

MENTAL HEALTH ASPECTS OF PEACEFUL REVOLUTIONS AND MASS VIOLENCE

An Essay

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{ مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي
الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ
أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا }

صدق الله العظيم

سورة المائدة آية

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*✍ **Mohamed Ibrahim Hashaad***

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| ACC | Anterior Cingulate Cortex |
| AI | Anterior Insula |
| APA | American Psychiatric Association |
| ASD | Acute Stress Disorder |
| CANVAS | Center for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies |
| CSF | Central Security Forces |
| ERC | Egyptian Red Crescent |
| IFRC | International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent |
| NIF | National Islamic Front |
| PD | Personality Disorders |
| PTSD | Post Traumatic Stress Disorder |
| WHO | World Health Organization |



Introduction

INTRODUCTION

According to historians' literature, human beings have witnessed hundreds of revolutions, rebellions and social movements across all centuries all over all continents. Although many of them have seen glorious moments but many as well have not seen the light of glory. Nevertheless, their characterizations are more or less similar in their life-cycle's dynamism; starting from the deterioration of the socioeconomic, political and financial conditions during the pre-revolution period, to the way they are born, the reasons of its ignition and the motivations behind the revolutions, to the actions and reactions in the during-revolution period and to finally the development of the new era in the post-revolution time (*Brinton, 1938*).

We generally apply the term revolution to sudden political changes, but the expression may be employed to denote all sudden transformations, or transformations apparently sudden, whether of beliefs, ideas, or doctrines.

A revolution may finally become a belief, but it often commences under the action of perfectly rational motives: the suppression of crying abuses, of a detested despotic government (*Le Bon, 1913*).

Revolution makers are portrayed as well-integrated members of their communities, self-empowered, capable of displaying considerable enthusiasm and energy, and cognitively liberated. In fact, favorable structural conditions and political opportunities are only translated into action when dissatisfied individuals consider themselves powerful enough to alter their lot in life (*Nepstad et al., 1997*). Inefficacious individuals, according

to (*Schwartz, 1973*), do not believe themselves to be entitled to more power and are happy with the way things are.

The feelings of isolation, powerlessness, anomie, guilt, and shame that are produced by the breakdown of social order as a result of rapid social change or the frustrations produced by a gap between achievement and expectation. These subjective states in turn render individuals receptive to the extremist messages of revolutionary movements (*Gurr, 1970*).

In the revolution, mirror neurons and interpersonal neurobiology might have had a significant role in explaining some phenomena like contagion, spread of hope, universality, empathy and imitative behavior. As if they were the couriers of ideas, emotions and actions (*Taha, 2012*). Mirror neurons are brain neurons that fire both when we perform an action and when we see someone else doing it. They are the organic underpinnings of empathy, and perhaps also of familiarity and intimacy (*Preston et al., 2002*).

Youth have played a prominent role in political violence throughout recorded history and the existence of a ‘youth bulge’ has historically been associated with times of political crisis. Egypt’s population growth underwent an explosion in the mid 1980s. This explosion meant that by 2011, a large proportion of the Egyptian population fell between the ages of 20 and 25. The perfect conditions had arisen to provide a ‘youth bulge’ at the time of the revolution. Or perhaps it is better to say that the revolution arose when the youth bulge was at its peak (*Korotayev & Zinkina, 2011*).

The starting point for our considerations is the frequently expressed view that the 2011 revolution in Egypt from the start of

the mass demonstrations on January 25th up to the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak on February 11th was remarkably nonviolent, or at least showed very low levels of violence (*Zunes, 2011*). This intuitive judgment is confirmed by a rough comparison with other revolutions and uprisings of 2011 in the Arab world. This finding is even more striking since other preconditions were structurally similar compared with countries like Tunisia and Syria: high level of education and high unemployment rate of the under-30s, inequalities in wealth and income distributions in favor of the elite, corrupt ruling elites, and strong security forces serving the persistence of authoritarian rule (*Schlumberger, 2007*).

