

Goodbye, Welcome, my 'Revolution'

...Egypt, The Military, The Brotherhood & Tamarod

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Egypt...How do we move? In what direction? How do we do this? There is a consensus of urgency, of impending catastrophes, but what action do we take? Many of us think that if the operators of the system are changed that the situation will be resolved, but that is an illusion. We need to come together immediately and move to create a society that is beyond our current reality. A start would be that we exchange our nouns for verbs. If we say 'education', we submit ourselves to someone educating us, but if we change to the verb 'learn', we recover the ability for ourselves to learn; for it is we who learn, we who teach ourselves, by reading and experimenting, learning from others who before us have sought different worlds, sending us messages from other worlds, as those Indigenous Rebels who call themselves the Zapatistas, deep inside the Lacandon jungle, before we had even heard of them. We need to find a way that we can all partake in learning, and give away our dependency. So, health becomes healing; how do we heal ourselves? The next action is clear. How do we dismantle the State apparatus of repression? By making this apparatus irrelevant. Capitalist production, extraction, and exploitation – how do we eliminate these? By minimizing their need to exist. We are in a structure of domination but how do we urgently dissolve this structure? By making it unnecessary, so that then everything will come into place. After all, just saying 'no' is not enough. This 'no' has to be accompanied by the creation of alternatives.

But before all else let's analyze our current circumstances and situation, and allow me to say that as a Muslim anarchist I'm against any form of institutionalized or hierarchical organization of religion, let alone any such thing as a capitalist nation-State, regardless of its nature, theocratic, secular, or otherwise. Our only hope is popular self-organization¹ and nothing short of this in its goals. Why do I say this? Because of our delusions and misunderstood analysis regarding the Egyptian military, The Brotherhood, Tamarod and our own crisis of identity. Therefore, certain things need to be clear and understood given the stakes involved, and so in moving forth:

Issue 1: Who is Abdul Fatah Al-Sisi?

Abdul Fatah Al-Sisi, is head of the Egyptian Army and Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) in Egypt, and was ordered to power by president elect Mohammed Morsi on August, 12th, 2012, replacing SCAF's former head Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, one of Hosni Mubarak's henchmen, following the "deaths of 16 Egyptian soldiers and the injury of 7 others"² in Sinai by militant 'Islamists'; an opportune event that Morsi seized, less than a year ago, to 'honorably' excuse/dismiss Tantawi. Al-Sisi, Tantawi's student, has been described as quiet and religious (whatever these two terms indicate of 'Islamist' inclining), but more importantly he's known for having recently opposed Morsi's move to sever relations with Syria for reasons of Egyptian national security; Egypt & Syria having lived a short-termed union as one country between 1958–1961, under Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, in what was then referred to as 'The United Arab Republic'. More importantly (particularly for Egyptians, Arabs, and Muslims who are committed to Palestine) Al-Sisi, as As'ad Abu Khalil writes, is responsible for the tightening of "the siege on Gaza and... serviced Israel more than it was serviced in Mubarak's days"³. As the following article titled *Egyptian army demolishes tunnels with Gaza* (2013) released today, July 4th, 2013, states: While Egyptians were celebrating Morsi's ousting, Egyptian army bulldozers, at Al-Sisi's orders, were

¹ For further details see: docs.google.com

² For further details see: english.ahram.org.eg

³ See Abu Khalil's commentary here:~ angryarab.blogspot.ca.

