

The failed emergence of Egypt, Turkey and Iran

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These three Middle Eastern nations have not succeeded in their attempts at emergence due to meddling by imperialist powers and the lack of capacity to challenge them.

These three Middle Eastern states should normally have been found in lists of today's 'emerging' states. They have each attempted, in the past, to modernise as a response to the challenge from Europe. Egypt attempted this under Pacha Mohamed Ali of the nineteenth century, as well as under Nasser. In Ottoman Turkey the Tanzimat (a reorganisation aimed at modernising the state) and later endeavours during the time of Ataturk (1920-1945) can be seen as the same, while Iran began with its revolution in 1907, and later the reign of Reza Palavi (until 1979). These were, in their own manner, leaders in modernising transformation of capitalist peripheries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However today none of these three states could reasonably be called 'emerging', not in the same way as China, South Korea, South Africa, Brazil, Argentina and others. The three states of focus are all important, in their own right, and also have similar populations of around 80 million people.

WHAT IS 'EMERGING'?

This term has been used by some to mean one thing and by others something entirely different in different contexts, often without any caution regarding precision around the meaning of the term. I will therefore here define the sense that I will give to the set of economic, social, political, and cultural transformations which permit one to speak of the 'emergence' of a state, a nation, and a people who have been placed in a peripheral place in the capitalist world system. (The term peripheral having the meaning that I have defined in my own work.)

Emergence is not measured by a rising rate of GDP growth (or exports) over a long period of time (more than a decade), nor the fact that the society in question has obtained a higher level of GDP per capita, as defined by the World Bank, aid institutions controlled by Western powers, and conventional economists.

Emergence involves much more: a sustained growth in industrial production in the state in question and a strengthening of the capacity of these industries to be competitive on a global scale. Again one must define which specific

industries are important and what is meant by competitiveness.

Extractive industries (minerals and fossil fuels) must be excluded from this definition. In states endowed by nature with these resources, accelerated growth can occur in these countries without necessarily leaving in its wake productive activities. The extreme example of this situation of ‘non-emergence’ would be the Gulf States, Venezuela, Gabon, and others.

One must also understand that the competitiveness of productive activities in the economy should be considered as a productive system in its entirety and not a certain unit of production alone. Due to the preference for outsourcing and subcontracting, multinationals operating in the South can be the impetus for the creation of local units of production tied to transnationals, or autonomous and capable of exporting to the world market, which earns them the status of competitive in the language of conventional economists. This truncated concept of competitiveness, which proceeds from an empiricist method, is not ours. Competitiveness is that of a productive system. For this to exist, the economy must be made up of productive elements with branches of this production sufficiently interdependent that one can speak of it as a system. This competitiveness depends upon diverse economic and social factors, among others the general level of education and training of workers of all levels and the efficiency of the group of institutions which manage the national political economy – fiscal policy, business law, labour law, credit, social services, etc. The productive system in question cannot reduce productive transformation to only activities involved in manufacturing and consumption – although the absence of these annuls the existence of a productive system worthy of the name – but rather must integrate food and agriculture as services required for the normal functioning of the system.

A real productive system can be more or less ‘advanced’. By this I mean that the group of activities must be qualified: is it involved in ‘banal’ productions or high technologies? It is important to situate an emerging state using this point of view: in what measure is it on the path of generating value added products? It is important to see emergent states from this point of view: at what stage are they in mounting the ladder towards producing value-added products?

The question of emergence therefore requires both a political and holistic examination. A state cannot be emerging if it is not inward (rather than outward) looking with the goal of creating a domestic market and thus reasserting national economic sovereignty. This complex objective requires sovereignty over all aspects of economic life. In particular it demands policies which protect food security and sovereignty, and equally sovereignty over one’s natural resources and access to others outside of one’s territory. These multiple and complementary objectives are contrasted with those of the

comprador class who are content to adopt growth models which meet the requirements of the dominant global system (liberal-internationalism) and the possibilities which these offer.

This proposed definition of emergence does not address the political strategy of the state and society: capitalism or socialism? However this question cannot be left out of the debate as the choice made by the leading classes will have major effects, both positive and negative, for a successful emergence. I would not say that the only option is to follow a capitalist perspective, which implements a system of a capitalist nature – control and exploitation of the workforce and a free market. Nor would I suggest that only a radical socialist option which challenges these forms of capitalism – property, organized labour, market controls- is able to last over long periods of time and move the society forwards in the world system.

The links between the politics of emergence on one hand and the accompanying social transformation, on the other hand, do not depend solely on the internal coherence of the former, but equally its degree of complementarity, or conflict, with the latter. Social struggles, whether class based or political, do not adjust themselves to fit the logic of a state's implementation of an emergence. Rather they are a determinant of this program. Current experience shows the diversity and dynamism of these links. Emergence is often accompanied by inequalities. One must examine the nature of these: inequalities where the beneficiaries are a tiny minority or a large minority (the middle class) and are realised in a framework which promotes the pauperisation of the majority of workers, or, on the contrary, one where the same people see a betterment in their quality of life, even if the growth rates of compensation for workers will be less than those who benefit from the system. Said in another manner, politics can associate emergence with pauperisation or not. Emergence does not follow a definitive set of rules. Rather it is a series of successive steps; the first can prepare the way for following successes, or bring about deadlock.

