

Democratisation from Portugal to Poland, 1970s–1990s, and in Tunisia and Egypt since 2010

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Preamble

Certain important assumptions underlie the arguments in this article, which are developed elsewhere.¹ Democratisation is essentially understood as the unending struggle of the weak majority against elites of wealth and power (this is well expressed in the slogan of the Occupy movement today: we are the 99 per cent, they the one per cent.) It is a socio-political process and a society and politics growing out of that where ordinary people are deemed capable of making the decisions affecting them. This was first and vividly seen in Athens 508-322 BCE. Democratisation is a matter of aspirations and impulses, which fail more often than they succeed, and yet re-appear. The control of elites is the vital accompaniment to the empowerment of the people if real democracy is to endure. This duopoly was Athens' outstanding lesson, but a good reminder was offered by the United Democratic Front (UDF) in South Africa in the 1980s in their Principles of Our Organisational Democracy and their practice of criticising elites not least their own. Democratisation is also a long historiography imbued with lies and deceptions: democracy is never the gift of elites or Great Men. In South Africa the African National Congress has propagated the idea that its external armed struggle 'set the people free', not the domestic work of the UDF, trade unions and community groups, and rule by its 'struggle heroes' constitutes democracy. Two main forms stand out: a liberal capitalist form revolving around periodic free elections, where elites get themselves elected, and the participatory kind. The former enjoyed predominance over a long period, but it is now being strongly challenged both internally, because of its extreme inequalities and dysfunctions, and externally from the successes—still limited and endangered—of the participatory aspirations of millions of people in Egypt and Tunisia since 2010.

Opposition to Soviet communist dictatorships in central Europe between the 1970s and the early 1990s, was everywhere the major force, and democratisation was a weaker and limited process, corrupted in various ways by elitism. Opposition to fascist domination in Portugal was, however, closely inter-linked with democratisation over an intense 19 months. To unravel the inter-relationships between the national and democratic issues, the immediate and the much longer term political processes, and to highlight their salient features, only a select number of countries will be considered. Portugal was first chronologically, but it was most outstanding for the role played by popular, left-wing military forces in ending a fifty year-old extreme right-wing dictatorship

¹ In a forthcoming book, *Trust in the Capacities of the People: Democratisation Then and Now*.

which had enjoyed American support, and for the linkage perceived by the soldiers and people between decolonisation in Africa and democratisation at home. The mobilisation of a large popular movement based on work-places and neighbourhoods began immediately with the bloodless coup of 25 April 1974, and unleashed the energies of ordinary people. This unique revolutionary movement ended nineteen months later with the establishment of a constitutionally-based centrist government in Lisbon, backed by the then West Germany, with the aim, attractive to many out of work Portuguese, of European integration. Poland was notable for its long opposition to communism, and even more for the large size--literally millions of people--and determination of its organised working class in what became a moderate, 'self-limiting' democratisation. Suppressed by martial law in 1981, Solidarity redeveloped to total some 10 million members in 1989, and became for a time, in association with a strong intelligentsia, Europe's largest liberal social movement.

Anti-communism and freedom saw one of its most visible but restricted successes in the collapse of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) at the end of 1989, accompanied by the immediate absorption of the GDR into the much larger, richer and conservative Federal Republic, with the crucial backing of Herman Kohl in Bonn and the non-interventionist stance of Mikhail Gorbachev in Moscow. This instant transition had rather less to do with democracy than a quest for stability and prosperity and the re-integration of the German people in a functioning liberal polity. Late opposition to Soviet dictatorship in Czechoslovakia, produced another 'velvet', non-radical reformist process, though the country had once possessed the strongest and most effective communist party in Central Europe (the KSC). It contested free elections in 1946 and obtained 38 per cent of the vote and 114 out of 300 seats in the National Assembly. Together with its social democratic allies, it held a narrow majority. But the assertion of Soviet power in 1948 followed by four decades of rigid dictatorship, opened the way for another liberal reformist process (Sassoon 1997: 101, Lodge 2001). Demonstrations were not used for mass mobilisation, but for levering concessions from the state. Stress was placed on abstract ethical values by leading intellectuals like Vaclav Havel (and Adam Michnik in Poland) as the bases for a new civil society and ultimately, they hoped, for an active popular democracy. Freedom and liberal democracy ostensibly triumphed, but it was in fact a simulacrum of Thatcherite Britain where power lay not with an active citizenry but with new nationalist elites who understood freedom as unchecked personal enrichment. Across much of central Europe, according to Michnik, "the worst thing about Communism [wa]s what came after"², the abandonment of shared communitarian values and the elevation of unrestrained, nihilistic elitism.

² Cited by Judt (2010: 139 and 146). Judt adds that President Vaclav Klaus of the Czech Republic typified the new elites' rush to make money.

The Carnation Revolution

On 25 April 1974, the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) rose in revolt against the dictatorship in Lisbon—the militarist regime of Antonio Salazar 1926 to 1932 and of Marcello Caetano subsequently; the world's most enduring fascist system. The coup caused the collapse of the regime, and it took the United States and major European states like West Germany by 'complete surprise.' In a matter of hours the streets filled with multitudes of people celebrating euphorically the overthrow, and showering the soldiers with red carnations. Having failed to follow the planned decolonisation policies of France and Britain that began a quarter-century earlier, small and under-resourced Portugal, with a population of less than ten million, faced a deep impasse attempting to sustain military forces in Africa of over 150,000. By the mid-1970s that war had lasted some 13 years and was consuming up to 50 per cent of the national budget. The physical burdens had fallen most heavily on the soldiers. 'Nearly every young man' was drafted for service in Africa. Many junior officers had served several tours of duty and, according to Hammond, were exhausted (Maxwell 2009: 144, Hammond 1988: 63 and 65). Many of them had concluded too that the war was unjust and unwinnable. Some of those who acted on 25 April had also acquired from their fighting experience a respect for the abilities of men like Amílcar Cabral in Guinea-Bissau, assassinated by the secret police, the PIDE, in 1973.³ Hammond states that 'Guinea became an early centre for the MFA'. As officers were rotated home they regularly swelled the ranks of the new movement (Hammond 1988: 66). For Houser (1973: 3), no other African leader had a clearer understanding of the socio-political dynamics than he had: he had founded the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) in 1956, and had begun by organising in rural areas through the provision of schools and health centres. Armed struggle was not initiated until 1963, and a decade later the PAIGC was poised for victory. For Hodges (2001: 9), it was 'the success of the liberation movements in Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau', in particular, that led to the downfall of the Salazarist-Caetano regime, and to independence for the colonies. In taking power the MFA committed itself to the restoration of civil and political liberties, to the democratic election of a constituent assembly within a year, to achieving a 'political, not military solution' in the colonies, and to an economic policy 'in the service of the Portuguese people, especially of the heretofore least privileged sectors of the population.' (quoted in Maxwell 2009: 15). Portugal recognised the independence of Guinea-Bissau in September 1974 (Hammond 1998: 92).

Democratisation and decolonisation in Portugal, 1974-1975, was a far more popular, revolutionary and conjoined process than democratisation in Central

³ His strategy was based on restraint and careful preparation; he stressed that 'our people are our mountains', that their fight was strictly against the authoritarian state, and that liberation would ultimately be accomplished with the assistance of Portuguese workers and peasants (Cabral 1969: 123-25). He was not the only nationalist leader assassinated, and PIDE's brutality was earlier displayed during a dock strike in Bissau in the 1950s when 50 workers were killed. (Hammond 1988: 49).

Europe fifteen years later. This came from the aims and experiences of the MFA, and from the pressures and energies emanating directly from a newly-freed people. Students, soldiers, landless workers, and the homeless in the cities forced the pace of change, in a sometimes chaotic movement, ahead for instance of the moderate tactics urged by the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) regarding land seizures and wage-restraint by urban workers. It was a movement, says Maxwell, 'born of struggle and conscious choices at critical moments' by men and women 'of all classes', regions and educational levels, and it was the combination of 'people power in the urban neighbourhoods and peasant power in the countryside' that constituted much of the country's democratic exceptionality.

But it was also consistent and responsible to the people to a large degree. After the establishment of a 'Council of the Revolution' as the supreme transitional authority of the state, on 11-12 March 1975, 'joined by an assembly of 240 representative of the three armed services', a number of critical measures followed, including the nationalisation of the banks and insurance companies, placing a major section of Portuguese industry and the media in public hands. At the same time, the original commitment of the MFA to the holding of elections for a Constituent Assembly within one year of the April coup was re-affirmed and successfully achieved. In the upshot the country placed itself among 'the most radical of European states' (Maxwell 2009: 147 and 151-53.)

Manifesting the country's distinctiveness in the context of the Cold War was the PCP, in 1974-75 the country's best organised party. Founded in 1921 and led by Alvaro Cunhal since 1943 (he had spent 13 years in prison in Portugal and 14 years in exile in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union), the PCP was an orthodox Leninist, cadre party, aligned with Moscow. But it also possessed diverse trade union support. According to Maxwell, it had a firm base in the grain-producing Alentejo, a region of large landed estates south of the Tagus River, with 'strongly implanted' support among the anti-clerical, landless rural labourers. Since 1970, they were also 'strongly entrenched in the metallurgical unions, and increasingly influential among lower-middle class white-collar workers, especially the bank workers' unions in Lisbon and Oporto (Maxwell 2009: 149). When the first civilian provisional government was named in May 1974, Cunhal was accorded the labour portfolio, because of the PCP's linkages to the trade union movement and its perceived moderating role therein (Hammond 1988: 77).

The Socialist Party (PSP) was then a much younger and weaker organisation, founded only a year earlier in West Germany, and led by Mario Soares, a Lisbon-based lawyer. But its potentialities were already present in Soares' friendship with Willy Brandt, a notable figure in Germany's Social Democratic Party and governing circles. While it had only 'a minimal organisational base in Portugal', it was affiliated with the Socialist International, providing institutional and other linkages to the then ruling social democratic parties in Germany, Sweden and Britain (Maxwell 2009: 149).

According to the PCP a direct role in government, with significant political responsibilities, was a radical move in relation to the major Western powers. It was the first time that communists were represented in a Western European government since the beginning of the Cold War. Portugal had significance beyond its small size. It was a foundation member of NATO, and the country's airbase in the Azores provided an important military resource for the projection of United States' power into Africa and beyond. NATO and the United States reacted with horror. In classic Cold War thinking, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger is said to have believed that 'Portugal was as good as lost to a communist power grab', and he 'made his misgivings abundantly clear' to visiting President Costa Gomes and Foreign Minister Soares in Washington in mid-October 1974. But while the US toyed with the idea of a direct 'Latin American solution', to the supposed problem, Western Europe 'took the more practical approach' of infusing preferred parties with foreign cash, 'thr[owing] clandestine support behind the political parties of the centre in Portugal', in a partial return to the assistance offered under Marshall Plan auspices to non-communist parties in Italy and France around 1946. Soares and the PSP were the recipients of 'substantial subsidies from West Germany via the SPD and that party's foundation, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung' (Maxwell 2009: 153 – 57). The Soviet Union's role, on the other hand, was uncertain and inconsistent with Kissinger's presumption of a power grab. Although it had 'invested heavily' in the PCP, it was divided on assisting the party during "the hot summer" of 1974-75. Portuguese communists, for their part, were obsessed by the fate of Salvador Allende, the elected and overthrown president in Chile just four years earlier, and the PCP had entered government with some reluctance, on the initiative of the then transitional president, the right-wing General Antonio Spínola.⁴

The Excitement of Revolution

The popular euphoria which had greeted the coup was maintained at an extremely high level over the subsequent year, as the revolutionary democratisation was extended into workplaces, neighbourhoods and rural areas. Workers responded enthusiastically to new political freedoms by demanding pay rises and major changes in their work processes. The authoritarianism of the Fascist state had been reinforced in harsh factory discipline, and workers 'immediately demanded that it be ended' and 'took over the fascist trade unions' (Hammond 1998: 77, 81). People spontaneously organised in urban neighbourhoods, setting up 'commissions' to assess and address housing needs. Not only the poor and the working class, but also 'moderately well off people', suffered over-crowded, unrepaired and absolute shortages of housing in the 1960s and 70s. Shantytown residents formed their own commissions. The Quinta das Fonecas, near the University City in

⁴ President Spínola aimed to bring the PCP into the cabinet as Minister for Labour, and name Cunhal as minister without portfolio, to promote restraint (Maxwell 2009: 152-153 and 158).

northern Lisbon, represented some 250 families. They held an assembly on 11 May 1974 to demand electricity, water and decent housing, and the entire meeting marched on the president's palace some eight kilometres away to deliver their demands. Other shantytown commissions were organised through the following spring and summer (Hammond 1998: 84-5). Shack dwellers acted similarly in South Africa later.