“demolishing the tunnels between Egypt and the Gaza Strip which have functioned as the life-line to the besieged Gaza Strip since the beginning of the Israeli siege in 2006”⁴. Moreover, it’s worth noting that Al-Sisi is amongst the generals who advocated for the implementation of virginity tests as: “soldiers violently cleared Tahrir square on 9 March, 2011 [and] 17 women were detained, beaten, prodded with electric shock batons, subjected to strip searches, forced to submit to ‘virginity tests’ and threatened with prostitution charges”⁵ (BBC, 2013). According to Al-Ahram newspaper in Egypt, as cited by the BBC, General Al-Sisi said: “the virginity-test procedure was done to protect the girls from rape as well as to protect the soldiers and officers from rape accusations”⁶ (2013). And it is Al-Sisi that still presides over 12,000 known, if not more, military trials and tribunals of civilians in Egypt, since the January 25th, 2011 uprisings. Egypt is a deep state with oppressive apparatuses that are bureaucratic, militarized, functioning upon the business model of conglomerate control by neoliberal elites, across a wide political spectrum, from Muslim brotherhood members as Khairat El-Shater⁷ to members of Hosni Mubarak’s National Democratic Party (the NDP) yet free. Make no mistake, Egypt is a security state, and remains guarded by an unrelenting vicious interior ministry, police force and a corrupt, un-cleansed, judiciary, from the Mubarak era, since the 2011 uprisings.

Issue 2: Is it a Coup or not? It was and it wasn’t...’A People’ & the Military

The whole obsessive debate raging on ...is it a coup...is it not...is absurd, when in all honesty attention could’ve been better paid to monumentally far more critical issues as the prevalent disease that is sexual harassment⁸ of women in a hetero-patriarchal society as Egypt’s? Still...

Let’s be clear:

It is and it isn’t a coup.

It isn’t because of the traditional/classical understanding of what a coup d’etat is, and that involves: A small but critical segment of the state establishment and apparatus (usually the army) deciding on their own to take control without the ‘will of the people’ mattering and then deposing the existent government and replacing it with a ‘civil or military body’ instead of whatever old vanguard government that existed before a coup occurred. In this sense there was no coup because ‘the people’ (or at least 33 million according to high estimations and 17 million by low estimations out of a population of over 90 million, of which approximately 50 million are registered voters) willed the removal of Morsi on the street through the Tamarod⁹ campaign. It isn’t a coup in the sense that the military didn’t decide to wake up and conduct a coup that would sacrifice Morsi. It took Tamarod, workers’ general strikes over the past year, along with agreements between opposition leaders to facilitate for the army to do what it did; that is, a pretext to intervene. Tamarod (The Rebel Campaign), for those who do not know, consists of a broad coalition of: the

⁴ For further details see: www.middleeastmonitor.com).

⁵ For further details see: www.bbc.co.uk

⁶ For further details see: www.bbc.co.uk

⁷ For further details see: www.aljazeera.com

⁸ For further details see: www.facebook.com

And see: tahrirsquared.com

⁹ For further details see: en.wikipedia.org)

And see: tamarod.com

Kefaya Movement, the April 6th Movement, and The National Salvation Front (itself consisting of approximately 35 parties). Tamarod even includes members of the former regime, the National Democratic Party (NDP), ‘so long as they supposedly haven’t been convicted of crimes against the 2011 uprising’, despite the fact that members of the NDP like Ahmed Shafiq (who remains a fugitive in the United Arab Emirates, is wanted for crimes committed during the January 25th, 2011 uprisings, with many cases pending against him for being prime minister then) have signed on to Tamarod, with their membership accepted. Tamarod also includes Nasserites like Hamdeen Sabahi and his supporters, Mohamed El-Baradei and his supporters, along with those involved with *shayfeen.com*, and indeed the Strong Egypt Party (spearheaded by Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh — who is a former member of the Muslim Brotherhood, having left the movement and started his own party) and ample more factions and groups mentioned later on.

All this stated therefore what happened in Egypt recently wasn’t a coup in the traditional sense. However, seemingly paradoxically, it also was i.e. ‘a soft coup’, but, again, why? This is because of the very definition itself of a coup d’etat.

