

HOSNI MUBARAK: ADORABLE AND ABUSED

Dr.B.N.Chaudhary,

Associate professor,
PGDAV COLLEGE (Eve.),
(University of Delhi)

ABSTRACT

The beginning of civilization starts from Egypt. A country blessed by such geographical boundary that it was not possible for any country of the world to interfere in day to day affair of their life. Peace prevailed and civilization saw all round growth and development. The time changed and it became a colony of British Imperialism.

In 1922 it got independence and became a part of Muhammad Ali's dynasty. In 1952, a revolution took place against the king and Egypt became a republic. Mohammed Naguib became the president. The revolution was led by Nasser. Thus it is clear that in 1952 it became a republic on the basis of movement by "free officers" of which Nasser was the chief. They wanted to establish a parliamentary democracy. In the meantime, a life attempt was made on him by "Muslim Brotherhood" (an Islamic Organization), he put the president Naguib under house arrest and assumed all executive power in 1954. He was formally elected president in June 1956. Here was a army officer, at the helm of affair, who wished to establish a parliamentary democracy but was he successful? This is the soul of this research paper. It proposes to analyse as to why only 3 people ruled the country for about 75 years till Mubarak handed over their reign of the country again back to a military man. Mubarak has also become important because he alone ruled Egypt for 30 years and after him within 7years, Egypt has seen three heads of state. Democracy is not insight. Then what else lies ahead in future for Egypt?

This paper proposes to have a bird eye view of Nasser's and Sadat's rule on one hand and Morsi's, adly Mansour's and Sisi's rule to forecast the future of democracy in Egypt.

INTRODUCTION

Nasser who took over the reign of the Egypt was brave and bold in decision making. First he consolidated his hold on military and police and later on became a champion of common man after nationalizing Suez Canal. He said it was to finance the construction of a high dam on Nile River. In retaliation, Britain and France and Israel attacked

Egypt and occupied Suez Canal but pressure from Soviet Union and U.N.O. prevailed and the Canal was left in Egypt's hand in 1957. This enhanced the prestige of Nasser. In 1958, merger between Egypt and Syria took place as United Arab Republic and he became the President of the republic.

Nasser was defeated in Egypt-Israel war in 1967 and Israel captured entire Sinai and crossed Suez Canal. Nasser resigned in 1968 but he was so

popular that confidence vote by national assembly and popular demonstration in his support forced Nasser to withdraw his resignation. Now Nasser left the policy of non-alignment and aligned with Soviet Union, who in turn started assisting him in major projects. Aswan high dam was completed with Soviet assistance. In 1970, he died of massive heart attack.

He was well known for his nationalist policiesⁱ and his version of Pan-Arabism also referred to as "Nasserism" many in the general Arab population view him as a symbol of dignity and freedom.ⁱⁱ

Here, I would like to point out that he was the person who gave republic constitution to Egypt in 1956. He was chosen a President through ballots. Yet when he died democratic procedure to elect the president in real sense did not rule the Egyptian Republic.

ANWAR SADAT

A close aid of Nasser and his Vice-President, he became the President of Egypt after Nasser's death. He introduced multi-party system and Infitah economic policy. This policy refers to opening up of liberal economy or we can say that it was a policy of 'opening the door' to private players, ending the dominance of Egyptian economy by public sectorⁱⁱⁱ. It was a move towards enabling Sadat's Egypt to realize political objective. As President, he led Egypt in the Yom Kippur war of 1973 to regain Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, which was under Israel's occupation. Later on, he entered into negotiation with Israel finally ending in Egypt-Israel peace. The act was generally appreciated by Egyptian^{iv} but rejected by Muslim Brotherhood and left^v. They thought his treaty has abandoned the efforts to ensure a "Palestinian State." Sadat moved forward on his stand and the result was Egypt's suspension from Arab League.^{vi}

Sadat to gain support for his political ideology and treaties, encouraged the ideological autonomy of Islamic movement.^{vii} It was under such

circumstances that the president Sadat was assassinated on 6th Oct 1981, during a parade in Cairo.

