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Revolts of the Youth: Challenges and Perspectives

Abstract

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Questions to be covered:

What mobilization potential is harboured in the young people's revolt for long term political engagement and for the drive for societal change?

The young people who went out all around the Arab world starting with the Tunisian revolt going through Egypt and spreading to Libya, Yemen, Syria and even Greece and Spain has changed the map of political activist and social engagement in the public spheres. The masses of the young people in the Arab world before 2011 were systemically and endemically marginalized and even intimidated from either being politically active or agents of social change without the fear of police brutality or deliberate disenfranchising.

Youth from the Mediterranean region has for long worked under the umbrella of the civil society as an alternative sphere to changing their realities. Although restricted in the way they work and how they can receive funding from international funding agencies; the increase use and impact of alternative social media has managed to break the shackles of limited mediums of expression and impacting the public domains.

After the Tunisians had brought down the China wall of fear for the rest of the Arab world it was interesting how they shared their experiences on the Internet and specifically face book for other revolting young Arabs better find the force of tyranny and State violence. The Arab youth found themselves in the Tahrirs of their countries now more than ever having to efficiently mobilize and manage the ever-increasing angry masses. If there is a lesson that young Arabs learnt the most from the events of the Arab awakening is that mobilizing and organizing is the name of the game which would change the rules of engagement from there on. After the fall of Mubarak in Egypt more than 200 new youth coalitions raced to gain followers and reputation along with 77 emerging new parties in less than two month. Those who were disenchanted with political sphere because of the turmoil caused by the ever-mounting polarization between political Islam and a deeply fragmented liberal camp many of young people opted for a role and a nascent civil society organizations that were detached from the crony attachments of the Mubarak era.

Fighting over the same resources all those youth centred entities are now crashing against the rocks of harsh realities of both the current economic situation in their countries as well the bureaucracy of the donors' world of inflexibility. Although it is true that the democratic transformations of the Arab world has not come to a real start but rather milestones towards it; a lot remain to be done and only if young people are included in the process of change that took them out on the streets the first place.

Eager to mobilize, willing to change yet overtaken by much more organized groups that remain undergrounds for decade that are more politically pragmatic and less idealistic the youth are once again disenfranchised and pushed out of the scene once again.

In this gloomy scene some success stories remain as hope for many young people who are still remain engaged. The 6th of April movement has been an inspiration to many young people across the nation and the Arab world. The 6th of April is the only youth movement that remained successful in its mobilization efforts and advancing the cause of freedom social justice through continuous on the street campaigns the raise awareness of the public on important issues such as the importance of demilitarizing the state and civil liberties. Another success story is the award winning civic education media tool "Qabila" which has used humorous animation discussing and simplifying issues such as political systems and constitutional issues. Two youth lead parties remain at the centre of the fragmented political spectrum the Socialist Democratic party and the Egyptian Current "Tayyar Masry" party both of which remain faithful to their revolutionary origins and agenda.

There are many initiatives on the other hand that worked on raising awareness on many political and civic related issues just to name a few:

1. "No the military trails" a movement working on educating the public on the illegitimacy of civilians standing military trails and pressuring the Military councils to release the civilians who stood military trail over 18 month.
 2. "No" the "say no the constitutional amendments" initiative was an attempt to inform the public of the weaknesses of the amendments proposed by the military council in March of 2011.
 3. The Independence Current "Tayyar Allstiqlal" a movement of independent judges who have been calling for the independence of the judiciary.
- There are many youth lead organizations in the E.U as well as youth branches of European parties that could share many of its best practices and its experiences to assist emerging civic education NGOs or even parties on how to raise public awareness on issues such civil rights and youth participation.
 - The School of Politics is another success story that could be a point of collaboration as well as a network for activists and politicians across the region.
 - Professional's skills exchange conferences that would bring professionals from Europe and the Arab world in skills centred conferences on themes such as social and business entrepreneurship.