After all:

General Al-Sisi did state that if Morsi did not respect the ultimatum and the ‘will of the people’ that the army had already prepared a “blueprint” and a “roadmap”¹⁰ to carry the nation, Egypt, forward, as Egyptians became the queue and green-light for the army to go on ahead and maintain itself as the uncontested red line of the Egyptian nation. The fact is that the Egyptian military is as any modern military a *Military Industrial Complex*¹¹, and regardless of the naiveté of Egyptians who would disagree. The Egyptian military is a political AND economic institution as any other in the world. It has been receiving funds from the US, second only to Israel, since Anwar Al-Sadat signed the Camp David peace accord with Israel, the first Arab and Muslim treaty that sold our brothers and sisters in Palestine to Zionism. The Egyptian Military as many already ought know controls an unknown percentage of the Egyptian economy, estimated between 15–40% and has its own secret budget that since the 2011 uprising it has refused to disclose¹² to its own people and who the military claims to protect; ironic, given 2011 represented a people’s revolt that the people launched for their right to dictate to all institutions and people in power how their lives and affairs are run and in the way the people themselves saw fit. It must be understood that the Egyptian Military is without question a military caring for its own interests and the interests of those outside the Egyptian nation. Its loyalty is to the United States given the disclosed \$1.3-\$1.5 billion dollars it receives from them (which the military CANNOT function without), the cost of which is the military’s promise to safeguard American, Western, and Israeli security interests. Indeed, the Egyptian Military is responsible for the massacre of Coptic Egyptian Christians at Maspéro¹³, for which none of the military’s members to this moment have been charged or been held accountable for. Let’s be clear, the reason a majority of Egyptian people feel a great sense of affinity with the Egyptian army is because of the prevalent role Gamal Abdel Nasser and the Free Officers Movement played in the 1950’s in the anti-colonial overthrow of King Farouk, along

¹⁰ For further details see: english.al-akhbar.com.

¹¹ For further details on what a Military Industrial Complex is see Andrea Smith’s *Hetero-patriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy* loveharder.files.wordpress.com

Also Dwight D. Eisenhower’s speech warning against the military industrial complex’s political and economic influences here: coursesa.matrix.msu.edu

¹² For further details see: www.aljazeera.com.

¹³ For further details see: en.wikipedia.org

with the British who at the time had been occupying Egypt as a colonial superpower, since 1801, and before them the French, when Napoleon invaded Egypt in 1798. This affinity with the Egyptian army predominantly exists too because of the four Arab-Israeli wars, 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973, that Egyptians partook in. This pride in the military is engrained in the minds and hearts of many Egyptians because we, the youth, have been raised by a generation of elders who've witnessed and spoon-fed us memories of an army that no longer exists except in history books, a tale told to us, yet that nevertheless is an illusion and a phantasy far fetched from an ongoing reality. But it's one thing to be infatuated with an army that is no longer akin to what euphoric memories of it that no longer exist, and another thing all together to realize that this 'honorable' army has undergone structural and 'ideological' overhauls since its modern inception and the reigns of Nasser, Sadat, Mubarak till this very moment. It's sickening when political pundits and supposedly 'experts' were on Arab radio and television stations, Egyptian and otherwise, filling the airwaves, the past few days, with ignorant propaganda as they ridiculously claimed that the Egyptian army we see now is the 'proud army that has existed, (apparently) throughout the days of the Umayyads, Abbasids, & Ottomans, and for 1000s of years before', protecting Egypt's borders and Egyptians for millennia, as if Egypt's geography and political and social identity has remained unchanged ever since the time of the Pharaohs. To these pundits, I suggest they read Dr. Khaled Fahmy's *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali Pasha, His Army and the Founding of Modern Egypt* (1997) for further reference to support my argument regarding the absurdity of such claims and to highlight how modernity, at the very least, altered the dynamics of what it is to have and be a part of the military, indeed to institute it as a military industrial complex. Briefly, Fahmy, in line with Timothy Mitchel's *Colonizing Egypt* (1988), argues how the advent of Mehmed Ali Pasha ushered in systems of:

"Ordering, labeling, and surveillance required to control the resistant recruits [of the military]...as a 'subtle' projection of power... [The military] increased [its] need to control the recruits: giving them each a number, demanding they have passes (*teskere*) to leave the camp, and printing papers for roll-call on which 'missing' was an established category...[Prevalent became] the great need for scribes able to handle all this new ordering of men... that the training of troops conjured up the idea of order, that life was no longer random and that precise punishments followed precise misconduct"¹⁴ (Ufford, 2003; Fahmy, 1997).