According to Hammond, the first year of the Portuguese revolution was a very exciting time for workers and people generally. They were 'constantly discovering new resources within themselves' and new powers over the employers and landlords who had dominated them. Many workers became active, even those who were not elected to commissions. The latter were said to be busy all day, every day, constantly confronting new problems. As one person explained it: "In a short time we lived centuries and centuries full of everything; people's lives changed completely. We would be at the factory, then the workers' commission, then the general assembly of all the workers. At night we would go to the popular assembly of all the workers' and neighbourhood commissions of the area. It was a time of tremendous excitement."

Popular mobilisation occurred too in schools and barracks, with similar effervescence and openness (Hammond 1998: 104-5).

Organising rural areas was difficult. In Alentejo, the farm-workers' tradition of struggle in association with the PCP offered a basis for rapid mobilisation, but in northern villages, where the peasantry had no such supports, the response was slow. In the summer of 1975 the Communist Student Union launched a campaign to "bring April 25 to the north". Students conducted brief literacy and health classes in villages, but could claim little success from their intervention (Hammond 1998: 87, 90).⁵

The close association between the MFA and the popular movement developed over time through their firm support for colonial independence and full, meaningful freedom at home. When General Spínola began to speak publicly of the dangers of domestic chaos and appealed to the country's silent majority to demonstrate in Lisbon on 28 September, left-wing parties and workers' commissions called on their members to mobilise against a threat from the right, the MFA acted and forced Spínola out of office. Though still without formal power, the MFA was 'clearly in charge', and its successful defence against a conservative coup attempt, 'enhanced its popularity'.⁶ The organisational strengths of the PCP offered no threat to the MFA and the popular movement. The Party had repeatedly demonstrated its full support for the MFA, while from the other side, 'the entire far left had rejected the PCP's centralist model of

⁵ So-called 'dynamising cultural teams' sent out by the military to areas where the Catholic Church was strong, 'irreversibly alienated devout peasants', according to Maxwell (2009: 156).

⁶ Soldiers and civilians had jointly manned barricades the night before the planned demonstration, three junta members were subsequently forced out of office and three right-wing parties which provided covert assistance to Spínola, the Party of Progress, the Liberal Party and the Labour Party, were banned. (Hammond 1988: 94-96).

society' (Hammond 1988: 75, 107). The MFA held executive and military power, and the popular movement stood with the MFA against a right-wing coup. The latter were also acquiring from their daily experience a deepening understanding of democratisation. This was, in Hammond's words, that they 'would not be content with representative democracy, but demanded instead political institutions based on the active participation of all citizens' (1988: 95-6). This was a realisation emerging from the new experiences of thousands of people, but notions of participatory democracy, if they were to be realised, would place Portugal well outside the liberal parameters of not least West Germany.

The Decline of the Revolution and the Rise of European Integration

During 1975 external events pressed heavily upon Portugal, stifling its revolutionary aspirations. With the defeat of Spínola and the consolidation of the MFA's power, differences between its radical and moderate factions on socio-economic issues were activated. A moderate faction argued for consolidation of the achievements to date so as to preserve the revolution's broad social support, and resist identification with the PCP. There were signs that the Party was losing popular support and might do badly in forthcoming elections (Hammond 1988: 109-11). Economic crises deepened and multiplied. The United States had utilised the Azores airbase during the October war, and a consequent Arab oil embargo hit the country hard (Hammond 1988: 109-11).⁷ Decolonisation, earlier synonymous with freedom and democracy, soon acquired negative connotations, not only depriving the country of raw materials and markets—the colonies had accounted for 18 per cent of exports—but also sending home huge numbers of unemployed people; some 150,000 demobilised troops and large numbers of former settlers.⁸ Domestic unemployment rose at the same time from other external causes, as Portuguese emigration to northern Europe, in further consequence of world oil shortages, fell from 120,000 in 1973 to 45,000 in 1975 (Maxwell 1995: 217-8).

Opposition from the United States and its allies to radical democratisation, combined with adverse international and domestic events sharpened these pressures. NATO had expelled Portugal from its nuclear planning group after the PCP was accorded a role in government, while the European Common Market promised economic aid and closer association 'only if the political course changed.' In August the United States acted similarly when it was asked for emergency assistance in airlifting large numbers of refugees out of a deepening crisis in Angola. Western political preferences were clear and sharp.

⁷ Until 1973-74 Portugal had encouraged the United States and NATO to utilise the Azores in its engagements in southern Africa, but thereafter the US had seen the Azores as a platform for its operations in the Middle East and Persian Gulf (Maxwell 1997: 178).

⁸ 'Several hundred thousand' refugees poured into Portugal throughout the spring and summer of 1975, creating an atmosphere of African crisis not seen since independence in Congo in 1960 and the Algerian revolution (Maxwell 1995: 123, 127).

The CIA and West Germany's ruling party, as noted, 'financed the PS', while multinational firms were said to have curtailed their Portuguese operations and Western importers to have boycotted Portuguese products. The country's historic dependence on the major Western powers for imports, export markets, capital and labour markets rendered the country and its democratisation highly vulnerable (Maxwell 1995: 219-220). The import of these events and their domestic ramifications were not lost on the ARM. In late July, President Costa Gomes--the general officer chosen to replace Spinola because of his progressive reputation--called on the MFA's Assembly to recognise the new exigencies. While initially "practically the whole population was with our revolution, today...that is not true." He called for a slowing down of the revolution, and reminded delegates that "national independence will not be achieved in the short run by any path that alienates the West" (Maxwell 1995: 213-4). The corollary was of course that Portugal's independent popular democratisation was unlikely to be achieved along pathways supported by the United States and Germany.

National elections for the Constituent Assembly, held as promised on 25 April 1975, appeared to confirm that political sympathies had moved to the right. Cunhal's PCP got only 12.5 per cent of the vote, the Democrats (PPD) of Francisco Sa Carneiro, (soon renamed the Social Democratic Party PSD), won 26.4 per cent, and Mario Soares and the SP came top with 37.9 per cent. Turnout was an exceptional 91.7 per cent.

The PS had made clear that it had no intention in office of 'pursuing socialist policies' (Maxwell 1995: 250). It, 'and especially Mario Soares', made accession to the European Community 'the highest priority among [its] foreign policy objectives.' Integration into the European Community came in 1986 and into the Western European Union in 1988. Soares had been on to something in offering Portugal a European future. Polls in the 1980s showed opinion in favour of NATO was as high as 64 per cent, as compared with only 17 per cent in neighbouring Spain. And over the course of that decade, Brussels 'far surpassed Washington as a source of financial aid and assistance' (Maxwell 1995: 177-8). The European aspiration was encouraged, in Maxwell's chosen words, 'by the strong role played by outsiders in the struggle for Portuguese democracy, especially, although not exclusively, by the Germans' (Maxwell 1995: 177).

The decline of the revolutionary movement and the fracturing of its alliance with the military escalated through late 1975. As it looked for ways to coordinate its base organisations and increase its political power to meet challenges from rejuvenated centrist parties, the movement faced a weakening of its legitimacy with its grass roots, as it no longer worked exclusively in communities and workplaces. As a movement of mass organisations, it had claimed to be inclusive and representative of the whole community, but the demonstrated electoral appeal of the PS and PD/PSD undermined its old claims.

As demobilisation proceeded, indiscipline worsened, to the point of mutiny, especially in the army, the most militant and politically divided of the three services. When a conservative government was formed in Lisbon, the Left, in

opposition, mobilised against it. On 7 September masked soldiers appeared at a press conference to announce the formation of Soldiers United Will Win (SUV) to oppose the right turn in the Council of the Revolution and the government. Soon after SUV organised a large scale march of soldiers in Oporto, joined by popular organisations. Joint demonstrations of this kind occurred over weeks in Lisbon and other cities. 'Almost every night—and almost all night long—tens of thousands marched in Lisbon.' At much the same time, an army captain announced that he had gone underground with 1,500 G-3 rifles which he would turn over to "the masses". In similar incidents newspapers carried reports that thousands of weapons shipped back from Africa had disappeared from the docks (Hammond 1988: 233 – 5).

Confrontational tactics antagonised the right and increased fears among many others that the country was becoming chaotic. Hammond believes that the popular movement was responsible for very little actual violence, and that more violence came from the right. But large and inherently disruptive demonstrations appeared to be the preferred tactics of the left, in circumstances quite different from those of the previous year (Hammond 1988: 234). As soldiers routinely disobeyed orders to restrain civilian demonstrators, the popular movement was increasingly isolated and politically weak.

After further rebellious incidents involving paratroops, the military right moved decisively against left-wing units on 25 November. For Hammond, the action was 'fatal to the popular movement, depriving it of the support of the armed forces which had been its main resource' (Hammond 1988: 226). But this was only part of the complex of relationships between the MFA and the popular left from the beginnings in April 1974.

Then there had been significant agreement that the state should assert significant control over the country's economic resources, and early steps like bank nationalisation had been taken on this basis. Differences existed among those Hammond calls moderates and progressives only about the pace and rate of change. But a contentious issue concerned the MFA itself, with moderates wanting minimal and temporary powers for the MFA, a view consistent with the MFA's initial promise for early constitutional elections, while other progressives favoured a longer and more hegemonic role for the radical soldiery.

But he also says that it was 'only the power of the popular movement [that] had turned the coup into a potential revolution', and 'the movement's initiatives were responsible for the [subsequent] major steps forward.' This ignores the fact that it was the soldiers' long experience of the fighting in places like Guinea Bissau that enabled them to see the intimate connection between colonial freedom generally and democratisation at home. This insight was the soldiers' and it was this that had brought the jubilant crowds on to the streets in Lisbon, launching the Carnation revolution. Hammond was on firmer ground when he said that 'a stronger and more autonomous mass movement would have strengthened the revolution against its enemies' (1988: 258), strengthening, that is, both the popular movement and the MFA. But he here ignores the powerful influences which were working against the popular movement,

externally the United States, West Germany, NATO and the Common Market, and internally the rising strength and resources of Soares and the PSP, backed by those who favoured a return to civil order and good governance and turned out in large numbers in the first constitutional elections.

Democratisation in Portugal in the mid-1970s

The process was developed and carried forward by two main elements, the MFA and the Popular Movement, each composed of different groups and organisations. The MFA, under the circumstances of dictatorship, was the initiator, and was chiefly the army in Africa, the officers and conscripts engaged in actual fighting with the PAIGC (and Frelimo in Mozambique). It developed near the height of the decolonisation movement in Africa, with independence in Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique impacting strongly on Zimbabwe, South Africa and Angola, with wide international consequences and ramifications; it was ideological and real-power politics bound up together, highlighted perhaps by the intrusion of multi-state Cold War conflict—South Africa, Cuba, the Soviet Union, the United States, et.al.-- directly into Angola in the second half of 1975, coincident with Angola's independence in November. Conflict was omnipresent, with Kissinger assessing the role of the PCP in Lisbon in the light of his close involvement in the overthrow of constitutional government in Chile and the death of President Salvador Allende a few years earlier. Portugal's membership in NATO and possible engagement in the European Union complicated matters further. Democratisation was also a struggle against one of the last remnants of Fascist power, which endeavoured to maintain its domination until the end. Alvaro Cunhal had spent 27 years in prison and exile, Mario Soares had formed the PSP only in 1973 in West Germany, and the MFA only manifested its potency on the morning of 25 April next year.

The Popular Movement was the larger and more diverse formation of tens of thousands of people in their neighbourhoods, work-places and 'commissions'. It was multi-class, where urban and rural workers were probably the more organised and active elements; the MFA based its initial economic program on the needs of 'the heretofore least privileged sectors of the population.'