In the same manner the relation between the emerging economy and the global economy is constantly transforming as well. From these two different perspectives come policies which can promote sovereignty or weaken it, and at the same time promote social solidarity in the nation or weaken it. Emergence is therefore not synonymous with growth in exports and an increase in power measured in such a manner. Growth in exports can strengthen or weaken the autonomy of an emerging state relative to the world market.

We cannot speak of emergence in general, nor can we speak of models – Chinese, Indian, Brazilian and Korean – in general. One must concretely examine, in each case, the successive steps in the evolution of their emergence,

identify the strong and weak points, and analyse the dynamic of their implementation and the associated contradictions.

Emergence is a political and not only economic project. The measure of success is therefore determined by reducing the means by which the dominant capitalist centre perpetuates their domination, in spite of the fact that economic success of emergent states is measured in the conventional economic terms. I define the means as control of the dominant powers over the areas of technological development, access to natural resources, the global financial system, dissemination of information, and weapons of mass destruction. The imperialist collective triad – United States, Europe and Japan – intends to conserve, using all of these means, their privileged positions in dominating the planet and prohibiting emergent states from bringing this domination into question. I conclude that the ambitions of emergent states enter into conflict with the strategic objectives of the triad and the measure of the violence emanating from this conflict will be determined by the degree of radicalism with which the emergent state challenges the aforementioned privileges of the centre.

Economic emergence is not separable from the foreign policies of the states. Do they align themselves with the military and political coalition of the triad? Do they accept strategies put in place by NATO? Conversely, will they oppose them?

The reflections which follow will concern the failure of Turkish, Iranian, and Egyptian attempts at emergence, long ago and in the recent past, their frustration due to the intervention of imperialist powers or by the lack of capacity to challenge them, and the notions of today's leading classes which render doubtful the prospect of any of these three countries emerging. The reflections must be understood using the theoretical framework of the preceding pages.

TURKEY

Is Turkey European? The debates around this question are generally extremely polemical and lack a solid scientific foundation. It is important to note that the ruling classes have considered themselves so for a long time, going back to the Ottoman age and 1453 when Mehmet El Fateh, the conqueror of Constantinople, would have hesitated and reflected before proclaiming himself “(Orthodox) Emperor of Byzantium/Constantinople”, as the soldiers, who had battled under the banner of Islam, as ghazis or conquerors, would not have accepted it. Still in the 19th century, Ottoman Turkey engaged in a reorganisation of the state known as Tanzimat – ‘reorganisation’ or ‘perestroika’ – the purpose of which can be clearly seen: to make Turkey a

‘European’ state. Whether the Ottoman/Turkish society advanced in this direction, or if the progress remained insignificant, is a question of which there has been no shortage of examination by historians.

Towards the end of the 19th century a large number of intellectuals and Ottoman politicians, Turkish or otherwise, organised themselves, under the name Young Turks, to accelerate this pace, beginning by ridding themselves of a Sultan judged incapable of imagining either the overthrow of his empire or the abandonment of its imperial character (the control of Arab Mashriq). Echoing European nationalist ideologies, they identified themselves overtly as Turks rather than Ottomans.

The war from 1914 – 18 created the conditions to unambiguously implement the Young Turks program, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk). The Arab provinces were lost, the caliphate was abolished, and the war against the intervention of the Entente was won. The newly proclaimed Turkish Republic could imagine itself on the route towards successful Europeanization.

It was unquestionably a project of emergence. It was also carried out by a capitalist transformation of society. All that was necessary, they believed, was the desire for power. The idea that the logic of global capitalism – with its creation of a global system consisting of a polarisation between the core and integrated partners in the periphery – would not permit this development was unthinkable at that time. The fact that Ataturk’s project coincided with the Russian Revolution could have raised questions regarding the appropriateness of a capitalist approach. But Ataturk and his contemporaries did not dwell on this thought, and the Turkish Communists had even fewer clear ideas on the question.

Social reality was to shape the implementation of the new attempt at emergence. A capitalist ‘bourgeoisie’ was, at most, in its infancy in 1924’s Turkey. However there was an important class of intellectuals, politicians and bureaucrats – only male – and the military who were responsible for assuming the leadership of the country. This class was recruited from the western part of the country – Istanbul, Edirne, Smyrne – and was identified – by themselves and others – as ‘Rumelian’, from the origin Rome – or Byzantium – which indicated the cultural aspirations. The east, Anatolia, was made up exclusively of peasants. The Turks at that time recognized Rumelians as ‘civilized’ or ‘European’ and Anatolians as wretches in need of being civilised. Of course the Rumelians were generally secular or even atheist, while the Anatolians were devoutly Muslim.

