

Egypt\342\200\231s Problems Go Beyond Morsi.
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With all the hand wringing about Egypt\342\200\231s army abruptly removing an elected president, more serious problems are not getting much attention.

The US had hoped that supporting the (unwelcome) outcome of an election would encourage the Muslim Brotherhood to learn how to govern. However, the Muslim Brotherhood abhors everything that liberal democracy values and they had resurrected the fear of \342\200\234one man, one vote, one time.\342\200\235

We Americans often assume that an election means that democracy is alive and well. This is not so. Holding an election means that sometimes, for the first time, people are selecting their own governance. But how did that choice happen? Are the voters literate and thoughtful? Do the majority (who are not literate and thoughtful) have any idea of permitting the losers to participate in the government, or are the losers persecuted? Do the majority in Muslim countries recognize the rights of those of other faiths to share citizenship rights? Do they recognize the rights of women to share in these rights? Do they even recognize the right of people who have no interest in religion to share citizenship rights?

Egypt demonstrates the lack of all of these rights. The Muslim Brotherhood, a 80-year-old militant Islamist party, has garnered the support of the ignorant and illiterate, but has suffered persecution at the hands of the military dictatorship that ran Egypt over 60 of those years. They were persecuted, not for their religious beliefs, but for their violence: assassinations, mayhem, and bad behavior. Recently they foreswore violence and became the chief organized opposition to the military dictatorship.

The army, seeing the mobs demanding Mubarak\342\200\231s ouster, supported the mobs and let the Muslim Brotherhood\342\200\231s candidate, Mohammad Morsi, take the presidency. During his one year in power, he violated every aspect of a tolerant, power-sharing democracy. This time, the public rage was faster. Three-quarters of Egyptians from all parties and sects wanted Morsi out. The one-quarter demonstrating against Morsi\342\200\231s removal are all Muslim Brotherhood rent-a mobs, ready to \342\200\234die for their God,\342\200\235 they say.

Should we be supporting the process of democracy (an election) or the values of democracy (tolerance, competence, and shared power)? Meanwhile, Egypt is sinking into problems that nobody can solve in the short term.

\342\200\242 Economy. Egypt used to be an exporter of wheat. Their agriculture is crashing due to increasing water shortages, flight of peasants from villages into cities looking for work, and the crash of the tourism industry, Egypt\342\200\231s best business. Did the religious voters consider that tourists will not visit an Islamist country where foreigners might be abused or killed by religious fanatics? Will tourists visit a resort where alcohol is banned?

\342\200\242 Hunger. No matter who will be the next president, Egypt is having a huge food problem. They no longer raise enough on their disappearing farms. The Nile River is no longer adequate to meet the needs of agriculture or electric power. The small petro-chemical industry does not provide enough fuel for Egypt\342\200\231s transportation needs. We can expect bread riots and gasoline line riots to increase.

\342\200\242 Population. Among the educated elites, the fertility rate has dropped just as it has everywhere in the world. But among the vast majority of pious Egyptians, the fertility rate continues to produce population doubling even since 1990. The Economist Magazine always considers a growing population a good thing for the economy. In Egypt, it is not a good thing. Unemployment rates for young men are approaching 50%. For the nation as a whole, inflation is at 8.5% and unemployment 15% (well understated).

\342\200\242 Public Disorder. The unhappiness of unemployed testosterone-poisoned young men finds release in gang raping women at political demonstrations. The Islamists claim that women should stay home if they want to avoid rape; the Morsi opponents claim that the Islamists are doing the raping. This is clearly revenge against women demanding rights.

No matter what President Obama does, it will make little difference. He will be criticized by those on the Right and Left. His position of urging democratic institutions (not elections) and promoting stability is the best he can do.

677 words

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