

Mediterranean Observatory

Special issue in collaboration with CIPMO - Italian Center for the Peace in Middle East



Editorial

by Janiki Cingoli, Director of CIPMO

The Conference held on 1st March, didn't mean to be a mere celebration of the "Arab Spring" in its first anniversary, it tried instead to investigate the different aspects of the hard transition still underway, on a political, economic and social basis. The high and pluralist level of the speeches, ended up with the masterful conclusions by Olivier Roy, offered a vivid and detailed insight into the different stands existing on the issue, bluntly and without diplomatic periphrasis.

The outcome of the Egyptian presidential elections these days confirms this complex scenario, with a slight rise of the Islamic official candidate, of the Freedom and Justice Party, Mohamed Morsi, with 24.78% of votes, followed closely by the Armed Forces candidate, Ahmed Shafiq, last Prime Minister under Mubarak, with 23.66% (together getting a total of 48.44%). Forces close to varying degrees to secular or "left" or "Islamic democracy" positions, as the Nasserist Hamdeen Sabahi (20.72%), the "pluralist" Islamic Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh (17.47%) and Amr Moussa (11.13%), the former Secretary General of the Arab League, gathered a slight majority with 49.32% of votes, but they in fact left the runoff to the two poles fighting for power, the Army and the Muslim Brotherhood, by running separate.

Forces linked to varying degrees to the Arab Spring thus represent a real power, able to affect and influence the choices of the country, but do not represent a comprehensive hegemony capable of governing. Even the most conservative forces, whether related to the Army or to the various formations of the Muslim Brotherhood or Salafi, could get a slight relative majority, but they couldn't sweep away the men and the women of Tahrir Square. The ones appeal to the hatred for the past, with its totalitarian and uncontrollable oppression. The other ones to the fatigue resulting from instability, insecurity, economic crisis and unemployment. In this impasse, it's natural that the two most deep-rooted forces, the Muslim Brotherhood, spread throughout the country including rural areas, and the Army with its entrenched grip on society (it controls more than 30% of the economy) ended up taking over. Nevertheless

even the most progressive forces shall look to the future, and be prepared to face this transition that will put the current leaders to the test, in such a tough scenario. This microcosm of Egypt is largely emblematic of the conflict underway in the whole area: also in Tunisia one can't say the struggle between the new and old powers is over, and even in Turkey, the confrontation between the governing Islamic party, the Army and Kemalist traditions can't be said to be completely settled.

However, there's a further wider issue: the expanding influence of Sunni Islamic parties -from Egypt, to Tunisia, Morocco, Turkey, Jordan itself, not to mention the Gulf countries- naturally tends to clash with the so-called Shiite expansionism, led by Iran. Syria, along with Lebanon, is perhaps the battlefield of this struggle, whose outcome is far from certain. However, what we can already say is that the Shiite pressure, which seemed at some point to be widespread, hit a hard and resolute bank, to which the United States itself is looking with increasing interest.

In this context, CIPMO and Paralleli intend to keep on working together, deepening the analysis on the ongoing changes in the Greater Middle East.

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Torino, 1 marzo 2012, ore 15.00
Circolo dei Lettori,
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A un anno dalla Primavera araba, è in atto una complessa transizione. Sono infatti emerse crescenti difficoltà all'interno di quei paesi, dove sembrano resistere le vecchie strutture di comando e le difficoltà economiche sono ancora assai gravi. D'altro canto, nelle diverse tornate elettorali che si sono tenute, si è registrata l'affermazione dei partiti islamici, sia dei Fratelli Musulmani, maggioritari in Egitto, Tunisia e in Marocco, sia, in minor misura, dei Salafiti, attestati su posizioni più dogmatiche e intransigenti.

Le forze del cambiamento, e tra queste in prima linea il movimento delle donne, mantengono tuttavia un ruolo forte, anche se non necessariamente maggioritario, e restano uno dei principali fattori in campo, in grado di influire in maniera consistente sugli sviluppi del processo in atto. Infine, gli altri regimi autoritari al potere, a cominciare dalla Siria, hanno deciso di resistere a oltranza, determinati a non seguire la sorte di Ben Ali, Mubarak e Gheddafi. L'Europa si trova quindi di fronte a scelte complesse, che possono essere decisive per il suo futuro.

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Khalil el-Anani, Ricercatore in Politiche del Medio Oriente alla Durham University (Gran Bretagna), esponente della nuova generazione dei Fratelli Musulmani

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La spinta delle donne e il ruolo dei social network
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L'iniziativa, parte del progetto "Percorsi Mediterranei in Piemonte 2011", è sostenuta da:



Si ringrazia:



Istituto di studi storici
Gaetano Salvemini



Introduction

by Pier Antonio Panzeri, Head of the Delegation for relations with Maghreb countries, European Parliament

If we look at the changes brought by the Arab Spring, it is possible to outline some considerations about the context, trying to evaluate the difficult transition process that several countries are experiencing. First of all, there is an ongoing debate in the European public opinion, and among different parties, wondering if these changes have confirmed the need of a European's different approach towards these countries. This can be explained with two sets of reasons: on one hand, with the electoral victory of Islamic parties, on the other with the growing awareness that the European Union is no longer the main actor all these countries prefer to deal with. The changes were definitely worth the cost: in fact, Europeans used to have a wicked policy towards these countries. The reality is that the compromise reached by member states of the European Union and many of the regimes has now disappeared. Europe (or the Western world at large) in fact supported or tolerated the regimes, having in return their commitment in the fight against terrorism and in the control of migration flows.

This balance did not hold and the 'exchange' has disappeared because of three sets of reasons. First of all because of the economic-financial crisis whose effects hit labour force and especially the youth of Maghreb countries, having no job or migratory opportunities; secondly, the youth and workers at large took to the streets because they wanted a change, they wanted reforms to be implemented, showing at the same time pride for their country (this has been a pivotal element of the revolution itself); then, the third reason was the extreme corruption that drained enormous resources. It has been calculated that Ben Ali and his clan have drained between 35 and 45% of Tunisian financial and economic resources, without distributing them to the population. At least one thing appears clear, and it can be turned into a first, although transitory, consideration: these processes are irreversible. Even if they do not have a defined or determined outcome, they will change the situation under two aspects:

- on a geopolitical point of view, the emerging role of Turkey as a protagonist in the Mediterranean area, to such extent that it appears not so interested in participating to the European

process, no matter our 'Turkey yes, Turkey not' unfruitful and provincial debate;

- the processes will require a change in the approach Western countries, especially those which are part of the European Union, have towards these countries.

At the beginning and over this transitional process some risks and opportunities, which could generate themselves as consequences of the process itself, have to some extent emerged in the European debate. A little preliminary remark needs to be done when it comes to opportunities: the fall of the Berlin Wall has basically changed the world, but what has happened in Eastern European countries after 1989 cannot be compared to what is happening today in Northern Africa and Maghreb. This is because of some differences, the most important one is that the Eastern countries, after they had free themselves from the communist's regime, had the perspective of the European integration, while Med countries could only be able to overhaul the European Neighbourhood Policy.

For what concerns the risks, one of them has always been the new pan-Arabism. It is true that the revolutions showed some kind of "arab proud", but it was more oriented to a modernization of the country than to a reconstruction of a pan-Arabian idea based on Nasser's model. And we have to objectively add that, in this transition phase, we haven't seen another problem: the Islamic radicalism.

The possible rise of this element will depend on the European approach with the parties that have won the elections in those countries. There are strict bonds between the Islamic parties of the Med countries, but there are also several social differences among them. Those parties have won because they were really connected with the territories, also if they had to operate clandestinely and were opposed by the regimes. They were able to give some answers to the population's needs. For what concerns immigration, we haven't seen massive exodus, but instead we saw a regular flow, especially if compared to the flow that invested Europe after 1989. Another aspect is the terrorism issue. A question has to be raised here, due to the consequence of these changes, taking into consideration, for example, what happened in Libya. The problem is that many people are still armed, organized in more or less irregular militia groups, as is the case of a good part of the Tuareg which have moved towards the Sahel area, where a certain concentration of these militias can be noticed.



