Why did the 2011 Egyptian Revolution Fail?

Alexey Khlebnikov

The Egyptian revolution of January 2011 failed and did not change the fundamental political structure of the country, which ended up under military rule. Leading scholarship will be examined and reasons for the revolution's failure will be presented in historical, regional and domestic contexts. This work argues that several essential conditions for successful revolution and democracy promotion did not occur. These include a change of the country's elite, reformation of state institutions, and an inability of the revolutionary masses to establish lasting broad coalition. Unique Egyptian peculiarities contributed to the failure of the revolution and transition to democracy. These included a strong military, an inability of the revolution's initiators to develop their success and lasting support from international networks of the existing elites. The Egyptian experience will be examined within a larger context of regional social and political changes.

Keywords: Egypt, Arab Uprising, revolutions, regime change, democracy promotion, failed revolution, army, military

Introduction

December 2010 marked a new stage in the history of the Middle East. When the Arab uprising began in Tunisia, spread over the region in a matter of months and the socio-political architecture of the region started to change—affecting international relations. By the end of 2013, almost every Arab country had been touched by the wave of uprisings, three Arab leaders (Tunisia's Ben Ali, Egypt's Hosni Mubarak and Libya's Muammar Qaddafi) had been deposed while Libya, Syria and Yem-

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en were torn apart by civil war. The fallout persists until the present. Tunisia and Egypt have been undergoing difficult transitions searching for ways to bring back stability and move towards building more democratic societies, while the Gulf States are fearful of another wave of unrests as the number of Islamists in the region continues to grow.

Egypt is regarded as a regional power and a crucial element in regional stability. That is why the future of the Middle East region is heavily dependent upon the outcome of the Egyptian search for its way towards stability. To understand the destabilisation and political turmoil of the country and region, it is important to understand the changes in Egypt. The military overthrow of the first democratically elected president in 2013, after Mubarak was forced to resign in 2011, reflects the forces which mitigate against some desired changes of the Arab uprising.

Egypt went through a transition period from Mubarak's resignation through military rule to Islamist rule, producing mass protest against democratically elected Mohamed Morsi, which ended with his removal from power in summer 2013. The military's performance after Mubarak's resignation defined the nature of Egypt's further development to a large extent and the following actions. The path chosen by the Egyptian military including tight control over the executive, legislative and judiciary branches, altered the country's path towards democracy. This article examines why the Egyptian 'January Revolution' of 2011 ended in military rule and an absence of qualitative change in country's political, economic and social institutions. The work argues that revolution in Egypt failed as it did not ultimately improve the country's political, economic, social situation and in general did not create conditions for qualitative change of the system.

The 2011 uprising led only to the overthrow of the person who embodied the regime and ultimately promoted domestic instability and contributed to further volatility in the region. The revolt against Mubarak did not change the fundamental political and social structure of the country.

This article argues that according to the research on revolutions, essential conditions for successful regime change were not in place or did not occur.[1]

These include:

1. The elites—as products of the Mubarak regime, remained powerful and did not perceive the state as inefficient and unjust to undertake fundamental change,

2. The institution of the army—comprising the core of the Egyptian political and economic elite and representing an essential parts of the regime, did not allow the entire system to collapse as they were not alienated from the state,
3. Existing international support networks—safeguarded the regime from transformation by supporting the military,
4. A low level of unity among revolutionary forces—that initiated the uprising,
5. The revolutionaries showed their inability and unpreparedness—to sustain progress as a coalition of revolutionary groups and elites did not emerge.

The article ultimately concludes that Egyptian revolution ultimately failed as the country returned to its pre-2011 state when the same elites with an authoritarian leader are in power. In the end, revolutions in countries like Egypt do not necessarily lead to a qualitative change of the existing system and usually pose major threats to both internal and regional security.

Multiple theories of revolution support this analysis. The role of the military during and after the 2011 uprising, its place in the existing system and the reality of the institution of an existing strong army influenced the Egyptian uprising and democratic transition in Egypt.

The role of the military in revolts in Tunisia and Egypt, which ended differently, will be compared. Institutional differences between the two countries' armies hugely contributed to the different outcomes of the two uprisings. This comparison shows the decisive role that the Egyptian military played during the revolt and the transition period, contributing to Egypt's failure to undergo a profound political and economic transformation; Tunisia, meanwhile, is enjoying a relatively successful transition from authoritarian rule to a more democratic one.

In January 2011, Egyptians initiated massive demonstrations in Tahrir square. Judging from the footage of the protests, a variety of factors initially mobilised people: poverty, rampant unemployment, government corruption and autocratic governance. Ultimately, however, the focus shifted to overthrow the regime of President Hosni Mubarak, who had governed the country for 30 years. The first uprising of January 2011 ended with ousting Mubarak from power. The military then seized power and prepared the country for democratic elections, which resulted in victory for the Islamists in summer 2012. Later, in June and July 2013, popular demonstrations against Islamist rule erupt-

ed and the military stepped in once again, deposing the new president Mohammed Morsi and taking the power for themselves. Later in 2014 Egyptians elected the former head of Egypt's Armed Forces Abdel Fattah el-Sisi as a new president.

The final result is that Egyptian regime has not changed much since the January 2011 uprising. The regime that was personified by President Mubarak has not been deposed and its institutions and elite have not been changed; moreover, the main attribute of not only the Mubarak regime, but of all previous Egyptian presidents' regimes—the army—has remained in power. It is fair to say that the current regime in Egypt is almost exactly the same as the one existed during Mubarak's rule.

