

THE EGYPTIAN TRANSITION IN AL-KAWAKIBI'S WORDS

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Abstract

The paper aims at applying some of the points of the theory developed by the Syrian writer 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī in his main work, "The characteristics of despotism", to the events that unfolded in Egypt since the fall of Mubarak in 2011. The purpose of the paper is twofold. First, to enhance the role played by al-Kawākibī in the development of the discourse on democracy and human rights in the Arab-Islamic world. Secondly, to give an interpretation of the Egyptian transition, in order to try to understand the obstacles to the implementation of a democratization process. First of all, the paper gives a short description of the political and social environment in which al-Kawākibī lived. Moreover, it focuses on al-Kawākibī's biography, which is strictly related to the contents of his above-mentioned work, in order to prepare the ground for the following analysis. After that, the paper highlights some of the main passages of al-Kawākibī's book, especially those related with democratization and human rights. To begin with, an analysis of the author's opinion about the causes of despotism is carried out, with a special focus on the political, religious and social ones. Furthermore, this section shows the consequences of despotism as exposed by al-Kawākibī. Finally, the emphasis shifts to the remedies proposed by the author in order to leave behind an autocratic environment. The final section represents the core of the paper. First, a brief analysis of the main events that developed from January 2011 on – fall of Mubarak, SCAF government, election and fall of Morsi - is carried out. Then, these same events are examined on the base of al-Kawākibī's work. In particular, a comparison between the causes of despotism such as conceived by the author and the Egyptian situation is carried out. Furthermore, this section tries to apply al-Kawākibī's theory in order to analyze the performance of Morsi and the Islamist government, as well as the new intervention of the military in the Egyptian politics and the first times of al-Sisi presidency. Finally, the paper aims at using al-Kawākibī's work in order to understand the possible elements that might allow Egypt to come out of the autocratic environment that has permeated politics and the society in the last decades.

Keywords: Egypt, al-Kawakibi, Despotism, Human Rights

1. INTRODUCTION

The Egyptian revolution in 2011 has been analysed from various perspectives, in order to understand its achievements and failures, its main actors, their objectives and the possibilities of building a democratic environment. After the Muslim Brotherhood triumph in the 2011 elections, much has been said about Islamists attitude towards democracy, the guarantees they could provide for women and Copts rights, while some have accused them of "having stolen" the Revolution. When president Mursī was deposed by the

Minister of Defence al-Sīsī, lots of people pointed to the non-democratic rule established by the Muslim Brotherhood, enhancing political Islam failures, while large strata of the population welcomed the military as their saviour. After the massacres perpetrated at Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya on July 2013 and the crackdown on Islamists, as well as the repression of civil liberties and human rights, many scholars, journalists and academics have stated that Egypt has regressed to the Mubarak era (Cadman, 2014; Mandour, 2015; Mephram, 2015).

Although much has been written on the Egyptian transition, and much more will be published in the years to come, this paper tries to penetrate this debate from a point of view that seems not to have been widely explored, a perspective that mixes Arabic literature and political thought, that goes back to the beginnings of the Nineteenth century but sounds particularly up-to-date. At that time, indeed, a Syrian-born intellectual was forced to move to Egypt, where the relatively free environment – and the positive views with respect to anti-Ottoman opinions – allowed him to publish his works, whose content focused on the need of a reform in the Arab-Islamic world, especially at the political and social level. More specifically, he criticized Ottoman authoritarianism and tried to provide solutions for coming out of that situation.

This intellectual's name is 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī, who passed his life fighting injustice, oppression and tyranny, thus significantly contributing to the development of a debate on democracy and human rights in the modern Arab-Islamic world. Inspired by some important Arab thinkers (Ġamal al-Dīn al-Afġānī and Muḥammad 'Abdūh), al-Kawākibī devoted his efforts to the elaboration of a theory that could have allowed the Arab-Islamic world to come out of the state of decline in which it had sunk.

As it is understandable, the topics he treated remind to the current debate on Middle East, which is focused on the outcomes of the 2011 uprisings. Therefore, the paper attempts to explain the difficulties Egypt has so far faced in its transition, as well as the comeback of an authoritarian regime, taking into account the considerations expressed by al-Kawākibī in his main work, *Tabā'ī' al-istibdād wa maṣāri' al-isti'bād (The characteristics of despotism and the destruction of enslavement)*. The purpose consists in trying to find out the possible reasons that have conditioned the direction taken by the transition process, but at the same time the focus is put on the possible elements that could allow Egypt to find a solution in order to undertake a democratization process.

