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## Turmoil in The Arab World Arab Spring Or Hot Summer

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### Backdrop

The overthrow of the Libyan Monarchy by Qadhafi in September 1969 and the expulsion of the US from the Wheelus Air Base was a blow to the Americans. He consequently sought and got higher oil prices and increased Libyan participation in the oil companies. He stridently opposed all US attempts to bring about partial agreements on the Arab-Israeli conflict (AIC). The US-Libyan views on major world issues diverged widely and relations between them remained considerably strained under the administrations of Presidents Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter. The Reagan administration very early identified Libya as a main perpetrator of state-sponsored international terrorism and made determined efforts to bring down Qadhafi's regime. He was accused of involvement in terrorist

activities as early as 1972 and the US put Libya in the state Department's list of states, which sponsored international terrorism. Qadhafi was painted in the darkest colours of being an international terrorist. The CIA spared no efforts to kill Qadhafi. The US attacked Libya on 14 April 1986 mainly with the intention of killing Qadhafi, but the Libyan leader survived. Following the footsteps of the Reagan and Bush administrations, President Bill Clinton intensified his efforts to overthrow Qadhafi, this time using the UN as a tool to portray scattered Libyan political violence as state-sponsored terrorism. The Lockerbie issue came handy to deal with Qadhafi. On 21 December 1988 a Pan American World Airways jumbo jet flight 103 traveling from London to New York exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing 243 passengers and the crew. The US mobilized the UN and on 20 January 1992 the UN Security Council

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unanimously adopted Resolution 731, which was a blow to Libya. The West again had its way in the UNSC when Resolution 748 was passed on 31 March 1992. The adoption of UNSCR 748 clearly indicated the extent to which the West would go for regime change in Libya. It signaled new heights of Western hostility towards Libya and an indication of harsher steps to follow. The manner and speed with which the US mobilized the UNSC clearly indicated US impatience with the Qadhafi regime. Actually US move helped Qadhafi to consolidate his base and tighten his grip on power. But most Libyans were convinced that the West after subjugating Iraq wanted to gain control of Libyan Oil. The US led UN sanctions imposed on Libya on 15 April 1992 remained in place for more than a decade. Qadhafi through his extensive contacts in Africa mobilized during many summits urged to lift or suspend or ease the UN sanctions on Libya. Soon Libya reconciled to the trial in Europe and handed over in August 2003 the two suspects which resulted in the imprisonment of one of the suspects as he was found guilty. Subsequently Libya agreed to pay several billion US dollars to the victims with Qadhafi accepting responsibility for the Lockerbie bombing. For Qadhafi the coming to power of the neo-con team in US in

2001 and the policy of George W. Bush after 9/11, together with the solidarity of British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Ariel Sharon Prime Minister of Israel, posed a new danger. More significantly, the US invasion of Iraq in March 2003 and lack of countervailing the support to Libya from Russia or China and his own isolation in the Arab world prodded him to work for rapprochement with the West. In August 2003 Libya formally accepted responsibility for the 1988 Lockerbie bombing and in Sept 2003 the UNSC voted to lift economic sanctions against Libya. Qadhafi, in a stunning decision in December 2003 decided to publicly renounce terrorism and agreed to destroy long-range missiles and WMD. He also abandoned Libya's quest for nuclear weapons and gave up Libya's nuclear programme. In January 2004 Libya was approved as the 109<sup>th</sup> country to ratify the NPT and in Feb 2004 Libya formally became the 159<sup>th</sup> country to join the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Soon after this unprecedented Libyan initiative, the West especially UK and US worked to lift UN Sanctions on Libya. On 11 Feb 2004 Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi met Qadhafi in Tripoli. In Feb 2004 Libyan Foreign Minister and UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw met and UK restored diplomatic ties with the

Libya. Soon Tony Blair visited Libya along with other Western leaders who followed him thereby ending Libyan isolation and boycott. In the tense standoff over Lockerbie, Libya had to ultimately make several concessions and at the same time the West also realized the futility of its policy towards Qadhafi's Libya. Finally on 15 May 2006 the US decided to restore full diplomatic ties with Libya after a break of more than 25 years. The US also removed Libya from a state department list of states sponsoring terrorism. It must be recalled that the US had closed its embassy in Tripoli in 1980 and had declared Qadhafi as a supporter of international terrorism. But it may be emphasized that what led to Libya's normalization of its international relationships was Qadhafi's decision in December 2003 to renounce terrorism and destroy long range missiles and WMD'S, Pam Am flight over Lockerbie controversy in 1988 for which Libya was blamed and Libyan decision to accept responsibility for it and pay compensation and hand over the two Libyan suspects who were put on trial that led to the gradual rapprochement with US and the West.