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Defining Revolution

Research on revolutions have undergone through four primary generations over the last century.[2] With each generation it included more and more revolutionary cases which, on the one hand, increased knowledge accumulation, but on the other, complete answers to such key questions as under what conditions do revolutions occur, what regimes are most susceptible to revolutionary changes, what is needed for revolutionary forces to succeed, still elude the field. Yet, for each of the question, there are robust sets of factors that consistently occur across the great variety of revolutionary cases which helps to understand when revolutions are more likely to happen. It should be noted that these conditions are not law-like as the exact mechanisms may vary across events, and they work differently in different contexts.[3] As a result, the scholarship on revolutions has developed consistent sets of general findings which outline when revolutions are more likely to occur:

1. when states' structures face increasing pressure (economic pressure and/or tensions with other states)
2. when regimes are unable or less able to accommodate or coopt contention due to their underlying nature (patrimonial and personalist regimes are in particular brittle)
3. and when contention is supported by broad coalitions of revolutionary groups and elites.[4]

With the revolutions of the 21st century – re: Colour Revolutions and the Arab Uprisings – the scholarship on revolutions started to focus more on the area- and type-specific studies of revolutions, although

acknowledging the basic sets of findings of the previous generations of the scholarship.

The area-specific studies of revolutions, in this case in the Middle East, found out that for a revolution to succeed, a number of factors have to come together. Goldstone, in analysing conditions for a successful revolution, synthetised previous research findings and adapted them to the Middle East. He concluded the following:

> The government must appear so irremediably inept that it is widely perceived as a threat to the country's future and its elites (especially in the military) are becoming alienated from the existing regime and not willing to back it any longer; a broad-based section of the population, spanning ethnic and religious groups and socioeconomic classes, must mobilize; and international powers must either refuse to step in to defend the government or constrain it from using maximum force to defend itself.[5]

Bellin, examining robustness of authoritarianism in the Middle East, rienforced Goldstone's findings about the role of the military during the uprisings.[6] She concluded that the state's coercive apparatus has proved to be the key factor in determining resilience of authoritarian regimes in the face of revolutionary events in the Middle East. Below in this article the key role of the Egyptian military will be thoroughly examined.

It is also important to consider several basic definitions of 'revolution' offered throughout the last century. According to the view presented by Johnson that 'revolution is a change, effected by the use of violence, in government, and/or regime, and/or society.'[7] This definition is quite broad and basically includes any type of violent change in government and society which may or may not lead to institutional transformation. Stone – for his part – specified that historians distinguish the 'seizure of power,' which leads to a major restructuring of government or society and replaces the former elite with a new one—from the 'coup d'état'—which involves no more than a change of ruling personnel by violence or threat of violence.[8] This definition brings up an important distinction between major changes in socio-political structures and just a simple change of ruling personnel.

Another definition, given by Davies, is that 'revolutions are violent civil disturbances that cause the displacement of one ruling group by

another that has a broader popular basis for support.'[9] This definition does not take into account that popular support is not the only factor that determines the success of a revolution. Sometimes it is not a determinant at all.

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In contrast, Skocpol defines revolution as 'rapid, basic transformations of society's state and class structures [. . .] accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below.'[10] However, this definition presumes that revolutions happen predominantly as a reaction to economic issues by the lower classes. This is not always true, especially in an era of globalization that has brought modern amenities and goods to people.

Goldstone, in his 2001 work, 'Towards a Fourth Generation of Revolution Theory,' argues that the above-mentioned definitions of revolution do not encompass all common elements of it, and include changes which do not seek to transform institutions and justification of authority like coups, revolts and rebellions. Hence, he synthesises previously existed approaches and offers the following quite embracing definition:

> an effort to transform the political institutions and the justifications for political authority in a society, accompanied by formal or informal mass mobilisation and noninstitutionalised actions that undermine existing authorities.[11]

A problematic thing about defining 'revolution' is the risk of confusing it with coups, revolts or rebellions that do not necessarily lead to a change of institutions, authority or society and, thus, do not lead to the qualitative change of the existing system. This is why it is important to determine whether the Egyptian uprising was a revolution that brought qualitative political transformation (from authoritarianism to a more democratic system, for instance) or pave the ground for it, or if it was simply a coup that resulted in the mere change of ruling personnel, and to define reasons behind that.

This question goes in line with one of the persistent problems of the research of revolutions – revolutionary aftermath, which is to assess the immediate, mid-term and long-term aftermaths of revolution. Therefore, it is important to examine the immediate outcomes of the Egyptian revolution and check if it has brought socio-political transformation or has created the conditions for a change towards more democratic system.

Framing the Egyptian Uprising

The events of January-February 2011 in Egypt can hardly be seen as a successful revolution which brought qualitative changes into its political, economic and social structures. In fact, what happened was a change of ruling personnel: The president and his inner circle were deposed by the military. The regime itself had not been changed. Its political and socio-economic institutions, and elite, remained intact. Moreover, the army, which forms the majority of the political elite and a big portion of the economic elite of the country, remained in power.

In short, a central finding of today's revolution research is that revolutionary movements can only succeed when the ruling regime, particularly the strength of its coercive apparatus, becomes substantially weakened[12] or its coercive forces refuse to repress revolutionary masses either because they stay neutral or because they build successful coalition with the revolutionary forces.[13]

In the Middle East this is particularly relevant. Firstly, because the military is exceptionally robust there thanks to the access many states have to hydrocarbon, geostrategic, locational, and secondary rents. Secondly, because many Middle East states maintained international support networks due to their service to Western security interests.[14] In addition, the military plays a key role in countries of the region for about a century and still holds a grip on power. The majority of rulers of Middle Eastern nations have a military education (former presidents of Egypt, Yemen and Tunisia; the current presidents of Yemen and Egypt; the King of Jordan; the emirs of Qatar and the UAE; Saudi princes; etc.) while the political and economic elite of many of these countries is closely connected with the military and military itself is deeply embedded into economy. This article examines how Egyptian military played the crucial role in not letting revolution succeed.