The Rumelians and followers of Ataturk were nationalist in the intolerant and chauvinistic manner of the term. They would never recognize the Armenian

genocide, and the shameful treatment to which the rarely spared Armenian child was subjected (forced conversion to Islam and discrimination) nor the situation of the Kurds or the Arabs of Hatay. All of the governments in Ankara, even the Islamists of today, share this chauvinism. The 'Arab' ideologues of political Islam privilege the Islamic identity to the point where other identities are nearly forgotten – we are neither Algerians, Arabs, nor Berbers, but Muslims, proclaim these ideologues. Political Islam in Turkey shares this somewhat but not fully; a Turk is Muslim, but just as much Turk.

The only development model possible in this situation would be state capitalism led by an enlightened despot. The implementation of the model would benefit the popular masses, both urban and rural, by allowing them to climb in the social hierarchy through children's education, as well as receive a higher quality of life. The benefits of enlightened despotism brought about an incontestable legitimacy in the eyes of the people. It did not hurt that it was also linked with anti-imperial struggles.

This is precisely where the attempt at emergence diverges from the Arab states. The nationalist powers of the latter, as we will see from the example of Nasser's Egypt, were systematically attacked by the imperialist powers. The Turkish regime never was. This was at the same time both their strength and their weakness.

From 1945, Turkey, still Kemalist, opted for a Western alliance against the Soviet threat (determined unfortunately by Stalin's claims that year concerning Kars and Ardahan and the status of the Bosphorus strait). Turkey would become a founding member of NATO, at a time when no requirement existed that the members make any declaration of democracy.

The weakness of the Kemalist capitalist state permitted them as an American ally, instead of opponent, to integrate into the global capitalist system that followed the war. Washington 'counselled' Ankara and secured 'elections' in 1950 that brought Menderes to power. But his electoral victory would transform the relations between the Kemalist/Rumelian forces and the Anatolian peasantry. Menderes looked towards a class of newly rich Anatolian peasants, produced by agricultural development. The end of the Rumelian/Kemalist elite's privilege had begun and would only continue. The new model, suggested and supported by the USA, the World Bank, and their contemporaries, effectively emphasised the development of capitalist agriculture. But the rich peasants remained 'Muslim', in opposition to the Kemalist state. The compradorisation of the Turkish development path occurred gradually yet plainly: capitalist agriculture, openness towards industrial outsourcing, privatisation of large parts of the originally capitalist state, possibilities for mass emigration of the poor Anatolian peasantry. The

new class of businessmen associated with and benefitting from the compradorian development, was recruited primarily from the children of the rich Anatolian peasantry.

Politically the last defenders of Kemalism, the army, would travel from defeat to defeat, despite the restoration of the dictatorship twice, until the day, only some years distant, when Anatolian Turkish political Islam would be established as henceforth dominant in society.

This evolution, which I define as a re-compradorisation, which ends the Kemalist project of emergence, is accompanied by the strong affirmation of the continued importance of the essential tenet of NATO, that being the support for the strategies of the imperialist triad. It is in this sense that I say that Turkey was 'the Colombia of the Middle East'. For those who question this affirmation I direct their attention to the recent interventions of Ankara in the ongoing Syrian crisis.

It should be understood that the Americans' Turkish ally remains a candidate for accession to the European Union (EU). However there is no contradiction, but rather a complementarity, between membership in this Union and NATO. This project of 'Europeanization', which nourishes the illusion that the new Turkey has inherited the mantle of Kemalism, constitutes a real, albeit minor, question. That different European political forces in the EU accept, while others reject, Turkey's candidacy and that the justification of these postures ends in polemics (never a 'Muslim' country in 'Christian' Europe) constitute equally real questions, but again of lesser importance. But compradorisation, the antithesis of emergence, is completed by the enthusiasm of its cheerleaders for the EU. So will Turkey rediscover the Middle East? Or perhaps even Turan? How would this eventually happen?

Turkey is active in the Middle East. But what role does it fill? In fact Turkey intervenes as an ally of the US and not as an autonomous emerging power. This is not new. Turkey was at the centre of the Baghdad Pact rejected by Nasser following the 1958 Iraq revolution. Turkey is, and remains, the military ally of Israel. It presently intervenes in Syria at the behest of Washington. Turkey is therefore easily 'the Colombia of the Middle East'. The Turanian alternative to reject Europeanisation was tried first in 1918 by Enver Pacha. But the rise of the Soviet Union rendered these ambitions impossible; though after its collapse it appeared that it could be reborn from the ashes. However Turkey can hardly do more than be a subordinate ally implementing the plan of its American masters.

Postures taken by the powers in the South are not neutral in the effects on the orientation of economic development. Inclusion in the geostrategic

considerations of the imperialist powers is naturally associated with economic compradorisation, the antithesis of emergence. Turkish political Islam is, like the Arab states or Pakistan, reactionary in its social postures; they overtly oppose the struggles of workers and peasants. This is in line with what is permitted in the corridors of power in the West, who are always therefore eager to certify their democracy.

Emergent states must enter into conflict with the dominant imperialists, even if the intensity of the conflict is variable from moment to moment. How prepared are they though, to be treated as an adversary by the imperialist powers in order to be a candidate for emergence?

