

# Egypt's unfinished revolution



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There is an anomaly in the Egyptian revolution: the revolutionaries have never come to power

In January 2011, the world watched in awe as millions took to the streets of Egypt to remove former dictator Hosni Mubarak. Two and half years later, the world watched perplexed as millions took to the streets cheering the removal of their democratically-elected president, only one year into his job.

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has vowed to continue its protests this weekend against the ousting of president Mohammed Morsi.

Last week, more than 50 Morsi supporters died in clashes with the army. Morsi himself remains "held" by the military.

Interim president Adly Mansour has begun talks with parties on changing the constitution - with new elections mooted for early next year.

From outside, recent events in Egypt can seem inexplicable.

For Morsi supporters, this was a military coup for his millions of opponents, it was a "second revolution".

Even for those of us with some recent experience of Egypt, it can be dizzying. On the many occasions I was in Tahrir Square during 2011, it was being won by young people protesting military rule. But in recent days, many from that same generation have supported the military's role in knocking out Morsi.

But although the events are undoubtably complicated, they are not inexplicable.

Despite some commentary, the turmoil in Cairo is not because Egyptians "don't understand democracy" or because of some inherent tension between Islam and pluralism.

It is because the revolution, begun in January 2011, has not yet ended.

That revolution had as its slogan - "bread, freedom and social justice". It was neither politically Islamist nor military led, but since then, these are the groups that have held power.

There is an anomaly in the Egyptian revolution - the revolutionaries have never come to power.

The revolutionary forces which led the toppling of Mubarak's dictatorship have watched with an increasing mix of pride and anger as others have wielded power over them. First there was the incompetent and bloody reign of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which filled the vacuum following the fall of Mubarak. Secondly, there was the last year of economic malaise and political division under the Muslim Brotherhood.

Of course, Morsi's election was by the ballot box. But even this free presidential election turned into a nightmare for the revolutionary groups, but split their vote. This meant the two candidates remaining in the run-off were Morsi and a former right-hand man of Mubarak.

The choice was between the old regime or the Brotherhood. Many revolutionaries held their nose and voted for the Brotherhood. Others abstained - all felt a profound sense of disappointment. Morsi barely scraped a majority in the final run-off, and, in the first round, he had won less than a quarter of the vote.

The Cairo 10 met long after last year's election when the revolutionary youth movement seemed exhausted and on the floor.

The Minister of Finance has ruled that, 12 months later, this movement has been



A rally in Tahrir Square last week against ousted Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi

*"Just because we elected him does not mean we will accept that he changes the identity of the country"*

resuscitated. A year of mounting economic problems, growing worries over security and concerns over a more "dictatorial" style of leadership has seen his support plummet.

Many Egyptians just do not trust the Brotherhood, and see it as an organisation concerned with its own needs, rather than the nation's. Morsi is charged with not building a wide inclusive coalition of

pondering to the more extreme Islamists among his support and failing to realise the aims of the revolution.

Morsi's followers counter-claim that 12 months is hardly long enough to turn around the economy, the military were never happy with him and that supporters of Mubarak are fomenting dissent.

There is truth to all of this, but they cannot deny the popular opposition to his rule. Millions took to the streets demanding Morsi leave, the Lamard (rebellion) movement collected more than 22 million signatures calling on him to go.

The army may have provided the final blow to Morsi, but there was undoubtedly a popular movement that severely weakened his rule.

Ahmad Mostafa is a musician I know in Cairo. Young, liberal, fiercely supportive of the revolt that removed Mubarak, he saw the recent "coup" against Morsi, as positive. "On June 20, 33 million people came out asking for a change and the economy was falling apart."

Mostafa's views would chime with many other young people. "Maybe it is a coup the way people in the West perceive it. But our definition of democracy is different. Just because we elected him does not mean we will accept that he changes the identity of the country and we just have to stand by watching."

The Muslim Brotherhood cannot run

this country. They are politically incompetent and totally unaware of how Egypt should be run.

"It wasn't a revolution then it could be a democratic coup". He wants a new constitution written quickly, with elections to follow.

Brotherhood supporters view it differently - they claim they are victims of a military coup. Fears that recent events will lead to some Morsi supporters becoming disenchanted and more militaristic cannot be dismissed, but may well be exaggerated. There is a militant Islamist tradition in Egypt and, although very active in the 1990s, it remained a marginal affair in terms of active participants. The average Morsi supporter, however angered at the deposing of the president, is unlikely to contemplate a militarist response.

But the Brotherhood is in crisis. Once the shock and mourning is over, it will be fascinating to see how this 80-year-old organisation regroups.

Although fears of potential "civil war" have been mentioned by various sources, Egypt has thankfully not approached the dark place Syria finds itself in. Reasons for this are numerous, including the relative religious homogeneity of the country (majority Sunni, with small Coptic, Christian minority), the role of the army, the fact that revolutionaries have not taken up arms and the binding quality of Egyptian nationalism. This is not a country "created" in imperial backrooms following the Great War. Egyptians are fiercely proud of an ancient history that predates both Christianity and Islam.

In western capitals, concerns have been raised over recent events, although the realpolitik of the situation will mean all

will eventually accept the 'legitimacy' of the military-backed new interim government.

