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## Morsi's Demise and the Black Box Problem

Dr. Badr Shafei

The process of documenting the historical stages of any nation, state or even group is significant for several reasons, including preserving its memory and saving it from oblivion, and enlightening the future generations on these events so that they could be well-aware of them. Also, this documentation is important for researchers concerned with analyzing information after collecting it from its main reliable sources.

On the other hand, absence of such documentation may have counter-productive results: It may lead to absence of public awareness and inability to provide accurate scientific analysis due to lack of reliable information. Hence, one of the problems facing Arab and foreign researchers interested in the Egyptian affair is documentation of the January revolution in general and the era of the late President Mohamed Morsi, in particular, which is extremely significant despite its shortness, being the first real democratic experiment in Egypt. Although researchers can assess this period through some quantitative indicators based on economic and statistical reports such as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), wages, the purchasing power parities (PPP), inflation rates and others; yet, the circumstances and background behind various decisions and attitudes during this period remain vague and subject to personal interpretation because of absence of information drawn from its main reliable sources.

Among these decisions, comes President Morsi's dismissal of Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, the Minister of Defense at the time, and Lt. General Sami Anan, the Chief of Staff of the Egyptian army at the time – in August 2012 after the attack on Egyptian soldiers in Rafah – and appointment of Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi as Defense Minister. We need to know whether Dr. Morsi was really the one who chose Sisi or the latter was imposed by the military institution, according to former Justice Minister Ahmed Makki's narration that was published on Masr al-Arabia website on 18 September 2016 (The August 2012 Sinai attack occurred on 5 August 2012, when armed men ambushed an Egyptian military base in the Sinai Peninsula, killing 16 soldiers and stealing two armored cars, which they used to infiltrate into Israel).

Also, we need to know about the circumstances that surrounded Morsi's issuance of his constitutional declaration in November 2012, without knowledge of even some of his associates and advisers, where he gave himself some extraordinary powers because of absence of constitutional institutions – the

July 8, 2019

declaration which was exploited by his opponents in portraying him as a tyrant, and resulted in the Al-Itihadiyeh Palace events, and the subsequent formation of the opposition Salvation Front, and Tamarod (rebellion) movement and others – although Morsi reversed this declaration a short time later.

Another thorny issue is the hidden information about the final moments before President Morsi's overthrow:

Was the president aware of the coup?

Why hadn't he dismissed Sisi or called for early presidential election?

Why didn't he clarify the situation in his last speech immediately before his overthrow and detention?

Even when Al-Jazeera tried to address this file quoting the testimony of Morsi's secretary for foreign relations, Khaled Al-Qazzaz, in a documentary titled "The Last Hours", that was broadcast last February, Morsi's family criticized the documentary for not listening to their testimony.

All these questions represent a black box that we, as researchers, have lost with the death of President Morsi, being the main witness to his actions and attitudes. However, Morsi, like many presidents, seems to have no time during his short presidential period that was fraught with lots of issues, both real and fabricated, record his memoirs.

It seems, from my own point of view, that President Morsi did not reveal such information, especially about the coup, that was clear to everybody a long period before its occurrence, for fear of further division in the country or for avoiding making people angry of the army, which may explain his repeated request from court judges during his trial to hold a private hearing for revealing confidential information to the court.

The forcibly disappearance of Morsi a little time before the coup, his appearance about four months later for the first time in court, the decision not to broadcast his trial sessions on air - as happened to Mubarak at the beginning of the revolution - putting him in a glass-insulated cage, preventing him from meeting his lawyers or his family except for only twice over six years of detention, and finally denying him the title of 'late president' in Egyptian media after his demise – all these violations

July 8, 2019

indicate that the regime has had a strong desire to completely blur this historical stage and Morsi's black box.

It is also expected that what happened to Dr. Morsi will be repeated with other symbols of the January revolution, both from the Muslim Brotherhood and others.

Thus, the documentation of this important stage in the history of the country regardless of our own assessment on it, is extremely necessary. Although this job should be honestly done by the State, however, it is clear, up to now, that the current authorities are not keen on doing this job or perhaps they intend to politicize it by drawing information from biased sources and political analysts who adopt pro-regime attitudes, under the pretext of documentation. It is not ruled out that such tools of the regime may even change the facts; for example, they may later claim that Morsi was president of the Brotherhood, not of Egypt, arguing that he was buried in the same cemetery where some Brotherhood leaders were buried, without mentioning that this act was imposed by the current authorities, taking into consideration that Morsi's family was keen to bury him in his hometown in Sharqia Governorate.

One of the important problems that the Egyptian opposition forces, especially those in exile, are facing is working to correct the political awareness of the Egyptian people, which is systematically distorted through changing the facts related to Egypt's January revolution and the forces that supported it. In fact, correcting people's awareness requires, among other things, documentation of events in the first place and obtaining testimonies from their main reliable sources.

It is true that there are major difficulties in reaching these sources because of the current circumstances and security constraints imposed on people - such as the security constraints the wife of President Morsi is suffering from - or because of the arrest of many of the prominent figures of the January revolution. However, some of these problems can be overcome by obtaining written testimonies, sent via social media. Otherwise, some of the narratives that we sometimes hear here and there will remain either as personal accounts that reflect the narrator's point of view, or in some cases, as information partially depending on the personal analysis of the narrator, which poses great difficulties to both researchers and future generations.