Although other authors could have been analysed in order to achieve the aims of this paper, the choice of al-Kawākibī has been guided by two main factors. First of all, his perspective is an internal one. Lot of criticism has been put on the orientalist – in Said words – view that characterizes some research works regarding Middle East and the Islamic countries in general. Moreover, when democracy and human rights are involved, the differences between East and West are even more underlined, leading to juxtaposition between universalism and relativism. Therefore, the use of a European or Western author as basis for this article would have left space for doubts on the work's adherence to the reality. Conversely, an Arab-Islamic intellectual represents a more reliable source in this sense, for the very reason that he analyses the society from an endogenous point of view.

Secondly, al-Kawākibī concretely operated during his lifetime in order to fight tyranny and injustice. As it will be shown in the following pages, he devoted his professional career to the assistance of weak people in their daily struggle against oppression and arrogance. Hence, together with his political ideas, al-Kawākibī engaged in practical activities in order to find a solution to the problems he put forth in his works.

On this basis, thus, the paper will start with an analysis of the political and social environment where al-Kawākibī lived, followed by a brief biography. This will help preparing the ground for the subsequent part, that is, the examination of *Tabā'ī' al-istibdād* main passages. After that, the paper will examine the events that unfolded in Egypt since 2011, trying to apply al-Kawākibī's theory about despotism and its causes. In conclusion, the solutions he proposed will be analysed, in order to understand both the reasons why the transition process has not led, until now, to democratic results and the possible ways Egypt could come out of authoritarianism.

2. FIGHTING INJUSTICE

Al-Kawākibī was born in 1854 in Aleppo, Syria, in a family of notables. He received a traditional education in Islamic sciences, but studied also the main languages of the region: Arabic, Ottoman, Turkish and Persian. In 1867 he started collaborating with the review *al-Furāt*, but the censorship that limited his possibilities to criticize the Ottoman misgovernment made him leave the position. In 1877 and 1879, respectively, he founded *al-Šahbā'* and *al-'Itdāl*, two newspapers that were short lived because of the criticism they expressed about political affairs. al-Kawākibī was appointed to several public charges (al-Kawākibī, 1998,

pp. 16-17) and opened a legal office, in order to face the injustices suffered by his fellow citizens. For this reason, he became known as the 'father of the weak'. He also led a delegation to Istanbul with the purpose of complaining about Aleppo's *walī* attitude. Accused of plotting against the governor, he was put on trial but then acquitted, while the governor was forced to resign. Another time, he was imprisoned on accusations of treason, and again he was acquitted, leading to a governor's resignation (Zimeri, 2007, pp. 5-6).

Following these events, his popularity grew considerably and he was appointed mayor of Aleppo in 1892. However, the impossibility of implementing a real reform programme made him resign and go to Istanbul in 1894, where he started writing his main work, *Tabā'ī' al-Istibdād* (*The characteristics of despotism*). Once back in Aleppo, he was forced to migrate to Egypt in 1899 because of his political opinions (Kawākibī, 1998, pp. 89-106). Here, he met other Syrian and Lebanese intellectuals, such as Ibrāhīm al Yazīgī, Šakīb Arslān, Ibrāhīm Nağğār and Rašīd Riḍā, as well as he entered in contact with Muḥammad 'Abduh. In Egypt he published both his works, *The characteristics of despotism* (*Tabā'ī' al-Istibdād*) and *The mother of villages* (*Umm al-Qurā*) and, as a result, *ḥedivé* 'Abbās Ḥilmī, whose desire consisted in creating a caliphate, employed him and sent him to India, Oriental Africa and Arabian Peninsula in order to spread his intentions (Kawākibī, 1998, pp. 107-112). Once back in Egypt, al-Kawākibī wrote the second part of his works, which were not published because of his death in 1902 (Tauber, 1994, pp. 190-191; Pellitteri, 1987, pp. 67-68; Kawākibī, 2003, p. 71), when Ottoman agents allegedly killed him because of his writings and activities. For this reason, indeed, the police confiscated his documents and library, as well as his properties and belongings (Zimeri, 2007, pp.6-7).

3. THE CAUSES OF DESPOTISM

Al-Kawākibī started writing his main work, *The characteristics of despotism*, during his journey in Istanbul, and published it in Egypt. It has been reported that he plagiarized Vittorio Alfredi's book *Della Tirannide*, of which he probably read a Turkish version (Haim, 1954, pp.331-334). However other scholars refused this interpretation, saying that he might only have taken inspiration from the Italian author's work (Zimeri, 2007, p. 11).