However, in these countries, the distinction between the political process and the need to fight terrorism it's clearly evident. So, contrary to the possible risks foreseen by the Europeans, even in this difficult transition time they did not act with virulence or as they were expected to by certain individuals.

If we sum up all the factors related to the transformation of these countries, we can say that, in didactic terms, we are facing two types of situations: the first one concerns the core group of countries that changed regime under the pressure of the masses who have gone into the streets, like Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya.

The second one involves the countries that did not chose this path, for different reasons, like Morocco, Jordan, and, with a big question mark, Algeria. This discernment capacity must be able to change the approach of the EU regarding its neighborhood policy. This change, which we can consider as cultural, has somehow already started, and is based on three concepts that have become almost essential components of the European Union towards the Mediterranean. They are the "Three M": Money, Market, Mobility.

1) Money: there is the need of having major economic and financial resources, because it would be unthinkable to demand a greater democracy in these countries without supporting the democratic process with financial resources which will help the economic and social development.

2) Market: Mediterranean's market must be opened and a free trade area must be created, dissolving the contradictions that do not exist in these countries, but which are present in the European mentality, and in the Italian one, as we have seen in recent events, which have affected the European Parliament, like the case of the fishing agreement with Morocco, or the agreement on agriculture.

3) Mobility: a mobility policy has to be managed in new ways, for example, introducing the concept of "circular mobility" that is convenient and useful to both sides. This represents a new approach that must be put in action in order to support this difficult transition. The last point that needs to be addressed is that the democratic processes in these countries will be strengthened even if and especially if the Europeans political parties will take a different role. It is true that there is a problem

at institutional level, but there is a problem also with the political organizations, parties and of course trade unions and other social organizations. The strengthening of the political pluralism structure in those countries also depends on the fact that European parties, in their complexity and their differences, are able to get in touch and "help" those societies to give birth to new political formations within them, which are the infrastructure of democracy, just as necessary as their institutions. In order to turn these countries into democratic ones, even if in their own way, there has to be a democracy where pluralism is considered as a fundamental element of the society's future.

Index

Rethinking Islamist Politics after the Arab Spring

by Khalil al-Anani

A year from the Arab Spring.

A difficult transition:

The economic dimension of the transition

by Heliodoro Temprano Arroyo

The EU's and international response to the Arab spring

by Heliodoro Temprano Arroyo

Ideology versus Sociology

by Hussam Itani

The role of women in the Egyptian revolution

by Shahira Abu Leil

Conclusive remarks

by Oliver Roy



Rethinking Islamist Politics after the Arab Spring

by Khalil al-Anani, Scholar in Middle East Politics, Durham University, UK

The following article will analyze to what extent the Arab Spring should change the way to think about Islamist parties. It is important to remark that there are different and diverse Islamic parties and movements operating right now in the Middle East. It is significantly important to grasp the new dynamics of Islamist politics after the Arab Spring. The starting point in this analysis is that the Arab Spring has reshaped Islamist politics drastically. After decades of stagnation and exclusion, many Islamist parties have been included in the political process in Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, etc. Furthermore, they are ruling now in some countries like Tunisia and Morocco.

Before tackling some of this issue, it needs to be stressed the fact that the transitional process is still underway. As Professor Philippe Schmitter once noticed, in fact, “transition is an uncertain process that might lead to unintended or unplanned outcomes”. So nobody knows yet what will happen in the future. The present analysis will address four main questions: First, who are the new Islamists (especially in Egypt) in terms of their ideology, discourse, strategies and ideas and what is the base of their legitimacy? Second, what do they exactly want, what would they seek to achieve, in terms of shape of the state and strategies? Third question is how to explain the Islamists' rise: is it a threat or is it an opportunity? Is it real or a myth? And the final question is about the future, what will happen next, what kind of scenarios are waiting in the Arab World.

The different Islamic forces

The landscape of Islamist forces can be divided into four main groups. On the first place we find the old Islamist forces, such as the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, Ennahda Party in Tunisia, and the PJD (Party of Justice and Development) in Morocco, which are now returning and emerging as power holders. The crucial question is to what are the differences between the old and new generations of these movements? For instance, is Ghannouchi, the Ennahda Party's head, still the same person he used to be in 1985? Did he change – and how? The second Islamic political force is composed of the newcomers, mainly Salafists, although some caution is needed when

using the word “Salafism”, as it entails different and diverse Salafi forces. A third group is composed by informal Islamists, mainly independent Islamists who do not belong to specific organizations, and dissent Islamists, those who split from Muslim Brothers, for example, or from any other Islamist party. Lastly, there are former Jihadists, or the ex-Jihadists and radicals who adopted violence during 1980s and 1990s. For instance, Egypt now has at least 15 Islamist parties six of them are officially registered and the rest still unlicensed.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that there are many commonalities among Islamist actors. First, they all believe in politics as the only means for change, which means that they abandoned the use of violence. Second, they are pragmatic and realistic. When it comes to making policies, they all try to move away from their ideology into politics. Moreover, they are inclined to involve in bargain and negotiation with other political forces; they are also moving away from the language of religion to the language of politics. A final common element among Islamists is represented by the legitimacy issue. The new Islamist parties acquired their legitimacy from the ballot box, they have been elected and they represent a significant and considerable segment of their societies. They are also inclined to be engaged or to be involved in dialogue with the West based on some kind of mutual respect and mutual interests.

What Islamists want?

Before the AS the main goal of many Islamists was to Islamize the State and the society. They sought to reformulate norms and values of their countries. Hence they advocated for some sort of moral and social reform. They also wanted to reshape laws, regulations and institutions and trying to re-articulate the social context to be based on Islamic values as it used to be centuries ago. To achieve that, they adopted the bottom-up approach, starting from the individual, moving then to the family and society and so on.

More importantly, they believed that the only way to achieve that is through applying *Sharia* (the Islamic law).

In addition, over the past decades, Islamists were reluctant to take power. However, after the Arab Spring, taking power has become a central goal for Islamist parties particularly in Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco. Economically, Islamists focus on what they call the “Renaissance”, or Ennahda, which could be understood as some kind of “good governance”. They seek to fight



corruption and to attract FDI (Foreign Direct Investments). They also aim to rebuild institutions to be more efficient and competent in delivering goods and services to people. Islamists also have to deal with many enduring problems, e.g. poverty, unemployment, illiteracy.

Indeed, Islamists have become similar to any other political party. Hence they seek to convince those who voted for them that they are responsible and they can meet their promises. They cannot do that without having some kind of economic vision or strategic platform which encourages investments and businesses. I would say, for instance, that the MB in Egypt are endorsing free market economy and trying to attract foreign investments. And then, of course, they need to focus on social justice, which used to be one of the main demands of the Egyptian Revolution.

And finally, Islamist forces seek to have peaceful coexistence and to achieve stability. They are keen to be realistic and pragmatic. And now they know this cannot be achieved only through *Sharia*, as they used to do in the past, but through a political process and meddling through everyday politics.

Why do they won?

Islamic parties won the elections in Tunisia and they formed the government with a coalition of different secular parties. They are now ruling in Morocco and they are poised to take power in Egypt. There are many reasons behind Islamists' rise: some of them are old and structural and others have more to do with recent developments.

First of all, each Islamic party has, to some extent, a clean image. As they were not a part of the older political systems, they are not corrupted. Furthermore, they have public appeal because they used to be oppressed by the former regime. The image of victim is still playing a role in the public mind towards the Islamist parties.

Secondly, they have significantly strong social networks and financial resources that enable them to fund many activities. Thirdly, their discourse and ideology resonate with many Egyptians, who are traditional or conservative, especially those who live in rural and suburban areas.

The Islamist's threat?