Another condition for successful revolution involve large coalitions of revolutionary groups and elites as challengers. In Egypt such coalition failed to be born as large, most influential and capable part of Egyptian elites, the military, was not interested in changing substance of the existing system, although it agreed to change its form. Thus, Egypt's political elite, a product of the Mubarak regime, has remained in power, creating just a façade vision of joining the revolution but in fact staying aside, guarding the system.

The above-mentioned prerequisites for successful revolutionary change — a weakened security apparatus, a weak state, and a large co-

alitions of revolutionary groups and elites — were not in place in 2011 in Egypt, where the existing regime had ruled since 1952 (the last time a major social and political transformation occurred).[15] Egypt's institutions, political and economic elite had been forming for half a century and, in fact, it did not build a coalition with the regime challengers.[16] President Mubarak contributed much to preserving the system and reinforcing its institutions and was just the embodiment (albeit a charismatic one) of the regime. So, with his resignation the regime did not collapse but continued to exist.

The entire system of political and economic institutions in the country proved to be quite strong and resilient, contributing to the regime's survival. The revolution did not ultimately succeed because the revolutionary masses failed to keep united and to continue their push for change after Mubarak's resignation. Existing elites, particularly the military, have become the biggest obstacle to change. Regimes typically possess tools which help them to weather times of crisis. Their organizational and institutional capacities (both military and civilian) are usually far more sophisticated than those of the rebels or protesters, and help them repress opposition and maintain legitimacy.[17] Thus, in the case of Egypt, the military was the primary obstacle to the qualitative change of the regime.

The Role of the Army in the Egyptian Uprising and Transition Period

The military played a key role in the Egyptian uprising of 2011 and during the subsequent period, including the 2013 coup. In order to understand the role army played in that period, it is important to understand its historic role in Egyptian society and in the country's political and economic system.

The army traditionally plays a prominent role in the political systems of the Arab states. Throughout the twentieth century, the military has been a key element of a country's successful performance. Anti-colonial revolutions played a central role in establishing a new ruling elite throughout the Middle East which had been formed predominantly by military officers. The Egyptian army built up its authority, credibility and gained public support over the second half of the twentieth century. The army was perceived as a force that guarded the national interests and protected the country from chaos.

The Army as Egypt's Primary Cohesive Force

The army has played a decisive role in changing colonial regimes in the majority of Arab states. By the early 1950s, in the absence of active, consistent opposition parties, the army was the most organised force.[18] From the end of World War I through the 1930s the biggest and most influential party was the Wafd party. However, the Wafd refused the army's offer to take power after the ousting of Egypt's King Farooq in 1952. The party also refused to cooperate with the Free Officers (the core movement of the Egyptian revolution of 1952), who eventually seized the power. Ultimately, the military had to take over governmental functions and had become responsible for the fate of Egypt. So what did the army look like in those times?

In 1922, Great Britain formally declared Egypt's independence, although Egypt's sovereignty was very limited and it remained a de facto colony. A big shift in Britain's policy towards Egypt occurred before World War II, when the British concentrated more of their troops in Europe decreasing military presence in the colonies. In such circumstances, Egypt was granted a right to increase its army from 11,500 to 60,000 soldiers.[19] Eventually, King Farooq had to recruit future officers from the middle class, as he needed to enlarge his army in a very short time. It is important because traditionally, officers of the tiny Egyptian army were from rich families. Starting in 1936, the Egyptian Military Academy began accepting young men from peasant families who consequently became the backbone of the Free Officers Movement, which ultimately took power in Egypt.

When the Free Officers toppled the king in 1952, they had neither governing experience nor a wish to govern the country. They were attempting to get rid of colonial governance and a corrupt monarchical regime. The refusal of the Wafd party to cooperate with the Free Officers caused the army to take power. Their lack of governing experience and the continuing decline of the Egyptian economy induced the Free Officers to use the cadres of the old regime, which provided them with necessary expertise.[20] Thus, the Egyptian revolution of 1952 resulted not only in the deposing of the king and liberating the country from British colonial rule, but also with the formation of the new elite, which rapidly gained broad popular support. After the coup, the Free Officers launched deep reforms that addressed the concerns of the masses and brought relatively quick results—further enhancing the army's image as the nation's saviour. Agrarian reform (the most

important issue in the Arab countries at that time) increased their popularity and secured the support of the Egyptian countryside, while Egyptian foreign policy became more independent and was perceived by the population as patriotic.

All these factors contributed to the formation of a new political system in Egypt with the army playing a distinct role in it. Since the overthrow of King Farooq in 1952, five Egyptian presidents have come from the military: Muhammed Naguib, Gamal Nasser, Anwar Sadat, Hosni Mubarak and Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. In 2011, more than half of Egypt's 29 governors were former military.[21] This underlines that the military keeps its strong positions even after the 2011 uprising. However, all Egyptian presidents have had to deal with the army in order to maintain the civil-military balance.[22] Control over the military has always been necessary to avoid the risk of coups. This has led to the constant shuffle of senior army officers and has made the military present in almost every sector of Egypt's life. For instance, one of the most recent ones happened in 2014-2015 when young engineers, university professors and experienced managers were appointed as governors replacing many governors from the military.[23]

The Egyptian Military and the Economy

The weight Egyptian military has in the country's economic system is very important, because it defines military's fiscal health which impacts its will and capacity to confront changes of the existing system.[24] The Egyptian military is deeply involved in crony capitalist relationships.[25] The economic interests of the military elite are well protected by businesses that have being formed in their interests for decades.[26] As a result, the military has built a business empire that controls from 15 to 35 per cent of Egypt's gross domestic product, according to various estimates.[27] Economic ventures with substantial military share are in the military-industrial complex, state-owned holding companies and their numerous subsidiaries. Economic projects, approved and protected by the regime, account for a substantial part of the military's economic benefits.[28]

Over the last 20 years the military has begun to increase its portfolio by diversifying its traditional spheres of economic influence. It has expanded into sectors ranging from maritime transport to oil and renewable energy, from real estate development to heavy equipment leasing.