In *The characteristics of despotism*, as explained in the introduction, al-Kawākibī wants to "define the characteristics of despotism and how it works, as well as [carry out] an analysis of enslavement and how to put an end to it" (al-Kawākibī, 2011, p. 8). "Despotism", in the political acceptance, "means free and wilfully disposal, by a single person or a group of people, of the rights of a nation, without fear of accountability" (al-Kawākibī, 2011, p. 14). Synonyms are enslavement, coercion, authoritarianism, arbitrary control, while contraries are equality, common sense, and general authority (al-Kawākibī, 2011, p. 15). At the same time, a despotic government is an absolute one, which conducts the affairs of its subjects wilfully and arbitrarily, with no fear of accountability or punishment. The opposite of a despotic government is a just, accountable and constitutional one, with limitation of powers (al-Kawākibī, 2011, p. 15). Despotism, in his opinion, represented the main factor of Muslim and Oriental decline. In particular, he pointed to the despotism of ignorance over knowledge (religious knowledge especially) and the despotism of soul over mind as the worst kinds of tyranny (al-Kawākibī, 2011, p. 19).

The main elements that contributed to despotism, in al-Kawākibī's opinion, were ignorance and the military. The former implied that people did not possess the tools for controlling the ruler and to rebel to it. To this end, despots prevented education, removing the opportunity to access culture and knowledge, in order to keep people inactive and obedient. The latter, that the author considers invented by Satan, "wreck[ed] the ethics of a community, [brought] brutality and blind obedience [and] repressed political activism and independent ideas" (al-Kawākibī, 2011, p. 17). The two were in some way interrelated and linked by another element: fear. Indeed, "people are afraid when they are ignorant and they are submitted when they are afraid" (Pellitteri, 1987, p. 39).

Moreover, despotism was fuelled by many other factors, the overall result being the decline of the Muslim world. In particular, from the political perspective, al-Kawākibī pointed to the denial of the *umma's* freedom of speech and action. Consequently, the community lost its security, aspirations, justice and equality of rights. Coercion of high-minded and rightly-guided leaders, reversal of the practice of taking property to the rich and giving it to the poor, loss of the power of public opinion through suppression and division, restriction of political concern to taxation and the military were among the main results of the suppression of freedom of speech and action (Kurzman, 2002, pp. 153-154). Furthermore, al-Kawākibī listed also some moral reasons that led to despotism and decline: general apathy, loss of religious and moral education, neglecting the demand for general rights (due to cowardice and fear of disappointment) and estrangement from

engagement with – and discussion of – public affairs (Kurzman, 2002, pp. 153-154).

The main target of al-Kawākibī's critics was, as already explained, the Ottoman political hegemony, which he blamed for the state of decline of the Muslim world. Indeed, he pointed to the standardization of judicial practices notwithstanding racial and customary differences, the centralization of administration despite the distance of certain parts from the capital, the lack of accountability for leaders and governors and the confusion resulting from inattention to the integration of morals with procedures (Kurzman, 2002, pp. 154-155). Moreover, al-Kawākibī focused on the lack of meritocracy and moral criteria in the selection of public figures and administrators, the widespread nepotism and favouritism, racial discrimination regarding subsidies and penalties, the mismanagement of public finances and, in general, corruption and bribery (Kurzman, 2002, pp. 154-155). He emphasized, in particular, the absence of representative institutions, such as the mechanism of *shūrā* (consultation), which once allowed the Arabs a measure of democratic participation as well as a mode of decision-making that reflected the will of the citizenry (Rahme, 1999, p. 163).

4. “EDUCATION IS THE SOLUTION”

Once established the causes of decline and despotism, al-Kawākibī worked toward finding a solution to this state of things. Inspired by European works, as well as recalling the Islamic tradition, he pointed first to the necessity of separating powers (legislative, executive, judiciary). Moreover, constitutionalism and elections should have been implemented, in order to allow citizens to choose their governors in a democratic way. At the same time, checks and balances and mechanism of accountability were essential in order to overcome despotism, because even elected and constitutional governments could be despotic (al-Kawākibī, 2011, p. 16). Indeed, if one considers the history of republican Egypt, it is not difficult to understand the righteousness of al-Kawākibī's thought. Most important, as regards the current transition, two constitutions have been issued and various elections have been staged, nevertheless the outcomes have been all but a non-despotic one.