Over the past two years, western politicians and the media were worried by the questions: Are Islamist parties a

threat or an opportunity?

First of all, by looking at data polls it is possible to get a precise idea of Islamists' power and appreciation degree. In Tunisia, the Ennahda Party just got 40% of the votes, which means that at least 60% of the voters are not with Ennahda, or are openly against it. The Islamic party did not get an absolute majority. The same is true for the Brotherhood in Egypt, which got between 45 to 47% of votes. The PJD, since the elections system in Morocco does not allow a single Party to have the majority, just got 27% of votes. Islamists' rise should not be exaggerated.

The second point is that the old power structures are still playing a role. The Arab countries are still in the beginning of a process. For instance, the military in Egypt is still strong and holds full power and it does not seem that the generals want democracy. In Morocco, the King is sovereign and untouchable. So, it would be wrong to think that Islamists got full power and can now fully dominate the political situation in the Arab World.

Furthermore, former regimes left a very heavy legacy. Arab countries are characterized by a high rate of unemployment, endemic corruption rooted in all institutions, different social and economic problems. It is all but sure that Islamists will deal with these problems more effectively than the former regime used to. Finally, Islamists are not ruling alone. They have to collaborate, form allies, interact with different political forces, both secular or liberal. They do not act in a political vacuum and they are not the only force in the scene.

Islamists in Egypt

Taking a closer look at Egypt's situation, it is possible to recognize two main Islamist forces dominating the scene: the Muslim Brothers and the political Salafism. It is important to point out, before going deeper into the analysis, that before the revolution the political spaces in Egypt were very narrow. There was no chance for any political force, especially for Islamists, to form a political party. Once the revolution broke out, political parties mushroomed.

The Islamist landscape before the revolution was stagnant and closed, whereas nowadays the political Islamic scene is dynamic and fluid, with at least 15 Islamist parties. The Muslim Brothers Party, or *ikhwan*, has been founded in 1928 by school-teacher Hassan al Banna and it is a socio-religious mo-



-vements aiming to reshaping the society and the State's values and norms to become more Islamic. It adopts a bottom-up approach and it has grass-rooted social networks, through schools, medical centers and welfare societies. They are well-widespread among lower and upper/middle classes in Egypt. The party has a very potent, although someone might define it authoritarian, type of leadership, partly because it used to operate in a closed system and involved 1940-political strategies. Some Brothers practiced violence back in the '40s and some of them went to prison under Nasser. They came back to live with Sadat and under Mubarak.

In 2005, however, when the Brotherhood won 20% in the Parliament's elections, Mubarak switched back to brutal repression. When the revolution broke off, the MB initially avoided to take part in it – at least officially, as the young generation was heavily involved in the demonstrations and in the protests. After some days, however, also the MB went to the streets and participated very effectively in the demonstrations. They established their political arm, the Freedom and Justice Party, which got 47% at the elections. Today, the Parliament's speaker is a Brotherhood member.

The second Islamic movement in Egypt are the Salafis. Salafism is a very controversial term. In the journalistic discourse, Salafism is considered as a school of thought characterized by some kind of rigid, to some extent even restricting interpretation of Islamic Texts and some regressive ideas towards democracy and human rights.

It is an ultraconservative movement, adopts literal and rigid interpretation and did not even take part in the revolution, as they considered it haram (prohibited) to revolt against the ruler as long as he is Muslim. Nonetheless, after the revolution a specific part of Salafism started to meddle in politics and three parties were established: Al-Nour Party, which got 25% in the elections; Al-Asala, the “Authenticity Party”; and then Al-Fadhila, the “Virtue Party”. Here we want to focus on the political wing of Salafism – and specifically on Al-Nour, the most important Salafi party in the country. Al-Nour has been formed in June 2011 and had adopted a political pragmatism regarding foreign policy, free market, the structure of the modern State. They have the tendency to interact and to negotiate with seculars and, despite its inexperience in politics, they significantly developed their programs. It is also interesting to remark some similarities and differences between the FJP and Al-

-Nour. Starting from the similarities, they have a common vision about the character of the State. The FJP is stressing that the State should be civilian under something called the “Islamic reference”, which means that the values of the society should be Islamic, though the strategies should be liberal or secular; the same is true, at least rhetorically, for Al-Nour. In their foreign relations, both FJP and Al-Nour seem very keen to involve in constructive engagement the Western countries; the two parties also share a similar position regarding Israel, as both the Brothers and the Salafis declared that they will not stop the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty, although they might revise it to be more balanced.

On the other hand, the FJP and Al-Nour have different opinions about democracy and human and minorities rights. On democracy, while the FJP accepts basic principles of democracy and institutions and respect public and personal freedoms, Al-Nour rejects democracy as the main tool and sees it as a Western product; on human rights, the Brotherhood accept many of them (except the right for women to run for the presidency, and this also might evolve over time), Al-Nour on the other hand, advocates segregation between men and women. The Brotherhood also has a more progressive stand about minorities, except that they would not accept a Christian running for the presidency in Egypt. Salafis generally oppose political rights for minorities, specifically for Christians; however Al-Nour Party, which is a different movement from the Salafis altogether, to some extent believe in equal rights for all Egyptian citizens.

The future of islamists

It is important to try to draw a picture of the possible future evolutions: what will be the future of Islamist parties? They will face some hard challenges. For instance, now they are not an opposition movement anymore: they are waiting to take power, so their discourse will need to change to be a responsible power force. Also their relationship with the Military will be an important issue in Egypt's political scenario.

In the beginning, the MB was siding with the military against the revolutionary forces because both of them are conservative institutions. The Brotherhood is not a revolutionary movement: they advocate gradual reform, accommodation and not confrontation with the establishment. This can cause a decline in the public image of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt. However,



recently both parties have clashed over power. Another element is the significant split or division between the older and the younger generations within the MB. Also the Salafi will have to change their agenda as they also moved from opposition to power and now they have to meet their promises. They will have to move from the sacred nature of things to the profane politics and they will have to leave their patronage, the traditional Salafi movement. At the end, the important question is whether Egypt is heading towards an Islamist age and what kind of country will it become? Will it follow the Turkish or the Iranian model? Or maybe the Pakistani one?

There are two possible scenarios. The first, very pessimistic one, will be generated if the army does not allow Egypt to have some kind of genuine democracy. In this case Egypt will end up with a strong Military, a hardly conservative religious movement and very weak secular and liberal parties. In the other scenario, Egypt will enjoy some kind of genuine democracy, political openness, balanced relationship between the Military and other political forces. Without having such kind of real democracy in fact, the democratic transition might be stuck and not proceed.



A year from the Arab Spring.

A difficult transition:

The economic dimension of the transition

by Heliodoro Temprano Arroyo, Head of Unit “Neighbouring Countries – Macro-Financial Assistance”, Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, European Commission

The Arab Spring not only responds to political frustrations, but also to socio-economic dissatisfaction, connected to an economic model in North Africa which has clearly not been working. The Arab Spring processes themselves are having an economic impact on this region and, if short-term macroeconomic stability is not ensured, the whole political reform process could derail and the political regimes that will emerge from this process will be weak and might collapse. Moreover, the Arab spring reflects structural economic weakness that, if left unaddressed, will undermine future economic performance and the satisfaction of the population of these countries with the new political regimes.

Macroeconomic impact: the challenge of stability

Considering the recent macroeconomic trends in this region, it is interesting to note that before the Arab Spring, North Africa and the Middle-East was one of the regions that performed better during the global economic and financial crisis. In fact, unlike the Eastern neighbours of the EU, which experienced the worst economic performance during this period, with GDP falling sharply in countries like Ukraine by almost 15%, Armenia 14% and Russia nearly 8%, the countries in the southern Mediterranean, did pretty well. This was caused by a combination of factors. First of all, they were experiencing less overheating and excessive growth before the crisis. Secondly, they were also less integrated internationally, in terms of both financial markets and trade integration. In particular, they were not exposed to toxic assets and they didn't have strong links with the banking system of the European Union. Their lower trade integration was an advantage because the global crisis of 2009 was triggered mainly through the trade and industrial sector. In addition, in some cases, like Morocco and Tunisia, a prudent policy had allowed them to implement contra-cyclical fiscal policies, which helped them also to moderate the slowdown. Also, these countries are very dependent on

food and energy and, therefore, when food and energy prices declined sharply during the global international crisis, they benefited disproportionately from this. Lastly, there were some lucky factors, in the Maghreb region in particular, where favorable climatic conditions resulted in very good harvests.