IRAN

Iran is an old and great nation, proud of its history, which reacted strongly, and quite early, to the European menace, both English and Russian. From 1907 they began a revolution against the regime of the decadent Qadjars dynasty, who were judged incapable of resisting foreigners. Moreover many intellectuals who participated in the revolution were trained in the Russian Caucasus with the POSDR (which would later produce Bolshevism). This left many leading Iranians with a much firmer grasp than elsewhere of certain issues and of the relation between imperialist domination and the historical pattern of exploitative class relations (feudal system).

The new power of Pahlevi, established in 1921, addressed this fact in a particular manner: they were reactionary to the overtures for social change; however they refused to be the lackeys for the dominant forces of the world market. The long term effects of the Soviet presence in the north of the country during the Second World War, the support given to the construction of the autonomous Azerbaijan and Kurdish societies and states, the emergence of a powerful anti-imperialist and socialist party (the Toudeh), the nationalist position taken in 1951 by the Prime Minister Mossadeqh who nationalised oil, could not be erased by the CIA sponsored coup which permitted Mohamed Reza Shah to turn the tide and rejoin the Western camp.

To defend against the challenge of the powerful democratic, nationalist, and progressive forces in Iran, Mohamed Reza Shah engaged in a 'White Revolution', beginning in 1962, associated with a 'neutral' international posture. Land reform was not really part of this; it did not reduce the power and the riches of the laitifundia; even though modernisation was encouraged, this merely facilitated the rise of a newly rich peasant class. Added to this was the modernisation of morals (especially towards women) and an effort in the domain of education. The neutral postures: reconciliation with the USSR in 1965, China in 1970, another nationalisation of oil in 1973, were, in these

conditions, accepted by the Western powers who had no better alternative. The regime, heavily dependent on security (the crimes of their political police, the Savak, have gained a well-earned notoriety) were the only way to maintain a reactionary social order. The emergence project of Mohamed Reza Shah was certainly one conceived in the manner of capitalism (albeit a state capitalism). The limits and contradictions were products of having chosen this option and principle.

The destruction of Toudeh by police violence cleared the path for a new force to challenge the regime. This was organised around Shiite Mullahs and their leader, the Ayatollah Khomeini. The Islamist regime, in place since 1979, is also undermined by its internal contradictions. At its foundation, in regards to its desires to reconstruct society, it is reactionary, not only in its cultural approaches (women are veiled) but also in its relations to economic and social life. Most of its support is provided by two social groups: the 'Bazaris', or the commercial/comprador traditional bourgeoisie, and the newly rich peasants. The regime inherited a state capitalism managed by 'technocrats' allied to the Shah's dictatorship. What the regime did was simply substitute this 'civil' management with a religious one. The Mullahs in managerial positions enriched themselves with no regard for the overall coherence of the Shah's modernisation project – which became modernisation led by religious figures, equally troubled by its own limits and contradictions. However at the same time, as the Shah's regime had been pro-Western, the new regime could adorn itself with an anti-imperialist mantle, although this posture would be confused with anti-Western.

The confusion is extreme. It explains how many Western analysts can qualify the system as 'modernising' (modern Islam, the say). They base this on real evolutions, but mistake the significance that these are given. Of course the female marriage age has been raised, and there are a larger number of women working and occupying the same roles and responsibilities. But this progress is found throughout the Southern world (with the exception of the Gulf States!) as in the North (where the word 'change' is well understood). Modernity, not to mention emancipation, requires much more.

Washington had supported the Shah until the end, and their reaction elicited the expected nationalist Iranian stance. This is why Washington mobilised its erstwhile ally, Iraq's Saddam Hussein, to engage in ten years of criminal and irrational war beginning in 1980. This led to a constitution, under the aegis of Washington, of an Arab camp (the Gulf supporting Iraq) who initiated the Iran (Shiite)/Gulf (Sunni for the most part) hostility. This conflict has been described as atavistic. There exists, however, no supporting facts of this conflict that had permeated the region through history ending in an imminent, constant and invariable reality. With the assistance of falsehoods, it could

appear to be so: reactionary political Islam allied with one or another other group.

In this manner Iran (Islamic, Shiite, Khomeinist), became the adversary of the Western powers, even if they had not wanted it to. Iran under Khomeini could not conceive of managing their economy other than by the simple rules of capitalism. A modus vivendi would have been easy to find between this local capitalism and that on the global scale. The Mullahs, particularly those who advance 'reforms', have studied such a path. The Gulf sought to frustrate these attempts, by alarming Washington.

Tehran's nuclear option can do nothing but further poison the atmosphere. This is not a new initiative of the Khomeini regime. Rather, it was the Shah Mohamed Reza who started his country down this path. During his time, Washington had nothing to say. Khomeini's regime did nothing but continue along the same route. There is no reason to reproach them, even using the hypothesis that behind the civil nuclear program lays a nuclear weapons program. They have truly no reason to accept the point of view of Washington, and its subordinate allies in NATO, concerning proliferation. One is not declared dangerous or a potential adversary unless the declaration benefits the imperialist powers. The silence concerning Israel's monstrous nuclear equipment shows the Western powers' method of judgement: differing weights, differing measures. Were denuclearisation to occur (the best possible option), it could be initiated only by the most menacing state in the world, the USA. One concludes therefore, that the threat of aggression against Iran proceeds directly from those howling in Tel Aviv.