### **The Internal Changes**

After a failed coup in mid- 1970's led by two of his colleagues, Qadhafi

purged the military of dissent and many were executed. Since then sensitive posts were allotted to the close personal acquaintances of Qadhafi or to the members of his immediate family or tribe. So by 1975 Libya had come to assume all the characteristics of a repressive and ruthless authoritarian regime in power. Soon Libyan society and polity were gradually transformed with the popular committee system which was set up in the year 1975. And in 1977 March, the *Libyan Jamahariya* was established. Soon people discovered that the main purpose of the popular committees was to eliminate those who did not conform to Qadhafi's thinking. Hence people who did not conform to the new thinking simply did not participate in Libyan affairs. This the Libyans call the period from 1978-1988 as the "dark decade" because of the political repression and the extreme economic hardships. Only the revolutionary committees and their leadership experienced no shortages during this period. Qadhafi's economic reforms laid the foundation for the final split between Libya's religious elites and the Qadhafi. The nationalization of the economy, by implication also rendered the Waqfs nationalized as well. The Ulema attacked the move on religious grounds as an attack on the sanctioned right to private property. Shaikh Al-Bashti in Tripoli

continued to attack Qadhafi's actions. The 1990's saw the proliferation of the ranks of the opposition to Qadhafi's revolutionary ideas. The middle class, educated professionals with degrees but severely limited job opportunities, and the growing number of students who perceived an equally disturbed future had begun to voice their contempt for rampant corruption and the absence of an independent civil society. Apart from the Sanusi religious elites who slowly reemerged, the Muslim Brotherhood also surfaced as a network of resistance in Libya, opposing Qadhafi's attempt to dismantle the religious bloc. The National Salvation Front (NSF)—also emerged as a grave threat to Qadhafi since 1981 led by Muhammad Yousef al Maqarayah. Many who defected from the regime found place in the Front. The main aim of the NSF became the overthrow of the Qadhafi regime. Two other groups also emerged to challenge Qadhafi: Islamic Martyrdom founded in 1993 by Amir al Haim and the Libyan Islamic Group led by Omar Rashid. Both had been Libyan veterans who had returned from the Afghan conflict or Jihad. All these groups and the numerous supporters expressed utter resentment towards Qadhafi's tyrannical rule of Libya. Among the several groups that opposed Qadhafi the Islamist militants were

particularly daring and aggressive. The first anti-regime protest began in 1995 June in Benghazi when the religious forces clashed with Libyan security forces leading to a protracted struggle in various parts of Benghazi area. A number of attempts were made on Qadhafi's life by the Libyan Islamic Group, Islamic Martyrdom Movement and other Islamic guerillas in June 1996 and June 1998. Not sure of his support in the military Qadhafi started building alternative popular militias and staffing key security posts with expatriate East Germans, Cubans and other mercenaries. According to one writer: "It is this increasingly isolated situation that compels the regime to re-assess its foreign policy as it seeks to make common cause with the USA and its allies in the fight against militant Islam".

### **The Internal Dynamics**

But the major issue was whether Qadhafi could offer political stability in future as he had provided since September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1969. Most of Libya's population being young and had great expectations especially after the severe UN-US economic sanctions for well over a decade. Women particularly had been hard hit and had endured the worst phase in their recent memory. This along with a largely authoritarian political

system despite the Green Book propaganda and People's Committees and Congresses, the people had a legitimate question i.e., after decades of struggle against the West, why did Qadhafi virtually surrender in December 2003 to the West? Ever after this 180-degree turn around, the plight of the ordinary Libyans did not improve enough and there was bound to be turmoil in the future. An indication of what was to come became visible during the 2005 protest over the publication of Prophet's cartoons controversy when Libyans suddenly attacked the Italian consulate in Benghazi and the police resorted to indiscriminate firing resulting in heavy casualties. Most Libyans wondered what Qadhafi was going to do with the more than \$100 billion foreign exchange reserve it had. Was it for emergencies to him and his family in case things went out of hand to his iron-fist rule or for what else?

### **The Climax**

The overthrow of Zine el Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak in Tunisia and Egypt in early 2011 and the protests for political reforms sweeping across the Arab World did not spare Libya as well. Small protests erupted in Benghazi since February 2011 which were put down by Qadhafi's security forces. From the

very start of his regime, Qadhafi faced many rebellions in the Benghazi area and his responses were to crush or destroy the prestige of the existing religious elites particularly those connected with the Sanusi in the Cyrenaica. Soon matters were getting out of hand attracting global attention focused at the highhanded measures adopted by the Qadhafi regime's security forces. Qadhafi himself called the protesters names and vowed to crush them. There were reports of heavy civilian casualties and soon the West called for effective steps to protect the civilian population. In this connection the GCC states and Arab League called for a no fly zone over Libya to prevent Qadhafi from using his airforce to suppress the civilian protests in the Benghazi area. Towards the end of February 2011 the US imposed sanctions and soon the UN also imposed sanctions. The UN approved curbs on travel, freezing of financial assets, weapons sales and a reference to International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague. India supported the first UN Security Council Resolution. India had to evacuate over 15,000 of its citizens from Libya by special flights and ships. India equally "deplored" the use of force "which is totally unacceptable and must not be resorted to". It "earnestly hoped that calm is restored at the earliest without any