It has also increased its share in the economy by launching joint ventures with transnational companies that reach into several economic sectors, including public-private ventures.[29] All this has firmly incorporated the military into the country's economy which makes it regime's largest stakeholder interested in preserving its substance in any form.

In the last years of Mubarak's reign, the cabinet of his prime minister Ahmed Nazif – which was composed mainly of technocrats – launched a privatisation process which the military perceived as a threat to its own economic interests. Given the large share of the military in the Egyptian economy, it was a logical move by Mubarak to enhance positions of country's economic technocrats by creating a competitive counter-balance to the military influence in economic sphere. In addition, his son Gamal Mubarak was a strong figure among younger generation of technocrats. Such move was perceived by the military elite as an attempt to limit and even decrease their share and influence in the economy by putting private-sector oligarchs close to the president and his family in a stronger position. However, since the uprising of 2011 and the resignation of Mubarak, many of his cronies have been on trial for corruption and some of them have left the country. This eventually left no serious competitors whose ambitions could harm or oppose the army's plans for economic expansion.[30]

The Egyptian Military and Foreign Support

Long-standing international support, both political and economic, greatly contributed to the economic strength of the Egyptian military. For years Egypt's has been receiving financial aid from its major international supporter, the United States. During the last 30 years, the US has provided Egypt with more than $40 billion USD in military assistance — about 80% of the country's total annual military procurement budget.[31] This equals $1.3 billion USD a year in military aid from 1987 to present.[32] Between 1948 and 2015, the US provided Egypt with $76 billion USD in total bilateral foreign aid.[33] The US suspended financial aid to Egypt only for short periods of time, the most recent one was in 2013 after the coup which deposed democratically elected President Morsi (it was fully resumed it in 2015).[34] However, even if the US decides to withhold funds, there are plenty of regional cash-rich countries willing to provide financial support to Egypt. Starting in July 2013, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait pledged a combined $14 billion USD in aid to

Egypt,[35] which is enough to cover any loss in American or European financial aid for several years.

This aid helped to keep the Egyptian army in a good fiscal health for decades, maintain its strength, keep its equipment up-to-date and gave it the capacity to use force, or the threat of force. This financial aid strengthens the military's power, making it more resilient and unwilling to change the existing system as they are its primary beneficiaries. In addition, the military is a key pillar of the Egypt's statehood and the main guarantor of its stability, and the US views it as the central partner. Turbulent and volatile Egypt is in no one's interest, including the US, so, as long as the Egyptian military guaranties stability of the country and keeps it from sliding into the chaos Washington will support it. Moreover, Egypt's strategic importance makes its military crucial to providing US and Western security interests such as ensuring a reliable supply of oil and gas (although with the shale gas revolution, the importance of this will somewhat decline); the security of Israel; containing radical Islamists; controlling immigrant flows, and counterbalancing Iran. This is why Egypt's military maintained international support networks which provide it with necessary financial and political assistance[36] keeping it strong and effective enough to manage the country.

Foreign aid and support to the Egyptian military contributed to maintaining its economic strength, thus, creating an additional obstacle for the country to undergo fundamental social-political change over the last five years. Egyptian Revolution of 2011 have failed to cause the qualitative change of the existing system and to pave the ground for that change. According to Skocpol, Bellin, Goldstone and others, an essential condition for successful revolution was not at place: Egypt's state institutions and its coercive apparatus (the military, security services, etc.) remained strong and effective enough to prevent regime change.[37]

The Role of Egyptian Military in the 2011 Uprising and After Mubarak

The regime in Egypt, which traces back to Nasser and the Free Officers, turned out to be very stable and viable, as its structure is still in place today. The Egyptian uprising of 2011 did not break the existing state system. It is worth noting that the army was not involved

in the anti-Mubarak demonstrations in January 2011. This neutrality in fact saved its credibility before the Egyptians. On 11 February 2011, after Mubarak was ousted, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF)[38] assumed control of the country. Its main goal was to oversee the transition and ensure that the power would be transferred to a civilian government elected by the people. The SCAF considered itself the sole actor with the relevant skills, experience and capacities necessary to protect the country from both domestic and external threats.[39]

Given the spread of internal insecurity in Egypt, and the rising regional instability (the Sinai and uncertainty in Libya and Sudan) during the time of January 2011 events and after, the SCAF simply could not put the country's fate into the hands of civilians (who could drag it into chaos) or let anyone question or challenge its own privileged status. With resignation of Mubarak the SCAF regarded almost all political parties as self-centred in their programs and narrow-minded in their behaviour. The only organised political force that the SCAF took seriously was the Muslim Brotherhood. Although the military took on the role of arbitrator, guarding the state's security during the transition to the elected parliament and president, it did not wish to remain in the political spotlight and to be held responsible and blamed for every mistake and failure. The SCAF did not intend to be sidelined either, nor it wanted to lose its self-ascribed role as the guarantor of constitutional legitimacy and security and be stripped of its economic privileges. Besides, the SCAF did not want to see political institutions in the hands of single Islamist party. Therefore, its objective was to stay in the background, arbitrating from behind the scenes.[40]

As a result, the SCAF relinquished power on 30 June 2012, upon the start of newly elected Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi's term. Although the SCAF was first viewed as the revolution's protector, many started to see it as an agent of the counter-revolution as it held all power in the country after 2011 uprising for over a year. During that period, the military was able to keep the country from descending into chaos—despite accusations that they were purposely delaying handing power over to a civilian government by suppressing major demonstrations that demanded an end to military rule. Ultimately, the army did transfer power to an elected civilian government, as it promised. Thus, it fulfilled its main obligations and saved its image.