When things turned violent on February 2nd, 2011 – the “Day of the Camel” – it became clear that some of the protesters were prepared to use other forms of violence, too. The attempt by thugs, most likely hired by the regime, to advance on Tahrir Square on horses and camels to disperse protesters was met with violent resistance. This opposition was primarily borne by hooligans of the Cairene Al-Ahly football club who have had long experience in dealing with the police (*Bilal, 2011*).

Global mass violence has undergone significant changes since World War II. According to the world conflict index a majority of over 400 violent conflicts that have occurred since 1945 have been intra-state conflicts. Major wars and mass violence are distinguished from other armed conflicts or massacres by various degrees of medium and high intensity, claiming usually more than an estimated 1,000 victims per annum or as an average during the course of the conflict (*Scherrer, 2004*).

Armed violence—‘the intentional use of illegitimate force (actual or threatened) with arms or explosives, against a person, group, community, or state (*Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2008*) has many harmful consequences, death being the most extreme.

It is important to note that since the GBAV 2011 database covers only the years 2004–09, it does not capture recent violent events of the Arab Spring that swept across Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen and Tunisia in 2011. The picture of lethal victimization in the Arab region will be dramatically different for the years 2010–12 (*Gilgen, 2011*).

Violent deaths are not only distributed unevenly across countries, but also within them. Raw statistics on violent deaths at the national level alone cannot fully explain the causes and consequences of armed violence. Each situation of armed violence is characterized by its own unique combination of drivers, dynamics, and effects (*Gilgen, 2011*).

Chronic stress, exposures to traumatic events and/or mental health disorders are associated with many physical health complaints (*McGinn, 2000*).

The relationship between exposure to traumatic events and unhealthy behavior such as cigarette smoking, alcohol and drugs abuse or high-risk behavior including fighting, dangerous sexual relationships, and sensation-seeking has been well established (*Solomon & Davidson, 1997*).

Reactions of stress and distress are normal in contexts of mass violence. Despite their normality, attention must be paid to

stress and distress since prolonged states of either can cause physical and mental damage (*Selye, 1956*).

There is growing awareness of the mental health impact of all types of mass violence. The exposure of large population groups, mostly having no mental health problems prior to the exposure, and the subsequent development, in a significant proportion of the population, of a variety of psychiatric symptoms and disorders represent both a challenge and an opportunity for psychiatrists (*Murthy, 2007*).

There is also a consistent finding of the dose-response to the amount of trauma and the prevalence of mental disorders. There is growing recognition that there is need to consider a variety of syndromes, in addition to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) like acute stress disorder (ASD), depression, complicated bereavement reactions, substance use disorders, poor physical health, fear, anxiety, physiological arousal, somatization, anger control, functional disability and arrest or regression of childhood developmental progression .The challenge is to reach all of the ill persons and provide mental health services. The opportunity provided by this field is to develop a better understanding of issues of resilience, recovery and effectiveness of public health approaches to mental health care (*Murthy, 2007*).



Aim of the Work and Methodology

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Current study was done to explore the relationship between mental health, mass violence, revolutions and their psychological aspects, emphasizing the 25th of January Revolution violent events as there is a limited research work on the most significant event in Egypt's Youth modern history. We argue that the revolution should not have been unexpected. Revolution came as a result of a culmination of many factors and its effects had changed the human minds and their attitudes.

AIM OF THE WORK

- To highlight the psychological elements of revolutionary movements, and to identify a neurobiological understanding.
- To explore psychological aspects of mass violence.
- To compare mass violence during and after revolutions across cultures and highlight the differences.
- To demonstrate mental health aspects and interventions in revolutions and mass violence.
- To find out the research worldwide done on the specific characteristics of the 25th of January revolution and the related violent events.

METHODOLOGY (PROCEDURES)

In order to fulfill the aim of the work, we conducted literature review of relevant papers with respect to the studies selected for history of revolutions and their psychobiological aspects, mass violence and cross cultural considerations.

Internet Search was conducted and reviewing online databases as the recent revolutions used the most recent and end line communication technology as their tools.

Chapter (1)



Psychobiological Aspects of Revolutions