further violence". The UNSC adopted another resolution no 1973 to impose UN NO Fly zone in which India, China, Russia, Brazil abstained. Soon UK, France, USA and others in the NATO plus Qatar and UAE started bombing Libya apparently to protect the civilians but actually to kill Qadhafi and bring down his regime. There is no doubt about Western hostility to Qadhafi and his regime but what actually triggered was Libya's decision to allow China, Russia and others unhindered access to Libya's oil assets and role in infrastructure development and Qadhafi's refusal to join US led Africa Centcom and persuaded many African states not to join.

### **The Role of Opposition**

The Libyan opposition under the banner of National Transitional Council (NTC) with NATO support especially heavy bombing of entire Libya and huge destruction of both civilian and military assets claimed victory and control over Tripoli, Benghazi and other coastal cities. Bin Walid and Sirte were still under the control of pro-Qadhafi forces. But in effect Libya was in a civil war and Libya was de facto divided into two parts. Libyans were killing Libyans and the West and its Arab cohorts like Qatar and UAE were adding fuel to

the fire. In an extremely rare departure from its usual anti-Arab and pro-U.S. propaganda, the *Guardian* of London commented: "If stopping the killing had been the real aim, the NATO states would have backed a ceasefire and a negotiated settlement, rather than repeatedly vetoing both. Instead, after having lost serious strategic ground in the Arab revolutions, the Libyan war offered the US, Britain and France a chance to put themselves at the heart of the process while bringing to heel an unreliable state with the largest oil reserves in Africa". (Seamus Milne, the *Guardian*, 24 August 2011). Qadhafi was willing to negotiate a peaceful solution, but after more than four decades of dealing with Qadhafi, the U.S.-NATO leaders rejected any peaceful negotiation. The control of Libya was the goal and peace did not meet that goal. The overwhelming majority of the Libyan population was against the violence unleashed by the armed gangs and NATO bombings was the only thing that sustained the gangs' violence. The U.S.-NATO bombings of Libya "are in derogation of international law, actions that are criminal in terms of their consequences: the killings of children, the killing of people in their own homes, and this has been well documented", said Michel Chossudovsky of Global Research in Montréal. Many see the so-called

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Transitional National Council (TNC), the Western-backed “Libyan rebels”, as a collection of expatriate criminals, C.I.A. operatives (“al-Qaeda”), xenophobic and racist hoodlums, and religious extremists. They are not peaceful ordinary Libyans struggling for democracy and human rights. There are also some U.S.-NATO ground forces. According to *Guardian* (25 August 2011): “British and French special forces along with special forces from Qatar and some eastern European states are on the ground in eastern Libya, calling in air strikes and helping co-ordinate [armed gang] units as they prepare to assault Sirte, the last coastal town still in the hands of pro-Muammar Gaddafi forces”. The armed gangs were financed, trained and armed by the U.S. and U.S. allies. Obviously the U.S. used these groups as a façade of “democratic” government to control Libya. There is hard evidence of mass killings of non-combatants, detainees and the wounded by the U.S.-NATO backed armed gangs. For six months Libya was subjected to U.S.-NATO air strikes/siege. Many perceive U.S.-NATO aggression as war crimes and crimes against humanity. According to NATO’s own record, over 25,000 air missions were flown over Libya, including 9,000 combat sorties by U.S.-NATO warplanes destroying hospitals, schools, homes,

water supply and communications. Thousands of innocent civilians were killed. The country’s civilian’s infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, water supply plants and roads were destroyed and ruined. Eric Schmitt and Steven Lee Myers of the *New York Times* observed: “Through Saturday [20 August 2011], NATO and its allies had flown 7,459 strike missions, or sorties, attacking thousands of targets, from individual rocket launchers to major military headquarters. The cumulative effect not only destroyed Libya’s military infrastructure but also greatly diminished the ability of Colonel Qaddafi’s commanders to control forces, leaving even committed fighting units unable to move, resupply or coordinate operations”. (NYT, 21 August 2011). Indeed, it was the heaviest bombardment to date. Once the way was cleared, the armed gangs stormed the Capital, inflicting mass atrocities against the civilian population. A Libyan eyewitness told Kim Sengupta of the *Independent* (24 June 2011): “The [armed gangs] are saying they are fighting government troops here, but all those getting hurt are ordinary people, the only buildings being damaged are those of local people. There has also been looting by the rebels, they have gone into houses to search for people and taken away things. Why are they doing this?” In another piece in the

