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On the 90th anniversary of the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, seven years after the January Revolution; after the Brotherhood came to power and then was sent to prisons and detention centers – It may be useful to evaluate this experience for several reasons, including:

First, the January Revolution (2011) is the first revolution that resulted in a real democratic transformation, albeit “temporary”.

Second, the revolution also resulted in the access of an Islamist president for the first time to power.

Third, the experience is still subject of debate among many researchers and analysts.

Fourth, the consequences of the experience have not been limited to the national internal framework, but it extended to the wider regional framework.

In this context, we will try to provide an initial assessment of the Brotherhood experience from the revolution of 2011 to the coup d’etat, through three pivotal phases:

1) The stage from the outbreak of the January 25 revolution (2011) to February 11, when former president Hosni Mubarak stepped down.

2) The stage of the military junta period from 11 February, 2011 to 30 June, 2012, when the first civil democratically elected president assumed power.

3) The stage of the Brotherhood’s access to power from July 1, 2012 to July 3, 2013, when Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi led a military coup against the civil government.

This report will attempt to discuss each stage in some detail:

First: The Brotherhood: A revolutionary or a reformist movement?

We can say that the Brotherhood's reformist approach continued to dominate the group until the harbingers of the January 25 Revolution of 2011, and perhaps this has made some of the opposition forces - including the revolutionary forces - claim that they rode the wave of revolution. Also, it was this reformist approach which made the MB keep away from the revolutionary forces after that, and fall a prey to the deep state that overthrew them in the July coup.

This "reformist" approach has been prominent in the MB literature since the era of Hassan Al-Banna, the group founder, who said in his 'Fifth Conference Message': "The Brotherhood members do not think about revolution, nor do they rely on it or believe in its benefits and results. However, they usually advice every government that in case situations continued as such without providing any urgent amendment or rapid solution to these problems, it will inevitably lead to a revolution not launched by the Muslim Brotherhood, but due to the pressures of circumstances and conditions, and the neglect of reform facilities...," Al-Banna said in the Fifth Conference Message, pp. 134-136).

Hence, until January 23, there was no decision from the Muslim Brotherhood to take to the street on the 25th of January. This was due to the fact that there was no clear vision about the objectives of demonstrations during that day – whether to call for purging the interior ministry and stop its repressive practices, or to call for overthrowing the regime as a whole. In addition, the forces that called for taking to the street that day were little known to the Brotherhood. However, as a result of pressures from some Brotherhood youths, and some of the intermediate leaders such as Dr. Mohamed El-Beltagi and Dr. Khalid Hanafi (Secretary of the Freedom and Justice Party before the coup), individuals were allowed to participate in demonstrations.

But after the repressive practices of the Interior Ministry on January 25, the killing of some young people in Suez, the media promotion that the Muslim Brotherhood was behind the demonstrations, and the subsequent arrest of a number of MB leaders on the morning of January 27, led the Brotherhood to decide in the evening of the same day to participate in the demonstrations of the 28th of January and the following days ... and accordingly they were the most influential forces in the Tahrir Square.

However, there was a lack of clarity regarding the MB's objective: whether it had a reformist goal to acquire recognition from the regime as a legitimate movement rather than a prohibited group, to be allowed to participate in free and fair elections, and have a partial participation in government. Or the MB's aim was to overthrow the regime through revolutionary mechanisms and thus acquire real recognition, not through Mubarak who was lacking legitimacy.

This has been reflected in many of the MB statements, most notably the statement issued by MB General Guide Dr. Mohamed Badia on February 3, 2011, stating that "The Brotherhood has followed the approach of peaceful popular reform for 80 years ... We cannot reject engagement in a serious, productive, and sincere dialogue targeting the supreme interests of the homeland provided that it takes place in a natural environment, away from the language of threatening and intimidation."

This may explain the MB reasons for meeting with their esteemed opponent, the vice president and the then-general intelligence chief, Omar Suleiman. This was in fact a recognition of the group's legitimate existence. This decision aroused the dissatisfaction of the youth forces, as well as the other revolutionary political forces. It was clear that the regime wanted to explore positions without making political concessions, which made the Brotherhood return to the ranks of the revolutionary forces.

The impact of the Battle of the Camels in early February – when supporters of the President Hosni Mubarak attacked protesters in Tahrir Square – played a major role in the MB return to the revolutionary approach after it felt that the Mubarak regime was useless. Large numbers of MB members were injured and martyred, as they were in the forefront of revolutionaries, which was recognized by the group opponents such as Naguib Sawiris and others.

Notes on MB Performance

Here are some remarks about the performance of the Muslim Brotherhood during that period:

- 1- The MB vision was swinging between the reformist and revolutionary tracks, which had repercussions on the performance of the Brotherhood after that as we will explain.
- 2- The political flexibility of the Brotherhood in dealing with the revolutionary and political forces in the Tahrir Square: It was agreed not to raise any Islamist or Brotherhood slogans or banners, despite the large crowds of the Brotherhood that were in the Square. In fact, these were the most prominent features of the Brotherhood discourse at the time, because they were aware of how the regime wants to cause political rupture among the partners of the revolution.
- 3- There were political assurances from the Brotherhood to the Egyptian interior and abroad that they would not engage in the presidency election, or the government, especially the MB General Guide's talk about the political vision of the Muslim Brotherhood, which included what can be called the three No's: "No to the presidency, No to the government, and No to the parliamentary majority." This was confirmed during the MB Shura Council meeting on February 10 (one day before Mubarak stepped down." However, reversing this vision by the MB created a major rift in the relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and other political forces, as well as loss of popular credibility, especially in the context of role played by the media of the



remnants of Mubarak regime and the counterrevolution forces against them after that.