HOSNI MUBARAK

After the assassination of President Sadat, on 6th October 1981, Hosni Mubarak, the then vice-president of Egypt took over the presidency. This was rectified by the lower house of Egyptian legislature.

Mubarak continued the economic policy of Liberalization introduced by Sadat. He also kept intact Egyptian commitment to 'Camp David accords of 1979.

However, Sadat's economic liberalization created a wealthy and successful upper class, a small middle class and average Egyptian was suffering from the same poverty, having no impact of economic liberalization. The average Egyptian was dissatisfied. In 1977 this policy led to massive Bread riots. The policy was criticized for bringing "wild rents, land speculation, inflation and corruption"^{viii}.

Between 1974 to 1985, more than 2 million Egyptian were working in Foreign countries. Remittances from these workers allowed families in Egypt to buy "refrigerators, TV sets, Video recorders, cars and Flats^{ix}". Thus, between 1974 to 1985 Egypt was heavily depended on their income from abroad, oil resources, Suez Canal and Foreign aid. Thus, the economy of the country when Mubarak inherited his legacy was fairly good.

But crash down of Crude oil prices and foreign aid brought Egypt to the brink. However, when Mubarak became president, he faced many problems of which two were very important. The first problem was Mubarak himself. He was seemed hardly skilled at politics. In early 1980's there was a perception that Mubarak was weak. The second challenge was his minister Abu Ghazala, Field Marshal Abdel Halim Abu Ghazala, who was implicit and indirect challenger to the President^x.

Another challenge was economic scenario of the country. Such a situation had come, where growth rate was alarming, coupled with massive debt, significant unemployment, growing population and low domestic production and balance deficit in import and export painting a very gloomy picture of Egypt. The country was not in a position to repay the international debt. The International Monetary Fund in 1987 was willing to allow Egypt to reschedule its debt but so many strings were attached to it. The important conditions were modification of price control, increase in the interest rate, loosening of import restrictions and policies which could unify the exchange rate. The Mubarak regime hesitantly, reluctantly but ultimately accepted those conditions.

The god smiled on Egypt and due to its role in Iraq-Iran war, Egypt was with Iraq's side, thus checking Iran's influence containing Soviet penetration of the Middle East.

In International arena, Mubarak was consolidating his position with in Arab countries. In 1984 Egypt was re-admitted in the organization of Islamic co-operation world and in 1989 it was re-admitted in Arab League. But Mubarak remained a strong ally of the United States whose aid to Egypt averaged \$2 billion a year since 1979^{xi}. Egypt remained with America as an allied partner in Gulf war of 1991. It was the first to send its troops to Saudi Arabia to throw out Iraqi forces from Kuwait. This move was not appreciated among Egyptians but brought fortune (financial) for the Egyptian government. The Economist writes^{xii}

"The Programme worked like a charm; a textbook case, say the IMF. Infact, luck was on Hosni Mubarak's side; when the USA was hunting for a military alliance, to force Iraq out of Kuwait, Egyptian President joined hands without hesitation. After the war, his reward was that America, the Arab states of Persian Gulf and Europe forgave Egypt around \$14 billion of debt^{xiii}.

However Mubarak neither supported 2003 Iraq war by U.S. nor in 2009. When the Obama administration said that if Iran does not stop its nuclear activities, the American administration will

consider to extend protection to its Middle Eastern allies^{xiv}.

On domestic front also, he tried to decentralize the political institutions. During Mubarak regime franchise was widened and direct election was held to elect national assembly with Multi-Party system.

Mubarak had two reforms idea for Egypt. He wanted complete peace on one hand and decentralization of political rule and institution.