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*Independent* (27 June 2011), Sengupta exposes another criminal character of the Western-backed armed gangs. She writes, "the mounting number of deaths of men from sub-Saharan Africa at the hands of the rebels, lynchings in many cases, raises disturbing questions about the opposition administration, the Transitional National Council (TNC) taking over as Libya's government, and about Western backing for it". The U.S. and its allies would back any group which served their imperialist interests. It is important to remember that the so-called *Independent* is one of the most anti-Arab propaganda mouthpieces of all the British newspapers. As the *Independent* on Sunday editorial revealed: "This newspaper supported NATO military intervention and Britain's part in it, when it began in March, but it was a choice between hard and complex options – and so it remains". (*Independent* Sunday, 28 August 2011). The US-NATO aggression against Libya was in flagrant violation of international law and UN Security Council Resolutions, including Resolutions 1973 adopted in March to "use all means necessary to protect Libyan civilians". There was no legal mandate to attack Libya and start a war. The sovereign Government of Libya committed no crimes. It is clear that the aim of U.S.-

NATO powers was to divide Libyans in order to seize control of Libya's financial assets and oil reserves and strengthening imperialism's grip on Libya and set the stage of the re-colonization of Africa. "In 1950, Libyans saw their country deliberately divided by Britain and France, and [the] seeds of division planted among them", wrote the renowned Canadian Middle East scholar, Henri Pierre Habib. After more than four decades of "independence", the old seeds of division have germinated. Libya which had the highest score on the UN's Human Development Index (HDI) of all African countries has been deliberately destroyed in a barbaric fashion. The NTC is a divided house and still unable to form a government as sharp differences have arisen between Secularists and Islamists, Tribal vs. Outsiders among other differences. The Ali Sallabi has emerged as a leading Islamist in new Libya who claims that relations between Islamists and secularists are "strong". He also said: "We support pluralism and justice. Libyans have the right to build a democratic state and political parties". But many critics fear that Mr Sallabi may show his true colors only after he has scaled current obstacles and assumed a position of power. More significantly, the Chairman of NTC in his first press conference said that Islam will be the

main source of new Libya's laws. There is feeble talk of elections and virtually no talk of political reforms as the West and Libyan opposition's main goal was Qadhafi's removal from power.

The U.S. politicians see the Libyan scenario as a template to implement around the world. "It is a good indication of the kind of partnership and alliances that we need to have for the future if we are going to deal with the threats that we confront in today's world," said U.S. Defence Secretary, Leon E. Panetta. In other words, the aggression against Libya will be used as a template to commit future aggression against other nations, such as Syria. The brutal killing of Qadhafi in Sirte on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2010 may not have solved Libya's problems but may be the beginning of either a civil war or division of the country as the acute differences mentioned earlier may prevent the stability and democratic future the Libyans have been aspiring for long.

### **Turmoil in Egypt**

#### **The Backdrop**

Inspired by the 14<sup>th</sup> January 2011 success in Tunisia when the Tunisians overthrew their dictator Zaine el Abidin bin Ali by organizing

massive protests, the Egyptians since 25<sup>th</sup> January 2011 began their protests starting from Cairo and other cities calling on President Hosni Mubarak to resign. Since then demonstrations, sit-ins were regularly held to press their demands. In Cairo, the *Maidan-e-Tahrir* (Liberation Square) became the epicentre of this protest movement. *Tahrir* square is in the heart of Cairo city near the Nile River where important offices of the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Arab League, National Museum, American University in Cairo, US Embassy and other important offices are located.

Trouble had been brewing up in Egypt for quite some time at least since 2000 when some NDP members who were not given tickets to stand for election contested as independents who wished to form a party of their own which was disallowed. On humiliating terms they were accepted back in NDP which was in power for over 30 years. During the 2005 Presidential election Ayman Noor challenged Mubarak in the elections but was arrested and put in prison with hard labor on frivolous charges. Then in the November 2010 Parliamentary elections the opposition alleged widespread fraud/rigging. The supporters of Noor since 2005 organized demonstrations/protests which were

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ruthlessly suppressed. Since November 2010 demonstrations were held regularly on a small scale which were also suppressed brutally. The police using emergency laws would arrest anyone protesting against the regime and routinely torture them. Many had suffered at the hands of insensitive police. Thousands of political activists were in jail for opposing Mubarak and his repressive policies. The youth who form a majority of Egypt's population and who denounced anti-people policies were especially targeted. Hundreds were humiliated and their careers ruined. Thus, repression, oppression and suppression had struck fear among the Egyptian people. When people came out on Cairo streets on 25 January 2011 they broke the walls of fear and began voicing their accumulated frustrations and grievances. Along with the lack of freedom, absence of free press, rubberstamp Parliament and tame judiciary and all the authoritarian structures which did not give them freedom, justice and democracy, growing unemployment and under employment, stagnant salaries for government employees, closure of industries due to global recession, and high rate of inflation had broken the back of most Egyptians for whom life had become unending struggle for survival. Egypt has limited revenues from