4 - The withdrawal of the Muslim Brotherhood and others from the Tahrir Square and allowing the military council to take power “for a transitional period” after the announcement of Mubarak's removal, led to an incomplete revolution, or, in other words, enabled the military to rule after the revolution. Again, this caused a rift between the Muslim Brotherhood and the revolutionary forces, which has had negative repercussions on the political scene and most prominently the Brotherhood.

Second: Egypt under the Rule of Junta

It has been clear since the January Revolution that the military junta does not want to get out of the political scene without gains: either to remain in control - from behind a curtain - through a military president as it happened during the last 60 years of rule since the June 1952 revolution or to fortify its privileges under a Constitution that can hardly be changed, according to which its budget remains away from any review. It is noteworthy that the constitution that was made and ratified after the coup d'état stated for the first time that the armed forces are the protector of democracy similar to the previous Turkish experience, in anticipation of the arrival of a revolutionary civilian president away from the control of the military. The political “military” leadership before the January Revolution, 2011 - given the state of understanding between them and the army – used to determine its role and employ it politically to serve its purposes without stipulating this in the Constitution.

According to a report by Bashir Abdel Fattah, a researcher, in Al Jazeera. net on May 28, 2012, Sadat said in a speech before the People's Assembly (parliament) in 1976 that “The army is protector of the Constitution and Constitutional legitimacy.” However, Mubarak considered the army as “the protector of democracy.” The political

leadership also depended on the army in the face of not only political opposition, but also the popular opposition, as happened in the events of May 1971, known as the coup of power centers in what Sadat considered as the “Correction Revolution”, in the events of January 1977, known as “Bread Uprising”, and in February 1986 during the events of the Central Security riots.

Army and Revolution

After the January 2011 revolution, the army was a major political actor, taking advantage of the rebels' lack of agreement on a unified command to take over the country. This gave the army a golden opportunity to play a political role by controlling the executive and legislative powers during the transitional period through the Constitutional Declaration issued by the end of March 2011, as well as the Supplementary Constitutional Declaration issued on 17 June 2012 on the eve of the second round of presidential elections, which gave the junta the right to legislate even in the presence of an elected president, after the Supreme Constitutional Court’s ruling to dissolve the parliament on June 14, 2012 ahead of the second round of presidential elections. It is noteworthy the Supreme Constitutional Court also participated in the overthrow of the democratically elected President Mohamed Morsi on July 3.

The Junta’s policy after Mubarak stepped down

We’ll mainly focus here on the Brotherhood's relationship with the Military Council as the governing body, while not neglecting the other powers:

As for the military junta, it wanted to prolong the transitional period and seize power in order to gradually put down the revolutionary situation and to divide the rebels, especially between the Brotherhood and the rest of revolutionaries, and to prevent the Brotherhood from dominating state institutions. This is illustrated by, inter alia, the following:

1- The Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) rejected a formula for the establishment of a civil military council to manage the affairs of the country during the transitional period in order to avoid the idea of military civil duality.

2- The SCAF delayed the issuance of the law of political isolation on the members of the dissolved National Democratic Party (the ruling party during the Mubarak era), which was supposed to prevent them from running in the elections in addition to the criminal punishment.

3- The Military Council did not mention in its constitutional declaration at the end of March 2011 which body was entrusted with the formation of the government after the parliamentary elections. However, one member of the military junta made this matter clear after that, when he said that the right to form a government is entrusted to the SCAF. It seems that the Military Council expected that the Islamists will win a majority in the parliamentary elections and wanted to deny them the opportunity to form the government. Perhaps this conclusion finds support in view of the formation of successive governments since the revolution, where the government of Essam Sharaf I and II were void of any representatives of the Islamic trend.

4- Egypt Supra-Constitutional Principles Document or the so-called "Al-Selmi Document" appeared in November 2011 shortly before the elections and served as a straw that broke the camel's back and revealed the true intentions of the military council. In the context of the 2011 Egyptian revolution, an initiative was launched by the Government of Egypt during mid-2011 to draft what has been referred to as the "supra-constitutional principles". A draft published on 1 November 2011 sought to grant the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces military autonomy from any oversight and a permanent power to intervene in politics. It also gave the military and/or judiciary broad powers over the upcoming processes of establishing a new parliament and passing a new constitution. In order to partly satisfy secular activists who had been

demanding a new (non-Islamic) constitution before parliamentary elections, the principles included guarantees for fundamental citizenship rights. The principles became known as the El-Selmi document. It gave rise to renewed large scale protests against the government in November 2011. The Islamists, especially the Brotherhood, took to the street and gathered in the Tahrir Square on November 18 to demand not only to drop the document but to set a specific date for the presidential elections and hand the government over to civilians. This forced the military council not only to withdraw the document, but to hold the parliamentary elections on schedule within ten days, as well as to set a date for the handover of power by the end of June 2012.

5- Weakening the authority of the Parliament, which is dominated by Islamists, through the government's abstention from complying with the People's Assembly, taking advantage of the inability of the Parliament under the constitutional declaration to withdraw confidence from it. Furthermore, Prime Minister Kamal Ganzouri threatened the Parliament Speaker Saad Katatni, who belonged to the Brotherhood, to dissolve the parliament through the Constitutional Court.

As for the position of the Muslim Brotherhood towards the military council, the MB's main goal was to accelerate the handover of power to the civilian forces, the same position in the era of Nasser. In fact, there was no deal between the MB and the SCAF and there were many statements issued by MB leaders, including the General Guide, denying such allegations.

(Part II will provide some remarks on the Junta period of rule, and the MB performance during that. Then, it will address the stage of the Brotherhood's access to power from July 1, 2012 to July 3, 2013, when Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi led a military coup against the civil government.)