The fall of fascism's half-century of domination unleashed great popular excitement and energies. People's growing consciousness of the powers latent within themselves and in the assemblies, neighbourhood and other groups they organised, was the essence of democratisation in revolutionary circumstances—paralleled a decade later in South Africa by the great number of civics and community groups that grew up around the UDF in the 1970s (Good 2011). The groups of the left shared a common aversion to the centralised controls favoured by the PCP. The MFA and the Popular Movement complemented each other-- the former as defender and guardian, and the latter as font of democratic ideas-- which may have extended to an interest in participatory forms of decision making. During their operations they faced big pressures from powerful Western institutions for the acceptance of orthodox liberal models and the

containment of their democratic aspirations. The developmental path supported by West Germany, Soares and the PSP, emphasised European integration, an attractive prospect for many poor and unemployed Portuguese. That they operated over nineteen demanding months, was an indicator perhaps of their durability, relevance and popularity. Revolutionary moments are often just that. Democratisation in Central Europe was sometimes merely a matter of hours and days, over before it had barely begun.

Central Europe: “When hope replaced repression”

Anti-communist democratisation in Central Europe faced far more favourable international conditions than Portugal had experienced fifteen years earlier. But the unprecedented popular uprisings—until Tunisia and Egypt eleven years later—that brought down Soviet dictatorships were soon followed by the rule of self-seeking nationalist elites, as in contemporary liberal capitalist democracies, over largely passive people, with the latter only active periodically in choosing between competing political elites. The ideas of figures like Vaclav Havel which had helped to inspire the rebellions were soon dissipated before the deregulation and privatisation policies of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, which resonated far more with the new Polish, German, Czech and Slovak rulers. The aggrandisement of the few was partnered, as in the West, by the weakness and disillusionment of the majority.

The German Democratic Republic is focussed on below because of the symbolism of the Wall and the immediate elevation of ethnic unity over democratisation; Poland because of the uniqueness of Solidarity and the role, first positively then negatively, of Lech Walesa a Man of the People; and Czechoslovakia too because its uprising rivalled in size and spontaneity that in the GDR, and what Havel had spoken of but failed to realise. The aims and achievements of these Velvet revolutions appear to compare poorly with those of the Carnation in 1974-75. The rebellions which toppled the already enfeebled dictatorships were accompanied by no sustained mobilisations for socio-economic development and no new popular parties.

In a knowledgeable and perspicacious article, Neal Ascherson noted that in January 1989 ‘business was much as usual’ in Soviet-ruled central Europe. By the end of the year, however, communist regimes which had ruled for 45 years had been overthrown by extraordinary public uprisings. Polish communism went first for substantive reasons. In October and November in the GDR, ‘the dauntless actions of millions of ordinary people in the streets, day after day’, backed by the refusal of armed militias to fire on the demonstrators in Leipzig on 9 October, led to the ousting of Erich Honecker and his hated regime, and on 9 November the Berlin Wall was breached.⁹ On 29 December, the dissident

⁹ It was a highly repressive system of personal rule. The Stasi was ‘the mainstay of State power. At its height, it had 97,000 employees, in a country of 17 million people. It also controlled over 173,000 informers, comprising together one Stasi officer or informant for every sixty three people; in Nazi Germany, on Funder’s estimates, there was one Gestapo agent for every 2,000

playwright Vaclav Havel became President of Czechoslovakia. Preludes to these and other big shifts were important, but Ascherson believes that it was in 1989 that 'ordinary people, on an enormous scale...lost their fear', having clearly seen over previous weeks that their rulers were incompetent and bereft of legitimacy (Ascherson 2009).

There is little doubt that these popular uprisings would not have happened so fast and with such apparent success if Mikhail Gorbachev had not become general secretary of the communist party of the Soviet Union in March 1985, and began promoting his new policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, or reform and openness. His message to the "captive nations" of Soviet Europe was propagated and dispersed. In Ascherson's summary, it was remarkable for its openness and moderation: 'You are on your own. We would like you to choose the socialist path. But whatever course your nation decides to follow, the Soviet Union will not invade with tank armies to stop you, as it did in 1956 and 1968. Even if your communists are swept from power, we will not use force to save them.' In June he declared that to oppose freedom of choice was an historical impossibility, and at the United Nations in December he unequivocally stated that "Freedom of choice is a universal principle. There should be no exceptions." When Gorbachev called the ruling communist leadership together to oblige them to understand that they could no longer count on a Soviet rescue, his non-interventionist, freedom to choose message 'reached opposition groups and the people at large' (Ascherson 2009).

It may be noted that Gorbachev's highly progressive position won no recognition in Washington. Concentrating on the details of Soviet military withdrawals, US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, 'missed the bigger picture entirely'—the revocation of the old Brezhnev Doctrine, even as the European Soviet edifice crumbled in front of her. As the leading Polish activist, Adam Michnik had it, America was "sleepwalking through history."¹⁰

Poland was the first to dismantle communism for a number of critical and concrete reasons not fully accommodated within Ascherson's depiction. The earliest and most active was the rise of Solidarity, a classic working-class organisation, which in 1980 initiated a strike among workers at the Gdansk Shipyard, and 'created a mighty wave of strikes [that] flooded the whole country.' Supported by opposition groups, the intelligentsia and the Catholic Church, this led to the Gdansk Accords, and the establishment of trade unions independent of the communist regime (Darnton 2011: 14).¹¹ Solidarity was

citizens, and in the Soviet Union under Stalin there was one KGB officer for 5,830 people. In 1973, Erich Mielke, a long-term communist security official, helped organise the coup which brought Erich Honecker to power in Berlin, and was rewarded with a Politburo position and material benefits. From that time onwards, says Funder, 'the two Erichs ran the country.' On 17 October 1989 Honecker was ousted by his deputy, Egon Krenz, who was younger but 'just as disliked' by the people (Funder 2003: 56-9, 65).

¹⁰ Rice's later admission is almost verbatim (Meyer 2000: 63).

¹¹ According to Smolar (2009: 135), the 'unusual alliance' between workers, the intelligentsia and the Catholic Church was 'one of the strategic keys to the movement's power.'

outlawed under martial law provisions the following year,¹² but it grew again into a social movement of some ten millions. Its founder was Lech Walesa, who together with 'a dozen or so' compatriots, including Michnik, stood out in their audacity and understanding, and made Poland 'the first country to pull the brick out of the monolithic wall of Communism' (Darnton 2011: xvii). Solidarity believed that 'it was the only instrument able to force the Communist authorities to negotiate Poland's way out of dictatorship' (Michnik 2011: 5), stressing all the while its tactics of negotiations and readiness to compromise. When a new wave of strikes began in 1988, a nerveless and divided government re-legalised Solidarity and opened round-table talks with the opposition. Multi-party elections were approved, Solidarity reluctantly accepted that the polls would have to be distorted by reserving a block of seats for 'official' candidates, and in early September the first non-Communist government in Soviet Europe came into being (Ascherson 2009).

In East Germany, protests began suddenly when municipal election results in May 1989 were seen to be 'blatantly, crudely falsified'. About 60,000 East Germans were already in Hungary waiting the opportunity to move to the West others in large numbers were boarding trains for the frontier. Only then, notes Ascherson, did numerically tiny dissident groups dare to set up a new party, *Neues Forum*. In early November a demonstration by some half-a-million in Berlin thunderously called for change. As the militia in Leipzig had refused to heed Honecker's call for them to fire on demonstrators, border guards took no action when tens of thousands of East Berliners piled through the Wall and began its dismantlement. But what they wanted was apparently less democratisation and much more market choice and ethno-national unity. According to Ascherson, the end of the dictatorship came as follows: 'The communists lingered on for a few months, proclaiming their conversion to social democracy. *Neues Forum* and others made plans for a new, truly democratic East Germany. All were irrelevant. By late November, the crowds which had been roaring: "We are the People!" had changed a word: "We are one people"...on 3 October 1990 a million people gathered in Berlin at the Brandenburg Gate to celebrate the formal reunification of Germany' (Ascherson 2009). A democratising East Germany was over before it began.

Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution preceded organisation and arose spontaneously among 'hundreds of thousands of ordinary men and women' around 17 November. That was the day on which students traditionally marched through Prague to commemorate a young man killed by German occupation forces. The police were said to have suddenly rushed at the marchers beating them with clubs. A rumour spread that a demonstrator had been killed, and in the confusion, students 'occupied their universities and larger, angrier crowds

¹² The crackdown was initially brutal, with 'several fatalities' and 'at least 10,000 people imprisoned and interned' (Smolar 2009: 137). 'Pushed underground, Solidarity endured seven long years. It survived repression, some of its activists capitulated dramatically, while many went abroad. It owed its survival to the attitude of its leaders, especially Lech Walesa...and also thanks to reason.' (Michnik 2011: 29).

began to gather in the streets.' It was 'a true mass uprising', as 'the people took over the city.' Some days later, the communist leadership resigned. Vaclav Havel and a few friends from the Charter 77 human rights movement were said to have commandeered a theatre and, on the spot, 'invented a new movement called Civic Forum' and started to debate where the revolution should go. Within a few days, as Ascherson relates, 'they found that they were turning into a revolutionary leadership, then a provisional government.' A meeting of a quarter of a million people, jingling their house keys in unison, symbolically informed the regime that its time was up. Crowds were chanting "Havel to the Castle", and after 'first treating the idea as a joke', he accepted. After becoming president on 29 December, he freed political prisoners and abolished the political police. Those participating in these events—among them the historian Tony Judt—had "the intoxicating feeling that history was being made by the hour" (Ascherson 2009).

Havel, says Meyer, was 'a legend in his own time'; he had been jailed many times, once for four years, and believed that writers in a totalitarian society had a special responsibility to speak out when few others did. He was the intellectual voice of what was until the end of November 1989 an almost nonexistent opposition, and Czechoslovakia's foremost dissident 'almost by default' (Meyer 2000: 135-7).

Judt's recent thinking cautions against over-inflating the achievements of the Velvet Revolution and the role of Havel therein. Admiration for Charter 77 should not ignore the fact that 'only 243 people signed it in the first place and about a thousand more over the course of the next decade.' A 'retreat from politics', and a privatisation of opinion, had gone 'a very long way' in Czechoslovakia since Moscow's crushing of the Prague Spring. Thousands of Czechs and Slovaks had abandoned public life in favour of political conformism and material consumption. Havel himself, says Judt, was obviously 'not a political thinker in the conventional, Western sense' (Judt 2012: 234-5).

Nonetheless Charter, formed in 1977 when the Cold War was near its height and the idea of freedom in Central Europe seemed hopeless, attracted people of great rectitude. Jiri Diensthir was a leading journalist, purged after the Soviet-led invasion of 1968, and became a furnace-stoker on the Prague subway. Persecution and jail followed his signing of Charter 77, so he founded and edited an underground paper, *Lidove Noviny* (The People's News). He was a leading figure in negotiating an end to communism, and became the free country's foreign minister in 1989. His achievements were rapprochement with Germany and the dismantlement of the Warsaw Pact. His career ended after he left office in 1992, but he remained on the margins of public life until his death in January 2011.¹³

If 1989 was the *annus mirabilis* in central Europe, what followed was a transition from communism to Thatcherism, and a slough of division and dissatisfaction for many. Ascherson believed that what most ordinary people

¹³ 'A Czech's Career', *The Economist*, 15 January 2011.

wanted in the new decade was 'something like social democracy'—freedom, a regulated market economy and a strong welfare state. But big divisions existed among the emerging political elites, and with the removal of the glue of anti-communism, it became clear that what many of the new nationalists wanted, as Michnik noted, was the freedom to make money. Ordinary people were much mistaken in their communitarian concerns, as the countries in transition from Soviet communism 'imported an undiluted version of Thatcherism' (Ascherson 2009). The communism to anti-communism transition was a move from 'repressive egalitarianism to unconstrained greed' (Judt 2010: 146). Price controls were abolished, subsidies cancelled, currencies floated. State industries were privatised. Huge gaps appeared between rich and poor, with a new predatory super-rich class, on one side, and near destitute pensioners and the redundant on the other. Social services like the elaborate network of free day nurseries for working mothers in East Germany vanished (Ascherson 2009).

Many Central European intellectuals were not in a good position to understand the enormity of Thatcherism, even if they wished to do so. For Judt, and for his collaborator Snyder, they had 'given up on economics'. Economics by the late 1980s 'had come to seem like political thinking and therefore corrupt.' Havel was one of those who was inclined to see macroeconomics as 'repressive in and of itself.' This was their position at just the time when Thatcher was radically changing British society and Friedrich Hayek was persuasively asserting that state intervention in the economy was 'always and everywhere the beginnings of totalitarianism' (Judt 2012: 242-4).