But the situation has changed fast and we are now facing a totally different world. The Arab Spring has had a very serious economic impact on the region. First of all, it has damaged economic activity, because social unrest has affected production and exports. Tourism, in particular, has declined very sharply, between 30-40% in Egypt and Tunisia. Remittances in Tunisia and in Egypt were also affected by the Libyan conflict, due to the high number of workers living there. The civil conflicts in Libya and Syria have also seriously disrupted domestic economic activity and exports in these countries, although following the end of the war in Libya, oil production and oil exports are recovering rather rapidly in this economy. Moreover, capital flows dried up very rapidly, while access to international capital markets was curtailed. During the course of the crisis, stock markets declined quite significantly initially, then stabilized for some months but began to decline again in the third/forth quarter of last year, partly because of the uncertainties of the political process in Egypt but also because of the overall decline in global stock prices.

All these factors have had quite an important impact on GDP growth, the current account of the balance of payments and the fiscal positions. The most serious case is Egypt, which has been losing consistently foreign exchange reserves since the beginning of the revolution. This loss intensified very seriously in late 2011 and early 2012, with an average loss per month of about 2 to 3 billions US dollars.

This situation is clearly unsustainable and is leading Egypt to negotiate a programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which was already discussed twice last year but was always stopped at some point by the Supreme Military Council. In response, the EU is considering to approving a Macro-Financial Assistance for Egypt, an extreme measure that it is used only for countries that are undergoing serious balance of payments crises. The total amount of money supplied would be of around 500 million Euros. However, this instrument requires the existence of an IMF program so it would depend on the negotiations with the IMF being successful.

Public finances have also deteriorated very significantly. Sou-

-thern Mediterranean countries were actually implementing rather prudent fiscal policy and reducing budget deficits before the global crisis. Then, the global crisis, as elsewhere in the World, pushed up the deficits. Budget deficits increased from an average of 1% of GDP in 2008 to an average of 6.7% of GDP in 2009. As these economies began to recover in 2010, they managed to reduce their deficits to some extent. But the Arab Spring crisis came and deficits have again increased quite markedly, in fact somewhat above (on average) the level reached during the global crisis. This fiscal deterioration reflects a combination of factors. First of all, economic activity slowed down sharply last year, which impacted negatively fiscal revenues. This year, only a moderate acceleration of GDP growth (to only 2-2.5%) is expected, so weak economic activity will continue to keep fiscal revenues down. At the same time, governments in the region have implemented fiscal expansionary packages to assuage social pressures, increasing in that way social expenditures and public investments. And there were other factors that also affected negatively the fiscal positions, including delayed or interrupted privatization processes and the deterioration of the financial markets conditions, which increased the cost of domestic borrowing. This is very clear in the case of Egypt, where not only the access to international capital markets has been lost but the government now has to pay much more for its domestic public debt borrowings. In sum, many countries in the region are facing a difficult macro-financial situation.

Exposure to the euro area crisis

The European crisis further complicates the macroeconomic outlook of the region since the EU is a very important economic partner for these countries, in particular for those in the Maghreb region. On average, the Southern partners direct about 40% of their export about to EU, but in the case of Tunisia and Morocco the shares are as high as 75%, and 60%, respectively. The Maghreb countries are also very dependent on remittances, tourism re-ceipts and capital flows from the EU. Egypt, Syria and Jordan, are more orientated also towards the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which are doing well now because oil prices are high. That provides them with a significant buffering effect. Jordan, Morocco and, to a lesser degree Egypt, have also benefited from some substantial official assistance (often in the form of grants) from the rich mo-




-narchies of the Gulf since the start of the Arab spring process started. But, in general, countries in the region are very exposed to economic and financial developments in the euro area. In this context, the best thing Europeans can do to support macroeconomic stability in the Southern Mediterranean region and, with it, the ongoing political reform processes, is to solve the euro area crisis.

Recent estimates by the World Bank suggest that a 2% deceleration in GDP growth in the euro area (such as it is approximately expected to happen between 2011 and 2012) can result in a 0.3 percentage point in the oil importing Mediterranean neighbours, with the effect rising up to 0.4 and 0.75 percentage point in the cases of Morocco and Tunisia, respectively. At the same time, we should not exaggerate the impact of developments in the euro area. In this respect, we should remember that in 2009, the central year of the global financial crisis, although the EU's GDP fell by 4.2% many of these countries managed to maintain positive rates of growth. On the other hand, it is also true that the situation now is much more vulnerable because these countries are in fact suffering two simultaneous economic "shocks", the first one caused the Arab Spring and the second one from the euro area crisis.

One positive aspect to note is that these countries are not too exposed to financial flows from the EU, contrary to what happens to the Eastern neighbors, which are already suffering from the retrenchment in bank lending to the East caused by the ongoing process of deleveraging and recapitalization of EU banks. This is not affecting, fortunately, the Southern neighbors yet. EU banks' involvement in the MENA Region, including the GCC countries, is relatively small compared to their exposure to the Eastern neighbours.

Underlying economic factors behind the crisis: the structural reform challenge

If we analyze the main factors that contributed to the crisis, we can underline a combination of structural factors that have been interacting and producing very poor economic performance, both in terms of GDP growth and of labour market performance. If we look at the macroeconomic performance of the main developing and emerging market regions over the last 30 years, we can see that MENA is one of the worst performing regions in terms of GDP growth, with slightly below 3% annual GDP growth, compared to 5.5% in Asia and the Pacific.


European Commission
Economic and Financial Affairs

**Population dynamics:
fast growth although slowing down**

- **Region with fastest growing demographic growth over last 30 years** (around 2½% average annual growth).
- **Demographic growth has significantly slowed down** from 1980-95 peak but remains on average above 1.5%.
- This has resulted in a **very young demographic profile**, with around 60% of the regional Arab population being less than 30 years old and around 30% less than 15 years old.

Moreover, because this is the region where population grows fastest, in terms of per capita growth the MENA scores even worse, being in fact the worst performing region in the world, with growth of only 0.5% compared to 4.5% in Asia. We cannot ignore this when we try to explain why we have the Arab Springs.

The structural weaknesses that explain this dismal macroeconomic performance include the following: badly functioning labor markets and rapidly growing populations; problems in the educational system, which tend to produce important mismatches between what the private sector demands and the types of skills schools and universities supply; an excessive role and weight of the public sector, which tends to crowd out finance and investments from the private sector; an excessive exposure to fluctuations in international food and energy prices; poorly targeted public expenditure systems and regressive tax systems; and a low degree of international and intra-regional economic integration.

There are also serious problems in the public finance management systems (lack of transparency and proper control of public spending, corruption, etc.), which result in weak economic governance.

These factors interact negatively with each other and, overall, result in a growth model that is perceived as unfair and non-inclusive, not resulting in an appropriate distribution of income and wealth. If those factors are not tackled, the economic performance of this region will remain disappointing and people will continue to be frustrated because the growth model is not meeting expectations and is socially non-inclusive.

Let us look at these factors in more detail. First of all, there is the problem of demographic growth. Over the last 30 years, the population of these countries has been growing on average by about 2.5%. Average demographic growth peaked in the period from 1980 to 1995 and then slowed down to about 1.5%, which is a more manageable but still very high rate of population growth. This has produced a very young population pyramid, with about 60% of the Arab population being less than 30 years old, and 30% being less than 15 years old, which has contributed to particularly high rates of unemployment among young people.