The situation is also more complex as the occupation of Iraq and the stalemate in Afghanistan have not given Washington the results they desire. Certainly Iraq has been destroyed, not only the state (split into four de facto regimes: Sunni, Shiite, Kurd 1 and Kurd 2!), but also the society. Among other things, all scientists were assassinated under the orders of the occupier. But the destruction of Iraq has at the same time given Iran a formidable card to play, who can mobilise its (Shiite) allies if needed. To combat this problem Washington has decided to weaken Iran by destroying its regional allies, beginning with Syria!

All of this confirms that the political conflict between the USA and Iran is very real. But that does not change the question posed in this reflection: is Iran on the path to emergence? My pure and simple response is no. Nothing in the evolution of Iran's economic system permits one to see the state leave the 'lumpen development' in which Khomeini's state is stuck. It is not enough to be considered an adversary by the imperialist powers to become, miraculously, an emergent state.

EGYPT

Egypt was the first country in the periphery of globalized capitalism that tried to “emerge.” Even at the start of the nineteenth century, well before Japan and China, the Viceroy Mohammed Ali had conceived and undertaken a program of renovation for Egypt and its near neighbours in the Arab Mashreq (Mashreq means “East,” i.e., eastern North Africa and the Levant). That vigorous experiment took up two-thirds of the nineteenth century and only belatedly ran out of breath in the 1870s, during the second half of the reign of the Khedive Ismail. The analysis of its failure cannot ignore the violence of the foreign aggression by Great Britain, the foremost power of industrial capitalism during that period. Twice, in the naval campaign of 1840 and then by taking control of the Khedive’s finances during the 1870s, and then finally by military occupation in 1882, England fiercely pursued its objective: to make sure that a modern Egypt would fail to emerge. Certainly the Egyptian project was subject to the limitations of its time since it manifestly envisaged emergence within and through capitalism, unlike Egypt’s second attempt at emergence—which we will discuss further on. That project’s own social contradictions, like its underlying political, cultural, and ideological presuppositions, were undoubtedly responsible at least in part for its failure. The fact remains that without imperialist aggression those contradictions would probably have been overcome, as they were in Japan. Beaten, emergent Egypt was forced to undergo nearly forty years (1880–1920) as a servile periphery, whose institutions were refashioned in service to that period’s model of capitalist/imperialist accumulation. That imposed retrogression struck, not only its productive system, but also the country’s political and social institutions. It operated systematically to reinforce all the reactionary and medievalistic cultural and ideological conceptions that had been useful for keeping the country in its subordinate position.

The Egyptian nation—its people, its elites—never accepted that position. This stubborn refusal in turn gave rise to a second wave of rising movements which unfolded during the next half-century (1919–1967). Indeed, I see that period as a continuous series of struggles and major forward movements. It had a triple objective: democracy, national independence, and social progress. These three objectives—however limited and sometimes confused were their formulations—were inseparable one from the other. In this reading, the chapter (1955–1967) of Nasserist systematization is nothing but the final chapter of that long series of advancing struggles, which began with the revolution of 1919–1920.

The first moment of that half-century of rising emancipation struggles in Egypt had put its emphasis—with the formation of the Wafd in 1919—on

political modernization through adoption (in 1923) of a bourgeois form of constitutional democracy (limited monarchy) and on the reconquest of independence. The form of democracy envisaged allowed progressive secularization—if not secularism in the radical sense of that term—whose symbol was the flag linking cross and crescent (a flag that reappeared in the demonstrations of January and February 2011). “Normal” elections then allowed, without the least problem, not merely for Copts (native Egyptian Christians) to be elected by Muslim majorities but for those very Copts to hold high positions in the State. The British put their full power, supported actively by a reactionary bloc comprised of the monarchy, the great landlords, and the rich peasants, into undoing the democratic progress made by Egypt under Wafdist leadership. In the 1930s the dictatorship of Sedki Pasha, abolishing the democratic 1923 constitution, clashed with the student movement then spearheading the democratic anti-imperialist struggles. It was not by chance that, to counter this threat, the British Embassy and the Royal Palace actively supported the formation in 1927 of the Muslim Brotherhood, inspired by “Islamist” thought in its most backward “Salafist” version of Wahhabism as formulated by Rachid Reda—the most reactionary version, antidemocratic and against social progress, of the new-born “political Islam. The conquest of Ethiopia undertaken by Mussolini, with world war looming, forced London to make some concessions to the democratic forces. In 1936 the Wafd, having learned its lesson, was allowed to return to power and a new Anglo-Egyptian treaty was signed. The Second World War necessarily constituted a sort of parenthesis. But a rising tide of struggles resumed already on February 21, 1946 with the formation of the “worker-student bloc,” reinforced in its radicalization by the entry on stage of the communists and of the working-class movement. Once again the Egyptian reactionaries, supported by London, responded with violence and to this end mobilized the Muslim Brotherhood behind a second dictatorship by Sedki Pasha—without, however, being able to silence the protest movement. Elections had to be held in 1950 and the Wafd returned to power. Its repudiation of the 1936 Treaty and the inception of guerrilla actions in the Suez Canal Zone were defeated only by setting fire to Cairo (January 1952), an operation in which the Muslim Brotherhood was deeply involved.