The transition soon carried away the revolutionaries themselves. Leaders of *Neues Forum*, like Baerbel Bohley and Jens Reich, returned to teaching and painting. In Poland, a new group of professional politicians had replaced the Solidarity veterans by 1993. Lech Walesa, the Gdansk electrician who had personified the hopes of millions of people about freedom and justice (Darnton 2011: xvii),¹⁴ now destroyed his own image, says Michnik, by a ruthless pursuit of the presidency, undermining the constructive efforts of colleagues.¹⁵ He proved to be an incompetent and unpredictable president, and became the first to employ 'the rhetoric of boorishness [in public discourse] that found so many followers later on' (Michnik 2011: 6). He was out of office by 1995.

In Czechoslovakia, which split into two in 1993, most of the Charter 77 leadership were by then without office. Vaclav Havel stayed on isolated in the Castle until 2003 (Ascherson 2009). An exemplar of the new ruling elite, was Vaclav Klaus, a state economist, who named Milton Friedman as the greatest living American, and proclaimed "I am our Milton Friedman." In 1991 he founded the Civic Democratic Party, which became one of the country's largest

¹⁴ Poland was in part 'a different story' to most of Central Europe thanks to the linkages built up between its genuine working-class movement and former student radicals and intellectuals (Judt 2012: 234).

¹⁵ He identifies Tardeusz Mazowiecki, advisor to Solidarity, founder of a Catholic periodical, and prime minister in the first post-communist government (Michnik 2011: 6, 214).

and most right wing parties. Prime minister 1992-1997, he defeated Havel to become president in 2003, subsequently re-elected (Meyer 2000: 184, Ascherson 2009).

Michnik, in the early 1990s, was using his editorship of the *Gazeta Wyborcza* to argue for morality and dignity against 'mindless self-defeating vengeance and retaliation',¹⁶ some of the more noxious features of post-communism. He vividly recalled August 1980 when "Poland changed the face of the world...it was a beautiful time with beautiful people. I was thirty four years old and convinced that my generation was writing an important chapter in history." Ascherson (2009) reported that 'nobody regret[ted] being part of a great and good revolution.'

But those who were without satisfying outlets for their ideals and experience, had little choice but try to enjoy, if they could, the normality of their daily lives. Ascherson recalled a Polish woman from 1989 as an 'intrepid conspirator for freedom'. Later, married with a grown-up daughter, she said: "I have a glass of fresh orange juice, an uncensored newspaper to read, a passport in my desk drawer. It's enough." In post-communist Poland, some of the revolutionaries made do with poetry. A girl in Leipzig said that in 1989, "I felt that I could fly." Ascherson concludes with the words that when the winds of history blow, people, like lovely birds, grow wings. And in that year 'for a few beautiful months, they flew.' Undoubtedly true, but scant compensation for post-communism's poor majority, whose needs were political and their material needs basic.

Solidarity provided a strength and determination that Central Europe otherwise lacked, and a decade's durability until communism's collapse. That event had a great deal to do with Gorbachev's determination to let the 'captive nations' choose their own developmental paths. The international terrain in the latter half of the 1980s was highly favourable to the central European anti-communist revolutionaries, unlike the Portuguese anti-fascists and radical democrats earlier. Despite these advantages, some of Solidarity's strength was in its anti-communism, and after 1990, Walesa, Michnik and the other old revolutionaries were obliged to manoeuvre largely as individuals against the rising tide of nationalist, pro-market elites. Reform communism had found no purchase, as the quick demise of *Neues Forum* and Civic Forum showed. If Ascherson is right to state that ordinary people wanted social democracy, Havel and Michnik have other weaknesses to answer for regarding the practicality, currency and political relevance of their ideas. Vaclav Klaus arose with speed and smoothness on a Thatcherite programme that had produced social decay in Britain when its progenitor was being swept from office by her own party. Havel's dismissal of economics was a costly omission for his fellow citizens.

¹⁶ An example of incoherent vengefulness was possibly the following: 'At the beginning of 2005, Poland was shocked by the publication of a long list of Secret Service functionaries, agents, and people whom the Secret Service had wished to recruit or failed to recruit. The names were listed at random, and it was impossible to discover how they had been categorised. Thousands of people felt slandered, and this was only the beginning of the show...' (Michnik 2011: 34).

North Africa since 2010: ousting the despots

Two countries are concentrated upon below, respectively the first and second to arise in the Arab Spring. Their democratisations were and are more real and rational than the megalomania prominent in Libya and Syria and unencumbered by reliance on heavy military force.

Egypt dwarfs Tunisia in population, territorial size and in GDP (where the ratio was approximately \$217 billion to \$44 billion), but in opposition to autocracy it showed the way forward in just a few swift weeks near the end of 2011. The catalyst was the immolation of a young, impoverished peddler, on 17 December in the inland town of Sidi Bouzid, who had endured too much everyday brutality at the hands of officialdom.¹⁷ News of the self-sacrifice was suppressed, but soon reached Tunis via social and foreign media. President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali reacted to the unprecedented tumult with military force. On 14 January Ben Ali and his family fled the country with much of the loot he had acquired over the past 23 years. The significance of the events could not have been greater. For the first time in the Arab world, Chrisafis wrote, ordinary people in the streets had ousted a brutal dictator. It had been a spontaneous, popular and apparently leaderless and non-ideological action.¹⁸ Their 'most impressive achievement' was to tear down the "wall of fear" carefully constructed around the regime (Shahshahani and Mullin 2012: 93). Acting in Havel- and Michnik-like terms 'as if they were free', Tunisians had moved decisively towards seizing that freedom. According to Fisk, the power of Arab dictators like Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak was based on three inter-related factors: terror (or fear), corruption and propaganda.¹⁹

Widening information about the unfitness of the regime and growing contacts between the people played a big role. A secret despatch (of 2009) from the US ambassador to Tunisia, Robert Godee, to Washington, released by Wikileaks in early 2011, described how Ben Ali and his clique "tolerate[d] no advice or criticism, whether domestic or international. Increasingly, they relie[d] on the police for control and focus[ed] on preserving power...Corruption in the inner circle [wa]s growing. Even average Tunisians are keenly aware of it." In publishing this informed assessment, the *Guardian* included comments from a pseudonymous young Tunisian, 'Sam', noting, in mid-January, how "a resigned cynicism about the regime under which he had grown up turned to hope...Then a young man immolates himself. And then 20 Tunisians are killed in one day. And for the first time we see the opportunity to rebel..." (Leigh and Harding 2011). Between 10 December and 11 January, an estimated 219 Tunisians were killed.²⁰ When thousands of protesters were gathered then in the centre of

¹⁷ Mohammed Bouazizi, age 26, peddled vegetables from a handcart to help feed his mother and younger sister, but constantly faced extortionate bribes and arbitrary harassment.

¹⁸ Angelique Chrisafis in *Guardian Online*, 7 February 2011 and 17 June 2011.

¹⁹ Robert Fisk, in *Independent Online*, 31 December 2011.

²⁰ *The Economist*, 16 July 2011.

Tunis, the locus of the fear surrounding the regime had seemingly shifted from the people to the despot himself; he claimed on 20 June that he had been deceived into leaving the country by reports (from the head of his presidential security) of a plot to assassinate him.²¹

Ben Ali had constructed an elaborate security system over the decades. Ramifying unpaid debt endlessly renewed was a foundational aspect of the 'Security Pact', which financed government action, supported the banking system and supposedly addressed social problems. A Fund of National Solidarity received obligatory voluntary contributions from companies and enterprises, and worked to eradicate what were officially termed 'zones of shadow', like poverty and inequality. The extensive chain of dependencies disguised accountability, while the Security Pact 'ensured peace and order over a long period.' The system focussed, according to Hibou, on the prevention or management of crisis 'by caution, by consensus and by the support of all.' Power was not asserted by radical measures and shocks, but through small-scale interventions and halftones that ultimately enabled most people to compromise. As important as fear in this system was silence, as active ongoing public agency over the decades. Consensus was, as Hibou puts it, 'indissociable from silence.' The consent of individuals was based on a mutually supporting silence. Until Bouazizi's flagrant, unanticipated sacrifice made this impossible.

Protest began initially among young people in peripheral and marginalised regions where job creation was parlous since 1990 and even bleaker after 2008; every year there were some 140,000 new job seekers, vying for at most 65,000 jobs, mainly located in the greater Tunis area and along the coast. Official data, under the rubric of silence, disguised such information and unemployment was not discussed. The integration of youth in the interior into Ben Ali's security pact became increasingly difficult, as their needs focussed directly on basics like jobs and bread. Hibou calls them 'the spearhead of opposition', which soon expanded to embrace 'all generations, classes and regions'. Daily demonstrations in support of the martyr were brutally suppressed and Tunis was engulfed in revolt. The security system then worked not to protect its creator, the President, but to preserve the regime. According to Hibou, a palace revolt was 'orchestrated by the general staff of the army and a section of the elite in power for over twenty years.' Their aim was to prevent the transformation of the popular uprising into a revolution (Hibou 2011: Preface, Introduction and pp. 25, 44, 59, 180-85, 193 and 206). Ben Ali was able to move himself, family and wealth into exile in Saudi Arabia, presumably with the assistance of the country's major Western allies. No physical assassination was plotted, but rather a political assassination was smoothly effected.

In 2012, Hosni Mubarak had ruled for 30 years, seven more than Ben Ali. But when the Egyptian people began to move decisively such longevity profited him little. This process too had its probable beginnings in a specific incident of egregious state brutality. On the night of 6 June 2010, Khaled Saieed, age 28, of

²¹ *Guardian Online* 20 June 2011.

Alexandria, was beaten to death in public by two plain-clothes police. The young man reputedly spent his time with a computer, a guitar and a number of cats, and on 6 June he had greeted friends in the Space Net cybercafe not far from his home. Without preliminaries of any kind, the two police spent 20 minutes kicking Saieed and slamming his head into the concrete floor while he pleaded for mercy. This was witnessed by various people, and the assault only stopped when a physician managed to convince the police that they were beating a corpse. After family members were called to identify the body, a relative managed to take a cell phone camera photo: it showed Khaled's face cut and mangled, several teeth missing and blood pooled under his head. Along with a parallel earlier image, which could have been any modern Egyptian youth, the picture exploded on to the country's internet. According to Mahmoud Salem, aka 'Sandmonkey', a progenitor of the Egyptian blogosphere, it was the picture of Khaled before he was killed that "galvanised people." The two together "showed the middle classes that their devil's bargain with the Ministry of the Interior meant nothing. Being silent and minding their own business wouldn't protect them."

The government attempted a crude cover-up of the killing, then tried to sweep it under the rug. But existing rights organisations like the April 6 Movement 'immediately rallied around the issue, and entirely new movements were born from it.' Khalil and others see it as the real start of the Egyptian revolution. The owner of the Space Net said that soon after mid-2010, "there wasn't anybody in Egypt who didn't know who Khaled Saieed was" (Khalil 2011, chapter 4).²²

State brutality in Tunisia and Egypt, and peoples' reactions to it, were immediately intertwined. Fisk reported his Egyptian colleagues saying that Tunisians had shown them "how to have pride", while Soueif writes that when, on or around the 25 January 2011, 'the Egyptian street started to move for the first time in thirty years' it did so 'under the leadership of the *shabab* (or youth) of Egypt' (Fisk 2011, Soueif 2012: 192). The older despot's end came relatively quickly thereafter, in just 18 days, with various delays and prevarications—he dismissed his cabinet on 28 January, vowed a few days later to stand down at the next 'elections' scheduled for September, claiming as he did so that he had "exhausted [his] life in serving Egypt and my people", and insisting, with evident reference to the already absent Ben Ali, that "I will die on the soil of Egypt and be judged by history."²³

A fourth pillar of Mubarak's power, as more fleetingly of Ben Ali's, was the support of the United States, and this axis had its own big complications. Washington was experiencing evident difficulty in choosing between its immense strategic interests in Egypt and the Middle East and its support or otherwise for Arab democracy. Well after the crackdown on the protesters was

²² He sees Khaled as 'the Emergency Law Martyr', with reference to the sweeping powers of detention and trial conferred on the police after the assassination of President Anwar Sadat, Mubarak's immediate predecessor in 1981, which lasted for the next 31 years. See also Ali 2012.