Second, the labor markets are performing pretty badly, as noted. This region has the lowest rate of participation in the labor force in the world: only 46%, compared to about 61% for the world as a whole. And when one looks at women the situation is even worse, with participation rates of only about 25% compared to a world average of 42%. When combined with particularly high rates of unemployment among women (close to 20%) this means that only about 15% of the women in the region are actually working. That is a negative factor not only because it shows the limits of woman's integration in economic and political life but also from an economic point of view, because a very important labor resource is being underused. A similarly negative situation affects young people.

At about 12%, unemployment rates were already very high when the Arab Spring began, but they have been growing since then and, unfortunately, are likely going to continue rising in the coming months, weakening social support for the political transition process. According to the IMF, the rate of employment creation in the next year and half will be much lower than the number of people that enter the labor force. High unemployment rates not only reflect the current macroeconomic difficulties but also labor market rigidities exacerbated by inadequate regulations.

There are also very extensive informal sectors. In the case of Egypt, for example, between 40% and 50% of the economy is underground, the so-called informal economy, which means, first of all, that the government loses a lot of taxes revenues and, secondly, that a very substantial part of the labour force is not covered by the social security system, contributing to create a socially unfair growth model.

In this context of high demographic growth, high unemployment rates, skill mismatches produced by the educational sy-

stem (along with very low quality of education, high illiteracy rates, low gender inequality in attendance, very low women participation, low rates of participation in rural areas) and big wage differences relatively to a rich region, Europe, which is so close to North Africa, migration rates are very high. About 10 million citizens of the Arab Mediterranean countries (more than 8% of their working age population) are living abroad. Half of these migrants are working in Europe, but there is also a very significant part (about one third) in the GCC and other Arab Countries, including Libya before the recent conflict.

Another structural economic problem is the very strong vulnerability of Southern Mediterranean countries to fluctuations in food and energy prices, which acts through three transmission channels: inflation, the trade balance and the fiscal position. First of all, these countries have a relatively high dependence on hydrocarbon energy. Secondly, food and energy carry relatively high weights in the consumption baskets and their consumer price indices. So when international food and energy prices go up, these countries tend to experience social tensions. This was one of the triggering factors of the Arab Spring. Energy prices collapsed during the global crisis of 2008-2009 but then they began to recover in particular in the second half of 2010 and continued to increase for a while at the beginning of 2012, creating social tensions. This is not completely new. Before the global crisis in 2007-2008, there were in fact already significant episodes of social unrest in these countries because international commodity prices were going through the roof.

We also saw it in Jordan in 1996/97. This element is also having a strong fiscal impact because these countries have a very important problem: they are subsidizing energy and food through generalized subsidy systems, meaning that everybody benefits from it and generating huge costs for the budget. It is important, therefore, for these countries to move to systems of targeted social transfers, to focus the support on people who really need it. Some of the Southern Mediterranean countries, including Syria, were moving to reform those systems but the revolution has led many of them to interrupt these reforms because, in the current sensitive social and political context, governments do not dare to undertake them anymore.

Concerning the excessive role of the public sector, it is reflected in ratios of public expenditure and public revenues over GDP that are relatively high for countries of that level of develop-



-ment (low-to-medium income countries). In addition, relatively high fiscal deficits and public debts tend to crowd out, as noted, financing from the private sector. Furthermore, much of public expenditure is military spending. This is clearly the case for Israel, Jordan and Egypt. And much of it is devoted to pay public sector wages, expensive generalized subsidy systems and, in some cases (e.g. Lebanon), the cost of servicing the debt, which means that public expenditure is in general not very progressive, that is, it does not help much to redistribute incomes in those countries. A similar story can be told about the revenues side of these countries' budgets, where the role of direct taxes, which are relatively more useful for channeling income from rich people to poor people, is very underdeveloped. Therefore, the public sector, despite its excessive size, is very weak at redistributing income, contributing to produce a socially non-inclusive model. Together with low participation rates, high unemployment rates, economic governance and public finance management problems, and high poverty ratios in the suburbs of the cities and in rural areas, all these elements produce a growth model that is perceived as unfair.

Finally, another problem is trade integration. Trade is potentially a very important engine of growth but it is being underutilized in the Arab spring countries, even though they did go through some significant trade liberalization over the last 15 years. The region's economies still remain relatively closely protected, both in terms of average tariffs (12 % on average) and non-tariff barriers.

On average, the exports of oil-importing of the Southern Mediterranean partners currently represent only about 15% of their GDP, compared to more than 25% for the emerging and developing countries overall. It is not surprising that, outside the oil and gas sector, the share of the Mediterranean neighbours in world trade has been stagnant, compared to the doubling of market shares seen in emerging and developing countries as a whole.

The EU's and international response to the Arab spring

by Heliodoro Temprano Arroyo

What has been the response of the EU and of the international community more generally to the Arab Spring awakening? Regarding the EU, it has adopted a serious response which covers quite a few areas: finance, including macro-finance assistance, trade, sectorial policies, mobility, political dialogue. The EU is increasing the financial assistance provided to the region through different instruments. It has strengthened its regular financial cooperation effort, which is mostly channeled through the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI), by about €1 bn for the period 2011-13. This includes the creation of the "Spring Program", for which €350 million have been allocated for 2011-12, which is a flexible program that can be allocated to those countries that are more involved in political reforms. Indeed, one of the principles of the EU policy in response of the Arab Spring, and of the new European Neighborhood Policy (which also covers the EU's Eastern neighbourhood) more generally, is the so-called "more for more" principle, that is, the idea that more assistance should be provided to those countries that do more progress with political reforms aimed at establishing fully-fledged democracies and respecting human rights. The EU may also provide, as noted, macro-financial assistance to countries in the region experiencing serious balance of payments problems provided that certain preconditions are met, notably the existence of IMF programmes.

The EU has also increased substantially the lending capacity of the European Investments Bank (EIB) in the EU's Southern neighbourhood (by 1 billion for the period through 2013). And it has been determinant in the decision to have the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), which until now was focusing on financing the transition economies in Central and Eastern Europe, to also start operating in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. The



amendments of the Articles Establishing the Bank allowing the EBRD to extend operations to the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean is ongoing. Since it will take some time for the amendments to be ratified by the necessary percentage of shareholders to become effective, a fast-track mechanism has been established, through the creation of so-called Cooperation Funds, which already allow the EBRD to provide technical assistance to four Mediterranean countries, namely Morocco, Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia.

Finally, the EU is also putting together an ambitious trade policy strategy for the region. In December of last year, the European Council adopted a new negotiating mandate for establishing Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs) with Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Egypt. The European Commission will be launching in the next few months so-called “scoping exercises” with at least some of these countries in order to assess their degree of preparedness, with a view to launching actual negotiations on DCFTAs sometime in the second half of the year.

In sum, there is a serious EU response to help the transition countries of Northern Africa and the Middle East. This EU response is part of a broader international response led by the G-8, the so-called Deauville Partnership Initiative, which also acts through several channels (financial, political/governance and trade, investment and integration).

Let me conclude by saying that the economic and political challenges the Arab spring countries are facing are formidable. My contribution tried to illustrate how there is an important economic dimension to the Arab spring. I have argued that the political uprisings partly reflect economic deficiencies and frustrations and that the success of the political transition processes will depend in part on the ability of these countries to maintain macroeconomic stability and to implement the structural economic reforms that are necessary to improve economic performance over the medium-term and move to a more fair and participative growth model. The task

is clearly very challenging, but it is not impossible. In this respect, let me recall that in the 1990s Central and Eastern European countries were able to restore macroeconomic stability after the fall of the Berlin Wall while implementing structural and regulatory reforms and doing political reforms that re-established democratic institutions. Everything was done simultaneously and the process was successful. Similarly, Spain and Portugal addressed macroeconomic stabilization and economic and political reform successfully in the 70s, and they actually they did this in the very unpropitious global economic context created by the oil shocks of that decade. They had been hit strongly, as the rest of the world, by the oil shocks, at the same time as they were undergoing political transformation from their dictatorships into democracies. But they managed to stabilise the situation, while developing democratic institutions and adopting new regulatory frameworks, including modern tax systems, new civil codes, and EU-based environmental and financial regulations. All this allowed those countries to then recover later. We have to hope that the transition countries of Northern Africa and the Middle East can also succeed in their current endeavour.



