranked Egypt in countries that are 'unfree' in 2011 (Mady, 2013: 315-319).

### **VII) What hereafter in terms of Democratisation?**

Mady (2013: 313) argues that successful transition to democracy depends on three basic elements: The first is a group of reformers who truly want to democratise the political system; second is a democratic opposition who has the ability to use the limited freedom given to them by the autocratic regime to push for bottom-up change; third is an external support for democratisation. In the case of Egypt, none is present. There is not a reformer group who truly wants democracy. The military doesn't have a stake in a democratic system since it supposes that it will lose its privileged status in a democracy in which Islamists will likely ascend to power. On the other hand, the opposition cannot use any means for democratic changes since it is continually suppressed by the regime for the time being. Lastly, many countries including Western countries, USA and Saudi Arabia are giving support to the new authoritarian regime of al-Sisi.

Second issue about Egypt's democratisation is the internalization of democratic values by the country's biggest and most politically influential socio-political group, namely Muslim Brotherhood (Volpi, 2009: 33). Although they are likely to be suppressed by the regime in the short run, their ascension to political power is almost inevitable in a globalizing world where democracy is seen as a universal norm. Thus, whether Islamists utilize democracy as a strategic means to gain power or they truly see liberal democracy as the best of the known political regimes will be decisive in the long run in Egypt's democratisation process.

Thirdly, the attitude of al-Sisi administration will determine whether Egypt will be a democracy. Although it can sustain the situation in the country in the short term, for the time being, given the fact that the economy is going worse and the external pressure on them may increase due to their brutality, the regime may not maintain the status quo in the long term (Saikal, 2011: 538). It appears to come to terms with the opposition which will open the way for democracy.

Fourthly, after the political atmosphere gets more bloody and unsustainable in terms of regional balance of power, the EU and USA may force the regime to democratise the system taking the Turkish experience as their example (Burnell, 2013: 854). The transformation of Turkish anti-Western Islamists into pro-Western democratic conservatives may be seen as a viable and trustworthy example by the Western powers.

Lastly, *al-Wasat* (the Centre) Party may be the hope for the future of democratisation in Egypt. *Al-Wasat* resembles to Justice and Development Party (JDP) of Turkey as *Al-Wasat* was founded by former Brotherhood members. Its party program declares that they emphasize democracy for Egypt and the

founders are more moderate in disputed issues vis-a-vis the mainstream thought of the Brotherhood. If the dust settles down in Egypt after some years, this party may follow the trajectory of JDP. But the party doesn't have a charismatic and politically-astute leader like Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for the time being.

All in all, after the 3 July 2013 coup in Egypt, a vicious circle appeared in terms of democracy. The violent and bloody political atmosphere results in political instability which causes economic stagnation (Burnell, 2013: 846). When the economy doesn't function correctly and struck with stagnation, the public become frustrated and the propensity for violence grows. Therefore, there appears little prospect for democratisation in this vicious circle although a third wave of democracy was expected in the beginning of Arab Spring (Salamey & Pearson, 2012).

### VIII) Conclusion

Democratisation almost always functions as a very long and exhausting way for third-world countries. Therefore it is not realistic to hope that a deeply-entrenched autocracy, Egypt, will be a democracy in a short time. Egypt's actors that are in favour of democracy had romantic sentiments just after the Revolution. Especially the Muslim Brotherhood had that feeling, but when they ascent to power, after about 7 months, they became arrogant that they are administrators of the country, having deep trust for the military. But after a few months, the 3 July Coup happened and the democratisation got into a quagmire.

Although the prospects are not well for democratisation in Egypt in the short term, in this age of information, it will not be easy for the authoritarian Sisi regime to govern the country in the long term. Thus, the regime has to loose its grip over the political actors and open the way for a true liberal democracy which will probably carry the Muslim Brotherhood to power again. In sum, even though it seems that some more blood is to be shed, Egypt seems to get into a process of democratisation in the middle term.

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