How to solve the problem of despotism, then? According to al-Kawākibī, the causes of decline and despotism could not be eradicated through violent means. Starting from his critics to the military, the main concept in al-Kawākibī's work, that consequently becomes central in this paper, is represented by gradualness. No tyrannical regime can suddenly change direction and become democratic, and the fall of a despot alone does not entail an evolution towards democracy. The process of eradicating despotism, according to al-Kawākibī, should progress gradually, involving a wide range of actors, from politicians to teachers and the population itself. What is needed is preparing the ground for future developments (Funatsu, 2006, pp. 9-16; Ḥusri, 1966, pp. 50-54).

Related to this, no despotism can be eliminated without educating people at moral and ethical level. As the author said, despotism demoralizes and weakens society, as all are educated to behave in a tyrannical way. Therefore, the public moral disappears and all fall prey to hypocrisy and dishonesty. Despotism's victims, hence, are deprived of the sole element that distinguishes men from animals: will (Funatsu, 2006, p. 9). To come out of this situation, intellectuals should act as a vanguard, assuming the responsibility to start educating people in order to leave behind a tyrannical environment. Al-Kawākibī, indeed, underlined that the simple removal of a despot is not sufficient in order to defeat despotism. For this reason, if the whole society is not educated to the principles of justice, honesty and moral correctness, and if at political level the necessary tools for contrasting despotism are not implemented – creating a context whose core is represented by constitutional consultation –, then another tyrant could replace the previous one (Funatsu, 2006, p. 11).

5. THE EGYPTIAN TRANSITION AND AL- KAWĀKIBĪ

The events that unfolded in Egypt in 2011 brought, at least initially, big changes in politics and society. The eighteen days protests in Tahrir that led to the fall of Mubarak represented a historical moment, followed by great expectations regarding the establishment of a democratic government.

The transitional process was led first by the SCAF and then the 2011-2012 parliamentary elections saw the large victory of Islamist movements, especially the Muslim Brotherhood that gained about 45 per cent of the seats (Egypt Supreme Judiciary Committee for Elections, 2012; al-Jazeera, 2012). The presidential election in June 2012 resulted in a success of a MB candidate, Muḥammad Mursī (Egypt Supreme Judiciary Committee for Elections, 2012a) who earned lots of votes from young revolutionaries and, in general, from those who wanted to end up with the *ancien regime* (Tarek, 2012).

However, the Muslim Brotherhood and Mursī did not manage to bring stability in the country and, as some

scholars stated, they managed politics in their own interest (Blair, Taylor, Perry, 2013; El-Sherif, 2014). The constitutional declaration issued by Mursī in November 2012, which granted him temporary absolute powers, was one of the first steps that provoked new anger in those people that had fought against the Mubarak regime (Mallat, 2012; English's text, 2012). Furthermore, the Constitution approved in December 2012 and voted in January 2013 contained some provisions that limited human rights (Charbel, 2013; Comments, 2013; Egypt: 8 months, 2013) and, in general, the government led by the Muslim Brotherhood did not manage to face effectively the problems raised during the Revolution (Saleh, 2013; The Square, 2013).

In April 2013, then, the Tamarrod movement was formed, in order to manifest dissatisfaction against the president and the government (Haraka Tamarrud, 2015; Hussein, 2015) and on June 30th millions of Egyptians went into the streets to protest against Mursī's rule and call for new elections (Nosseir, 2013; Cambanis, 2015; Zaki, 2015). The military gave Mursī 48 hours time to hold talks with all the political forces and meet people's demands (al-Quwwāt al-musallaha, 2013) but no results were achieved. Therefore, general al-Sīsī took power with a *coup d'état* on July 3rd (el-Shobaki, 2013; Miṣr, 2014), repressed violently the Muslim Brotherhood (All According, 2014), issued various laws limiting freedoms and approved a Constitution that still does not guarantee an effective protection of human rights (Egypt: Rights Crisis, 2014). The presidential elections in May 2014, eventually, sanctioned the comeback of an authoritarian regime, with al-Sīsī winning elections with 96 percent of votes (Natiġa al-intiḥabāt al-ri'āsiya, 2014) and immediately approving some old-style measures, such as the presidential appointment of university deans and courts of appeal's leaders (Abaza, 2014). The situation worsened between the end of 2014 and 2015: forced disappearances of students and activists increased, torture and deaths in prisons became systematic, while arbitrary arrests and detention of journalists rose to alarming levels (Attalah, 2015; Egypt military arrests, 2015; Warā' al-šams, 2015; With more journalists arrests, 2015).