A first coup d'état in 1952 by the “Free Officers,” and above all a second coup in 1954 by which Nasser took control, was taken by some to “crown” the continual flow of struggles and by others to put it to an end. Rejecting the view of the Egyptian awakening advanced above, Nasserism put forth an ideological discourse that wiped out the whole history of the years from 1919 to 1952 in order to push the start of the “Egyptian Revolution” to July 1952. At that time many among the communists had denounced this discourse and analyzed the coups d'état of 1952 and 1954 as aimed at putting an end to the radicalization of the democratic movement. They were not wrong, since

Nasserism took the shape of an anti-imperialist project only after the Bandung Conference of April 1955. Nasserism then contributed all it had to give: a resolutely anti-imperialist international posture (in association with the pan-Arab and pan-African movements) and some progressive (but not “socialist”) social reforms. The whole thing done from above, not only “without democracy” (the popular masses being denied any right to organize by and for themselves) but even by “abolishing” any form of political life. This was an invitation to political Islam to fill the vacuum thus created. In only ten short years (1955–1965) the Nasserist project used up its progressive potential. Its exhaustion offered imperialism, henceforward led by the United States, the chance to break the movement by mobilizing to that end its regional military instrument: Israel. The 1967 defeat marked the end of the tide that had flowed for a half-century. Its reflux was initiated by Nasser himself who chose the path of concessions to the Right (the *infitah* or “opening,” (an opening to capitalist globalization of course) rather than the radicalization called for by, among others, the student movement (which held the stage briefly in 1970, shortly before and then after the death of Nasser). His successor, Sadat, intensified and extended the rightward turn and integrated the Muslim Brotherhood into his new autocratic system. Mubarak continued along the same path.

Under Nasser Egypt had set up an economic and social system that, though subject to criticism, was at least coherent. Nasser wagered on industrialization as the way out of the colonial international specialization which was confining the country to the role of cotton exporter. His system maintained a division of incomes that favoured the expanding middle classes without impoverishing the popular masses. Sadat and Mubarak dismantled the Egyptian productive system, putting in its place a completely incoherent system based exclusively on the profitability of firms most of which were mere subcontractors for the imperialist monopolies. Supposed high rates of economic growth, much praised for thirty years by the World Bank, were completely meaningless. Egyptian growth was extremely vulnerable. Moreover, such growth was accompanied by an incredible rise in inequality and by unemployment afflicting the majority of the country’s youth. This was an explosive situation. It exploded.

During the Bandung and Non Alignment period (1955-1970) the Arab countries were in the forefront of the struggles of the peoples, the nations and the states of the South for a better future and a less unequal global system. Algeria’s FLN and Boumedienne, Nasser’s Egypt, the Baas regimes in Iraq and Syria, the South Yemen Republic, shared common characteristics. These were not “democratic” regimes according to the Western criteria (they were “one party” systems), nor even according to our criteria which implies positive empowerment of the peoples. But they were nevertheless legitimate in the eyes

of their peoples, for their actual achievements: mass education, health and other public services, industrialization and guarantees for employment, social upward mobility, associated with independent initiatives and anti imperialist postures. Therefore they were continuously and fiercely opposed by the western powers, in particular through repeated Israeli aggressions.

These regimes achieved whatever they could in that frame within a short period, say 20 years, and then ran out of steam, as a result of their internal limits and contradictions. This, coinciding with the breakdown of Soviet power, facilitated the imperialist “neo liberal” offensive. The ruling circles, in order to remain in office, have chosen to retreat and submit to the demands of neo liberal globalization. The result has been a fast degradation of the social conditions. All that had been achieved in the era of the National Popular State to the benefit of the popular and middle classes was lost in a few years, poverty and mass unemployment being the normal result of the neo liberal policies pursued. Thus the objective conditions for the revolts were created.

The period of retreat lasted, in its turn, almost a half century. Egypt, submissive to the demands of globalized liberalism and to US strategy, simply ceased to exist as an active factor in regional or global politics. Instead, the major US allies—Saudi Arabia and Israel—occupied the foreground. Israel was then able to pursue its course of expanding colonization of occupied Palestine with the tacit complicity of Egypt and the Gulf countries.