²³ Jack Shenker, et.al., in *Guardian Online*, 2 February 2011.

underway, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton referred to Mubarak as a loyal friend and indeed as “family”,²⁴ and not until 1 February, did President Obama state that the transition must be meaningful, peaceful and begin now. Ambassador Godee’s cable of 2009 had summarised Egypt’s ongoing, vital importance—it supported peace between Israel and Egypt and ensured critical access to the Suez Canal and Egyptian airspace for American military operations sometimes on short notice. Washington’s military aid was running at some \$1.3 billion a year, and Egypt’s leadership, said Godee, saw this as “untouchable compensation” for making and maintaining peace with Israel. Other factors were also part of this strategic relationship. Egypt played a key role in keeping Hamas bottled up in Gaza and in slowing the flow of Iranian weaponry to them. And Cairo had cooperated enthusiastically with President George Bush’s programme in the ‘rendering’ and interrogation of suspected terrorists.²⁵

Obama’s reluctance to act firmly against Mubarak came at the cost of heavy repression. One estimate of ‘the number killed, minimum’ in clashes with security forces in Egypt, January through February 2011, was 846. Soueif refers to an exhibition of ‘the murdered’ in the Midan in Cairo, describing various pictures: ‘Sally Zahran, massive blows to the head’; ‘Muhammad Abd el-Menem, shot in the head’; ‘Ali Muhsin, carries a laughing toddler’; ‘Muhammad Bassiouny, shot, lies back with his two kids’; and among others, ‘Muhammad Emad holds his arms open wide and wears a London T-shirt’. Pictures of ‘843 more’ existed. She does not specify the time period, but the tenor of her book suggests similarity with *The Economist*.²⁶

Tunisia’s population was less than 11 million people, but they were ethnically and religiously homogenous and enjoyed relatively good standards of health, education and housing at least in coastal cities. For some two decades before the uprising, the economy had grown, on tourism, manufacturing and offshore services, at an annual average of five per cent. Perhaps most prominently, the status of women was unusually high. Polygamy and forced unilateral divorce, for instance, were banned, and the minimum age for marriage was 18. More than 80 per cent of adult females were literate; women made up half the student population, a third of magistrates and a quarter of the diplomatic corps.²⁷ These were some of the factors for which Bel Ali had liked to be known to the world. But there were limitations here too. Though women ‘had been key players’ in the uprising, whether as members of the educated elite of doctors, lawyers and academics, or among the large numbers of unemployed women graduates, they still lacked, in the first months of the ‘Arab Spring’, what Rachid Ghannouchi called political leadership status. As the country’s first parliamentary elections approached, ‘women made up only 6 per cent of the leading candidates at the

²⁴ Cited by Ali 2011. Prime Minister Tony Blair described Mubarak as “immensely courageous and a force for good.” Citation by Owen Jones, *Independent Online*, 1 June 2012.

²⁵ *The Economist*, 5 February 2011.

²⁶ *The Economist*, 16 July 2011, and Soueif (2012: 181).

²⁷ Chrisafis, in the *Guardian Online*, 20 October 2011.

top of party selection lists, which meant [under the electoral rules] that 'very few had a chance of winning a seat.'²⁸

Maintaining the Regimes, Restricting Democratisation

Six months after the start of the Tunisian uprising, Chrisafis could report few signs of optimism on the streets of the capital about progress. According to Bassem Bouguerra, a blogger she spoke to: "Tunisia doesn't know where its going. But it knows where it came from and it doesn't want to go back there."²⁹ Bouguerra, along with more than a dozen journalists, had been beaten by police in May when they covered a renewed anti-government demonstration. Many of the same police who served Ben Ali still held their posts. The interim government was fragile and expected elections had been postponed. When people went to the polls in October, they voted, she and colleagues reported, 'in the shadow of the old regime.' Police brutality continued: Ben Ali's cronies and sympathisers 'still dominated a crooked justice system [and] corruption had worsened.' In the new year, censorship continued along with 'growing intolerance': a liberal writer told Fisk that 92 per cent of books then being published in Tunisia were Islamist. Bookshops outside Tunis just sold school notebooks and tracts.³⁰ Material conditions were also very grim for many. The jobless rate for graduate women was above 40 per cent, and double that number in the interior. Of the country's working-age population of 3.5 million, *about 800,000* were unemployed.³¹

In Egypt, the dumping of Mubarak quickly proceeded when the arrangements were clarified between the American and Egyptian military. US Defence Secretary, Robert Gates, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, and other senior Pentagon figures were in regular contact with their Egyptian counterparts all through the last days of January and the beginning of February. In an interview with ABC television, Mullen described existing American aid as a "significant investment" that has "paid off for a long, long time". The two large armies were described as closely interlinked, through joint training and exercises as well as aid.³²

By 11 February, the authorities had little choice but to act decisively and quickly against the President. On that morning, in Cook's description of the events, 'millions of Egyptians poured into the streets all over the country to demand Mubarak's ouster' (Cook 2012: 294). In Cairo 'a mass of humanity' streamed

²⁸ Chrisafis, *Guardian Online*, 20 October 2011.

²⁹ Bouguerra had been detained and assaulted a month earlier when he tried to film police beating a cameraman at a demonstration. Chrisafis, *Guardian Online*, 17 June, and Chrisafis, et.al., *Observer Online*, 22 October 2011.

³⁰ Fisk, *Independent Online*, 21 February 2012.

³¹ Fisk, *Independent Online*, 21 February 2012 and Chrisafis, *Guardian Online*, 17 June 2011.

³² Ewan MacAskill, *Guardian Online*, 4 February 2011.

toward Mubarak's compound while hundreds of thousands kept up their protest in Tahrir Square. These numbers were much greater than those seen in the uprisings in Central Europe a decade earlier. At six pm Vice President Omar Suleiman took less than a minute to announce on television that Hosni Mubarak had stepped down and power had been handed over to the military. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) was instructed to manage an orderly transition. SCAF would be headed by Field Marshal Mohammed Hussein Tantawi, commander of Egypt's armed forces.³³

Suleiman's role and proclivities were antithetical to constitutionalism and the rule of law. He was chief of Egypt's General Intelligence Service, 1993-2011, but assumed a more public role in the foreign ministry after 2001. He was known as 'the CIA's main man in Cairo' and 'Egypt's torturer-in-chief'. Under President Bush's war on terrorism, rendition was directed less at putting suspects on trial and more at obtaining 'actionable intelligence'. For the Bush administration, Egypt was 'a torture destination of choice', and at least one person rendered there, the Egyptian born Australian citizen, Mamdouh Habib, was tortured by Suleiman himself. According to US ambassador, Edward Walker—in a document released by Wikileaks—Suleiman was "very bright, very realistic...[and] not squeamish, by the way."³⁴

The power of the Egyptian military went well beyond the aid it received from the United States and its broad association with the superpower. It was much more than a military machine, and its tentacles reportedly reached everywhere. It was a business empire that included construction, hotel and petrol sectors, worth around 20 per cent of the country's economy.³⁵ Retired army officers 'were accustomed to receiving title to public lands', and turning them sometimes into housing and agricultural projects and hotels. It possessed unaccountable and largely independent powers built up over some sixty years, permeating the country's laws, institutions and the six million-strong bureaucracy. Such agencies and operatives constituted a 'shadowy matrix' or 'deep state'³⁶—in other words, the core of the regime, intended to endure regardless of who or what held the formal powers of the state. With the handover of executive power to SCAF, the military had acquired powers which it had not enjoyed, according

³³ Cook (2012: 294); McGreal and Jack Shenker, *Guardian Online*, 11 February 2011.

³⁴ Habib was said to have been seized off a bus in Pakistan in October 2001, and in Egypt, apart from electric shocks and immersion in water, his fingers were broken and he was hung from metal hooks. The beatings were so hard that at one point his blindfold was dislodged, revealing the identity of Suleiman as his torturer. The subsequent Vice President was also 'directly implicated' in the death of Ibn al-Sheikh al-Libi in Libya in the early 2000s. Lisa Hajjar, in *Jadalliya*, 30 January 2011, with reference to Jane Meyer's *The Dark Side* and Habib's memoir, *My Story: The Tale of a Terrorist Who Wasn't*.

³⁵ *Aljazeera* online, 14 August 2012.

³⁶ *The Economist*, 19 May 2012. Shatz notes differences between the military and the investigative agencies and Ministry of the Interior, favoured by Mubarak. This had the effect of insulating the army from the daily work of repression, shielding it in turn from public rage when the uprising began (Shatz 2012: 15, 17).

to Shatz (2012: 17), since the early 1950s, and might find difficult to sacrifice. A year after Mubarak's demise, the core of the regime (or *nizaam*) 'remain[ed] in place' (Teti and Gervasio 2012: 102). What facilitated the United States abandonment of Mubarak also constituted of course a deep problem for the democratisation movement. On the assessment of Hossam Bahgat, a prominent human-rights lawyer, the "real, dangerous struggle" was not along a religious-secular divide, but "between civil society and the deep state."³⁷

But civil society in Egypt was not without strengths of its own. This stemmed from the size and diversity of the population, and in particular from its youthfulness, its high educational levels and associated organisational skills. By 2010 there was rapid growth in the 20-24 age group. Of those officially unemployed at the start of the uprising, about half were aged 20-24. As more than 43 per cent of the unemployed had university degrees, the impact of the uprising came from well educated youth in both a formal and a general sense. According to Salt (2012: 58), the young had the networking skills to draw 'millions of people' affected by low wages and rising prices into the protest. It was a movement, Nogam reports, composed of 'tech-savvy students...labour activists, intellectuals, lawyers, accountants [and] engineers' which 'had its origins in a three-year-old textile strike in the Nile Delta, and built upon an alliance of new and old opposition groups. One was the April 6 Youth Movement, formed in 2008 in support of the workers' struggle in the industrial town of El-Mahalla El-Kubra. National minimum wages had remained stagnant for 'over two and a half decades'. At issue too was the restructuring of unions that had 'hitherto functioned with government appointed leaders'. April 6 endeavoured to rally middle class youth behind the strike. But the military occupied the factories, and demonstrations faced a brutal crackdown (Nigam 2012: 166).

Workers' action had a fairly long history in Egypt, but it had spiked when Mubarak pushed ahead with a neoliberal agenda of privatisation, low wages and reduced benefits. In 2006-2008 almost the entire textile industry and the communities supporting it were on strike, and the Mubarak regime was forced to recognise the first independent trade union since 1957. Labour activism thereafter became 'the primary form of resistance to the regime' over the decade preceding the uprisings.³⁸ The protest leaders and the workers were intertwined. Tens of thousands of workers in both the public and private sectors, covering sectors from petroleum, through banking, transportation and health care, to heavy industry and the Cairo stock exchange, struck on 10 February 2011, the eve of the ousting, and joined the protesters in the streets. In Tunisia too, education unions played a key role in the uprisings, organising unemployed youth, many of whom as noted were educated, and endeavouring to combine demands for political reform with bread-and-butter issues. The military, Galvin notes, watched this action 'with trepidation.'

³⁷ Cited in *The Economist*, 19 May 2012.

³⁸ James Gelvin, author of *The Arab Uprisings*, *Jadaliyya*, 25 July 2012.

Labour activist Hamdy Hussein, also says that labour protests served as a catalyst for Tahrir, linking popular protest over corruption and poverty with workers' demands for better pay and conditions. Textile workers have continued their activity and they are prominent in both their large numbers and militancy. In mid-2012, a strike by 23,000 employees at Misr Spinning and Weaving, the country's biggest weaving company, was in its fourth day and had been joined, according to Hussein, by 12,000 workers in other state firms. Egypt had around 300,000 textile workers, including 100,000 in the state sector. They were facing strong competition from foreign and privately owned companies. Labour unrest was also occurring in the ceramics industry, and disputes at Ceramics Cleopatra, Egypt's largest privately owned ceramics firm, had brought clashes between workers and police at much the same time. This action was unlikely to decrease, according to Hussein. Workers had sparked the revolution against Mubarak's despotism, only to be "crowded out", along with sympathetic left wing groups, by Islamists and the army in the immediate aftermath. "The coming revolution", he believed, "will correct the path of the first one [and] it will be a labour revolution."³⁹

Independent worker organisations were a direct threat to the privileges of the military elite. Soon after the transfer of power to SCAF, 'an unprecedented wave of union activity rolled across the country...involving hundreds of thousands of workers.' Earlier it had issued a decree banning strikes that could harm "the wheel of production". The military continued its backing of state-run unions, and the harassment of union organisers (Mackell 2012: 28).

