THE DEMOCRACY OF SHARING DIVERSITY.
GLOBALISATION, DEMOCRACY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN EGYPT AFTER REVOLUTION OF 25 JANUARY 2011

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Abstract: The last three years represent the most recent major episode of Egypt's re-opening up to the world. The Egyptian Revolution of 25 January 2011 (aka the Lotus Revolution) resulted in the removal from power of the dictator Hosni Mubarak. Thus Egypt entered the path of democratic reforms. The impact of this crucial event on the society went much deeper than anything that Egypt had experienced before, and this justifies the use of the relatively new term "globalisation". Furthermore the consequences are difficult to predict even by the most subtle international policy analyst. This paper addresses the issue of globalisation on Egypt nowadays, a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, which requires a particular type of democracy adapted to the existing social and historical conditions, which might be labeled the democracy of sharing diversity.

Keywords: democracy, globalisation, diversity, national identity, Egyptian Lotus revolution

> *"Each time a man stands up for an ideal or act to improve the lot of others, or strikes against injustice, he sends a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million centres of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."*
> Robert F Kennedy, former US Senator and Presidential candidate in 1968[1]
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> *"Why should Egyptians quarrel with each other about their identity? ...Whenever there is an acute crisis regarding Egypt's political direction and its socio-political set-up, it turns into a search for something broader and deeper—a "soul" and a "fabric.""*[2]

Introduction

During the last decade a number of developments which took place in several countries around the world have given globalisation, intercultural dialogue, and national diversity a more prominent place on political agendas. They relate to major changes and global social convulsions with identitary character - whether it's about the transition from dictatorship to democracy, or succeeding in getting rights for minorities. These transformations might be resumed as follows: globalisation and geopolitical changes; multiculturalism; migration flows that have significantly changed the population diversity of some countries; new means of communication (the so-called "New Media") and a related expansion of media content with a strong impact on youth, disadvantaged, discriminated, and marginalized groups; an increase in controversies and debates on value systems; a reported rise of incidents of discrimination, racism, and populism; in the Middle East and North Africa, the popular uprisings that swept down dictatorships in the complex phenomenon called "Arab Spring" that began toward the end of 2010 have not only opened perspective to

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[1] Quote from the "Ripple of Hope" speech, delivered at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, June 6th, 1966.

[2] Ahmed Abdulla, "The Egyptian National Identity and Pan-Arabism Variations and Generations," Roel Meijer (ed.), Cosmopolitanism, Identity and Authenticity in the Middle East, Richmond, Curzon, 1999, pp. 172 – 173.

democracy, but also have lead to escalation of the Islamic fundamentalism and the consequently reactions against that.

Such developments and transformations on the socio-political stage are not unusual; nor are multicultural situations a new phenomenon in the World history. On the scale of history rather they are commonplaces In the Middle East and the Mediterranean World, a multiplicity of cultures coexisted in rural areas as well as in cities at least from the time of Alexander the Great. With Islam, the religion and language of ruling groups changed, but the cultural mosaic was not rubbed out. Diasporas played an important part in the religious and economic life of major kingdoms and Empires since the ancient times.[3]

Over the millennia, the geo-political stage of the human society has changed thousands of times, composing and recomposing itself over and over again; the state entities were unifying, splitting, and merging again, the process repeating itself several times until now according both to the different phases of the general evolutionary level and the particular economic needs. In that process therefore, the current phase with *globalisation* as the international key-word, is just a step, a natural one. Viewed in that context, the two connected parts, the national identity and the intercultural diversity contribute to the strengthening of the state cohesion as well as of the communitary entities. To this respect, in the large construction of globalisation one observes a new paradigm emerging. Its specificity is due to the fact that the individuals are informed, educated and stimulated to no longer consider themselves and the communities to which they belong in isolation, but rather to understand the whole of society as a huge entity whose cohesion factors are the specific ethnic and cultural identities, and the particular values. They tend therefore to become subsystems of a new geo-political "being" with distinct economic, social, political and cultural life, characterized by the dialectic of syncretism and traditional values. That process implies on one side the syncretical development of the common recognized socio-intercultural elements of civilization that belong to peoples from different political/ethnical entities; and on the other side the conservation of the prized ethnic and national values and mental constructs of the traditional identity that characterized the human diversity, the nations and states.