Suez Canal, tourism, remittances, and modest oil and gas exports. Most of its food (wheat) is imported and the population is growing rapidly and less than 10% of its land is arable and habitable, the rest is desert or barren. The US gives nearly \$2 billion in economic and military aid but the interest charged is higher and most Egyptians feel the US benefits more than the Egypt in this unequal client relationship. For majority of the youth the getting a job, flat/house and marrying had become an uphill task so a combination of political social, economic factors had created an explosive situation which burst into street protests. Youth bulge, huge unemployment, gross economic inequality, corruption are obvious reasons for turmoil. Only people with right connections to NDP/regime or military could get benefits or get jobs, others had to pay to get the jobs. There was massive corruption and new elites made fortunes through Import-Export, Special Economic Zones, and Free Trade Zones and so on. There was a clear nexus between the new economic-elites and the military-elites who control power and authority. In the education system students are not encouraged to question or think independently or analyze or welcome other view points. So a docile army of graduates was created but the internet and, email opened up the horizons of the

youth and they also learnt some lesson from Jasmine revolution in Tunisia. The Wikileaks also opened the eyes of the people which were clearly eye opener to Egyptians. Egypt has 1.7 million police and CSF and huge intelligence apparatus plus nearly one million military including reserves for a population of 80 million people. What it spends to maintain this huge repressive security establishment is enormous mainly at the cost of its economic and social development.

### **Response by the regime**

The Hosni Mubarak became more and more repressive towards the opponents of peace treaty with Israel and critics of Egypt's over dependence on the US/West. Many Egyptians feel due to its sheer size of history their country could and should play a major role in the region whereas Mubarak had reduced the country to a client State of the US. Due to its intellectual and cultural supremacy Egypt "commands a privileged place in the Arab imagination". Since 5 February 2011 Hosni Mubarak faced the most serious challenge to his rule with protesters calling for his immediate resignation. But Hosni Mubarak reacted by saying that if he leaves at this moment due to protests, there would be instability and chaos.

Earlier he would say, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) would come to power and challenge peace with Israel and partnership with US besides implementing the Shariah to create an Islamic state. Initially, Hosni Mubarak through his Ministry of Interior let loose violence on peaceful protestors on 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb 2011, in which many were killed and hundreds injured. He sent the military with tanks and APC and also aircrafts and helicopters to subdue the agitators but all this did not deter or dampen the enthusiasm and determination of the anti-Hosni protestors who continue to demand an end of Hosni Mubarak regime. Then Hosni dismissed his government and appointed Anwar Shafiq [air force commander] as Prime Minister and Omer Suleiman (former Intelligence Chief) as Vice President, a post he kept vacant for 30 yrs probably in the hope to groom his son Gamal as his successor. Hosni Mubarak's plan misfired as he had to announce that he will not seek re-election in September 2011 and that his son will also not seek power. Many of his old ministers were arrested and their bank accounts frozen. The NDP chief and top functionaries also resigned from their posts. The Vice President Omer Suleiman agreed to talk to MB and opposition parties for the transition/ political reforms and committees

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were formed to make recommendations in this regard. Salaries were raised for government servants besides other economic incentives to select groups and compensation for those who had lost property in recent riots. On 10<sup>th</sup> February night rumours were spread that Mubarak was stepping down and protestors in *Tahrir* square and elsewhere were in a mood to celebrate their victory. But then came the disappointment when Hosni Mubarak appeared on TV saying that he will remain in charge until September to oversee an orderly and peaceful transition. He accused foreign governments of interfering in Egypt's affairs especially the US and said Egypt was not a satellite state. It would decide its destiny and shape its future without any outsiders. By and large the people were utterly disappointed including President Obama in the US who almost said Hosni Mubarak was going, which was reconfirmed by the CIA chief. A showdown was avoided when Mubarak finally resigned on 11 February 2011 night as President and left the Cairo. A military Council headed by Gen. Tantawi is in charge of Egypt since then. The Higher Council of the Egyptian Armed Forces suspended the constitution after it took control of the country and promised to hold elections within six months. A judicial committee was

formed to oversee amendments of only six articles in the constitution. People have continued to assemble at *Tahrir* Square every Friday to press home their demands for political reforms. Mubarak is likely to face corruption charges along with some other officials. According to a leading scholar Chandra Muzaffar, by a strange coincidence, the Egyptian overthrow of Mubarak happened on the same day as Iran's Islamic Revolution. It was on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February 1979 that the Islamic revolutionaries in Iran proclaimed victory after the military declared its neutrality and the revolutionaries took over the public buildings and the Iranian State Radio and Television. The 11<sup>th</sup> February is celebrated as a national holiday in Iran. The powers-that-be in Tel Aviv, Washington, London, Paris and other Western capitals would not like to be reminded of this historical coincidence. It is a coincidence that will also send a shiver down the spine of many a monarch and president in the Arab world. More than this coincidence, both events succeeded in harnessing the energies of millions of people in their respective countries.