To establish peace, he cracked down on Muslim Brotherhood, who was engaged in terrorist activities in the name of Jihad. Jihad is an Islamic term which means struggle for one's goal. The Jihadi leaders were arrested and faced the trial before military court. Also the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) had started few radical changes to change the country to Democracy. It was under the banner of "New thinking and Priorities". In 2005 the ruling party was asked by the president to bring legislation. Article 76 was to be amended in a way where multi-party presidential election could be held. Before 2005, opposition parties were not allowed to contest for the post of president. Infact, the position of the president was reaffirmed through referendum in the lower house of the legislature at regular interval of six years. After the amendment, it was put to referendum. The opposition parties urged the people to boycott the referendum as it was meaningless in their opinion. Ignoring the plea of the opposition leaders, people participated in referendum^{xv}. The referendum was adopted with 80% votes^{xvi}.

In 2005, Mubarak started his presidential campaign and promised reforms in economic and social spheres. He promised further amendment to give power to every individual in political freedom, to establish machinery for 'checks and balance' between different political institutions and independence of Judiciary. The net result was that he was returned to his office with 89% of votes against his two candidates.

Another factor which contributed in his victory was that other opposition parties were

fragmented and weak compared to NDP. The November 2000 people's assembly election results show that in a house of 454, only 34 candidates could win the election. Muslim Brotherhood could not fight election as it was banned as an illegal organization and was not a registered political party. On economic front, there was massive under-employment and unemployment, the common workers felt that the policy of privatization has made their life more difficult but all the indicators of economic development pointed towards a vibrant economic growth.

Like any Country, Egypt too has emergency law enshrined in 1958 constitution under law number 162. Under this law any individual can be detained and put behind the bar for unlimited period without any trial. Political activities, demonstration or mass mobilization are banned.

STATE CORRUPTION

Political corruption, during Mubarak regime's ministry of interior rose like never before. Young activists and political leaders were put behind the bar without trial^{xvii} such hidden facilities were made which were neither legal nor documented^{xviii}. In 2005 freedom house, a NGO which conducts research into democracy stated that "corruption remained a significant problem under Mubarak who promised to do much but Infact, never did anything significant to tackle it effectively^{xix}".

DOWNFALL

The decline of Mubarak regime started in 2007 when the bread riot (mentioned earlier also) protestors took to street. His era symbolized terror, torture and illegal detention". Concerns raised include political censorship, political brutality, arbitrary detention and restriction on freedom of speech, association and assembly^{xx}".

Mubarak also lost his credibility due to his son's activity. It was perceived generally that the President was training his second son General Mubarak to take over the rein of presidency, when

his fifth term as president expires. Mubarak was then in his 80's.

The success of Tunisian Jasmine revolution too influenced the common people of Egypt and people started protesting against him and his regime from 25th January 2011. People were not prepared to bear any more the torture, corruption, unemployment, poverty, lack of health services and miseries of crony capitalism. The youths, farmers, middle class and opposition political leaders demanding Mubarak's resignation were on roads. The president went all out to assuage the feelings of protestors and failing that ultimately he resigned on 11th February 2011, handing over the country to supreme military.

Look at the irony. The person who in his last days tried to bring democracy and at one time was admired and loved by his people became a symbol of repression and had to hand over the country to armed forces.

After Mubarak, Mohamed Morsi became the fifth president of Egypt. He was in fact the first president of Egypt who was elected democratically. It is alleged that failing to cease the unrest in the country. He tried to bring totalitarianism and was overthrown in a military coup in 2013, which was led by army chief Abdel Fatah-el-Sisi. The Constitution of 2012 was dissolved and chief justice of Supreme Court Adly Mansour was sworn in as interim president. In 2014, presidential election was held and Abdel- Fateh-el-Sisi was elected President. He is the president till date.

Here is the question regarding the fate of Egypt. Is it hoped that under Sisi, Egypt can move towards democracy? Certainly not, Though Morsi period saw few democratic development such as the rise of political parties, independent trade union federations and other non-governmental organization. But the way he was thrown out, shows only and only the supremacy of military in the country. Present president Sisi was the person who led coup against Morsi and ultimately became the president. It is rare that the military supremo will take the country towards democracy.

Secondly, Constitution is simply a piece of paper which can be dissolved at any movement and by anybody who is military supremo. Anyone and everyone who came to power dissolved the then existing constitution.