Why, then, such an outcome? How could Egypt have sunk into a new authoritarianism, despite all the efforts produced before, during and after the Revolution? Which elements allowed al-Sīsī to gain such a wide popular support? The answers to these questions are various and different. The purpose of this article consists in trying to use al-Kawākibī's work in order to give one.

The following sentence, in particular, contains some elements necessary to achieve the objectives of the paper: "Despotism must be fought not with violence but, rather, with gradualism and gentleness. It cannot be defeated overnight; instead its eradication must be the product of evolutionary and incremental change, above all a transformation in the consciousness of society at large through a long-term process of education". Thus, "before attempting to fight despotism, its replacement must be ready" (al-Kawākibī, 2011, p. 115).

The first element, then, is gradualness. In al-Kawākibī's words, "the excitement and passions of a revolutionary moment are likely to be fleeting: They will not pave the way for enduring reform because the foundations of reform efforts in a setting where the idea of freedom has yet to be properly grasped will be fragile. The successful pursuit of reform, therefore, is predicated on a collective understanding of the nature of despotism and a collective willingness to support a hitherto untried alternative. Such a process would necessarily require patience and determination" (Funatsu, 2006, pp. 11-12). The Egyptian revolution, however, was not the product of a gradual process, although some opposition movements have been set up in the previous years, such as *Kifāya* or the 6th April. The eighteen days that led to the fall of Mubarak started with manifestations against the police. What happened, then, was something that the revolutionaries, and Egyptians in general, did not expect; thus, they were not organized in order to effectively contribute to the transition process (The Square, 2013). Years of repression, indifference towards politics, restrictions on civil society and NGOs, all contributed to the lack of creation of an alternative to authoritarianism.

This leads to the second important element, that is, the transformation of the collective consciousness through education. The illiteracy rate in Egypt is still high, about 26 percent (UNICEF; Youssef, 2014), a factor that implies ignorance. Therefore, as al-Kawākibī strongly reiterated in his work, ignorance constitutes at the same time the base and fuel of despotism, because people do not possess the tools to claim their basic rights. Ignorance, moreover, implies passivity and submission.

However, illiteracy itself cannot explain the authoritarian comeback. As seen above, despotism weakens society because it makes people behave in a tyrannical way. To come out of this situation, the simple overthrow of the despot is not enough, because "people who have been debased for so long that they have become like animals, or worse, absolutely will not demand liberty and will not invoke justice. [...] They might avenge themselves on the despot, but this will be only to take revenge on his person, not to get rid of despotism. This will not benefit the people, for it will be exchanging one disease for another, like substituting

a headache for a stomach-ache” (al-Kawākibī, 2011, p. 115). This sentence seems to clearly resume what happened in Egypt in the last three years. Indeed, the fall of Mubarak was largely acclaimed, but this has not helped getting rid of despotism. The same happened with Mursī. Most of the people going down on the streets on June 30th, as the author was told and some scholars claimed, had no clear idea of the way to satisfy their demands (bread, gas, fuel, electricity), but only wanted the fall of the president (Accorsi, 2013, p. 37; Kingsley, 2013). Indeed, as al-Kawākibī (2011, p. 116) put forth, “such a people might also prevail in getting rid of a despot by collaborating with another despot. In either case, the eventual result will be not to uproot tyranny but to replace an old tyranny with a new tyranny”. Moreover, “the freedom that brings benefits to the community is the one that is obtained after people are prepared to accept it, as the one that is obtained with a revolution of ignorant is seldom useful, because the revolution – often – ends with cutting the tree of despotism but does not eradicate its roots in order to prevent it from growing stronger” (al-Kawākibī, 2011, p. 115). To this end, the Egyptian events have demonstrated that a new despot has been largely supported by what the young revolutionaries call the “generation of parents”, that is, those people who have passed all their life under a despotic regime and have, therefore, developed a passive attitude towards political affairs (Kirkpatrick, el-Sheikh, 2014).