### **The Way Ahead**

The military leader Gen. Tantawi

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has become the key figure from now onwards till elections for Parliament are going to be held in Nov, 2011, to oversee smooth and orderly transition. The military higher ranks, along with US, Israel and GCC states also view this way so as to prevent Egypt from getting overwhelmed by popular protests. Although people view Tantawi as Mubarak's man but, they may prefer him for a few months. The military would continue to dominate and resist demands for huge political changes and try to drag its feet so that protesters will get exhausted and eventually give up. But one thing is clear: the protesters have shed the fear and most Egyptians are willing to challenge the regime openly on a sustained basis. Even the accusations that the protesters are instigated by foreign elements and influenced by satellite TV channels and so on are made, there is no doubt that most protesters are Egyptian nationalists and patriots who genuinely believe in a democratic Egypt, liberal political system and widest political participation along with a largely secular regime. There is no doubt that all Egyptians believe their country is great with very deep roots in history, but that Mubarak broke their dignity all over. Ahmed Zewil, El Baradei and Amr Moussa among others are great Egyptians who may give new direction to Egypt but only future will

tell whether Egypt will move ahead towards stability and greater and [genuine] democratization or descend in the direction of chaos and anarchy. Since Egypt's economic resources are limited, any future government has to fully utilize its human resources towards its full developmental potential. Undoubtedly the anger, frustrations visible on the Egyptian streets was avoidable if friends like India, US, and other friendly governments had forewarned Mubarak of the impending explosive situation created by their short sighted policies. The Egypt's ruling military council on 3 October 2011 unveiled a schedule of power transfer to a civilian government. As per the schedule, the People's Assembly, the lower house of Egypt's parliament, will convene for sessions in the second half of January 2012, immediately after the election results are announced. The Consultative Council, the upper house of Egypt's parliament, will start its work on March 24. Both the Houses will hold a joint session to elect the committee for drafting country's new Constitution in the last week of March or in the first week of April, though there is no mention of how long it would take to write Egypt's new fundamental law. After the draft Constitution is prepared, the military will hold a referendum to approve the document. A

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presidential campaign will kick off in Egypt the next day after the referendum results are announced. Presidential elections will be held within 45-60 days after the Constitution is endorsed. After that, the military will hand over power to the civilians. The announcement comes amid growing popular dissatisfaction with how the reforms are being conducted by the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). But Tantawi said he is not worried about the growing public frustration over the continuance of military control in the country. "We won't stop before those who speak and criticize. Nothing stops us and we will carry Egypt to stability," the *Los Angeles Times* quoted Field Marshal Tantawi, as saying. The military council has been criticized for not lifting the country's 30-year-old emergency law, the new election laws and the continuing trial of civilians by military courts. Tantawi also defended his testimony in the trial of former President Hosni Mubarak, who is charged with corruption and complicity to commit murder and the deaths of hundreds of protesters. Civil rights lawyers complained that Tantawi's testimony was favorable to Mubarak and that they were not allowed to cross-examine the former. During a televised speech in April, Tantawi told a graduating class of police

officers that SCAF members met shortly after the revolution began on January 25 and decided not to fire live ammunition at the protesters. According to civil rights lawyers, those comments suggested that the military had opted to ignore Mubarak's orders. Lawyers recently claimed that Tantawi denied that there were orders to use deadly force. "It, the testimony, was the testimony of truth from a man who fought for more than 40 years for the sake of God and Egypt," the paper quoted Tantawi, as saying. "We were not asked to shoot at people and we'll never fire live gunshots," he added. On Sunday 9 October 2011, the Egyptian military launched a brutal attack on protesters in Cairo, killing at least 36 and injuring hundreds. The crackdown happened after a peaceful demonstration by 10,000 protesters headed from Shubra, a working class suburb of Cairo, to the state television building in Maspero in downtown Cairo. Most of the demonstrators were the Copts protesting the ruling military council and demanding religious equality for the Christian minority in Egypt. Last week a Coptic church was attacked in the Upper Egyptian city of Aswan. Many Egyptians suspect that the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) was responsible for the incident. Abdel Tawab Hassan, an Egyptian activist,