Groups concerned with workers' and human rights have stood their ground against the regime. Teti and Gervasio have identified among such groups the Hisham Mubarak Law Centre and the Centre for Trade Union Workers' Services. They note too that among new independent trade unions, the Real Estate Tax Collectors union (RETA) was the first established in December 2008, and it was followed since the uprising by 'literally hundreds' of others, including the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU), formed on 31 January 2011. They see the independent unions and "activist NGOs" as 'certainly the most important component' of the democracy movement, in both their independence and in the 'efficacy of their action.' In so doing, they have devised and utilised a variety of instruments and methods to spread their messages among the people (Teti and Gervasio 2012: 104).

Hossam el-Hamalawy is a journalist, blogger and activist and, judging by a photograph, he is of the mid-20s age group. He believed that independent unions "are the silver bullet for any dictatorship." What he called mass strikes were continuing. While attempts were being made by middle-class activists to confine the revolution to the realm of formal political institutions, he believed that the main part of the revolution lay in the socio-economic emancipation of the people, which was just beginning. What we need to do now, he said, "is to take Tahrir to the factories, the universities, the workplaces. In every single

³⁹ 'Labour Unrest Spreads in Egypt', *Aljazeera* online, Middle East, 20 July 2012.

institution in this country there is a mini-Mubarak who needs to be overthrown. In every institution there are figures from the old state security regime who need to be overthrown." It must be assumed that everyone who belonged to the old regime or enjoyed privileges under it is going to defend those privileges. There was, he said, huge resentment among the Egyptian working class about the neoliberal policies that have impoverished them over recent decades. He did not doubt that the western powers and Arab monarchs who are already deeply unhappy at what they have seen in Egypt will be even more dismayed at the second revolutionary phase. But 'however much pressure they put on the military junta, the pressure of the street can be stronger' (El-Hamalawy 2011).

Democracy's Gains and Losses

One year is an extremely short time on which to assess progress in a country as large as Egypt, where democratic processes are just beginning. But in consideration simply of discernible tendencies, it might be thought that the balance is at best mixed, and the gains are mainly in symbolic and long-term aspirational areas and very limited in the key formal institutions, parliament, the presidency and the constitution.

Key parliamentary and presidential elections were opportunities largely missed by the people. Islamic parties dominated in parliament along with remnants of the dictatorship. Two-thirds of voters in the November 2011 parliamentary elections supported the candidates of either the Muslim Brotherhood's FJP, or *al-Nour*. Both were well organised, untainted by past corruption, and typically faced weak and divided secular parties especially in rural areas. The Brotherhood's strength was based on its half-million committed members and its unmatched capacity to mobilise the numbers.⁴⁰ It won 36.6 per cent of the 9.7 million votes cast. Number two was the unequivocally anti-democratic *Al-Nour*, which advocated strict curbs on art and personal freedoms, and drew support from hard-line Salafi Muslims, and obtained 25 per cent.⁴¹ The two together held a solid majority of the vote. After subsequent elections for the upper house or Shura Council—where turnout fell to some 6.5 per cent—*The Economist* believed that 'over 70 per cent of seats in parliament' were held by the Brotherhood and *Al-Nour*.⁴²

An immediate and vital task of parliament was to choose the composition of a proposed 100-person assembly which would re-write the country's constitution. Under existing laws power was of course vested in the presidency. Liberals were

⁴⁰ *The Economist*, 19 May 2012.

⁴¹ Alastair Beach, in the *Independent Online*, 5 December 2011. The party's spokesman in Cairo, Yousseri Hamad, said that democracy allowed man's law to override God's: "In the land of Islam, I can't let people decide what is permissible or what is prohibited. It is God who gives the answers as to what is right and what is wrong." Interview with Associated Press, *Guardian Online*, 2 December 2011.

⁴² 10 March 2012.

reportedly seeking representation for civil society in the writing of the new constitution, including professional associations, intellectuals and trade unions. Voting for the presidency was a related and equally big long term issue, and on both the Brotherhood's actions offered no secular or democratic assurances. After earlier pledging that it would not contest for the presidency—given its parliamentary dominance—it reversed its position and announced at the end of March that it would contend. Results in the first round of presidential elections saw Freedom and Justice again coming first, with a candidate of the regime a close second. The Brotherhood's Mohammed Morsi won 24.3 per cent, and Ahmed Shafiq, a self-styled law and order candidate, former air force chief, and Mubarak's last prime minister, was second with 23.3 per cent. Other significant contenders were Hamdeen Sabbahi, variously described as an independent Nasserist or 'populist socialist', with 20.4 per cent, and Abdel Moneim Abul Fotouh, seen as an independent or mild Islamist, with 17.2 per cent. The second and decisive round in June was thus restricted to Morsi and Shafiq; Islam or the military, the entrenched poles of Egyptian society and politics over decades, still unchanged. Turnout in this vital contest was a pitiful 46 per cent of registered voters.⁴³

Informed opinion on the likely role of Islamist parties in a democratising state was divided. Marc Lynch has looked at the recent successes of Islamists in elections in Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt and sees no cause for alarm; it was inevitable that groups like the Brotherhood would benefit from the opening-up of politics after the long dictatorships—which sometimes bore heavily on their leadership--⁴⁴ and their democratic pretensions should be put to the test.⁴⁵

Despite the reportedly wide-spread pessimism on the streets, Tunisia's parliamentary elections on 23 October 2011 went well, and lent credence to Lynch's view. *Ennahda* (Renaissance), the heavily repressed Islamist party under Ben Ali's domination, had already shown considerable political capacity. It had reestablished its leadership from prison (some 4,000 were jailed in the 1990s) and exile, rebuilt party structures and entered the elections within a few months of Ben Ali's expulsion: before January 2011 the party had no offices or visible signs of its existence. It won some 41 per cent of seats in the assembly. Led by Rachid Ghannouchi, an intellectual who had written on Islam and democracy in the 1980s (Haugbolle and Cavatorta 2012), it ran a supposedly exemplary democratic campaign against a number of small secular parties,

⁴³ Ian Black and Abdel-Rahman Hussein, *Guardian Online*, 29 May 2012, and *The Economist*, 2 June 2012.

⁴⁴ For example, Khairat al-Shatir, senior member of the Brotherhood's leadership and a wealthy businessman, spent 12 years in prison, and was only released as a result of the uprising in 2011. *BBC News Online*, 31 March 2012.

⁴⁵ Review of Marc Lynch, *The Arab Uprising: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East*, *The Economist*, 21 April 2012. Some historical experience also pointed towards inclusion. When the Islamic Salvation Front comfortably won general elections in Algeria in 1991, but was prevented from assuming power by the army, a decade of bloody civil war followed. 'Briefing: Islam and Democracy', *The Economist*, 6 August 2011.

stressing its long opposition to the old regime, and 'its identification with working class authenticity', in contrast with the orientation of Tunisia's traditional Francophone elite. On an estimated turnout of 60 per cent of eligible voters—usually a larger category than those who were registered—*Ennahda* secured 90 seats in the 217-seat assembly. Its nearest rivals on the results were the Congress for the Republic, led by a prominent human rights campaigner, with 14 per cent of the seats, and Popular Petition on 13 per cent. In power, it established a coalition government and appeared to accept such key principles as individual liberties and the rule of law. It was early days, but Tunisia's elections had made a strong case for letting the people choose on contentious issues like the role of political Islam in a democracy.⁴⁶

Samir Amin held a strong contrary opinion. He allowed that political Islam in Egypt 'still enjoys "legitimacy" among the general public', but sees this as a mistaken perception. If it takes over government, he stressed, 'it will continue to impose itself...for a long time.' He does not see the Brotherhood as primarily an Islamic party, but as 'firstly a reactionary party', ready and able if it gains power to collaborate with imperialist powers against democratisation (2012: 37, 39).

In contrast with Tunis, Islamism in Cairo continued to obstruct democratisation. The Brotherhood's representation predominated in parliament, but deadlock persisted for weeks over the composition of the constitutional assembly, and hence of its first meeting. Here was a large vulnerability which the military could exploit in order to hold on to power. SCAF had already said, in December 2011, that the upcoming parliament would not be representative of all Egyptian people, and it could therefore not be accorded the final say in the drafting of the new constitution.⁴⁷ After the rejection of a proposed constitutional panel in April 2012 by the Administrative Court in Cairo, supposedly because it gave a near-majority of the membership to Islamists and under-represented women, secularists and youth, Field Marshall Tantawi reportedly gave parliament a deadline to name a representative body.⁴⁸

Progress was being achieved, however, in many informal areas in highly meaningful long-term ways. One was an attempt to record and document the revolution as it had been occurring on the streets in Cairo and elsewhere. The historian, Khaled Fahmy, said that Egyptians were highly sensitive about official attempts to write history and create state-sponsored narratives about historical events. Inherent tensions existed, he believed, between mass popular participation and official attempts to catalogue and record them. These insights

⁴⁶ *The Economist*, 29 October 2011 and Shahshahani and Mullin (2012: 67 and 85).

⁴⁷ Major General Mokhtar el-Mulla, a leading member of SCAF, in an interview with foreign media,

Jack Shenker, *Guardian Online*, 7 December 2011.

⁴⁸ The reported membership of a more representative body of 100 included in part thirty members from parliament's lower house; 15 judges and legal experts; one seat each to the armed forces, police and the justice ministry; four from the Coptic Church; 13 delegates from trade unions and 21 public figures. *BBC News Online*, 8 June 2012.

led to the formation of the Committee to Document the 25 January Revolution, staffed by volunteers and drawing on everything from official records and insurrectionary pamphlets to multimedia footage and updates on Twitter. The immediate aim was to gather as much primary data as possible and deposit it in the national archives for the free scrutiny of the people and posterity. The bigger plans accommodated practical and political concerns. Over the first five months of 2011, the ruling military junta—SCAF—had been seeking to ‘limit the [accepted] scope of the revolution both rhetorically and legally, applying the term strictly to the 18 days of street demonstrations that led to Mubarak’s resignation’, and contrasting these supposedly “selfless” protests with the allegedly “disruptive” and “self-interested” strikes and sit-ins held subsequently by workers and other groups demanding political change.

Questions abounded concerning the scope of the revolution and the democratisation process. One of the Committee’s working groups had decided to change the ‘start date’ of their enquiries from 14 January 2011 when Ben Ali was forced out, back to June 2010 when the Alexandrian youth Khaled Saieed was battered to death in public by police. The ‘finish date’ of the project was an unresolved problem. The recognition that revolution, like democratisation, is a long-term process, rarely a single event, is of profound importance. Fahmy’s own feeling was that “the revolution is very much incomplete, and this second stage—which requires overcoming the army—may prove even more difficult than the battle to topple Mubarak.”

The project was also battling against the denial of public access to official information in Egypt and other Arab countries, both by legal measures and by burying depositories in basements and cellars. What was happening in Tunisia and Egypt appeared to validate strongly the belief, found in Marx, Brecht and elsewhere, that people not generals or leaders make history. “But if it is the people who make history, then they should be the ones who write it and read it as well,” Fahmy concluded: “This was a leaderless revolution...which came about through mass participation.” The writing of history now “ha[d] to be part of the same process” (Shenker 2011b).

The ongoing protest had many specific targets in the military and security forces. The demand that police and other former regime officials be accountable for the violence inflicted on demonstrators had seen armed security men fighting long running battles with civilians in Cairo and Suez at the beginning of July 2011, after police accused of murdering protesters were released on bail. “The demands of the revolution have not changed since day one”, declared the 25 January Revolution[ary] Youth Coalition in an online statement. “It was not just about toppling the old regime but about building a state where people can have freedom, dignity, rule of law and social justice.” In an apparent attempt at appeasement in the face of the protests, the interim interior minister, Mansour el-Essawy, ‘promised to purge up to 700 corrupt senior police officers’. But five months after Mubarak’s fall, with by then ‘almost a thousand dead’, only a single officer had been convicted--but not then imprisoned-- for his crimes. Many newspaper articles, among them one by the noted author Alaa al-Aswany,

decried the continuing presence of Mubarak-affiliated ministers, judges, security officials and journalists, among the political elite. The revolution was at a real fork in the road, said al-Aswany; it could accomplish its goals, "but it can also lose, leaving the old regime to return in a slightly different form," he said (Shenker 2011a).