In Europe and elsewhere, worries have been expressed over the military's role in Morsi's fall.

But it must be remembered that Egypt is not a politically "normal" country at the moment - it is still in the throes of an unfinished revolution. What is regarded as "legitimate power" is a fluid concept in Cairo.

The formal niceties of a new constitution introduced under Morsi are regarded as less important than a Tahrir Square bulging with millions of protesters. For now, protesters in Tahrir are regarded by many Egyptians as a more legitimate barometer of popular will than any parliament or election.

There is, for sure, much to be concerned about here.

A precedent has been set, that military intervention can bring down civilian rule. The army, with its massive economic influence, is a tremendously powerful institution. Also supporters of the old Mubarak regime have been boosted by recent events and may try and use this period to agitate for a rolling back of this revolution.

However the last fortnight has also reaffirmed a more important precedent that was first set in 2011 with the overthrow of Mubarak.

Any Egyptian leader, elected or otherwise, who ignores the wishes of the millions marching on the streets does so at his peril.

David Lynch reported from Egypt for The Sunday Business Post throughout 2011 and 2012

## LETTERS to the editor

We welcome exclusive letters addressed to The Letters Editor, The Sunday Business Post, 80 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2; e-mail: letters@sbsp.ie. Letters may be edited for length.

### Anglo tapes scandal

The search for the Anglo tapes whistleblower reminds us that the only person convicted in connection with the Beef Tribunal was a whistleblowing journalist.

The Minister for Finance has reportedly complained, in relation to the tapes, that the media should stop "mucking around in garden business".

Surely, politicians are the parties most guilty of "mucking around" for having failed to set up a robust and comprehensive public inquiry into the most damaging event in the state's history.

They also appear to have failed to provide adequate resources to the fraud squad. Director of Public Prosecutions and Office of Corporate Enforcement to complete rapid and extensive investigations into events that have left citizens footing a bill for at least 66 billion.

Brian Flanagan  
Blackrock, Co Dublin

### Banks on the run

Learning that the National Pensions Reserve Fund is eventually being wound up and the money put into productive use, gave me some satisfaction.

Its demise is very welcome, as would be the demise of all those salaries from the public purse, which are in excess of the financial earnings and in excess of the government's pay caps.

It is now five years since I met the late Brian Leahy junior in his constituency office. There was speculation at the time that the country was facing a possible recession. I believed he was short of money and I wanted to know how much. With some reluctance, he said €3 billion.

I suggested suspending the private sector pensions tax subsidy for one year. Should more be required, he could use the €20 billion in the National Pensions Reserve Fund which was losing €1 billion a year at

the time. Furthermore, there was the €100 billion private sector pensions funds, mostly invested abroad, to which the government had contributed 50 per cent. His response was that this would cause a run on the banks. It appears that neither he nor I knew that the banks were on the run anyway.

Castleknock, Dublin 15

### Labour's failures

We no longer have a pragmatic social democratic party in Leinster House. Whether or not one agrees with such a philosophy, it is essential for balance in our politics that such a party exists in sufficient critical mass - at the very least to influence public policy.

After the Meath East by-election, commentators suggested that the Labour Party had become obsessed with "social issues". While these are of importance to the rela-



tively small number of individuals involved, they are in effect niche matters.

The real social issue is whether ordinary people, let alone the growing number of the weak and vulnerable, have a reasonable standard of living - food on the table, a roof over the head, a secure income, a future in Ireland and for their children and grandchildren.

A serious party must offer a critique of the global socio-economic system which brought us to this point, and the flaws in our society, ethics and politics which did not equip us to deal with the threat.

I am disheartened to see a member of the Labour Parliamentary Party who is publicly identified with such

"commencing after implantation in the womb of a woman" was implicitly rejected in the two surgical case judgements delivered by Mr Justice Fintona in the High Court on March 5.

In both cases, the judge accepted the DNA test for maternity and for paternity.

The individual human's DNA is set down on the completion of fertilisation. The sixth state is appealing the judgment in the case of the genetic mother to the Supreme Court. If successful, pre-implantation abortion, and the vast wastage of human embryos in IVF, would be sanctioned, and full and partial salpingectomy - the surgical removal of a fallopian tube - would be prejudged.

If the DNA test is rejected by the Supreme Court, convicted rapists, murderers, robbers and other criminals would have to set free.

Seamus de Barra  
Rathfarnham, Dublin 14

### Debate on abortion

Unborn, which is defined in section 2(1) of the abortion bill as

### Consequences of sexual pleasure

TDs who support this bill are either fools or knaves.

"We prefer to believe it is the latter. If such is the case, the bill is dishonest in itself - and, indeed, invites dishonesty in others."

It has far more to do with dealing with the consequences of sexual pleasure than with saving (or "protecting") any life.

If however the bill is being promoted by fools, then we are all to blame for having selected them, and thus we are getting what we deserve.

Donal O'Driscoll  
Blackrock, Co Dublin

### The language of satire

The Last Post column might have written with a more sophisticated description of lawyers' lobbying efforts against the Legal Services Bill than the hyperbole indicating that they are losing their "arses" in the process.

We do have a tendency in this country to resort to the language of the barely literate when we attempt satire.

Joe O'Connor  
Woodstown, Co Waterford