Thirdly, nation building and a stable democratic government requires assimilating all sections of society. Egypt is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society and fragmented on this basis.

Fourthly, though Muslim Brotherhood renounced the path of violence in 1972, after realizing that their objectives cannot be fulfilled with the help of violence. But let us not ignore the fact that their importance and presence cannot be ignored. Certainly, they do not fight for a secular, democratic republic of Egypt. If they get a chance to rule, Egypt may become a democratic republic but certainly ruled by Islamic Law.

Hence, democracy in Egypt is a far-fetched dream. Elections are being held to show the world, not to consolidate democracy.

REFERENCES

- ❖ Bauer, P., (2011), The Transition of Egypt in 2011 – A New Springtime for the European Neighbourhood Policy?, 22 pp., forthcoming

- in *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, ed. by C. Kaunert, December 2011)
- ❖ Bicchi, F., (2009), Democracy assistance in the Mediterranean: An overview, *Mediterranean Politics*, 14(1), pp. 61–78.
- ❖ Brumberg, D., (2002), The trap of liberalized autocracy, *Journal of Democracy*, 13(4), pp. 56–68.
- ❖ Foreign Affair Magazine, October (2011), “Commanding Democracy in Egypt”, Jeff Martini and Taylor, P. 127-137.
- ❖ Jung, D. (Ed.), (2006), *Democratization and Development: New Political Strategies for the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan).
- ❖ Steven A.Cook, (2012), *The Struggle for Egypt (From Nasser to Tahir Square)*, Oxford University Press: New York, p. 158.
- ❖ Youngs, R., (2006), *Europe and the Middle East: In the Shadow of September 11* (Boulder, CO: Rienner).
- ❖ Zaki, M. (Ed.), (2008), *Civil Society and Democratization in the Arab World: Annual Report 2007* (Cairo: Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies).

Copyright © 2017, Dr. B.N Chaudhry. This is an open access refereed article distributed under the creative common attribution license which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

ⁱ Robert Satlof, Among the Righteous; lost stories from the holocaust’s long reach into Arab lands; Public Affairs; 2007, P.163.

ⁱⁱ Walter, L.; The Changing face of Anti-Semitism; from Ancient times to the present day, Oxford University Press; P.141.

ⁱⁱⁱ Egypt’s “Infitah” and the politics of U.S. economic Assistance by Marvin, G.Weinbaun; Middle Eastern Studies; Taylor and Francis Ltd.; Vol.21 (2); April 1985, P.206-222

^{iv} Peace with Israel; U.S. Library of Congress.

^v Graham, Nick; Middle East peace talks; Israel: Palestinian negotiation; More hopeless than ever.; The Huffington post 21st August 2010.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Ibid.

- ^{viii} Fouad Ajami; The Political Economy of Sadat's Egypt; journal of Arab Affairs; 31st October 1981; P.27.
- ^{ix} Tarek Oasman; Egypt on the brink; Yale University Press; 2010; P.122.
- ^x Steven A.C.; The struggle for Egypt (From Nasser to Tariq Square); Oxford University Press; New York; 2012.
- ^{xi} F.A.Q. on U.S. aid to Egypt: where does the money go-and who decides how it is spent? Marian wang Publishers; 31st January 2011.
- ^{xii} The IMF's Model Pupil; the Economist; 18th March 1999.
- ^{xiii} Ibid.
- ^{xiv} Fareed M.; Disarmament: Egypt rejects U.S. Nuclear Umbrella; Inter-Press Services; 20th August 2009.
- ^{xv} Egyptian Caste ballots in key referendum; International Herald Tribune; 25th May 2009.
- ^{xvi} Egypt says 'Yes' to contested election; The Independent; 27th May 2005.
- ^{xvii} Suzanne Choney; Egyptian bloggers brave police intimidation; 27th January 2011.
- ^{xviii} Jane Mayer; The C.I.A.'s travel agent; the New York; 30th October 2006.
- ^{xix} Country Report: Egypt's freedom House.org.2005.
- ^{xx} Egypt: Abuses under state of emergency; Amnesty International; June 2011.