Ideology versus Sociology

by Hussam Itani, Columnist of the Lebanese daily Al Hayat

Like a hungry and poor child standing in front of a candy shop, the Arab peoples today stand looking at their freedom. The child does not know how to get the candy, and does not know what to do with it if he gets it.

For centuries, hundreds of millions of Arabs were denied their most basic freedoms: The freedom of opinion, the freedom of expression, personal freedom and the freedom to join political parties. This resulted in injustices rarely seen anywhere else in the modern world. The Arab peoples lived outside the realm of history for long periods of time, often reacting rather than acting, and being influenced by others rather than influencing them. Even the Renaissance, which the Arab “Zeitgeist” claims our region had witnessed in the wake of Napoleon Bonaparte’s Egyptian campaign, did not quite manage to reconcile the Arab world – if we can speak of an entity as such – with modernity in the Western sense. History, progress, the state and power, nay even freedom and the press, have come to gain a different meaning in our countries than the one enshrined in European modernism. This perhaps explains the ease of escaping the authority of these concepts, and rebelling against the institutions under which they develop. This pushes the authorities to retreat to the exercise of sheer violence, by the military, intelligence services and armed militias.

Nevertheless, this did not prevent the Arab world from falling completely under various forms of colonization, League of Nations mandate regimes and Western tutelage, which all sought to shape and pair local social and economic hegemony with dependency on the outside. These conditions continued even in the post-colonial era, whose lack of polity had perhaps prevented it from being called the “era of independence”, given the difficulty of invoking independence in light of the quasi-total economic and political subordination to the West.

This introduction is necessary to establish some of the enormous dimensions of the change taking place athwart the Arab world, and the powers that stand against it. The critic Hamid Dabashi may therefore be right in his belief that the Arab spring marks the end of the post-colonial era, and the beginning of the era of Arab independence. But the child standing in front of the candy shop – or Ali Baba as he descends into the

treasure cave, for those who prefer Oriental historical clichés – is fully aware that the ‘villains’ will try by all means to steal his candy as soon as he lays his hands on it. Ali Baba also knows that the forty thieves are standing at the cave’s door, brandishing their swords and preparing to strike his neck, as soon as he leaves the cave carrying but a small part of the gold and jewelry that lay in its depths. Indeed, Arab independence, i.e. the ripe fruit of this ongoing spring, will not emerge, and the democratic process will not progress in our countries, before the forces of the past exhaust all the tricks up their sleeves to monopolize power, in its various manifestations.

It is possible that the moments of overwhelming joy we lived when Hosni Mubarak stepped down, or with the ouster of Ben Ali or the rebels’ entry to Tripoli, had made us see our reality in rosy colors. However, this reality was very quick to remind us of its difficulties, and of the situation we face in light of its tribulations that have left us breathless. To be sure, power in Egypt was handed over to a military junta that is no less reactionary than Mubarak, while the ‘rebels’ in Libya killed Gaddafi in a manner reminiscent of tribal vendettas.

More importantly, the majority of those who took part in the revolutions and those who supported them were offended by movements acquired their Islamist character following its triumph or success in ousting the head of the previous tyrannical regime. In Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen and Syria, attempts were made to emphasize that the Islamist character of the revolutions was only a myth promoted to the benefit of several parties. But in reality, the issue is quite complex. On one hand, the activists, at the onset of the revolutions, wanted to bring in the Islamists to their movement, only to soon discover that the latter have a large appetite threatening to devour the entire uprising.

If we return to the idea of the end of the post-colonial era, we may say that true independence requires true representation. We may also say that political Islam, whose Jihadist (armed) wing has failed miserably in all the quests it undertook from Algeria to Egypt, can still respond to the needs of a broad segment of Arabs and claim to represent them with its ‘moderate’ wing that comprises the Muslim Brotherhood and the non-Jihadist Salafists.

For one thing, there is a crisis of identity and modernity and a sense of helplessness *vis-à-vis* the West. In addition, the rentier economy based on the sale of raw materials and the san-



-tification of consumerism, along with the contempt for production, labor and education as values that can contribute to improving the odds for social and individual progress, are endemic diseases in the Arab world. These factors all place the various types of Islamist movements among the 'counterrevolutionary forces', if we assume that the revolutions are proceeding to take the Arab world a step forward, in line with the European concepts of progress and development.

Here, Adorno and Horkheimer's thesis on Dialectic of Enlightenment may seem attractively relevant, especially regarding the role of modernism and rationalism in paving the way for fascism. Adorno and Horkheimer both observed that fascism had effectively abolished the tension between the relations of production and material productive forces, which destroyed the equilibrium that was the basis of democratic capitalism. In the Arab world, we are living a similar threat. While we probably have not gotten that far yet, we cannot dismiss the disturbing trends seen in Egypt and elsewhere, where there is an alliance between Islamist forces and the military institutions. If this alliance were considered in conjunction with the climates of economic crisis, we will then be able to see classical precursors of the rise and dominance of fascism.

This begs a question regarding whether the Islamists are among the "Forces of the Past" [reactionary forces], in the classical perception of the European revolutions and the struggle with the feudal forces and the nobility. The Islamists will probably refuse to be categorized as such, citing the wider representation they came to gain in elections that were undoubtedly free and fair in both Tunisia and Egypt. They say that they therefore represent the future aspirations of the people in those two countries. The question then addresses the meaning of the past and that of the future. For instance, many of us are taken aback at images of women attending concerts of Umm Kulthum in Cairo in the fifties and the sixties, or women's demonstrations in Beirut and Damascus. Women were bareheaded, wore no headscarves. Now it is rather a rare occurrence to see a bareheaded woman in Egyptian and Syrian city streets.

The concept of "*Jahiliyyah*" [Ignorance of Divine Guidance, often used to denote the pre-Islamic period] provides convenient theoretical vindication for the proponents of political Islam with regard to the argument of the "inseparability of political progress and social freedom". Thus *al-Jahiliyyah* for Islamists, as an ongoing war against religion, is what should

be blamed when calls for the emancipation of women are voiced, and not the requirements of progress. Therefore, if political progress and liberation are to conflict with 'religion', or rather the Islamists' definition of values and their insistence on conflating religion and ethics, then this would be a false progress leading its advocates to perdition.

The struggle between the forces of the past and those of the future is also astounding in the case of Syria. The force leading the resistance to change is a party that is supposed to be a product of modernism, i.e. the Arab Socialist Baath Party, and the regime proclaiming that this Party is the 'leader of society and the State' (according to Article VIII of the previous Constitution). This party is in fact a sample from a long list of political parties founded in the Levant in the period from the twenties to the forties (of XX century), parties that adopted modern ideologies, including nationalism and Marxism. However, a closer examination of what lies under the surface of these ideologies reveals a significant role, played by intellectuals and activists who belong to minorities to create these parties. In other words, we can speak here of efforts by the most educated elites of the Levant to find guarantees for the survival of their communities through ideologies that cross the barriers of narrow identification with ethnic and religious groups. From the author of the Arab Awakening, George Antonius, to some of the most prominent Arab writers today, not to mention Michel Aflaq and Antun Saadeh, and the founders of communist parties in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, it is evident that individuals belonging to minorities were in the vanguard.