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told the independent newspaper Daily News Egypt that the SCAF "wants to show that there is strife between the Egyptians, so it can continue tightening its grip" and enacting repressive legislation. Many Muslims also reportedly joined the march to protest the regime's attempts to incite sectarian strife between Muslims and Christians. They chanted "No to burning to churches," directing slogans against the military junta and de facto dictator Field Marshal Tantawi: "The people desire the overthrow of Field Marshall Tantawi," and "Down with military rule." On their way to Maspero, marchers were attacked several times by stone-throwing goons. At one point a car sped through the crowd, and shots were fired on protesters. When the demonstration arrived at the state television building, the Egyptian army then attacked the marchers with tear gas and batons. As the protesters tried to defend themselves, the military fired live ammunition into the crowd and armoured personnel carriers drove through the protesters, running them down. Soon, in an interesting development the Egyptian Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Hazem el-Beblawi submitted his resignation on Tuesday 11 October 2011 to the Prime Minister Essam Sharaf. Beblawi said he resigned against the backdrop of

the Maspero incident, in which a peaceful demonstration by Coptic Christians turned into deadly clashes. The government should shoulder part of the responsibility for the incident, even if it was not directly blamed for the clashes, Beblawi said. 'The Maspero incident shook in a great way the security and safety,' he said. Thousands of Coptic Christians held a demonstration Sunday night in front of the state TV building Maspero in downtown Cairo. The demonstration later turned into bloody clashes between the protestors and security forces, leaving 25 dead and about 329 injured. Beblawi was appointed the finance minister and deputy prime minister on July 16, in the latest cabinet reshuffle in response to demonstrations urging for reforms. The Egyptian military has been accused of provoking and killing the Copts in order to remain in power.

Every country is suffering from the global recession, social problems, unemployment, inflation, corruption and human rights violations, but how and in what civilized manner governments tackle these huge challenges is the big question in the face of people, call for a real change if things don't improve. One can't but agree with El Baradei who says: "I am pretty sure that any freely and fairly elected government in Egypt

will be a moderate one, but America is really pushing Egypt and pushing the whole Arab world into radicalization with this inept policy of supporting repression" The US had a duty and obligation to encourage democratic structures with genuine peoples, participation to enhance legitimacy and transparency in place of authoritarian and dictatorial rule. If genuine change for peoples' participation is not coming through evolution then revolutions are inevitable with all the violence, destruction and painful memories which will further disrupt and destabilize the situation. As Marwan Mausher wrote in *Washington Post* 2/2/11: "Arabs might not be calling for democracy as it's known in the West, but they are demanding better rule of law, equitable treatment and far less corruption. These things can't happen without political reform. Arab leaders need to understand that if they want to maintain power, they have to share it".

### **India and Egypt**

Despite the visits by two Indian Prime Ministers P.V. Narasimha Rao in October 1995 and I.K. Gujral in October 1997 followed by two visits by Vice President Krishan Kant for the G-15 Summits in 1998 and 2000 in Cairo, Indo Egyptians ties were

clouded by the Kashmir, Babri Masjid, BJP's policy towards Indian Muslims and growing Indo-Israeli military and strategic ties. All these led one Indian expert to conclude that "with the NAM in disarray and with the Palestine issue losing its high moral ground in India's foreign policy agenda, there has been hardly any other significant political or emotive issue either at the international or regional level to necessitate a high profile political entente between India and Egypt as during the cold war period. Egypt does not seem to enjoy any strategic importance in India's foreign policy calculation in the changed international scenario". Nevertheless India on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1997 nominated the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak for the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding for the year 1995 keeping in view the contribution of the Egyptian leader to the Arab-Israeli peace. Mubarak visited India in 2009 to receive the prestigious award, although on two earlier occasions dates were fixed but were cancelled due to one or the other reason. With lack of push at the political level, both have been appearing to salvage what is possible through economic cooperation and trade. In this connection a partnership agreement between the two countries was initiated in Cairo in May 1999 during the first meeting of the India-

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Egypt Joint Business Group. This is an umbrella agreement focusing on bilateral industrial cooperation for setting up of Joint Ventures with built-in exchange of expertise. To give a further boost to bilateral economic cooperation a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) is being negotiated with the aim of taking bilateral trade from present one billion US\$ to more than the double. Since 2002 trade has been in Egypt's favour due to increase in India's oil imports. Trade figures also show significant progress as the volume increased to \$1.5 billion in 2006 and came close to \$2 billion for 2007. Both have promised to increase bilateral trade by 2010 to \$6 billion.

Mubarak had visited India while he had been the Vice President and President. Two years ago he came to India to receive the Nehru award which was given to him in 1997. The Indo-Egyptian ties have been smooth but not very cordial as during Nehru-Nasser period. Mubarak was perhaps concerned about India's growing ties with Israel especially in security areas. He may have also wanted to mediate over the Kashmir issue as he maintained close ties with Pakistan. But bilateral ties are growing in the economic field with India importing oil and chemical fertilizers among many items with bilateral trade crossing \$5 billion.