Egyptian history is a record of the army guarding the interests of the secular state and their own elite position in the system of power. Egyptians in general treated the army as a liberator and defender of the country's national interests, which allowed it to utilize this popular trust in such important moment. With regard to the Muslim Brotherhood and President Morsi, the army's policies failed to meet people's expectations after Mubarak's resignation, a revolutionary mood returned to the masses and it resulted in large protests against the Brotherhood rule. This time Egyptian military joined the coalition of anti-Brotherhood forces, creating a needed sufficiently broad and cross-cutting coalition which successfully deposed Mohamed Morsi and his Islamist government. The military stepped in removing members of the Muslim Brotherhood from leading governmental positions. As a result, Egypt witnessed a coup which was against newly elected president and Muslim Brotherhood, who desired to monopolise power.

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When Morsi had become a president he undertook certain steps to limit and decrease the role of the military. He removed old generals of the Mubarak era such as Minister of Defence Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, Chief of Staff Sami Enan and General Intelligence Director Mourad Mouwafi, promoting younger officers to their positions. Basically, Morsi intended to make an alliance with the military to secure their support and get control over the coercive apparatus. The military realized the intensions of the MB and threat they pose to their positions, and supported public demonstrations against their rule which led to the Islamists' loss of power.[41]

The military once again demonstrated its superiority and took the power because they had the capacity, needed support and experience to do so. Basically, the regime developed a system which functions well and regulates itself with the help of the army balancing between military-civilian-secular edges. Once the military realized that not only the form but the substance of the existing system was about to change, it deposed the Brotherhood. Therefore, the Egyptian uprising did not lead to the system's transformation, but only led to the change of leadership.

In the case of the 2013 coup, the army's aspirations to get rid of the Islamist regime and the people's desire to regain the "stolen" revolution and its results coincided and created the necessary coalition of

convenience. It led to successful seizure of power with the decisive role of the military. As a result, the army even gained more respect and trust on behalf of Egyptians whose "revolution" they "saved."

One could argue that the July 2013 coup against Mohamed Morsi could be described as a counter-coup. However, this would not be accurate. First, ousted President Morsi and his party came to power legitimately via democratic election – they attained power by a popular vote which they managed to consolidate and secure. Therefore, when mass demonstrations started in Egypt against President Morsi and his push for Islamic rule, the Egyptian military stepped in and deposed the Muslim Brotherhood.

Second, it must not be forgotten that the Egyptian military never left Egypt's political arena and was practically behind all major political moves.[42] Their decision not to rescue Mubarak and to sacrifice him in order to protect the existing regime well-demonstrated their intensions to stay in power and adapt to changing realities. In a way, Mubarak's resignation in February 2011 was less about the success of the uprising than it was a move to keep the existing system alive.[43] As an evidence, the key power figures in the years after Mubarak resignation were from the military.

The head of the Egyptian General Intelligence Directorate, Omar Suleiman, became vice-president after Mubarak's resignation, while Aviation Minister and former Chief of Egypt's Air Force, Ahmed Shafik, became prime minister. On 11 February 2011, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF)[44] took power from Mubarak and became the ruling body of Egypt until 30 June 2012. SCAF was headed by Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, who had served as the Minister of Defence under Mubarak and was his close friend. The council also included service heads and other senior commanders of the Egyptian Armed Forces, namely Air Marshal Reda Mahmoud Hafez Mohamed; Air Force Commander Sami Hafez Anan; Armed Forces Chief of Staff Abd El Aziz Seif-Eldeen; and Mohab Mamish, Navy Commander in Chief.[45] They all served in their new positions until August 2012. Essentially, while Mubarak and some of his cronies were deposed, strong political figures from the military assumed the power.

When Mohamed Morsi was elected as a new president of Egypt, he changed the SCAF's personnel, basically promoting senior military officers who were four to eight years younger than their prede-

cessors. General Abdul Fatah Al-Sisi (current president of Egypt) was the youngest member of the SCAF before Morsi became the president. Morsi and the Brotherhood understood the importance of the military and the inevitability of an alliance with them. In addition, an alliance with the military would provide Islamists with strong coercive apparatus and guarantee financial and military assistance from the US, as Washington views Egyptian military as its key partner.

Thus, when the Muslim Brotherhood came to the political arena and attempted to sideline the army, the military took decisive action and stripped them of power. It cannot be considered a counter-coup, simply because the military regained the position they had before the 2012 elections, basically bringing Egypt back to where it was after the Mubarak's resignation.

Tunisia... A Different Role for the Military A Different Outcome of the Uprising

It is important to indicate why the Egyptian revolt is different from other revolts in the region. Tunisia— where a revolution took place and the process of elite change is ongoing—serves as a good example. This comparison will show the differences between role of the military in Egypt and in Tunisia and how these differences led to different outcomes of their respective uprisings. The argument that revolutionary movements can only succeed when the ruling regime, its strength and especially the strength of its coercive apparatus become substantially weakened[46] is well-substantiated in Tunisia's case.

The role of the military in Tunisia is very different than in Egypt. The Tunisian military is not engaged in country's politics. Upon the creation of the Tunisian military in June 1956, President Habib Bourguiba excluded them from political participation and set up a clear institutional separation between the country's new political structures and the military. He wanted to establish a professional and apolitical army modelled on Western European countries.[47] Keeping the military out of politics and limiting its size and budget allowed him to reduce putschist ambitions and the risk of a coup.[48]

Even when Ben Ali came to power, the general position of the army remained unchanged, despite Ali being a career military officer himself. Even Ali's decision to increase the military budget, was aimed

more at providing internal security than at expanding the military's influence. Ben Ali's distancing himself from the military, his preoccupation with internal security and the fact that he relied more on the police and intelligence services gave the army little stake in politics or the economy.[49] This created a situation in which the army's ties to the Tunisian economy were minimal—nearly absent—giving the military little incentive to protect or fight for the existing regime. In short, the Tunisian military's role in the political and economic life of the country has been strictly limited since the 1950s. Essentially, they serve as an apolitical guardian of the state and the constitution.[50] The Tunisian military, in stark contrast to the Egyptian military, has no substantial political or economic stake in the existing regime. The military's small size, small budget and exclusion from political and economic life made the army reluctant to oppose regime change and transformation of the system. This is why Tunisia is experiencing rather peaceful and smooth path towards democratic development while Egypt is not.