To come out of this situation, al-Kawākibī pushed on the preparation of a concrete substitute, which he claimed to be a framework of constitutional consultation, as well as the establishment of channels for communicating to the population about the objectives and reform, in order to forge a broad consensus and ward-off co-optation by supporters of the status-quo (Funatsu, 2006, p. 11; Tapiero, 1956, pp. 82-93). In Egypt, the only organized alternative to the Mubarak regime was the Muslim Brotherhood, a strong hierarchical movement that, as seen from the brief period they governed, did not always operate in a transparent way. Moreover, “its organizational introversion and conspiratorial mind-set also undermined its ability to build a broad network of support” (El-Sherif, 2014). Finally, the “despotism disease” had infected the organization itself, which had developed in a context of repression and authoritarianism that certainly has not helped the formation of democratic mechanisms, especially between the old guard (Pargeter, 2013, pp. 5-35)

As regards the concept of education, it is clearly defined by al-Kawākibī. Indeed, he considers it the only way to come out of despotism, because it would help fighting ignorance. Education is not an end itself, but it would represent the mean towards setting up a society free from ignorance and aware of the “agony of despotism”. In particular, he thought “a people that had not experienced a mode of rule other than tyranny would have no basis for adopting and adapting itself to democratic governance and individual liberty” (Funatsu, 2006, pp. 12-13). To eradicate despotism, moreover, “the progress in education and awareness constituted the only effective mean” (al-Kawākibī, 2011, p. 117). In particular, al-Kawākibī insisted that knowledge should not be the monopoly of a select few, but “it would have to be shared across the populace in order to arrive at a common perception of the causes of and the cures for despotism and decay” (Funatsu, 2006, p. 12). Indeed, only the free diffusion of research and education, coupled with the definition of clear objectives, could have helped a community to come out of an autocratic environment. In case these conditions were not met, al-Kawākibī warned, part of the population could have “allied” with the despot and, consequently, civil war could have busted (al-Kawākibī, 2011, pp. 119-120).

These words seem appropriated to understand what happened after the January 25th Revolution. Indeed, the Muslim Brotherhood failures could be explained given the movement’s lack of experience in governance and the development in an autocratic environment. At the same time, the second major force in Parliament, the Salafists, were totally alien to politics, as they had rejected it on the base of rigid interpretations of Islam.

At the population level, the majority of Egyptians was not familiar with politics, nor willing to bring significant changes to the autocratic government. Indeed, the Revolution was promoted by young and educated people that, however, lacked a clear plan and structure that could have allowed them to manage the post-Mubarak period. At the same time, the military was – and still is – highly appreciated in Egypt, and the slogan “the people and the army are one hand” resounded in Tahrir Square during the 2011 Revolution (Ketchley, 2014, pp. 155-186). Hence, it is no surprise that large strata of the population have welcomed the comeback of an authoritarian ruler, in the person of al-Sīsī. Moreover, as mentioned above, the military represented, according to al-Kawākibī, a strong tool in the hands of despots and a substantial obstacle to its elimination.

6. CONCLUSION: HAS THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS STARTED?

At the end of this analysis, thus, it is understandable how al-Kawākibī’s work can help in comprehending the events that characterized the Egyptian revolution and its aftermath. In particular, the concepts of gradualness and education seem the main points on which to focus in order both to learn from past mistakes and to prepare the ground for the future.

Indeed, every transition process from autocracy or dictatorship needs years, or even decades, in order to show some positive results, as the French and the American revolutions has showed. Therefore, the elimination of despotism in Egypt might take lot of time, because of the crystallization of the political and social habits that has allowed authoritarianism to perpetuate itself.

As al-Kawākibī said, the only way to gradually come out of this system is through education. Despite the new authoritarian ruler, this last process seems to have started. During the last decade of Mubarak rule, various organizations had been set up, especially in the field of human rights. At the same time, universities and NGOs have proposed and implemented various projects on education, women empowerment, human rights, anti-harassment, etc. After the 2011 revolution, moreover, these kinds of activities have multiplied, thus preparing the ground for future developments in the fight against despotism. Lots of young revolutionaries with whom the author talked to emphasized the need for education for the next generations, as the elder ones were too much used to authoritarianism and, thus, almost impossible to be introduced to the principles of democracy, freedom and human rights.

Therefore, although the immediate outcome of the Egyptian uprising has not been what the revolutionaries wanted or expected, associations and organizations operating for education seem active and willing to spread the values al-Kawākibī deemed as fundamental in order to leave behind despotism. Only hard work in this direction, thus, with the participation of the large majority of socio-political forces, could allow Egypt to overcome authoritarianism and start a democratization process that would lead to freedoms and human rights respect and protection.

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