The process of globalisation, which started at the time of the Discovery, was dramatically speeded up in the second half of the 20th century by the new technologies of rapid transportation and telecommunication. Because of the increased mobility linked with air travel, people in remote areas are discovering new styles of life through their contacts with tourists. International migrations develop and a growing number of foreign groups settle in the great cities of the developed or developing countries. Because of the new facilities of telecommunication, it is easy for migrants to maintain contacts with their home countries: it gives to their cultures more chance to survive.

Contemporary multicultural situations differ however by many features from their antecedents because of the rise of a new type of ideology which bears that name precisely: *multiculturalism*. In the past, multicultural situations were tolerated by the ruling groups, but their aim was generally to integrate minority groups into mainstream cultures. In order to understand the problems of today, it is worth to investigate the dynamics of modern

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[3]Paul Claval, "Multiculturalism and the Dynamics of Modern Civilizations", Dialogue Among Civilizations Conference, United Nations University, Tokyo and Kyoto 2001, pp. 1-12.

civilizations in which multiculturalism arose as an answer to the emerging spatial pattern of cultures.[4]

The case of Egypt, as it is now unveiled to the world, with its recent years of riot, turmoil and upheavals show that the recent developments are particular, national consequences in the Egyptian society of the regional and worldwide phenomena of globalisation, cultural and inter- and multicultural diversity that in light of these phenomena require a redefinition of the concept of national identity.

Globalisation

From the quantitative point of view, globalisation is defined as: "The intensification of economic, political, social, and cultural relations across borders".[5] From the qualitative point of view, globalisation is defined as a process comprising a number of qualitative transformations, which in turn characterise the current phase of capitalist development. In this context, globalisation is identified as a qualitatively new phenomenon, comprising a number of components all of which converge to define globalisation as a process or, as Mittleman suggests, a "syndrome".[6] Moreover, these components tend to spill over into each other, without any predetermined single cause/effect relation but in a dialectical way, which makes it possible to identify the direction of the change, if not to react accordingly. The components included in such a qualitative definition of globalisation are represented by: technological transformation; financial transformation; geographical reallocation of production; the process of commodification; the polarisation of wealth; the subordination of politics to economics and the related decline of the nation state; and the emergence of a new global division of labour.[7] Globalisation, based on the free play of comparative advantage, economies of scale and innovation, is clearly a genuinely radical force, in the true sense of the word. To put it differently, globalisation essentially amplifies and reinforces the strengths, but also the contradictions, of market capitalism: its efficiency, its instability, and its inequality. Globalisation is not just an economic phenomenon. At the same time as it attacks the social fabric that binds us together, globalisation can contribute to the realisation of individual aspirations. It has wider political and social ramifications: globalisation risks fuelling the sense of powerlessness, the sense of disenchantment with the world that has become so evident - for instance in the street protests in Egypt over the last three years. It is essentially up to us to make sure that it evolves in the right direction. We do need the efficiency gains it brings, we can prevent its destabilising effect, and we need to correct the inequality it produces. But as the term implies, this corrective action can not be conducted only at the national level; the regional level and the global one are also relevant. Regionalism cannot be the only answer. We also have to take account of the need for global answers.[8]

Cultural (and Intercultural) Diversity and Cultural Identity

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[4]Claval, loc. cit.
[5]C.B. Brettel and J.F. Hollifield, 2008, Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines, second edition. Routledge, London.; Leila Simona Talani, From Egypt to Europe Globalisation and Migration Across the Mediterranean, Tauris Academic Studies, I.B.Tauris Publishers, London, New York, 2010.
[6]Ibidem.
[7]Ibidem
[8]"The globalisation process and its implications for Egypt", Council for Foreign Relations at the Diplomatic Club, Cairo, March 25, 2001, trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/html/119400.htm

Cultures are not static realities. They are dynamic ones.[9] Cultural Diversity is the quality of diverse or different cultures, as opposed to monoculture; it can also refer to having different cultures respecting each other's differences. Cultural diversity and increased cultural participation strengthen democracy, tolerance and social cohesion, and therefore is an investment in the future as well as a driving force of sustainable development. Enhancing people's choices and responsibilities is key to human development. Cooperative cultural policies can enhance development opportunities. In this process, an active, competent and organized civil society plays an important role.