Revolution and Roadblocks to Democratic Transition

The Arab uprisings are tightly connected with the problem of democratic transition. The Middle East, being a region with primarily authoritarian regimes, did not follow the path of democratisation which happened in 1980s-1990s after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, nor did it follow the wave of Colour Revolutions in 2000s. When the Arab Uprising started in late 2010 it was met with high expectations and hopes that it would pave the road to the democratization and prosperity in the region. However, the first year of the Arab Uprising in the Middle East proved the opposite, demonstrating only one relatively successful example of Tunisia. As a result, the region has become more turbulent and generated new challenges for the region and beyond such as the rise of Islamic extremism and uncontrolled movement of refugees.

It is important to note that transition to democracy issue is very complicated. Besides, while domestic conditions of a state matter for the democratic transition, the role of external factors should not be underestimated, especially when the Middle East is concerned. Many scholars conducted research in attempts to find the reasons why the states of the Middle East predominantly remain authoritarian and fail to take a democratisation path.

As it was already mentioned in the sections above, according to the findings of research on revolutions, the presence of a strong, coherent and effective coercive state apparatus is the major roadblock to successful revolution and subsequent conditions for transition to democracy in authoritarian states. The will and capacity of a state's coercive forces to oppose democratic initiatives, which undermine their status and positions, almost negates the possibility of fundamental change in certain Middle Eastern countries (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Bahrain, etc.). In addition, external support for the existing regimes (and in particular the military) in the region safeguard them from qualitative institutional change. These important arguments indicate the dissonance between the declarations and real actions of some Western countries towards the Middle East.

The dissonance appears when Western democracies support autocratic regimes in the Middle East through military and economic assistance, thereby contributing to their robustness and increasing their resistance to change. Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, for instance, enjoy US patronage and military protection, despite clear undemocratic nature of the regimes in power and obvious violations of the human rights. However, political, economic and security interests (oil supplies, counterbalancing Iran, the fight against terrorism, military bases in the region, security of Israel, etc.) outweigh idealistic concerns. That results in the relative stability of autocratic regimes in the Middle East and the continuous absence of democracy.

The Egyptian military is an essential part of country's system and the guarantor of its security and stability. It is deeply incorporated into the Egypt's economic and political structures. Those facts make the military the primary recipient of US and European assistance and the only reliable provider of their interests in the region.

Foreign Assistance and Democracy Promotion

Foreign or external aid is tightly connected to the question of democracy promotion. The debate among scholars about the impact of the external democracy promotion on the domestic policies of states is ongoing. Scholars such as McFaul, Fukuyama and Gershman argue that foreign aid has a positive impact on the transition towards democracy. Other researchers disagree, arguing that there are many issues, such as methodological difficulties with evaluating the impact of the exter-

nal assistance. Researcher Stephen Knack's argues that 'no evidence is found that [foreign] aid promotes democracy.'[51]

The US and EU consider themselves committed to the promotion of democracy in Egypt, however, their policies hardly push the political change in Egypt. Oppositely, they undermined it by being incoherent and controversial. In 2009, Vincent Durac's research indicated that the Western scale of 'inconsistency between the asserted aim of supporting political change and that of maintaining a stable and friendly Egypt have the paradoxical effect of strengthening, rather than challenging, the position of a regime that is deeply undemocratic.'[52]

As stated above, the main problem with Western assistance to the MENA states is in the ability to strike a balance between security and creating conditions for democratic transformation. In the case of Egypt, the US has provided both economic and military assistance with the precondition that the Egyptian government will demonstrate progress towards democracy.[53] However, in more than three decades since 1970 Camp David Accords, US economic assistance to Egypt has gradually declined; since the late 1980s, it has been drastically reduced.[54] The difference between annual military and economic aid is enormous: $1.3 billion USD versus $250 million USD respectively in 2010-2013.[55] As a result, maintenance of the Egyptian army's fighting capacity, anti-terrorism cooperation with Egypt and security and stability of the state are evidently of a higher priority for the US national interests than Egypt's transformation to democracy.

Even in the case when Washington suspends its financial aid to Egypt as it was in 2013 after the coup which deposed democratically elected President Morsi (although it fully resumed it in 2015[56]) or if the US and/or the EU are dissatisfied with the progress of their aid recipients towards democracy and decide to withhold funds, there are plenty of regional cash-rich countries willing to provide financial support to Egypt and to those in power. Starting in July 2013, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait pledged a combined $14 billion USD in aid to Egypt,[57] which is enough to cover any loss in American or European financial aid for several years.

However, importance of the security issues is quite clear in the Middle East realities and in Egypt in particular. Egypt is the most populous

Arab country in the region (87 million in 2015). If it gets destabilised, the entire system of regional security will be undermined. A nation of almost 90 million people in a chaos or fragmentation is able to bring a lot more instability and volatility to the region and beyond than the much less-populous states of Iraq, Libya or Syria that are already in chaos. Therefore, the transition to democracy has been quite problematic in Egypt: what appears to be one of the main obstacles to democratic transition is also the guarantor of the country's security and stability. The balance between democratic governance and security is of the highest importance in such states. However, the dissonance between democracy promotion and security maintenance is clearly evident.