De-politicization of the society due to the modus operandi of the Nasserist regime is behind the rise of political Islam. Note that Nasserism was not the only system that took this approach. Rather, most populist nationalist regimes of the first wave of awakening in the South had a similar approach in the management of politics. Note also that the actually existing socialist regimes have also taken this only approach, at least after the revolutionary phase, that was democratic in nature, when they solidified their rule. So, the common denominator is the abolition of democratic praxis. And I do not mean here to equate democracy with multiparty elections. Rather, the practice of democracy in the proper sense of the word, i.e. respect for the plurality of political views and political schemes and for political organizing. Because politicization assumes democracy, and democracy does not exist if those who differ in opinion with the authority do not enjoy freedom of expression. The obliteration of the right to organize around different political views and projects eliminated the politicization, which ultimately caused the subsequent disaster.

This disaster has manifested itself in the return to the bygone archaic views (religious or otherwise), and this was also reflected in the acceptance of the project of the "consumer society" based on solidification of the so-called trend

of “individualism,” a trend which spread not only among the middle class that is benefiting from such pattern of development, but also among the poor masses who call for participating in what appear a minima welfare—even though with its maximum simplicity—in the absence of credible real alternative. Therefore one must consider this as a legitimate demand from the popular classes.

The de-politicization in Islamic societies took a prevailing form that was manifested in the apparent or superficial "return" to "Islam". Consequently, the discourse of the mosque along with the discourse of the authority became the only allowed ones in Nasser's period, and more so during the periods of Sadat and Mubarak. This discourse was then used to stop the emergence of an alternative based on the entrenching of a socialist aspiration. Then this “religious” discourse was encouraged by Sadat and Mubarak to accompany and cope with the deteriorating living conditions resulting from the subjugation of Egypt to the requirements of imperialist globalization. This is why I argued that political Islam did not belong to the opposition block, as claimed by the Muslim Brotherhood, but was an organic part of the power structure.

The success of political Islam requires further clarification regarding the relationship between the success of imperialist globalization on the one hand, and the rise of Brotherhood slogans on the other hand.

The deterioration that accompanied this globalization produced proliferation in the activities of the informal sector in economic and social life, which represents the most important sources of income for the majority of people in Egypt (statistics say 60%). The Brotherhood's organizations have real ability to work in these circumstances, so that the success of the Brotherhood in these areas in turn has produced more inflation in these activities and thus ensured its reproduction on a larger scale. The political culture offered by the Brotherhood is known for its great simplicity. As this culture is content with only conferring Islamic "legitimacy" to the principle of private property and the "free" market relations, without considering the nature of the activities concerned, which are rudimentary ("Bazaar") activities that are unable to push forward the national economy and lead to its development. Furthermore, the provision of funds widely by the Gulf States has allowed for the boom of such activities as these states have been pumping in the required funds in the form of small loans or grants. This is in addition to charity work (clinics, etc.) that has accompanied this inflated sector, thanks to the support of Gulf States. The Gulf states do not intend to contribute to the development of productive capacity in the Egyptian economy (building factories...etc.), but only the development of this form of “lumpen development”, since reviving Egypt as a developing state would end the domination of the Gulf states (that are based

on the acceptance of the slogan of Islamization of the society), the dominance of the United States (which assumes Egypt as a comprador state infected with worsening poverty), and the domination of Israel (which assumes the impotence of Egypt in the face of Zionist expansion).

The apparent “stability of the regime,” boasted of by successive US officials like Hillary Clinton, was based on a monstrous police apparatus of 1,200,000 men (the army numbering a mere 500,000) free to carry out daily acts of criminal abuse. The imperialist powers claimed that this regime was “protecting” Egypt from the threat of Islamism. This was nothing but a clumsy lie. In reality the regime had perfectly integrated reactionary political Islam (on the Wahhabite model of the Gulf) into its power structure by giving it control of education, of the courts, and of the major media (especially television). The sole permitted public speech was that of the Salafist mosques, allowing the Islamists, to boot, to pretend to make up “the opposition.” The cynical duplicity of the US establishment’s speeches (Obama no less than Bush) was perfectly adapted to its aims. The de facto support for political Islam destroyed the capacity of Egyptian society to confront the challenges of the modern world (bringing about a catastrophic decline in education and research). By occasionally denouncing its “abuses” (like assassinations of Copts) Washington could legitimize its military interventions as actions in its self-styled “war against terrorism.” The regime could still appear “tolerable” as long as it had the safety valve provided by mass emigration of poor and middle-class workers to the oil-producing countries. The exhaustion of that system (Asian immigrants replacing those from Arabic countries) brought with it the rebirth of opposition movements. The workers’ strikes in 2007 (the strongest strikes on the African continent in the past fifty years), the stubborn resistance of small farmers threatened with expropriation by agrarian capital, and the formation of democratic protest groups among the middle classes (like the “Kefaya” and “April 6” movements) foretold the inevitable explosion—expected by Egyptians but startling to “foreign observers.” And thus began a new phase in the tide of emancipation struggles, whose directions and opportunities for development we are now called on to analyse.

The history of modern Egypt is that of successive waves of attempts at emergence, designed using essentially the model of a capitalist society. Nonetheless, it is associated with progressive social transformations and advances in democracy, benefitting from a clear vision that the hostility of Western powers must be confronted. The abandonment of these attempts must be largely attributed to this hostility, which has been directed more at Egypt than against the others, particularly modern Turkey.