According to the Article 1 of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity: "*Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind. As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations.*"

Culture precedes cultural practices, thereby influencing and constraining how actors engage in the reproduction of culture:

"*So the existing cultural patterns form a sort of historical reservoir—a pre-constituted "field of the possibles"—which groups take up, transform, develop. Each group makes something of its starting conditions—and through this "making," through this practice, culture is reproduced and transmitted. But this practice only takes place within the given field of possibilities and constraints.*"[10]

In other words, culture, as a social practice, is not something that individuals possess. Rather, it is a social process in which individuals participate, in the context of changing historical conditions. As an "historical reservoir," and due to its diversity *culture is an important factor in shaping identity*. However, this identity is not static.[11] Identity, like culture, is understood as fluid and historically constituted:

"*Cultural identity ... is a matter of "becoming" as well as "being." ... Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they [identities] are subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture and power ... identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.*"[12]

Culture and identity represent important concepts within the study of political science because they influence how individuals and groups engage with the world—including the world of politics. The processes of cultural construction and identification "bridge agency and structure, are multiple and sometimes contradictory, and can be understood as strategies."[13]

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[9]Paul Claval, 1995, La Géographie culturelle, Paris, Nathan.

[10]John Clarke et al., "Subcultures, Cultures and Class," Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (eds), Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain, London, Hutchinson, 1976, pp. 9–74; 9), p. 11.

[11]Nicola Pratt, "Identity, Culture and Democratization: The Case of Egypt", New Political Science, Routledge, Volume 27, Number 1, March 2005, pp. 73-90; p. 76.

[12]Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," J. Rutherford (ed.), Identity: Community, Culture, Difference, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1990, reproduced in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds), Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader, New York, Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 394.

[13]Spike Peterson, "Sexing Political Identities/Nationalism as Heterosexism," Sita Ranchod-Nilsson and Mary Ann Te´treault (eds), Women, States, and Nationalism, London and New York, Routledge, 2000, p. 57.

Identities—whether based on class, gender, religion, nationality or some other social/cultural marker—play a role in building social movements and "framing contention."[14] Moreover, the realm of culture and identity is often the object of contestation for social movements. For example, one of the distinguishing features of the political Islamist movements in the Arab world is their emphasis on promoting an "Islamic culture."[15] In the case of Egypt, Islamist activists have imposed gender segregation and censorship on university campuses, burnt video rental shops and undertook the policing of wedding parties to prevent the consumption of alcohol.[16] They have also mobilized street protests against cultural productions that they deem heretical.[17] Conversely, the Egyptian state has also attempted to counter Islamist opposition through producing its own version of Islamic culture, through magazines, newspapers and television programs.[18]

In the conceptual framework of international relations, in Egypt diversity is a main element of soft power in society. Religious tensions have posed a threat to the country's social fabric and allowed divisive discourses and incidents of direct confrontation between Muslims and Christians to take place against a backdrop of poor governance of religious diversity.[19] Issues related to religious diversity have figured prominently in news reports, blogs, commentaries, and intelligence analysis based on the recent political upheaval in Egypt. The authors cautioned either against the risks that the uprising could allow the Muslim Brotherhood to seize power and establish an Islamic state; or against the outcomes of the recent attacks on Egyptian Christians by Muslim extremists, arguing that the Christian position will probably further deteriorate under a new regime. Most observers, however, have stressed the secular nature of the Egyptian revolution, casting doubt on any devolution into a hard-line Islamist government. A number of reporters have even stressed cooperation between Muslim and Coptic Christian protestors during the days of harsh demonstrations in Tahrir Square. Moreover, the geography of the Egyptian religious communities is an intricate one. Egyptian Christian congregations are interspersed with Muslim communities over much of the country.[20]

The two phase-Egyptian Revolution (Lotus and Tamarod) and the debate on democracy

[14]Sidney Tarrow, Power in Movement, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 119.

[15]Larbi Sadiki, The Search for Arab Democracy: Discourses and Counter-discourses, New York, Columbia University Press, 2004, pp. 322–323.

[16]Nazih Ayubi, Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World, London, Routledge, 1991; Salwa Ismail, "Religious 'Orthodoxy' as Public Morality: the State, Islamism and Cultural Politics in Egypt," Critique, 1999, pp. 25–47.

