

Denial is not a river in Egypt.
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Although this headline is a joke, the facts on the ground are not. Fareed Zakaria, usually a sound commentator on world affairs, chastised the pessimists who see no democracy for the Arab Spring. He noted how slowly the revolutions of America and France bore fruit. However, liberal democracy only comes from countries with a 2500-year-old western heritage\227or those that have adopted these values (Japan, South Korea). Whatever fruit Egypt will bear will not be liberal democracy, no matter how we wish it.

Over the past few months, the military government has backed off from their promise that they would yield their power to democracy. Increasingly violent street conflicts between the military and the demonstrators alarms the Egyptian majority. The young and educated demonstrators do not represent most Egyptians, who prefer order to democracy. The majority is rural, pious, and feudal.

The Egyptian military want no \223help\224 in establishing a democracy. They have arrested (and released under American pressure) a number of American idealists, in Egypt to help Egyptians establish the institutions needed for a democratic state. Nobody in control of Egypt wants a democratic state.

Initial elections were held, with \223experts\224 predicting that the Muslim Brotherhood would not get many votes. They were, of course, wrong. The Brotherhood and the Salafists (Islamofascists) garnered the majority of seats in Parliament. Islamists are in, women are out. Now, the experts predict that the Brotherhood has \223moderated.\224

I would ask how moderate it can be when its mission statement is: \223Allah is our objective, the Koran is our constitution, the Prophet is our leader, Jihad is our way and death for the sake of Allah is the highest of our aspirations.\224

Even worse, the elections appear to have been fraudulent. The one internationally known candidate for president, Mohammed El Baradai, former Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, condemned the electoral fraud and removed his name from the roster.

The Free Egyptian Party announced that it had filed more than 500 complaints about Lower House elections, but no legal action was taken by electoral authorities. This same party (a classic liberal political party) has also pulled out of the upcoming Upper House elections, citing once more violations that are not punished.

The military establishment has played a clever game. They pushed out the dictator, Hosni Mubarak, whom they had long sustained, and proclaimed themselves on the side of the young revolutionaries. Now they are trying to show that the country cannot do without them. They are playing a role behind the scenes in financing the Islamist parties so that the public will think that the military are still needed.

Egypt has some other problems that bode ill for democracy. After a horrific population explosion, the country is now (as is the entire Muslim Middle East) in population crash. Young women from families with six or seven siblings are having one or at most two children. Within a generation, the military may have a problem recruiting. Although it seems good to see the overpopulation decline, such rapid changes in demographics create tremendous unrest and feelings of despair.

The Nile, which has nurtured Egypt for millennia, is running short of water. It cannot even provide half the electric power that the Aswan Dam was supposed to produce, nor feed its agriculture. Now half the nation\222s wheat must be imported. Egypt has already had bread riots, and there will be more. China can pay more for wheat than Egypt, and they will have it. Watch for hunger.

All the money spent on public education has produced third-rate universities that are incapable of providing graduates with any skills needed by modern economies. The majority winds up with dead-end government jobs, producing nothing anybody needs. Is this a failed state in the making?

Egypt\222s one reliable industry, tourism, is under attack. The Islamists in Parliament will close the tourism business as they shut down resorts, threaten to destroy the pyramids (because they predate Islam), and endanger foreign tourists (kidnapping and terrorism).

Egypt will not become a democracy.

671 words

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