

# Egypt's revolution and the US: Mubarak's fatal error

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Egypt's leader and his political party is because he learned the wrong lessons from his patrons. Will Americans learn something from Egyptians, asks **Eric Walberg**

The Supreme Administrative Court order to disband the National Democratic Party and confiscate its properties last week was based on the NDP's violation of the constitution; namely, monopolising power, preventing legitimate competition from other parties, and allowing corruption by the marriage of business and politics. As the only political force in control of the administration of the country, the NDP allowed powerful businessmen to rise through its ranks and then enact laws and run the country in their personal and corporate interests.

What is this scenario but the Western electoral system, governed in the US by what is increasingly known as the Republicrats? Albeit minus the need by corporations and other lobbyists to divide their donations between two look-alike NDPs. It is impossible for a genuine alternative party to gain any traction in this polyarchy, defined by Noam Chomsky as "a system of elite decision-making and public ratification", where elections are rigged, but indirectly — by media control and their huge cost.

Constitutions are mere words on pieces of paper, which real world actors twist to meet their needs. Revolutions ignore these pieces of papers when they no longer reflect the underlying reality. America's constitution, treated with great reverence, long ago lost all relevance to what it really going on in the US, with the president declaring multiple wars, serving "corporate persons" not citizens, conspiring with foreign powers and individuals to undermine American life — all in violation of the real meaning of the constitution. The very idea of revolution, as enshrined in the US constitution itself, is now outlawed as "terrorism".

As a North American living in Cairo, I wake up every day not quite believing that the revolution actually happened here. That the threadbare constitution was swept aside, and in a matter of days, revised to meet people's demands and affirmed in a referendum. That leading politicians and businessmen are being driven to court in their Mercedes and driven away in a Black Marias, as was reported about the ineffectual former prime minister Ahmed Nazif.

Nazif was perhaps the least odious of the lot, convicted for colluding with NDP head and Shura Council (upper house) speaker Safwat El-Sherif and Popular Council speaker Fathi Sorour, who amassed huge tracts of land, dozens of villas and apartments, and amended the constitution in 2007 to pave the way for Gamal Mubarak's ascension. They have been joined by Mubarak's chief of staff Zakariya Azmi, ex-minister of health Hatem El-Gabaly, ex-minister of tourism Zuheir Garana, ex-minister of culture Farouk Hosni and ex-minister of finance Youssef Boutros Ghali.

Nazif can now reconvene his cabinet at the Tora prison and hold regular cabinet meetings, so the popular anecdote goes. He, business tycoon Ahmed Ezz and ex-minister of interior Habib El-Adly greeted Gamal Mubarak when he arrived at Tora with the NDP election slogan, "We are here for you," another anecdote has it. Even the first lady Suzanne has not been spared, called for questioning about embezzlement from the Alexandria Library and the annual Reading-for-All festival.

And the prospect of ex-president Hosni Mubarak being helicoptered to a military hospital, after defiantly broadcasting a speech on a *foreign* satellite channel denying the obvious — that he presided over a police state indulging in an orgy of graft and corruption — who needs sensational soap operas? I am reminded of some of these soap operas and popular movies, which during the past decade, as corruption ran wild, provided an outlet for the frustrations — and education — of Egyptians.

To watch once pompous remote leaders being paraded before the mainstream media as criminals is both shocking and inspiring. For who are the role models for the Mubaraks and their Sherifs, but the Bushes and Cheneys? Not so much the slick Clinton or Obama — these are peculiarly American phenomena, who act masterfully to distract Americans from reality. But who can deny that the Bush dynasty, from banker Prescott through master Cold War intriguer Herbert Walker to the borderline illiterate George W — all crowned by political high office, the latter with his terrifying Dr Strangelove adviser — cynically soaked the American people of untold wealth and are responsible for the deaths and/or torture of millions of innocent people?

While in office, Mubarak befriended five US presidents from Reagan on and saw how they intrigued, lied, betrayed, stole and emerged unharmed. How they colluded with big corporations to enrich themselves and their families, how the Zionist and military lobbies held them in a vice-like grip, preventing any honest policy of peace, especially in the Middle East. How they denied any wrong-doing, indeed, how arguably the worst offender politically — Reagan — is now worshipped as a great president, second in some polls only to John F Kennedy.

Is it any wonder he was misled so disastrously by his henchmen to dally in office long past his due-date, confident that his people could be brainwashed by media saturation of stories of his military heroism, impressed by his pharaonic large-than-life royal image? Why shouldn't his son inherit the mantle of power, just as the ex-CIA Bush more or less handed his power on to his offspring?

That business cronies like Ezz moved into parliament via a political party that prevented any possibility of honest elections is only to emulate the Republicrats. Unblinker North Americans look on longingly at the spectacle now being acted out in Cairo, for Mubarak is an angel compared to his colleagues in Washington.

Even the squeaky-clean Obama has helped his bankers and businessmen continue their economic rape of Americans, and stained his record with the murder of thousands of innocents in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere. When he leaves office (next year or in five years — what difference does it make?), he will move, as did his predecessors Clinton and Bush, into a world of feel-good preaching, cocktail parties and corporate boardrooms, turning everything he touches into gold.

Mubarak's fatal error was to ignore the highly sophisticated nature of US politics, where graft and violence are arts carefully honed over many years of electoral slugging matches. It is this sophistication that Egypt lacks, not any innate sense of real democracy, in the sense of respect for others and acknowledgment by rulers of their responsibility to their subjects. It turns out that the so-called undemocratic Egyptian political system, and the supposedly unsophisticated Egyptian people, are in fact light-years ahead of Americans in their political savvy, their sense of moral outrage, their courage in facing down evil and putting a stop to it.

Already, Hillary has been seen in Tahrir Square glad-handing hijab-clad mothers, and generously announcing new millions of dollars to support Egyptian democracy, as if the last 30 years hadn't happened at all. Pentagon officials are in daily contact with Egyptian officials. But it won't necessarily be smooth sailing for corporate democracy to reimpose its stranglehold on Egypt.

IMF head Dominique Strauss-Kahn got a rude awakening at a forum in Cairo last week. The revolutionary most feted by the West, Wael Ghonim, invited to appear on a panel in the IMF's Egypt headquarters, called the world's financial hatchetman and the "elites" of the world "partners in crime" for supporting Mubarak's regime. "To me what was happening was a crime, not a mistake. A lot of people knew that things were going wrong." The implication being that it was the height of hypocrisy for the IMF to pretend it had any concern for Egypt's real needs.

Egypt's Google marketing chief's savvy, comparing his attack to Joe-the-plumber's grilling of US presidential candidate Barack Obama in 2008, is a yellow flag for the bad guys, whose game might be up. Revolutionary youth refused to meet with Clinton when she came on her pilgrimage to Tahrir. Another storm signal for the empire is the fact that Bush, Rumsfeld and others have had to cancel visits to Europe, fearing arrest for their war crimes. Egypt's revolution gives succour to citizens everywhere struggling to return morality to politics.

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