[17]For instance, in 2000, Islamists mobilized significant opposition to a novel (A Banquet for Seaweed by Syrian novelist Haydar Haydar), which was published by the state-owned General Organization for Cultural Palaces. This led to the editor and managing editor of the book series being officially charged with blasphemy. See Samia Mehrez, "Take Them Out of the Ball Game," Middle East Report 219 (2001), available online at: khttp://www.merip.org/mer/mer219/219_mehrez.htmll. See Pratt, ibidem, p. 77.

[18]Ismail, loc. cit.

[19]Sameh Fawzi, Samir Morcos, "Governance of Religious Diversity: The Copts of Egypt as Example", Arab Reform Initiative, Governance of Diversity, June 2012, pp. 1-11; p. 1.

[20]Martin M. Lewis, "Egypt's Religious Diversity and Its Forgotten Shi'ites", Geocurrents. The Peoples, Places & Languages Shaping Current Events, February 14, 2011, http://www.geocurrents.info/cultural-geography/egypts-religious-diversity-and-its-forgotten-shiites

In light of recent developments in the religious and cultural domains, and particularly in the political one (see the 2014 New Egyptian Constitution[21]), especially due to the fact that Egypt is still in the process of passing through a new stage of history following both the events of the January 25, 2011 Lotus Revolution, and the fall of President Mohamed Morsi starting with June 2013 (the so-called Tamarod – Rebellion - Egypt's Second Revolution) societal issues are influenced by the aforementioned factors. In the current context of the upheavals they subsume to the long-debated democratic nature of the Egyptian society to come.

This is natural if one considers the fact that after the popular uprising that removed Hosni Mubarak from power, the prospects and hope for a democratic Egypt were high in 2011. In the three years since then however, a government has been elected and subsequently removed, and people still protest in the street on both sides of the political divide, while the West holds their breath to see if Egypt will return to authoritarianism or become a member of the democratic club. The economic performance and wealth of a country, social class structures, and the legacies and institutions left over from the previous regime, all have significant impacts on the transition process to democracy and whether the country becomes a democracy or slips back into authoritarianism.[22]

Thus, as regards the likely democratic outcome in Post-Revolution Egypt and people's much-needed and much-disputed diversity-based freedom, it must be pointed out that social democratic transitions occur during times of an evident upheavals taking into account the historical narrative, democratization progress, and the extent of socially oriented agendas in a given country. Amongst post-Arab Spring countries only Egypt stands out to have such possibility.[23] This is due to the fact that since 2011 Egypt has seen the most wrenching change. Now after three years from the dramatic uprising against Mubarak's dictatorship, Egypt stood out until now as an icon of the struggle to radically change the authoritarian regime and to impose instead major democratic reforms in all sectors of society.

With a population of over 80 million and its location bridging both Africa to the Middle East and the Mediterranean to the Red Sea, Egypt has long played a pivotal role in the region. Egyptian support over time for the Middle East peace process has been crucial to US foreign policy interests. In a region that has seen more than its share of internal political crises — military coups, civil wars and revolutions — Egypt stands out as having, until recently, experienced remarkable continuity in its domestic political scene, though the apparent stability masked significant and rising public discontent. Since the early 1920s, Egypt's political system has undergone fundamental change only twice — from a constitutional monarchy under strong British influence to an independent, authoritarian state in the 1950s, in which the military played a guiding role, and, beginning in 2011, when the authoritarian rule of Hosni Mubarak was defeated by a broad and popular revolution. Green[24] stated that

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[21]Constitution of The Arab Republic of Egypt 2014, http://www.sis.gov.eg/Newvr/Dustor-en001.pdf

[22]J. Fidrmuc, Economic Reform, Growth and Democracy During Post-communist Transition, 2001, p. 23, retrieved from http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/39756/wp372.pdf?sequence=3.

[23]Dorgham Abusalim, "Is Social democracy Possible in Post-Arab Spring Egypt?", 7 May 2012, https://www.academia.edu/4934896/IS_SOCIAL_DEMOCRACY_POSSIBLE_IN_POST-ARAB_SPRING_EGYPT , pp. 1-51.

