



Egypt after two Revolutions: An Impression from Inside

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In a span of two years, 2011-2013, Egypt has passed through a historical political transformation wherein two rulers were deposed. In February 2011, President Hosni Mubarak was forced to step down and on June 30, 2013; President Mohammad Morsi, the first democratically elected was removed from office.

The removal of Mr. Morsi is largely being seen in the context of ‘revolutionary legitimacy’ as against ‘constitutional legitimacy’ by the Egyptians. The ‘constitutional legitimacy’ is perhaps based on the assumption that Morsi was an elected President. But there are other views too which stipulate that the legitimacy is not a static or infinite entity but rather it needs to be sought through performance; and its real source is the people’s consent. The mass uprising of June 30, 2013 was a clear message to Morsi that people had withdrawn their mandate and subsequently President Morsi stepped down honouring people’s sentiments.

Similarly, the view that removal of Morsi came through a military coup seems to be misplaced one. When the opposition groups under the umbrella of Tamarrod (rebellion and mutiny) collected signatures of 22 million people seeking the removal of the President and at that critical juncture the Army had no option but support the people’s aspiration. The Army did not seek power after the exit of Morsi but they were merely partners in the democratic change that

the masses were seeking. People wanted to win against the Islamists government so they sought Army's help and the 'Army could not strike an attitude of neutrality'.

On July 3, 2013, the Army removed President Morsi and appointed Ahmad Mansur, Chief of the Supreme Constitutional Court of Egypt as an interim President. The Army also came out with a Road Map stipulating a civilian government, a new constitution, and making arrangement for the Parliamentary and the Presidential election in six months time.

Though the Islamist President had secured the victory with a very thin majority but the victory was hailed as a 'dawn of new democracy' in Egypt. Unfortunately, the way new government governed the country turned out to be a nightmare as Morsi failed to keep the promises he had made to the people. He failed to resolve the protracted socio-economic crisis and instead, national economy further deteriorated and there was decline in other sectors too like education, health and transport.

The Islamists adopted the policy of Ikhwanisation (rendering the state more Islamic) of all the state institutions. In a span of one year, they had placed their own men in different government agency regardless of their incompetence and inexperience. Morsi had appointed an inexperienced person as a Minister of Planning who was a graduate in language. Likewise, the removal of the Minister of Cultural and her later replacement by an experienced member of Muslim Brotherhood (MBH) antagonised the lovers of arts and culture.

Most of the appointments were made on the basis of organisational loyalty. People became more disillusioned when the Islamists tried to hijack the revolution and endeavoured to Islamise it. Expressing his resentment against the radical policy of the Islamist government, one member of Tamarrod group revealed that they had voted for the Islamist party but the new government started discriminating among the voters on the basis of their ideological orientation. The members of MBH had created a state for themselves alone and had developed a false impression that Egypt belonged to them.

The most obscure reason for the debacle that ensued the revolution was the mistake on the part of the Islamists of not keeping the promises they had made to the people. MBH's political wing, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), had announced that it would not contest for the post of the President and had suggested that it would enter the fray for not more than one third of total National Assembly seats in the parliamentary election; but the party went back on these promises. They had announced to resolve the issue of electricity, gas, traffic and security within hundred days but they failed to do anything concrete on these pressing domestic issues.

Morsi's one year stint was marked by deteriorating social harmony. The churches and minority institutions were burnt and this hostile practice is completely unfamiliar to the Egyptian society. Coptic community were under threat while they were very much part of the revolution. A former Egyptian diplomat told an interviewer that the Islamists were creating an Egypt which was completely alien to Egyptian traditions and values. What was more threatening was MBH's embracing of Jihadists from across Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Morsi failed to identify the priority of the government and made 20 foreign trips in span of one year and wasted more and more time in receiving foreign delegations with little regard to other important national issues.

On the other hand, the members of the MBH have a different narrative of the issue altogether. They demand Morsi's reinstatement and accuse the army and the civilian government installed by it of trying to bring back Hosni Mubarak's dictatorial style of governance. Expressing his grief, one of the MBH sympathisers said that the treatment meted out to the Islamists was worse than what had been witnessed in China in the past. He also added that Morsi led democratically elected government should have been allowed to fulfil its four-year term in office.

The political future of Egypt is riddled with a chain of dilemmas and a series of challenges emanating from different set of circumstances. One of the biggest challenge is to cater to the aspirations of the youths who constitute about 70 per cent of the total 90 million population. The question of unemployment and political empowerment for the youths needs to

be addressed on priority basis. The substantial number of non-urban and semi-educated youth, vulnerable to conservatism, would have to be absorbed in the mainstream socio-economic agenda of Egypt.

The dilemma of positioning the Army in the new dispensation in Egypt would be another challenge for any future government. New government will have to move very cautiously while dealing with a highly enthusiastic group of Political Islam in form of MBH and the Salafist. This is the group which has captured substantial political space in the country after the Revolution and has emerged as a force to reckon with. Every government in future will have to be cautious so that they do not fall into a trap of forces of destabilisation.

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