
Now that the Mubarak regime has been quite easily overthrown by young, highly educated, revolutionary Egyptians, equipped with IT skills and determined to put an end to the autocratic regime in their country, it can be stated quite categorically that nobody foresaw such a scenario, including Bruce Rutherford in his *Egypt after Mubarak*.

Both academicians and politicians underestimated the influence of civil society in autocratic regimes in general, and in Egyptian society in particular, and considered Egyptian autocracy during Mubarak’s presidency as soft and flexible, at least in the West. At best, they kept track of a limited number of political parties and movements that negotiated with the ruling National Democratic Party in order to get a share, or rather a few crumbs, of the political cake.

However, careful observation of the socioeconomic processes that took place in Egypt over the last decade certainly indicates that young Egyptians not only refused to reconcile with the dictates and unwritten laws of autocracy, but were also resolved to take their destiny into their own hands, and thus operated in any way possible, using any means available to them, to significantly change both their personal and collective lives. This was especially clear after the riots that broke out in April 2007, which came to be known as the “pita riots,” were followed by the establishment of the April 6 Youth Movement. Bruce Rutherford mentions the demographic “youth bulge,” claiming that the region would need 50 million new jobs by 2010 to accommodate 38 percent of the population that is under the age of fourteen. He analyzes this phenomenon from the regime’s point of view and concludes that “this demographic challenge draws attention to two core weaknesses of the current order: the poor quality of state-led economic management … and the absence of political institutions that can represent the interests of these young people and respond to their concerns quickly and effectively” (p. 12). He does not add a single word on the way young Egyptians might react to these economic weaknesses, for example by directing their anger and frustration at the president himself.

Besides ignoring the economic burden the Egyptian people suffered and still suffer from, Mubarak also chose to groom his son Gamal to inherit the presidency, despite the opposition of various powerful groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian Movement for Change, *Kifayya* (that
is, “enough”). They, and others, were raising their voices against the betrayal of Egypt’s unwritten law that disallows the transfer of power by inheritance. Such inherited transfer of power took place in Egypt in 1848, when the Ottoman wali, Mehmet ‘Ali Pasha, having governed Egypt for 43 years, was succeeded by his descendants, following an Ottoman decree (firman) to that effect. They ruled the country until July 1952, when a group of Egyptian officers overthrew King Farouk, the last of ‘Ali Pasha’s dynasty, and proclaimed Egypt a republic, thus putting an end to this legacy. Neither Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasser, nor Anwar Sadat, his successor, bequeathed the presidency to a descendant, nor did they govern Egypt for as many years as Husni Mubarak, who was (eventually) ousted in 2011.

In Egypt after Mubarak, Bruce Rutherford, a Colgate University professor of political science, claims that in spite of what he refers to as the “stable authoritarianism” in Egypt, Mubarak’s Egypt has a “vibrant and aggressive judiciary whose rulings constrain the regime” (p. 2). In addition, opposition groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood share “common agendas” with Egypt’s business community and liberals, “which converge around a core set of reforms that embody the key features of classical liberalism,” namely restricting state power, strengthening the rule of law, and protecting basic human rights.

Rutherford presents a scenario as to how these various groups may reframe their agendas to suit the political reality in the aftermath of Husni Mubarak’s rule. He claims that these groups could constitute a broad and unified front that might become an appropriate alternative to the regime. However, the post-revolutionary period is proving to be quite the opposite, as the most striking feature of it is its considerable plurality and diversity on both the organizational and the ideological levels, to the degree that one gets the impression of intense fragmentation as political participation has suddenly become the preferred option of most members of both the Islamist and the liberal-secularist groups. Indeed, the Muslim Brotherhood has recently established the Freedom and Justice Party, while a splinter group of young Muslim Brotherhood members created their own political party called the Egyptian Current Party (Hizb al-Tayyar al-Masry), the manifesto of which mentions neither the Islamic canonical law (shari’a) as its frame of reference, nor the Islamic principles of consultation (shura) as the Islamic form of democracy. It stresses its civil and democratic nature, as well as its openness towards the Other. The Salafis, on their part, established two new political parties: Light (al-Nour) and Virtue (al-Fadila). We are witnessing the same fragmentation both among Egyptian traditional opposition parties and the revolutionary coalitions.