In these critical circumstances, activists were proposing new forms of grassroots political participation, including what they called a "civil referendum". This would see questionnaires about Egypt's future distributed among demonstrators and then dropped in manned ballot boxes throughout Tahrir square (Shenker 2011a). At the same time, existing youth groups were flourishing despite or because of the continuance of the military junta. The April 6 Movement, for instance, had grown seven times in size, embracing at the start of 2012 some 20,000 activists across Egypt.⁴⁹

The revolutionary process was producing understandings of historical and universal importance. When once the Arab world was seen as a stagnant pond of retardation, tyranny and fatalistic submission, now protest movements in the United States, Spain and elsewhere—for instance the Occupy Movement and the *indignados*--saw Tunisia and Tahrir as inspiration for their own actions. The lesson was a dual one: no longer was the west to be a democratic beacon to the Middle East, and additionally, once again, democracy has become a revolutionary force. In the words of Occupy: 'From Tunisia to Tahrir Square, Madrid to Reykjavik...people are rising up to denounce the status quo'. Where supposedly democratic systems exist, they have been 'emptied of meaning, put to the service of those few interested in increasing the power of corporations and financial institutions.' In the commentary of Chomsky: things that were sort of known, though hidden in the margins, 'are now right up front—such as the imagery of the 99% and 1%; and the dramatic facts of sharply rising inequality.' And for Chakraborty, Occupy had succeeded in just one year in turning "we are the 99%" into one of the most resonant slogans in campaigning history. In a world where 'the history of political activism is the history of setbacks and unexpected advance,' what Occupy has clearly got right 'is its targets'. That the liberal capitalist model is broken 'shows in the policy exhaustion of those still trying to patch it up four years after Lehman's collapse' (Occupy Movement 2012, Chomsky 2012, Chakraborty 2012).

What the Arab revolts represented for Bottici and Challand (2012) was the return of 'a truly combative civil society' possessed of spontaneity and grassroots organisation, and 'operating outside the framework of formal political institutions.' It is a civil society 'very different from the reformist one depicted by western political theorists.'

⁴⁹ Tom Perry in *Mail and Guardian Online*, 18 January 2012.

Military Domination Versus Presidential Authority

But parliament, the Muslim Brotherhood and the people have left it late to strengthen and activate the formal political institutions. From the beginnings of Tahrir, the people had harboured the illusion that the military, unlike the police forces –especially the Interior Ministry’s Central Security riot police-- represented no physical threat, and were rather benign, even protective, as regards peaceful democratisation.⁵⁰ The absence of physical intimidation had been stressed by protesters, and other forms of control emanating from the military had been ignored or neglected.

Beginning in mid-June, SCAF took a number of steps which cumulatively appeared to indicate that there would be no meaningful handover of power on 30 June, as previously and repeatedly promised (Human Rights Watch 2012a). On 14 June the recently elected parliament was dissolved and sweeping powers, including those over legislation, assumed by the military. Decrees of 4 and 17 June re-empowered the military to arrest and try civilians and expanded its role in internal as well as national security affairs. On 14 June, General Mamdouh Shaheen declared on television that “the good of the country require[d] a presence for the armed forces in the street to protect the country since the police are still unable to fully perform.” A so-called “Constitutional Declaration” of 17 June indicated the military’s wide powers and its presumptions of superiority with regard to the presidency and the people: “[I]n cases of internal disturbances that require the intervention of the armed forces, the president may ask the SCAF for permission to order the armed forces to share in law enforcement duties and the protection of public institutions.”⁵¹ In a few weeks SCAF had acquired powers in internal affairs that went far beyond what the military held under Hosni Mubarak.⁵²

Brutality at the hands of the Egyptian military was of course a harsh and largely unaddressed reality. Human Rights Watch had documented ‘dozens of cases of torture by the military during arrests and in detention, most recently in Abbasiya in May, and before that...brutal beatings of male and female protesters in December 2011. On 9 March 2011, military officers had subjected female protesters in detention to virginity tests.’ (in Human Rights Watch 2012a.) In late October 2012, Human Rights Watch noted that, over the previous 18 months, ‘the military ha[d] been getting away with murder, torture and assault.’

⁵⁰ Consider this description of popular behaviour in Cairo on 1 February 2011 soon after SCAF had declared that the armed forces would never fire on the Egyptian people. ‘Battalions of people are continuing...to surround the tanks, lean on them, climb on to them...stick flags and flowers on them.’ Eventually a young officer made a speech urging us to maintain our determination. ‘He was lifted on to people’s shoulders and carried round the Midan. “The People ! The Army ! One Hand! The People! The Army!...”’ (Soueif 2012: 53). Khalil (2011: 161, 211) notes that the military’s statement against the use of force (of 31 January) also acknowledged “the legitimacy of the people’s demands.”

⁵¹ Excerpt from article 23, in Human Rights Watch 2012a.

⁵² Assessment of Joe Stork, deputy Middle East Director of Human Rights Watch. in Human Rights Watch 2012a.

Military courts had enjoyed sole jurisdiction over any act committed by military personnel and 'consistently failed to investigate properly the army's abuses against protesters.' And the same courts issued harsh sentences, 'including many death sentences', for crimes committed by civilians, and there was even a 'significant discrepancy in sentencing when a military officer [was] tried, sometimes for the same crime' (2012b). In a long and detailed report, Amnesty concluded that the 'army [was] above the law' over the eighteen months of the SCAF's domination. For instance, 'no members of the military forces, including paratroopers and commando units, had been charged with any crime, despite killing at least 17 people and injuring around 1,000.' 'Only time will tell' whether the military junta had been put under elected civilian control. Ambivalence and uncertainty prevailed. President Morsi, for example, had appointed the commander of the paratroopers as commander of his presidential guard. He also promoted the head of the Military Judiciary to become one of his aides: a person 'responsible for overseeing the unfair trials of thousands of civilians before military courts.' Overall, 'the military forces appear to remain beyond the reach of justice...It is unlikely that they will ever be held accountable' (Amnesty International 2012: 40 – 44).

Certain disturbing incidents were widely publicised. One, in December 2011 in Cairo, showed a woman, seen in photos as 'young, slim and fair', lying on her back 'surrounded by four soldiers, two of whom are dragging her by the arms...She's wearing blue jeans and trainers. But her top half is bare...' Soldiers had also taken 'a distinguished older lady [who had] become known for giving food to the protesters and slapped her repeatedly about the face till she had to beg and apologise.' The army's message was said to be clear: 'Everything you rose up against is here [and] is worse. Don't put your hopes in the revolution or parliament. We are the regime and we're back' (Soueif 2011).

When the results of the presidential election were still awaited, and big demonstrations occurred in Tahrir square, Mohammed Morsi published a statement indicating his future plans. If he was elected, he noted, "I alone [would] represent an unequivocal departure from the old regime." People must be free to choose public officials through fair elections. "No party or group or class must ever be allowed to monopolise the political power in the country" (sic). He intended to transform the office of the president, into "an institution with clear and delineated roles given to a number of vice-presidents (representing political and social forces other than the Freedom and Justice party)." They will work in a transparent political environment, "subject to oversight by parliament and civil society." "Inclusion", he stressed, would be "at the core of my economic vision." Scholarly research indicated that most of the country's privatisation programme had "benefited only 30 families", while 40 per cent of the population could not spend even \$2 a day. "Balanced economic growth and social justice will be the ultimate objective of my programme, as it was for our great revolution as a whole" (Morsi 2012).

When Morsi became president elect on 24 June, he had received 51.73 per cent of the vote against 48.27 per cent for his rival Shafiq, an improvement on the

one per cent that separated them in the first round. Perhaps further reflecting the invidiousness of the choice for many voters, turnout was only 51.58 per cent. He reportedly resigned from his positions within the Brotherhood, and an assistant, Dina Zakareya, affirmed on 25 June that the new government would be "a coalition government without a FJP majority and led by an independent figure."⁵³

Morsi was sworn in as president at the end of June at the Supreme Constitutional Court. The day before SCAF supposedly handed over power to him after a military parade outside Cairo. Field Marshal Tantawi declared that the military "ha[d] fulfilled our promise...before God and the people", decorated the President with the Shield of the Armed Forces, and shook hands with him several times.⁵⁴

But the divisions were many between SCAF, the Supreme Constitutional Court, and the President, with the latter the only popularly elected entity, but unsupported by a parliament and a constitution, parliament having been partly dissolved by the decision of the Constitutional Court and *in toto* by a subsequent SCAF decree. According to Mahmoud Helmy of the FJP, the Court's original decision had been "specifically regarding the unconstitutionality of a third of the parliamentary seats, not the entire Assembly". The President, he told the *Guardian*, "had no objection to there being new elections, but for now, we will go about our business as usual."⁵⁵ This was wishful thinking. Without decisive action President Morsi was unable to act independently of the judiciary and military.

A leaderless uprising certainly drew the people into Tahrir Square and kept them there until they had ensured Mubarak's expulsion, but it brought big problems of organisation and leadership in its wake. A newly risen people were unable to deal with the detailed immediate issues, like ensuring good turnout in key elections, and in meeting constitutional demands such as the convening of a representative Constitutional Assembly, where the Brotherhood was allowed to sit on its hands over weeks. Democratic institutions were denied validation and activation. The uprising was also at fault in its failure to understand the military and the intentions of its commanders to hold on to power.

Military power was extended in the days before Morsi's inauguration when it was revealed that Tantawi would remain head of SCAF and commander of the armed forces, and be defence minister as well.⁵⁶ The notion of remnants was used against deeply tarnished figures like Ahmed Shafiq and ex-Vice President

⁵³ *BBC News Online*, 24 June 2012 and Abdel-Rahman Hussein in *Guardian Online*, 26 June 2012.

⁵⁴ Magdi Abdelhadi in *BBC Online*, 30 June 2012.

⁵⁵ Abdel-Rahman Hussein in *Guardian Online*, 26 June 2012.

⁵⁶ Reuters, 'Egypt's Defence Minister Hangs Defiantly on to Power', *Guardian Online*, 28 June 2012.

Omar Suleiman,⁵⁷ but it is possible that not enough recognition was given to the great size of the Mubarak regime,⁵⁸ and that many within it were much closer to SCAF than to Morsi, as Alaa al-Aswany had warned in mid-2011, the Constitutional Court being not the least of these. "There is no power above people power", Morsi abstractly intoned on the eve of his inauguration, and promised a "civil, nationalist and constitutional state".⁵⁹ But he did not invoke the distinctiveness of his position as sole elected representative of the people, and the unique authority this conferred on his decisions. When he attempted to recall parliament in early July, the Supreme Constitutional Court overruled him.

When Secretary of State Clinton met president Morsi on 14 July in Cairo, at the start of a two-day visit to Egypt, this was said to be the highest level meeting between a US official and the Muslim Brotherhood, Washington had previously been inclined to see the organisation as a supporter of terrorism. Nevertheless the views which Clinton now expressed were firm, clear and pro-democratic. The United States, she said, "supports the full transition to civilian rule with all that entails". There was more work ahead, she stressed. "I think the issues around the parliament, [and] the constitution have to be resolved between and among Egyptians." She looked forward to discussing these issues with Field Marshal Tantawi "and working to support the military's return to a purely national security role."⁶⁰

Tantawi, however, rejected such recommendations almost out of hand. Speaking just hours after his meeting with Clinton, he upheld the political supremacy and guardianship of the military, portrayed the Brotherhood as a foreign intrusion and accorded no role to democracy. "Egypt will never fall. It belongs to all Egyptians and not to a certain group. The armed forces will not allow it. [They] will not allow anyone, especially those pushed from outside, to distract it from its role as the protector of Egypt. The army will never commit treason and will continue to perform its duties..."⁶¹

⁵⁷ Shafiq was reported to have left Egypt with most of his family for Abu Dhabi on 26 June, hours after investigations were opened into claims he misused public funds as a minister of the former regime. Suleiman had gone the same way earlier that month. AP, *Independent Online*, 27 June 2012.