The Syrian uprising today can be summed up as an act of shredding these ideologies and the false consciousness that they tried, for decades, to impose as well the deconstruction of the methodical exploitation of the Palestinian cause by the Baathist regime. The same applies to the rebuttal of the narrative of Syria's pan-Arab role in resisting the imperialist and Zionist advance into the region. In this sense, the Syrian uprising brings the focus back to Syrian society, including its issues, components and domestic concerns, as well as the Israeli occupation of the Golan as an issue of national sovereignty - regardless of the fate of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

But the opposition's problem seems to lie in its ability to confront the extortion practiced by the authorities, specifically in the sense of patriotism. Whenever a voice rises to call, from a

a purely realistic perspective, for a role to be played by outside parties to topple the regime, - out of concern for Syrian lives-, accusations of collaboration with foreign parties and collusion with Zionism and imperialism are immediately flung in its direction.

In practice, the ideology in question manifests itself in claims of a geopolitical nature which, mostly, border on ludicrousness - claims about Syria's strategic position and its significance to global stability, for example. The Syrian geostrategic claim finds itself an Iranian parallel, in fact, with the assertion often repeated by the Iranian leaders who claim that "the cause of all problems in the region is foreign meddling". This claim completely negates the significance of the home front, and the society and the economy there, as it portrays the region as a landscape of a single dimension, namely that of external deeds. The function of local governments is therefore to pacify the belligerent foreign role through self-isolating within their benevolent home fronts, under the leadership of the incumbent regime, naturally.

Without getting too deep into examples, we say that what Syria is witnessing today can be summed up as the struggle of ideology and sociology, a struggle between the false consciousness arising from the Ideology and the Unhappy Consciousness (in the Hegelian sense) of Sociology. There can be no coexistence between the two; one must either accept the ideology in question, which is the imposed and false consciousness of the minority, or rely on sociology and all its inherent risks, some of which we have mentioned above.

On the other hand, the demographic question is one of the issues often ignored when talking about the Arab uprisings. Syria, along with Egypt and Yemen, experienced a massive population explosion during the seventies and the eighties. Interestingly, the fact that capital was seized by a small minority, along with the dismantling of public educational and healthcare institutions, has placed an unprecedented burden on younger citizens, who constitute an overwhelming majority of the population, leading them to feel that the doors of the future have been slammed in their faces.

The role of women in the Egyptian revolution

by Shahira Abu Leil, Egyptian activist and spokesperson of the movement "No to Military trials"

The role of women in the revolution has been extraordinary. Shahira Abu Leil is one of these women, an activist whose point of view is mainly based on the kinds of relationships she had had with people throughout the revolution. After Mubarak was overthrown, she and some fellow activists started a group called No military trials for civilians after having seen people being taken by the Military, for example the case of a young man called Omar, who had been kidnapped and experienced something called 'military trial'. Military trials are like martial courts, there is no defence and charges are fabricated; at the beginning, this used to happen in the kitchen of the military base and it did not have any of the conditions of a fair trial. Moreover, families were not informed and they could not access to legal support. Shahira Abu Leil, together with a fellow activist called Mona Saif and some other people, funded No military trials for civilians, in order to raise awareness about military trials and military torture and murder at large.

On March 9th an entire sit-in in Tahrir Square was violently broken up by the Military and the people in the sit-in were taken to the Egyptian Museum. Abu Leil and some of her fellow activists went to the Museum to contact the people who were being tortured inside. They found out that the men were tortured for ten hours straight, their heads had been shaved, their clothes taken off and they were electrocuted, beaten and hit. On the other hand, women were subjected to 'virginity tests', as a consequence of the fact that the Military consider all the women in Tahrir Square to be prostitutes. Therefore, they wanted to 'prove' their promiscuity, through this horrific practice; women were taken to a room with all the windows open with at least fifty soldiers inside, and they were forced to take their clothes off before a military officer probed them to realise whether or not they were virgins. A week after March 9th, the group of activists had a conference in Imbaba, where a couple of girls who had experienced the horror of virginity tests shared their stories, together with those told by families of military trials' victims.

A military officers, together with his fellows, attacked the conference, throwing chairs at people; it was a very important

event for a twofold reason: on one hand, Abu Leil and her organization learned a lot from it, especially about how to take precautions and to be prepared; on the other, they realised they were making the Military angry, that they were afraid of them, and this awareness was very empowering. After that, they started a proper campaign, holding conferences, interviewing people to give their testimonies and sharing materials on their website, Tahrirdiaries.org, and on their Youtube account. They also started to provide legal support to the accused people and they become more and more visible on the media.

Another relevant day Abu Leil recalled is the first day of Ramadan, the 1st of August, when the Military broke up a peaceful protest in Tahrir, a sit-in where people were asking for fair trials in civilian courts for all those who had been arrested after military trials. The most upsetting thing about this attack was the fact that it was carried out on the first day of Ramadan, a day people are supposed to be loving and respectful with one another: this did not happen, and the Military violently attacked protesters, leaving many injured behind.

The three episodes recollected by Abu Leil are just examples of the Military's actions, that she considered 'crimes against humanity' (from the definition given by the UN 'Human Rights Resolution'). Three examples of real pain and death, something that the Egyptians had to face since they have decided to fight against the dictatorship. It was extremely shocking for her to witness people being killed by the Military and to know that the same Military were the ones which would have later fabricated fake reports at the morgue. Abu Leil strongly asserted the fact that she had no choice: either people started fighting the Military or they had to accept to live under another dictatorship.

The Military, that is to say the SCAF, is the leader of the counter revolution and it has overtaken the revolution from the revolutionaries, supported by the Muslim Brothers and the Salafists. There is an alliance between the Islamists and SCAF. The Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists will have an important role in the Parliament and in exchange they will put SCAF in the Constitution as a supreme power.

The Military stays in power mainly thanks to military trials, a very oppressive tool targeting low-socio economic classes and poor people, and this happens for more than one reason. First of all, since they are poor, it is not easy for them to defend themselves through lawyers; secondly, it is easy to call a poor

person a thug or a thief; thirdly, poor people in Egypt have strong reasons to revolt about.

As far as the elections are concerned, Abu Leil pointed out how they were neither free nor fair, as proved not only by many reported gerrymandering, but also by the fact that heavy attacks were carried out by the military in Tahrir Square and Ismailia, two days before elections. In this city in particular, a tank drove into a big sit-in and opened fire.

Liberal and youth parties that were formed during the revolution and after the revolution, did not have enough time to organise themselves and Abu Leil claimed that, even if there had not been gerrymandering, the Muslim Brotherhood would have won the elections anyway. In fact, those parties had more time in the last years to connect with people and become grass rooted. Nevertheless, the percentage would probably not have been so high (47%).

Abu Leil's blog gets many views (her testimony of the Ramadan attack, for example, got 100.000) and this is particularly important for her, in a moment where TV and newspapers do not report what is happening. For her, blogging is the power to be able to communicate what she thinks and what she sees every day with her own eyes, sharing it with the public and with the rest of the world.

The role of women in the revolution has been relevant, they have been physically, emotionally and strategically involved in the battle and this is something that finally gives them the entitlement to be taken seriously; a lot of people look at women differently since the revolution: it is going to take time, but a 'gender revolution of the mind' has begun.