Another aspect of democracy promotion in the Middle East is the US image in the region. After 9/11, President George W. Bush declared democratisation in the Middle East a strategic priority. This aim, however, was undermined by several factors: the one-sided US approach to the Palestine-Israel question; the association of democracy promotion with military intervention and the failed policy towards Iraq; the use of harsh counterterrorism measures that cast a shadow on democracy promotion; the tendency to doubt the winners of elections when they seemed worrisome (such as in the Palestinian territories in 2007); and the discrepancy between democratic rhetoric and concrete action in places like Egypt and Pakistan.[58] These factors have led to the situation when the US is rarely perceived as a promoter of democracy in the region. According to 2012 Pew Research Center public opinion poll majority in Jordan (67 per cent), Turkey (58 per cent), Tunisia (57 per cent) and Egypt (52 per cent) believe the US government opposes democracy in the region.[59]

The subsequent victory of Islamists in the elections in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya after the ousting their rulers reduced initial enthusiasm in the West and in the US in particular about the 'Arab Spring,' which was labelled this way because at the very beginning this process was majorly seen as the democratisation of the region. The people who desired changes and participated in protests in Egypt were not able to create lasting broad coalition with other forces (Islamists, political and economic elites) which could increase their chances to successful

revolution. Thus, they lacked the necessary capabilities, support and power, which ultimately contributed to the failure of their sincere and positive aspirations.

Missed Opportunities and the Muslim Brotherhood

The initiators of the Egyptian uprising were mainly urbanites, with the core force consisting of young educated people. As they represented the most educated and active class of society, their expectations were the highest. This provides a legit explanation to why they went out to Tahrir to protest. However, the majority of Egypt (57 per cent) is rural[60] and is less modernised, less educated and more conservative than the moving force of protesters. As a result, in the case of democratic elections, the rural majority is likely to win (having equal access to the voting stations), voting for candidates who are closer to them ideologically. This is one of the reasons why the Muslim Brotherhood won both elections, presidential and parliamentary in 2012.

Another reason is that the Muslim Brotherhood enjoys huge grassroots support. It has been providing much needed social services in impoverished, mostly rural areas for several decades.[61] [62] Thus, the Muslim Brotherhood quite easily received the majority of votes and secured the majority in Parliament (along with the Salafi Al-Nour party) by mobilising public support throughout the country. After Mubarak's resignation, the military did not put any legal restrictions on the Islamic groups in Egypt. This led to their increased participation in political life and ultimately brought them to power. Weak secular-liberal groups which lack unity, experience and the capacity to act, could not seriously challenge the Islamists. The possible opponents from the former ruling National Democratic Party, who did possess the necessary knowledge, experience, and capacity to act, were discredited by their corruption and connections to Mubarak. Consequently, the vacuum appeared which was soon filled with more organised and competitive forces.

After securing the majority in the Egyptian Parliament and winning the presidential elections, the Muslim Brotherhood used these victories to consolidate its power and expand the rule of sharia law, doing so under the military's supervision. Even after the election of Morsi, when he made moves aiming at undercutting influence of the military,

the latter appeared to be much stronger and demonstrated its control of the situation.

It could be argued that President Morsi tried to reduce the military's influence in the political sphere and establish a more transparent and democratic regime in Egypt, and if he'd had more time he would have succeeded. At first glance, this appears to be the case. Morsi had started removing the remaining elements of Mubarak's inner circle—old generals like Minister of Defence Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, Chief of Staff Sami Enan, General Intelligence Director Mourad Mouwafi, and others. By doing so, Morsi got quite a positive reaction from the public on the wave of anti-Mubarak sentiments.

In fact, it turned out that he tried to get younger members of the military on his side by promoting them to the positions of their predecessors. Basically, Morsi intended to make an alliance with the military to secure their support and get control over the coercive apparatus. He also tried to promote Brotherhood members and sympathisers to important political posts, consolidate power and push a conservative Islamic agenda (it must not be forgotten that Morsi is tied to the conservative wing of the Muslim Brotherhood). In fact, Morsi declared his assumption of full constitutional power, causing strong resentment among both the general public and elites.

This attempt to push an Islamic agenda and strip the military of power ultimately failed when popular demonstrations against the Muslim Brotherhood erupted. The military could not allow anyone to question their political and economic standing in the system and stepped in, siding with the people, basically implementing a coup.[63] The Muslim Brotherhood's attempt to dominate the political arena and overpower the army failed. In addition, the inability of the Muslim Brotherhood to deliver a viable economic plan also contributed to their ultimate failure.

After anti-Islamists protests and coup of 2013, the military took hard steps against Islamists. They outlawed the Muslim Brotherhood on 25 December 2013. They declared it a terrorist group, criminalised all its activities—including its financing and membership in the organisation—launched a demonization campaign and severe repressions against its members.[64] The military understood that the Muslim Brotherhood was a dangerous opponent with the ability to generate public support throughout the country via its vast grassroots activity.

In fact, the Muslim Brotherhood could eventually undermine the power of the military, hence Egypt's security. Moreover, the historical rivalry and hostile relations between the military and Islamists in Egypt also contributed to the army's decision to outlaw it. However, such decision has mixed results. On the one hand, it created better conditions for the formation and rise of more cohesive secular liberal parties and political organisations—albeit, under the close control from the state. On the other hand, it marginalised a powerful actor supported by a large swath of Egyptians, as the majority of Muslim Brotherhood support comes from the rural population,[65] which makes up to 57% of the country.[66] Another negative consequence is that the MB's exclusion from politics could turn them toward terrorism and sympathies to radical Islamist groups in the region that are currently on the rise.[67]

Here lies the paradox: an uprising which topples an authoritarian leader, but subsequent developments do not satisfy expectations of the active, liberal (but relatively weak) revolutionary forces. In fact, even using democratic tools—such as fair elections—undemocratic forces can come to power. This is what ultimately occurred in Egypt. The liberal democratic forces that initiated the uprising, and were at its heart, could not secure the results of their revolutionary achievement.