⁵⁸ Inquiries within parliament's Planning and Budget Committee (which died when the assembly was dismissed by SCAF in mid-June) revealed that there were 5.7 million government employees in 2009, and close to 7 million by 2012 (El Rashidi 2012).

⁵⁹ Abdel-Rahman Hussein in *Guardian Online*, 26 June 2012.

⁶⁰ A Reuters report on her visit in *Guardian Online*, 14 July 2012.

⁶¹ *Aljazeera* online, Middle East, 16 July 2012. Founded in 1928 in opposition to British occupation, it is difficult to depict the Brotherhood as foreign. It has influenced Islamist ideas across the region, while professing a relatively moderate version of Islam at home. It is known for its discipline, secretiveness and political awareness. *The Economist*, 4 and 10 December 2011.

On 14 July, as if anticipating the military's intransigence, the Secretary of State had reportedly urged President Morsi to "assert the full authority of his office."⁶²

Protests against the United States and the Brotherhood had seen tomatoes, shoes and plastic bottles thrown at Clinton's motorcade, support for the 'jihadists' and a 'theocracy' were denounced, while other demonstrators had chanted "Monica" in a clear reference to Monica Lewinsky and President Bill Clinton.⁶³ Yet on any objective criteria then, the Secretary of State was seemingly the best interlocutor then available to President Morsi. This was borne on the United States' regular financial assistance which went largely to the military, and which was considered untouchable and valuable by both sides. Financial resources were of proven importance to the military. During her meeting with President Morsi, Secretary Clinton was said to have pledged 'hundreds of millions of dollars in debt relief, private investment and job creation funds.' When this economic package was discussed with Tantawi, the Field Marshal stressed, according to an official present on the occasion, 'that this is what Egyptians need most now, help getting the economy back on track.'⁶⁴

The political problems facing Morsi were equally pressing. Direct action by millions of people had introduced democracy, accompanied by intense workers' struggles. In the immediate aftermath popular experimentation with democratisation had begun. But elections had seen no upsurge in participation, and had instead accorded a large and disproportionate role to Islamists. The latter might respect the formalities of democracy, but their understanding of democratisation as a deep and long term process was limited at best.⁶⁵ Morsi came to the presidency with 'a reputation as a plodding technocrat.' But when he purged the upper ranks of SCAF in August 2012, he initiated some important gains for elected executive power. He retired Tantawi and his next in line, the chief of staff. The moves were strongly welcomed in Tahrir Square where demonstrators celebrated with chants of "Go away Field Marshall." Replacing Tantawi in SCAF and as minister of defence was the head of military intelligence, General Abdel-Fatah el-Sissi. El-Sissi was described as considerably younger than Tantawi, and to have 'br[ought] with him several younger officers' (El Amrani 2012). The military retained economic and political power, but the President would now be dealing with 'a new, potentially more compliant and more competent generation of officers.' Some members of SCAF had apparently assisted President Morsi in his move, and they could be

⁶² *Aljazeera*, 16 July 2012.

⁶³ *Aljazeera*, 16 July 2012.

⁶⁴ *Aljazeera*, 16 July 2012.

⁶⁵ When the uprising had started 'Islamist leaders were nowhere to be seen. The Brotherhood did not

expect to wield power in Egypt so soon, and they resisted taking power over the military until February 2012. Many of their affiliates were said to be internally divided and 'unsure of what to do now that they are in power.' Editorial, *The Economist*, 18 February 2012.

beholden to him for their positions in his administration.⁶⁶ Uncertainties continued. Both Tantawi and Anan received high military honours, prompting some speculation that this could be part of a 'safe exit scenario' which would allow members of SCAF to leave office without fear of prosecution for crimes against demonstrators. Such prosecutions were of course specific demands of the demonstrators.

As significantly, Morsi also cancelled SCAF's constitutional declaration in June curbing presidential powers. Legislative powers thus reverted to the President. He further decreed that fresh parliamentary elections would be held 60 days after the ratification of a new constitution in a popular referendum. Speculation focussed on a possible renewed challenge from the supreme constitutional court. Perhaps with this in mind, Morsi also appointed senior judge, Mahmoud Mekki, as a Vice President. Mekki was prominent in the independent judges movement which agitated for judicial independence under Mubarak.⁶⁷ Additionally, Mahmoud's brother, Ahmed Mekki, who was also part of the judicial Reform Movement, was named as justice minister. According to Hearst, 'civil society and the rule of law could not have two better non-Islamist champions.'⁶⁸ They would also strengthen the President in any future challenge from the Constitutional Court.

The plodding continued. In early August, Morsi acquired a prime minister, and shortly after a cabinet. The new administration did not inspire revolutionary enthusiasm. Led by Hisham Qandil, a pious bureaucrat who had served as irrigation minister, its ministers were 'mostly grey figures sympathetic to the Brotherhood'. The interior minister was a police general.⁶⁹ A coalition government, pointed to before Morsi's inauguration, had not been realised. But there was also no sign of greater Islamisation. In December 2011, it was reported that the Brotherhood leadership had assured the British ambassador in Cairo, James Watt, that they had no wish to impose sharia law on the country or to cancel Egypt's treaty with Israel.⁷⁰ But Morsi was also utilising presidential authority to chart a more independent international role. Within his first 100 days, he had 'sent a clear message to Washington that he is distancing himself from Hosni Mubarak's unquestioning support for the United States, insisting that foreign relationships will be based on "mutual respect".'⁷¹

The 'revolution's second stage', was a large part of what had produced the first stage, ousting despotism, and it was still sought after by workers, activists, intellectuals and the youth. A more decisive President had moved to limit the overweening power of the military and to check interference from the old

⁶⁶ *The Economist*, 18 August 2012.

⁶⁷ Abdel-Rahman Hussein, in *Guardian Online*, 12 August 2012.

⁶⁸ David Hearst, in the *Guardian Online*, 13 August 2012.

⁶⁹ *The Economist*, 4 August and 15 September 2012.

⁷⁰ Donald Macintyre, *The Independent Online*, 26 December 2011.

⁷¹ Among countries Morsi had visited were China, Iran, and Turkey. *Aljazeera*, 9 October 2012.

regime's judiciary. Greater space and opportunity was thus available for democratisation.

Civil society, with its educated youth, women and an organising working class, possessed as noted great potentialities. Principles stressed by Benoit and Challand were 'the urgency of a renewed sense of citizenship', and of 'inclusion' seen specifically in the widespread role in the uprisings of women and youth. 'Spontaneous and leaderless movements' characterised the uprisings in North Africa and later the Occupy movement, and the absence of leaders, they said, did not mean the lack of organisation or of vision' (Bottici and Challand 2012). But this characterisation ignores the big differences between the two movements and the problems they faced. Democratisation in North Africa was about gaining control over government and furthering a 'second stage' of the revolution: and the leaderless movement in Egypt had shown an inability to respond adequately to important formal institutional demands—to turnout in large numbers for key elections, to support new, non-Islamist political forces, and to press for a democratic constitution, for instance.

Democratisation and Constitutionalism

Ordinary people in their millions had brought an end to despotism, and youth, women, intellectuals and organised workers had endeavoured to promote democratisation in varied ways—in the writing of history by those who had actually been making it, in the recognition that independent trade unions were 'the silver bullet' for 'mini Mubaraks' everywhere, in on-going protests against state brutality and in many participatory initiatives. But initial comment on the country's new draft constitution indicated that new and serious limitations were about to be imposed on democratisation.

The drafters had taken their inspiration from Egypt's 1923 constitution drawn up under British military occupation, that also of 1971--sometimes transcribing their very words--from the principles of the French Fifth Republic, from Islam, and little or nothing at all from what had been actually happening all round them over the last two years. Adding insult to inquiry, there had not been any 'semblance of public consultation during the writing process' (Sedra 2012). To highlight some main points. According to Goldberg's analysis, the country was about to acquire 'a very powerful executive authority rooted in but not managed by an elected president.' There would be 'a strong president whose goals are accomplished through an unelected prime minister subject to a vote of confidence by an elected legislature. Educated professionals would play 'a dominant role in administration and legislation', while the approximately 'sixty per cent of Egyptians who are poor or illiterate...will have no role in its institutions and relatively little in its politics.' The existing People's Assembly and Consultative Assembly would be replaced by a Chamber of Deputies and a Senate. Literacy and educational qualifications, unknown most everywhere else in the contemporary world, were to be introduced to exclude ordinary people from the legislature. To qualify as a Deputy a person must be more than 25

years old and have completed primary education. Goldberg estimated that this would exclude seventeen per cent of the male population and thirty five per cent of women, more than half of the poorest and weakest. Educated professionals would 'play a dominant role in administration and legislation', and compete for power with each other in elections. The military and judiciary will retain significant levels of autonomy, the former continuing as a 'self-contained hierarchy' and the latter with greater institutional divisions (Goldberg 2012).

The legislature has limited powers. Deputies who join the government lose their seats. The president names the prime minister who then forms a government and presents its program to the Chamber. The latter (the former parliament) will have only 'limited powers'. It can propose legislation, but largely 'responds to the executive'. The autonomy of the military counter-balances the president and prime minister. The president is the supreme commander of the armed forces (article 152) and makes appointments within the military. But it is the prime minister who appoints the defence minister, and the defence minister is also named as "the general commander" of the armed forces: additionally the defence minister must be a member of the officer's corps (article 198). The past intrusiveness of the military and the judiciary was to be checked in two main ways. Military courts would in future only try cases involving military personnel, and civilians may not be brought before military courts. The Supreme Constitutional Court would lose its powers to declare elections, and elected legislatures, invalid. On Goldberg's (2012) summary the new proposals amounted to 'an elected constitutional monarchy'.

When Manal al-Tibi resigned from the Constitutional Assembly she had noted that an institution that that was made possible through revolution had perversely come to 'serve the purposes of counter-revolution'. They were creating a constitution that "would maintain the same primary foundations of the regime that the revolution had risen up to overthrow, while only changing the personnel."⁷²

The popular referendum which is required to approve the draft constitution has now acquired even greater importance. If democratisation is not to be grievously set back, a huge turnout and firm rejection was essential.

Progress was notable in Tunisia. The demands of the revolution, stemming from December 2010, were focussed upon the writing of a new constitution in which the rule of law, human rights, and above all, "Work, Freedom and Dignity", were to become the foundations of the new republic. The three main parties elected to the constitutional assembly on 23 October 2011 had committed themselves to the task. But not all was plain sailing. *Ennahdha* had sought to assert the supposed 'complementarity' of women in relation to men, and an 'Islamic Supreme Council had also been proposed. New political parties had arisen, and peace and security remained fragile nationally. Clashes between people had become common in many places, Salafists sowed disorder, and insecurity was in

⁷² Cited in Sedra 2012.

consequence widespread. 'And yet', said Weslaty (2012), 'particularly among the younger generation, a revolutionary spirit, a spirit of defiance, still exists.'

Tunisia now possessed 'an active civil society with press conferences, assemblies, meetings, discussions and different forms of citizen action being organised every day.' Even though the old structures of the dictatorship have not been completely eradicated, 'the people now have the required weaponry--the pen and freedom of speech--to bring them down.' Tunisia had come to be regarded, she said, 'as the cradle of revolution', and international help for its democratisation was on offer (Weslaty 2012). Cautious revolutionary determination seemed appropriate.

European and North African democratization

For all their differences, Portugal, Egypt and Tunisia have the most in common in the revolutionary, popular and the exciting qualities of their democratisations. The ousting of the old regimes was quickly accomplished in the earliest of the three, which was also the most radical, ambitious and organised over the 19 months of its existence during the height of the Cold War and the advance of European integration. The collapse of foreign dictatorships in Central Europe, by contrast, was followed by little or no democratisation, as Solidarity withered and no new popular democratic organisations appeared. New nationalist elites feathered their own nests and ignored the needs of the people in emulation of Thatcher and Reagan. In the GDR re-unification immediately trumped all. Havel and Michnik ignored economic realities to their peoples' cost, but their ideas like acting as if you were free saw increased validation in 2010-11 against Ben Ali and Mubarak. Anglo American liberal capitalism has lost its hegemony and it seems unlikely to regain it. New opportunities are being offered to democracy, if it is popular, organised and actively, constantly anti-elitist.

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