[24]D. Green, "What caused the revolution in Egypt?", 2011, retrieved November 22nd, 2013, from http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/feb/17/what-caused-egyptian-revolution

"demographics, technology, corruption, the country's foreign policy, legitimacy of the state that was very low back then, torture done in the police stations and other factors all played a big role in bringing angry Egyptians out in the streets." The shift to popularly elected government was bewildering for all involved. Deep social and political cleavages, which the context of authoritarian rule kept in the relative background, have now come to the fore, including, prominently, the challenge of reconciling widespread religious faith and democracy. The military has proven a decisive factor, holding the balance of power between religious and secular/liberal political forces. Despite the massive changes already seen, Egypt's successful transition to functioning broad-based democracy is however far from assured.[25]

Three years ago, on 25 January 2011, the so-called Lotus Revolution marked a new chapter in Egyptian history as the people collectively called out the state's failures, embraced their rights, and took collective action to change their country, starting with the ousting of Hosni Mubarak from his presidential throne on 11 February 2011. Once united, the Egyptian people held high hopes for a seamless democratic transition and a significant government reform.[26] They wanted to see a better country, one that respects their rights as citizens and saves their dignity, one that stands for equality and social justice, a country that actually counts their votes in elections and where they can feel the freedom they have been deprived from for several decades.[27] Mohamed Morsi, the leader of the Freedom and Justice Party, and the first democratically elected president of Egypt came into power on June 30th 2012, with the support of the Muslim Brotherhood, a grassroots Islamic movement, and was ousted by a military coup on July 3rd, 2013 after mass protests took place. Since the rise of Mohamed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood to power, the economic program that was implemented was similar to the ones during the Gamal Abdel Nasser and Hosni Mubarak eras prior to the revolution. These were the same policies that played a pivotal role in uniting ordinary Egyptians to lead a revolution. These policies did not look at the interests of the people and the standard of living of the poor; they gave advantage to the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood, favored billionaires and military leaders – much like during the Mubarak era. The ordinary citizens started questioning the reasons why they started a revolution in the first place. The citizens were struggling every single day with a ruined economy and a bankrupt country, plagued with corruption as Egyptians suffered of daily blackouts and long queues to get gas. Morsi's governance started resembling the one of Mubarak.[28] The disappointments and frustrations boiled up and exploded with the form of a revolt – the Tamarod (Rebellion).[29]

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[25]Stephen McInerney, Moataz El Fegiery, Michele Dunne, Issandr El Amrani and Kurt Bassuener, 2010; revised by Kurt Bassuener and Jeremy Kinsman, 2013, "Case Study: Can Egyptians Build a Consensus for Functioning Democracy?", A Diplomats Handbook for Democracy Development Support. A Project of the Community of Democracies, Third Edition, (ed.) Jeremy Kinsman and Kurt Bassuener, Published by The Centre for International Governance Innovation in partnership with the Council for a Community of Democracies, 2013, pp. 231-265.

[26]Al-Sharif Nassef, "Revolution square one: Egypt three years on", Daily News Egypt, February 15, 2014, http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2014/02/15/revolution-square-one-egypt-three-years/

[27]BBC News 2011, "Egypt Protests: US Call to Hosni Mubarak's Government", BBC News Middle East, February 9; BBC News 2013, "Egypt profile — Timeline".

[28]Khaled Nasir, "Egypt's Second Revolution: What Triggered the Fall of Morsi", The Globalized World Post, August 12, 2013, http://thegwpost.com/2013/08/12/egypts-second-revolution-what-triggered-the-fall-of-morsi/

[29] Ibidem.

One year after the Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed Morsi took power, the July 3rd 2013's milestone marked a new phase in the Egyptian revolution, ending with Morsi's fall. That moment, the statement, read out by military chief-of-staff Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi, described a roadmap including the ousting of President Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood, suspending the constitution temporarily, and handing over power to the head of Egypt's High Constitutional Court. The roadmap, which various political and religious figures participated in drafting, included forming a committee for revising the constitution, formation of a council for "national reconciliation", revising laws for parliamentary elections and holding early presidential elections. Attendees at the press conference where El-Sisi gave his speech included a number of top military and police officials who sat in two rows on either side of the podium. They included the Coptic Orthodox patriarch Tawadros II, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmed El-Tayyeb, Mohamed ElBaradei, a representative of the Salafist Nour Party, Mohamed Abdel-Aziz, one of the anti-Morsi Rebel campaign's founders, and a senior judicial figure. The subliminal message was that Egypt is ready for real democratic changes, tolerance and religious and cultural diversity included.[30]