Drawbacks of Modernisation

Even if revolutions happen to succeed, those who were at the heart of them often do not become the victors. More often, the groups that were excluded from political activity under the former regime (the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafis), use their superior organisational capacity and considerable grassroots activity to come to power.[68] The youth movement which was at the heart of the Egyptian protests in 2011 was leaderless and lacked organisational and political experience to create lasting and broad coalition, including with elites; this led to its marginal involvement in subsequent political life. At the same time, more organised actors whose role in the protests was minor (the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis) took advantage of the new political opportunities.[69] As a result, the Muslim Brotherhood came to power through democratic elections, getting about two-thirds of the Parliament seats and winning the presidential chair.

According to Russian philosopher Nicholas Berdyaev 'all revolutions end up with reactions. It is inevitable, it is the law.' World history has demonstrated that the sustainability of democratic achievement heavily depends on the degree to which a society is modernised, its cultural traditions, the external environment, etc. This is why countries with high socio-cultural and economic levels, which have already travelled the thorny path to democracy, experience revolutions (or revolutionary reforms) that result in quite stable democratic regimes.[70] Two good examples are the Portuguese revolution of 1974 and the revolution in Czechoslovakia in 1989. Those revolutions were predominantly non-bloody and happened in short periods of time. On the contrary, if a society is not modernised enough and has a high illiteracy rate, a larger rural population, a strong influence of traditionalists, low status of women, absence of democratic experience and idealisation of democracy—and where all parties are not ready to behave according to democratic rules when they lose elections—then Berdyaev's law comes into play and the way to democracy becomes extremely difficult. It also should be noted that if the forces which form the core of the regime are strong they hinder democratic transformation. This can lead to either violence, or a military coup which will return a country to authoritarianism.

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A country needs to have certain degree of social, economic and cultural development to pave the ground to the democratic development. In fact, the modernisation of big countries never goes evenly. As a result, a modernising country may have a modernised 'centre' and a poorly modernised conservative rural 'periphery,' where the majority of the population lives.[71] This is the case in Egypt. That is why the (more or less educated) revolutionary youth who initiated the demonstrations ultimately lost their leadership position. The language and rhetoric of the Muslim Brotherhood were closer to big parts of the population, and their grassroots decades-long activity could not be challenged by anyone except the state. As a result, the Muslim Brotherhood highjacked the outcome of the Egyptian uprising. However, when the public became dissatisfied with Islamic rule and the performance of the Brotherhood, Egyptians again took to the streets. In this situation, the most organised, cohesive and experienced force in Egypt—the military—stepped in to prevent chaos and oversee a smooth transition.

Conclusion

The Egyptian uprising, in fact, appeared to be a failed revolution, because those who initiated it failed to secure power[72] and pave the ground for qualitative change in political and socio-economic structures of the regime.

This work examined two Egyptian uprisings, 2011 and 2013 and it explained the crucial role the Egyptian military plays in the political system, being the most cohesive, experienced and respected force in the country. Egyptian military is a robust institution with a big stake in Egyptian political and economic life which did not lose the trust in the efficiency of the existing system. Unlike in 1952, the uprising of 2011 did not change the country's political elite; the country did not start a 'new life.'

The comparative case of the Tunisian and Egyptian militaries demonstrated how the different nature and role of the military in each state's system hugely contributed to the outcome of the uprising and the transition which followed. The example of the Tunisian military confirms that an army which is excluded from the political and economic life of a state is less opposed to the change of the existing regime. On the contrary, the Egyptian military was one of the main obstacles to a fundamental regime change.

Another important factor that contributed to the failure of the Egyptian revolution is that the country was not ready for change. There was no cohesive secular political force with solid governmental experience (except the army and former NDP bureaucrats). The army's power over political and economic institutions allowed it to maintain its strength and fiscal health. The Egyptian military successfully maintained international support networks that secured additional financial assistance and political support. The weakness of the revolutionary forces, and the military's failure to create a more competitive political space (by creating coalition with liberal forces, for instance), made it extremely difficult for secular-liberal forces to compete with the Islamists.

Another condition for successful revolution – large coalitions of revolutionary groups and elites as challengers – was not at place. Successful coalitions might take various forms and involve different actors as long as they are sufficiently broad and cross-cutting of social cleavages.[73] In Egypt such coalition failed to be born as large, most influential and capable part of Egyptian elites was not interested in changing substance of the existing system, although it agreed to change its form.

Egypt's political elite, a product of the Mubarak regime, has remained in power, creating just a façade vision of joining the revolution but in fact staying aside, guarding the system.

The failure of the Muslim Brotherhood to manage the country in such a critical period, when peoples' expectations were extraordinarily high, led to mass dissatisfaction and another call for change. Although the Brotherhood was the most organised political force, they did not have governing experience or the capacity to implement meaningful political and economic reforms. Besides, they did not control Egypt's coercive apparatus and did not have rigid support from foreign actors that could assist them in holding power. Eventually, Egypt had returned to its pre-2011 state when the same elites with an authoritarian leader in power govern the country.

As a result of the uprising of 2011, the political figurehead is different, but the political system, and the economic power is in the same hands, meaning that the regime is still in place. In countries like Egypt, revolutions often do not reflect the desires of those who initiated them, do not usually succeed and do not necessarily lead to democracy or pave the ground for moving towards more democratic development. With such a robust military, Egypt is unlikely to undertake the fundamental political and economic reforms necessary to move it towards democratic change in the near future. Although they have allotted more space for secular-liberal political groups (by banning the Brotherhood), the military remains in control of the entire Egyptian political system and this is unlikely to change anytime soon. However, the need for experienced cadres who can manage a massive reformation of the Egyptian economy will force the existing regime to cooperate with technocrats. This allows for the slight possibility of a slow transition to a technocratic government—although under the condition that the economic position of the military would remain unshakable. Either way, Egypt would experience more political turmoil.

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