Conclusive remarks

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The Arab spring is irreversible

Many people speak about an Arab winter now because what is going on, now, is not necessarily what was expected one year ago. And many of the actors involved in the Arab springs are now disappointed. They don't recognize themselves in the new governments which are now more or less in place, while the old institutions, like the Army in Egypt, and many members of the old political elite, are still there. But why the process is irreversible? If we look at the economic and social data it's clear that the crisis it's not a new phenomenon, it's a matter of trends. The crisis has been obvious for the last fifteen years. So why did the Arab spring happen now, and not ten years before, or ten years later? The main issue is that now we have a new generation. It's a numerous generation, but it is the last numerous. The fertility rate has in fact decreased in most of the Arab countries, but the people who are now demonstrating were born twenty years ago when the fertility rate was still high. So this new generation has entered later, or has not entered at all, the labor market. They have married later, they have less children, they are more educated, and they are more mixed in terms of gender. Of course there is a crisis in the educational system, but there are more women in the university than twenty years ago and the employment prospects are not better. The actual generation is more open to the global world. Internet is a tool, is not a new world, but is a technique that allows them to exchange contacts and information on an horizontal way. It is a generation of peers or equals that feel that their parents in a sense have been unsuccessful. The older generation is a generation of losers, economically but also politically (the Palestine question, the Pan Arabism, the Pan Islamism, etc.). The old generation has grown under charismatic dictators. Now what do they have? The sons, the successors. They don't have the aura of their fathers: Bashar Al Assad is not Hafiz Al Assad and Mubarak is not Nasser and Ben Ali is not Bourghiba. So this new generation has a new political culture, they have no more sacred causes. It is very interesting to see that in this revolution we do not have any charismatic lea-

ders, and this is a totally new phenomenon. All the older liberation movements and pre war revolution had a charismatic leader: Ben Bellà, Khomeini, Arafat and so on. Now it is different and the funny thing is that the West, is trying to identify new leaders, but instead the main actors just say, "no, I am not a leader, I don't want to be prime minister, I don't want to be president, I don't want to be minister of economic". They don't care, they say: "I'm a journalist, I'm a blogger, I'm a citizen", and this is totally new and it makes the revolution irreversible. Nasser and Arafat were able to impose authoritarian regime because they had a cause: nationalism, Islam, fighting Zionism and so. The actual revolutions have no external causes or sacred causes that could justify authoritarian regimes.

The "Arab Spring" is irreversible. So, what we have to expect now?

Elections were held in the countries involved in the Arab spring and the Islamists have been elected. We may say that the elections were not absolutely fair but the surprise was not the victory of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt or of Ennahda in Tunisia, but it was the success of the Salafis in Egypt. And the winning parties know that, from now on, they will have to face serious issues, in fact there were no triumphalism, no big demonstrations. The Muslim Brothers are very cautious, and they have good reasons to be like that. Ennahda party carefully decided to make a coalition with democrats and the so-called secular leftists parties, even if they didn't really need a coalition. They have understood that is better not to try to take the absolute power. It seems that they are not shaping the political scene, is instead the political scene that shapes them. And the political scene is tightly connected with the elections.

In the Middle East, each time there were an opportunity, people rushed to the polling stations. It happened in Iraq, after the American military intervention, in Afghanistan in 2004, despite Taliban's threats, in Iran and in Algeria in 1991 and 1992. The idea that leaders must be elected is now rooted, also among conservative Muslims. A proof of that is Salafis' attitude. Salafis usually criticized politics, but many of them are now involved in it and have created political parties. Now that they are in the Parliament, they do know exactly what to do. Two weeks ago, one of them decided to call for prayers in the Parliament and the Chair of the Parliament, who was a Muslim Brother, told him: "Do you want to pray? Go to the Mosque,

what are you doing here? It is a Parliament". So it is true that they do not have a liberal mentality, but they entered a system where elections, Parliament and Constitution are seen as something that is legitimate, necessary and unavoidable. And this is another reason why the process is irreversible. Now that they have entered the political system they will have to adapt. When they speak of democracy, they say: "We have the majority, so now we speak for the people". And they have the tendency to ignore political minorities, but not religious minorities. The Muslim Brothers have no problems with the Christians. The Copts' massacres were not committed by the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, they were done by the Army and by some Salafis. There are no problems with the concept of religious minority but with the concept of political minority, of dissenting views, of secularism, veil, and role of Sharia. All these issues require compromises. First of all, because their electorate is not revolutionary, is a conservative electorate. The electorate of the Muslim Brothers in its majority may be interested in the Sharia, but it didn't vote for the reintroduction of Sharia. They want them to fight against corruption, they want stability and they consider Muslim Brothers as devote people, as good believers, which should not be corrupted. They didn't give a free mandate to Muslim Brothers or to the Islamists. They will wait for results, especially economic results. And these results came from political stability, credibility, and good relations with the West. So they have to learn about the democratic practices and I am not pessimistic at all on that. In Tunisia, for instance, people are protesting every day. Of course, among the protesters there are secularists, Salafis, people who have voted for Ennahdha, unemployed people. But this is democracy too. The Salafis have the right to demonstrate as the secularists have the same right. The problem is the distinction between liberalism and democracy. We tend to think that a democrat is a liberal and a liberal is a democrat. It is not like that: we have non-liberal democrats, people who want elections but who are not liberal, who don't want freedom of speech, who don't want to hear different voices and so. I would say, for instance, that in the US the Tea Party is not a liberal movement, but is still part of the democratic American system.

Conversely, we have liberals who are not democrats. We have many secularists that think that if we let the people vote, they will vote for the Islamists, so it is better not to let them vote.

We have in Tunisia, especially among the westernized and the

French speaking elite, a nostalgia for President Bourghiba. He was a good man, a true political leader, but he was not a democrat. In the end the contrast will be on values, not on Shariaic norms. The Islamists are pursuing conservative values, on family, on gender, on sex, on freedom of speech, artistic freedom ecc... But in the same way, many conservative Christians are doing the same. It's quite interesting to see a shift from religious norms to more universal values. We can use alcohol as an example. You can find two ways to fight the consumption of alcohol. One is to say: "It is written in the book" and the Koran states that, so no alcohol. The other way is to say: "Well, you know, alcohol is bad, is bad for the public health, is bad for youth health, is bad for public order", so it is better to ban alcohol. The final result is not based on the implementation of *Sharia*, but on conservative values. Gannouchi is very clear, he never speaks of *Sharia*, he speaks of identity. Many leftists by the way, would not disagree with that, saying that there is a Muslim Arabic identity and family values which are not the same than in the West.

An idea, which is very strong in the West, is that you don't have a democracy if you haven't had a previous process of secularization. Secularization first, Kemal Ataturk, Bourghiba, and, why not, Hafez Al Assad, and then democratization. But this connection is historically wrong. Italy was not secularized before the declaration of the Republic, the US have never been secularized in fact the Founding Fathers were not secularists, they claimed for separation between Church and State, nevertheless the American society has always been a very religious society, maybe more religious now than it used to be one century ago. So, what has been seen as an Islamic revivalism during the last forty years, is not a backlash of traditional society that uses fundamentalism against westernization, modernization and secularization. The religious revival is part of the movement, of "individualization and diversification of the society". The big difference from the past is that 30 years ago the Muslim Brothers had almost the monopoly of the Islamic reference in the public sphere. It was not the government, it was not Al-Ahzar, it was the Muslim Brothers. Now everybody has something to say on Islam in the public sphere.

You may have many kind of Salafis which don't care about the Muslim Brothers. The younger Muslim Brothers don't have the same definition of what does Islam mean in public sphere. The dean of Al-Ahzar, who was a strong supporter of Mubarak, was



not a democrat. But now he says: "Well, we should separate, not religion and society, but Church and State, we, Al-Ahzar, have to be independent and autonomous from the state". But also autonomous from the Muslim Brothers and from the Salafis. The Sufis are coming back in the states, saying, "We are citizen too". The Christians have the same problems because there is the same generational gap among their hierarchy. The oldest ones don't like citizenship and prefer to be considered as members of religious community, while the younger Copts say "We are first citizen and then Copts". So the Christian clerical hierarchies in the Middle East, are neither democrat nor liberal. But the younger generation are often more liberal than their fellow Muslim citizens. So what is important for democratization is not to see secularism growing, it's to see an accepted diversification of the religious sphere where nobody will have the monopoly of religion. And if the Muslim Brothers don't have the monopoly of religion, they cannot claim the right to establish an Islamic state anyway. So, what they can do is to push for a conservative agenda that would fit with many American Evangelical and many European conservative Catholics. We have to think that we may be confronted with religious conservative coalition, with the Pope, the Muslim Brothers, the Tea Party, on abortion and gay marriage, and that will be the end of the clash of civilization but not the end of history.