The revolutionaries militated in favor of the broad government reform and redefinition of civil-state relationships necessary for Egypt to realise that the claimed democratic path and tackle society's challenges have not yet taken hold.[31] Moreover the allure of Egypt's Islamist tide emboldened retrograde Islamist factions like Salafists and jihadists, creating the perception of a hyper "Islamic" climate. While such attacks were likely not coordinated by the Muslim Brotherhood, multiple instances of such factions resorting to violence against Coptic Christians and Shi'a Muslim minority groups further polarised Egyptian society and increased anti-brotherhood dissent. The Muslim Brotherhood cast grassroots revolutionaries, liberals, and union workers aside and hijacked the revolution that they started. Morsi's year as president was marked by the undemocratic mode of governance of its authoritarian predecessors. The exclusionary policies and lack of progressive or reformist initiatives culminated in the Brotherhood's demonisation by local media and wide-rejection by the masses. The military-backed government's intimidation tactics included banning Muslim Brotherhood as a "terrorist organisation" and wide-scale imprisonment or killing of its members, the arrest of some activists, or civil society leaders and academics. On 1 September 2013 Morsi and 14 other members of the Muslim Brotherhood stood trial for "committing acts of violence and inciting killing and thuggery," prosecutors announced. Military officials also appointed a new assembly, which contained almost no Islamists, to draft a new constitution.

After the referendum on Egypt's new constitution on January 15, 2014, Egyptians approved a new constitution with a Mubarak-like 98 percent yes-vote in a referendum. Many observers saw it as cause for celebration, citing the document's provisions on gender equality, religious freedom, and secularism as important steps forward.[32] Among other achievements,

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[30]Mary Mourad, "Revolution Part 2: The Fall of Mohamed Morsi", Ahram Online, Wednesday 3rd July 2013, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/75614/Egypt/Politics-/Revolution-part--The-fall-of-Mohamed-Morsi.aspx

[31] Al-Sharif Nassef, loc. cit.

[32]Isobel Coleman, "Education and Egypt's New Constitution", Democracy in Development, January 28, 2014, http://blogs.cfr.org/coleman/2014/01/28/education-and-egypts-new-constitution/

the draft of the 2014 Constitution of Egypt put into consideration the cultural diversity of Egypt, preserving multiculturalism, by recognizing minorities whether religious or cultural. The article included in the draft constitution on multiculturalism allow such minorities to have a separate constituency during elections so as to have a seat in the parliament. A clear example is that of the Almazigh living in Siwa. Currently more than 40 million Amazigh live in North Africa spread throughout different countries with multiple religions, sects and cultures. It is important to say that within the committee drafting the 2014 constitution there were a representative for Sinai Bedouins and another for Nubians, a healthy phenomenon on the democracy path that recognizes ethnic minorities in Egypt.[33]

Democracy, diversity, multiculturalism, national identity = Tomorrow's Egypt?

What can we draw from all that has been hitherto presented in terms of globalisation, national identity and democracy for today's and tomorrow's Egypt? Could democracy be the appropriate path to follow by the present Egyptian society? Is it ready for this huge step? To some analysts, unlike Egypt's regional neighbors Libya, Jordan, and Bahrain, Egyptians' national identity insures that it stands the best chance at finding true, electoral democracy.[34] However, considering its particularities, its geopolitical context, the population's degree of education, of tolerance and acceptance of diversity (reduced compared to that of true democratic societies, but consistent compared to that of some Arab states of the Middle East) would it be rather acceptable an intermediate stage to be considered? That process in stages might prepare society for the transition to an authentic democracy. In our view such stage would be both beneficial and useful. Some recently examples come to illustrate major issues the population is coming to deal with and to resolve in terms of social perception of the other as well as of Egyptian national identity, understanding and acceptance of diversity in an inter- and multicultural way.

