

Analysis: 'Egypt's revolution was regime exchange, not regime change'

July 1 2013

A two-and-a-half hour long speech last week by the Egyptian President, Mohamed Morsi failed to stop Egyptians from taking to the streets. Egyptian academic Dr Solava Ibrahim, from The University of Manchester, discusses the latest crisis to afflict the country and why calls for a early presidential elections are getting louder. A practising Moslem, she is a lecturer in International development.

A failed regime

"The Mohamed Morsi regime is failing. The three key demands of the 2011 January 'revolution' in Egypt of 'bread, freedom and social justice' have not come about. In fact, the country has moved further away from achieving these goals.

"The situation is dire: poverty has increased from 21.6% in 2008/9 to 25.2% in 2010/2011, political activists are arbitrarily arrested, and unemployment among 20-24 year-olds has reached a huge 42.7%. Power cuts, queues at petrol stations, shrinking foreign reserves, failed IMF talks, growing mistrust by investors in the Egyptian economy and increased sales tax all illustrate Egypt's deepening [economic crisis](#).

"There is also unprecedented [polarisation](#) of Egyptian society: hate speeches by Salafi leaders as well as calls for Jihad in Syria are inciting violence against Copts and Shiites. The result is growing sectarian violence: four Shiite leaders were killed in June 2013 and the Coptic

cathedral was attacked in April 2013. Police brutality, the deteriorating security in many cities and escalating violence also show how the new regime is failing to ensure stability.

What revolution?

"But actually, and more fundamentally, Egypt never had a revolution. Yes, Egyptians succeeded in overthrowing the government, but, they did not bring in a new system; instead they continue the old one. It was regime exchange rather than regime change. No profound social, political or [economic reforms](#) have been carried out.

"And since the new regime has come to power, state institutions are increasingly being infiltrated by the forces of political Islam, especially Muslim Brotherhood loyalists, regardless of their experience and expertise.

"But Morsi, it seems, can't win. His former supporters, the Islamists and the Revolutionary forces, have openly criticized him for being either too lenient in implementing Islamic law or being too repressive."

These protests are different

"Previously, the police has confronted protestors and acted as a 'guardian' of the regime. But because they sided with Mubarak– and were punished for it - they have declared their neutrality.

"Also importantly, the current regime does not have clear backing from the armed forces: recently the head of the armed forces called for the government and opposition forces to start talks immediately to reach consensus on urgent political reforms.

"Although the current mobilisation is still mainly in the urban centres and among the youth, the rural population as well as older generations - are no longer distant from the rapidly developing Egyptian political scene. Many are participating in the protests.

"The cards seem to be stacking up against Morsi and Egypt is on a knife edge. All Egyptians will wait, with baited breath, to see what happens next and if our country can be brought back from the brink."

Provided by University of Manchester

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