Egypt is emerging like Oman, Jordan, Morocco and other Arab states as partners in India's food security besides trade through Suez Canal. Both India and Egypt started off at the same time and had also fought same number of wars and were founding members of the NAM but unlike India, Egypt drifted to being an authoritarian and repressive state. It also became a very close security partner of the US for the region and in Arab-Israeli peace which did not make much progress. Initially India was hesitant to come out forcefully on the current developments in Egypt but subsequently came out in favour of the protesters and their democratic aspirations. Initially India through the MEA in a statement on January 30, 2011 merely observed that India was "closely following with concern" the developments in Egypt. "India has traditionally enjoyed close and friendly relations. We hope for an early and peaceful resolution of the situation without further violence and loss of lives". This position was criticised as inadequate by many and promptly the Indian position improved when a more cogent stance came out on Egyptian mass protests by terming them as an "articulation of the aspirations of the Egyptian people for reform". It further said that it "is hoped that the current situation will be resolved in a peaceful manner, in the best interests of the people of

Egypt. India wishes that Egypt, a fellow developing country with which she enjoys close and traditional ties, will continue to be a strong and stable nation, contributing to peace and prosperity in the region". There were about 3,200 Indians living in Egypt, of whom the majority are in Cairo. India sent its planes to bring them back to India although some complained that Air India was over charging them.

The fact remains that India would be concerned about the role of Muslim Brotherhood [MB] in a democratic Egypt, but it has become clear that MB can't be excluded in any future government. The Egyptian people have been longing for freedom, justice and a democratic political system. What is needed are proper checks and balances as the executive had become too strong and powerful at the cost of legislature and the judiciary has become too feeble with restrictions placed on a free press. Proper adherence to rule of law will strengthen the state and remove fear from people's mind which is essential for overall growth. Once corruption, nepotism, cronyism are tackled or contained meritocracy will enhance the legitimacy of the government. This will also allow the civil society to play a responsible role in the system with the military-business elite nexus put under close

scrutiny. Students and youth will then develop the questioning attitude to think, analyze and develop an alternative view point.

### **Conclusion**

Egypt witnessed genuine development in all fields since the 1952 revolution. Economic planning, land reforms, strong public sector, strides in education, agricultural progress, industrial development and significant social reforms all had been initiated by Nasser. He also fostered a secular society although it was far from being democratic like India. Despite the Suez crisis, disintegration of UAR, military intervention in Yemen, Egypt was well on its way to becoming a developed Arab country but the 1967 war and defeat at the hands of Israel brought to a halt Egypt's development process. Since Nasser's death in 1970 Sadat was preoccupied to retrieve the lost territories, and he opted for an alliance with the US. Since Sadat's assassination in 1981, Mubarak, in order to maintain the unpopular peace treaty with Israel as also US aid, has not favoured a full fledged democratic political system which most Egyptians yearn. Full democratization, less reliance on US and a balanced foreign policy in general will enable Egypt to regain its rightful place as a major power in the Arab world. There is no doubt that

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Egypt wants its peace policy with Israel to be emulated by the other Arab states. But due to Israeli reluctance to withdraw from Palestinian lands, its aggression and blockade on Gaza, and harsh policy towards the Palestinians together with many internal developments led to the uprising against of Mubarak in early 2011. In their struggle against Mubarak, India took a strong position in favour of the Egyptian people and their demands for an end to authoritarian rule. However, there is an urgent need for India to work with Egypt to accelerate the search for Arab-Israeli peace. The Palestinians with Egypt's [and outside] help can rebuild their society. This is essential for peace, security and stability in this crucial region. India on its part should share its development experience and technology to assist Cairo in its development. Egypt's strategic location, its experience in peacemaking with Israel, its human resources, Suez Canal and growing oil and gas deposits make ties important for India. Although India is keen to join the Arab-Israeli peace process but it has become imperative to coordinate its efforts with Russia, China and regional states like Egypt and others. India in order to regain genuine respect must not only

continue to support the cause of Palestine and work with countries like Egypt to bring about an end to Israeli occupation but also ensure justice is delivered to the Palestinians. Non-resolution of Arab-Israeli Conflict will lead to more violence and instability in an area where India has vital interests. Undoubtedly close ties with Egypt will further India's national interest. There is also need to encourage the democratic forces in Egypt and elsewhere in the region so as to prevent foreign interventions which have become common due to the regions' strategic location and the crucial oil and gas deposits which the entire world needs for its development. The Egyptian people have broken the barrier of fear and have taken their destiny in their own hands and there is no going back as far as political reforms towards greater freedoms, genuine political participation, justice, rule of law and equality are concerned. They will no longer tolerate repression, oppression and suppression. The people's movement might suffer some setbacks but there is no going back. Already the Egyptian struggle for freedom and democracy has become a landmark in the Arab world and beyond—a fact of history and a heroic event which will shape all peaceful movements for democracy, peoples' rights and dignity. ■