Issues related to religious diversity and tolerance in Egypt have figured prominently in news reports, commentaries, and intelligence analysis based on the recent upheavals. The authors cautioned either against the risks that the uprising could allow the Muslim Brotherhood to seize power and establish an Islamic state; or against the outcomes of the recent attacks on Egyptian Christians by Muslim extremists, arguing that the Christian position will probably further deteriorate under a new regime. Most observers, however, have stressed the secular nature of the Egyptian revolution, casting doubt on any devolution into a hard-line Islamist government. A number of reporters have even stressed cooperation between Muslim and Coptic Christian protestors during the days of harsh demonstrations in Tahrir Square. The geography of the Egyptian religious communities is an intricate one. Egyptian Christian congregations are interspersed with Muslim communities over much of the country.

Statistics in Egypt a few years ago show that the Egyptian Muslims were 100 per cent Sunnis. Several sources, however, estimate Egypt's Shi'ite population at 700,000. Shi'ites were persecuted under the Mubarak regime, and there are some indications that they have

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[33]Mounir Adib, "Amazighi activist: New constitution recognizes cultural diversity in Egypt", *Egypt Independent*, October 22, 2013, http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/amazighi-activist-new-constitution-recognizes-cultural-diversity-egypt

[34]Daniel Bender, "Egyptian National Identity and Prospects for Democracy", *PolicyMic*, March 12, 2014, http://www.policymic.com/articles/255/egyptian-national-identity-and-prospects-for-democracy

been singled out for special persecution.[35] Shiite ideology could not penetrate Egypt even under the Shiite Fatimid rule. Recently, the intensive Shiite preaching efforts, sponsored by Iran and its religious leaders, have borne fruit and Egyptians amounting to thousands and perhaps dozens of thousands have converted into Shiites. The new converts are disguised in more than 76 Sufi groups. Shi'ism has perhaps gained converts in Egypt in recent years, but the faith has been present much longer than that. To be sure, the Shi'ite Fatimid Caliphate, which ruled Egypt from 969 to 1171 CE, did not impose its version of Islam on the country; the Fatimids were noted for their tolerance, allowing Sunni Muslims, as well as Christians and Jews, not just to practice their faiths unmolested, but also to reach high levels in governmental service. Yet Shi'ism – in the Ismaili version of the faith practiced by the Fatimid rulers – certainly did "penetrate" Egypt during this period. In the standard narrative, Ismaili Shi'ism gradually declined after the Fatimids lost power, and eventually all but vanished. Some scholars put Egypt's current Ismaili population well above one percent, estimating the Shia population at 2.2 million, and finding it to be concentrated in seldom-studied southern Upper Egypt, and judges the community to be mostly Ismaili. If this is correct, the story of Shi'ism in Egypt needs to be substantially revised. The presence of a large Ismaili community would suggest that connections with Iran may be much weaker than is commonly imagined. Both the theological and the sociological gaps between the Twelver Shi'ism dominant in Iran and Ismaili Shi'ism – known for being global, cosmopolitan, and relatively liberal – are substantial.[36]

Another test for Egypt's diversity tolerance appears when it comes to freedom of faith, freedom of expression and accepting differences. While the New 2014 Constitution explicitly addressed some issues attempting to offer legal support and and to implement them into state policy, there is still a serious and obvious discrimination among the Abrahamic faiths, universally accepted, and other minority faiths. Believers of other faiths can practice their religions, but only in private, and have to keep their beliefs a secret. And that is the case of Baha'is and atheists. The risk for Egypt is becoming an intolerant society that resists change and refuses to acknowledge the differences among its citizens.[37]

Conclusions

Therefore the real test for the success of democracy in Egypt will come over this year and the years to come, as the military hands over power and the newly elected government begins building strong democratic institutions and implements the new constitution into policy. It is essential to remember that the transition in several stages to true democracy is not an easy process. The Egyptian population should be educated in the spirit of liberty, tolerance, and diversity to bridge the differences, and understand the world from the globalised perspective. The next stage of the democratic process might be called the *democracy of sharing diversity*, which can help Egypt to build a better future for all.[38]

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[35]Jafariya News. Largest Shia News Website, www.jafariyanews.com
[36]Martin W. Lewis, "Egypt's Religious Diversity and Its Forgotten Shi'ites", The Peoples, Places & Languages Shaping Current Events, February 14, 2011, http://www.geocurrents.info/cultural-geography/egypts-religious-diversity-and-its-forgotten-shiites
[37]Sarah el-Sirgany, "Egypt's Diversity Test", *Almonitor*, April 23, 2014, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/04/egypt-religion-revolution-tolerance-society.html#
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