Egypt entered, in 2011, a new phase in her history. The analysis which I propose consists of a democratic movement, national and popular in its appeal,

and the strategies of the local reactionary adversary and its outside allies permit one to imagine a multitude of different paths towards emergence. In conclusion to this analysis I must say at this time one could not say that Egypt is on the path towards emergence. Rather, for the foreseeable future, Egypt will sink into a fatal combination of lumpen development, powerful political Islam, and submission to the domination of the global imperial system. However the struggle will continue and will perhaps permit an exit from this impasse and a reinvention of an appropriate road to emergence.

Emergence and Lumpen Development

There can be no emergence without state politics, resting on a comfortable social bloc, which gives it legitimacy, capable of constructing a coherent project an inward looking national productive system. They must at the same time ensure the participation of the great majority of social classes and that these groups receive the benefits of growth.

Opposing the favourable evolution of an authentic emergence is the unilateral submission to the requirements of the implementation of global capitalism and general monopolies which produce nothing other than what I would call 'lumpen development'. I will now liberally borrow from the late Andre Gunder Frank, who analysed a similar evolution, albeit at a different time and place. Today lumpen development is the product of accelerated social disintegration associated with the 'development' model (which does not deserve its name) imposed by the monopolies from the imperialist core on the peripheral societies they dominate. It is manifested by a dizzying growth of subsistence activities (called the informal sphere), otherwise called the pauperisation associated with the unilateral logic of accumulation of capital.

One can remark that I did not qualify the emergence as 'capitalist' or 'socialist'. This is because emergence is a process associated with complementarity, while at the same time conflict, of the logic of capitalist management of the economy and the logics of 'non-capitalist' – and potentially socialist - management of society and politics.

Among the experiences of emergence, some cases merit special mention as they are not associated with the processes of lumpen development. There is not a pauperisation among the popular classes, but rather progress in the living standards, modest or otherwise. Two of these experiences are clearly capitalist – those of South Korea and Taiwan (I will not discuss here the particular historical conditions which permitted the success of the implementation in the two countries). Two others inherited the aspirations conducted in the name of socialism – Vietnam and China. Cuba could also be included in this group if it can master the contradictions which it is currently going through.

But we know of other cases of emergence which have been associated with lumpen development of a massive nature. India is the best example. There are segments of this project which correspond to the requirements of emergence. There is a state policy which favours the building of an industrial productive system. Consequently there is an associated expansion of the middle classes and progress in technological capacities and education. They are capable of playing autonomously on the chessboard of international politics. But for a grand majority, two thirds of society, there is accelerated pauperisation. We have therefore a hybrid system which ties together emergence and lumpen development. We can highlight the link between these two complementary parts of reality. I believe, without suggesting too gross a generalisation, that all the other cases that are considered emergent belong to this familiar hybrid, which includes Brazil, South Africa, and others.

But there exist also, and it is most of the other Southern countries, situations in which there are no elements of emergence as the processes of lumpen development occupy much of the society. The three countries considered here (Turkey, Iran, Egypt) are part of this group and it is for this reason that I declare them non-emergent and the projects of emergence abandoned.

In Turkey and Egypt submission to the comprador economic model, geostrategic alignment with the United States, lumpen development and pauperisation, and the increase in reactionary political Islam, trap the societies in a downward spiral. This is because the more a society succumbs to lumpen development; the more susceptible it is to political Islam. In Iran the duo of lumpen development and control of society by the Mullahs relegate the country to the same downward spiral. Despite the political conflict with Washington, there has not been a rupture with the pursuit of a political economy analogous to that of a comprador state. It is therefore more necessary than ever to rid oneself of the illusions of transition led by the local exercise of power by political Islam.

There is a prevailing media discourse, that is extremely naïve, that contends that "the victory of political Islam became inevitable because Islamic self-identity dominates the reality of our societies, and it is a reality that some had rejected, and thus this reality imposed itself on them."

However, this argument completely ignores another reality, namely, that the de-politicization process was deliberate, and without it no political Islam would have been able to impose itself on these societies. Furthermore, this discourse argues further that "there is no risk from this victory of political Islam, because it is temporary, for the authority emerging from it is doomed to failure and thus the public opinion will abandon it". This is as if the

Brotherhoods are those who accept the implementation of the principles of democracy even if it works against their interests!

However, the regime in Washington adopts, apparently, this discourse, as well as the public opinion there, which is manufactured by the media. And there is an ensemble of Egyptian and Arab intellectuals who also became convinced by this discourse, apparently, perhaps opportunistically, or because of lack of clarity in thought.

But this is a mistake. Let it be known that political Islam, in the supposition of taking over the governments, will continue to impose itself if not "forever", at least for a long time (50 years?). Let us not forget the case of Iran for example. During this phase of "transition" other nations will continue their march of development, and so we will find ourselves eventually in the bottom of the list. So I don't see the Brotherhood primarily as an "Islamic party"; it is first a reactionary party, and if it managed to take the government, it represents the best security for the imperialist system.

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