Alternatively, and too in support of my argument regarding the evolution of modern military structures as part and parcel of the apparatus of modern nation-States, see Manuel De Landa's essay *Economic, Computers & the War Machine*, in which he writes:

"It has been Michel Foucault who has most forcefully articulated this view. For him this intertwining of military and civilian institutions is constitutive of the modern European capitalist nation-State [with what it entailed in governance and governing procedures that were transplanted to 'post-colonial' nations]. On one hand, the project of nation building was an integrative movement, forging bonds that went beyond the primordial ties of family and locality, linking urban and rural populations under a new social contract. On the other, and complementing this process of *unification*, there was the less conscious project of *uniformation*, of submitting the

¹⁴ For further details see Fahmy's text and Ufford's review titled 'Modern Army? Modern State' available here: www.h-net.org

new population of free citizens to intense and continuous training, testing and exercise to yield a more or less uniform mass of obedient individuals”¹⁵.

Indeed, in Foucault’s own words in his seminal text *Discipline & Punishment*, he writes:

“Historians of ideas usually attribute the dream of a perfect society to the philosophers and jurists of the eighteenth century; but there was also a military dream of society; its fundamental reference was not to the state of nature, but to the meticulously subordinated cogs of a machine, not to the primal social contract, but to permanent coercions, not to fundamental rights, but to indefinitely progressive forms of training, not to the general will but to automatic docility... The Napoleonic regime was not far off and with it the form of state that was to survive it and, we must not forget, the foundations of which were laid not only by jurists, but also by soldiers, not only counselors of state, but also junior officers, not only the men of the courts, but also the men of the camps. The Roman reference that accompanied this formation certainly bears with it this double index: citizens and legionnaires, law and maneuvers. While jurists or philosophers were seeking in the pact a primal model for the construction or reconstruction of the social body, the soldiers and with them the technicians of discipline were elaborating procedures for the individual and collective coercion of bodies”¹⁶.

In sum, it is Napoleon’s introduction of the idea of institutionalized conscription when it comes to modern militaries and that’s very much applied and ongoing in Egypt to this day that formulates the premise that we, as Arabs, Muslims and Egyptians, have constructed our militarized societies, politically and economically, on colonial and imperial European models. It is no secret the Egyptian military manufactures everything from knives, forks, spoons, to dishwashers and refrigerators, and even has its own construction companies and projects let alone tourist resorts. Of course, here I must and have to distinguish between the military elite (i.e. the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces – SCAF) and the poor and impoverished soldiers who constitute the military itself. Nevertheless, that changes nothing in terms of the military being a hetero-patriarchal

¹⁵ For further details see: www.t0.or.at.

¹⁶ Excerpt is from Michel Foucault’s *Discipline & Punishment* (1979: 169). “Napoleon had changed the paradigm from battles of attrition to battles of annihilation with warfare changing from the dynastic duels of the eighteenth century to the total warfare with which we are familiar in this century. War itself has come to rely on the complete mobilization of a society’s industrial and human resources. While the armies of Frederick the Great were composed mostly of expensive mercenaries, who had to be carefully used in the battlefield, the Napoleonic armies benefited from the invention of new institutional means of converting the entire population of a country into a vast reservoir of human resources. Although technically speaking the French revolution did not invent compulsory military service, its institutional innovations did allow its leaders to perform the first modern mass conscription, involving the conversion of all men into soldiers, and of all women into cheap laborers. As the famous proclamation of 1793 reads: ‘...all Frenchmen are permanently requisitioned for service into the armies. Young men will go forth to battle; married men will forge weapons and transport munitions; women will make tents and clothing and serve in hospitals; children will make lint from old linen; and old men will be brought to the public squares to arouse the courage of the soldiers, while preaching the unity of the Republic and hatred against Kings’... Even before that, in the Dutch armies of the sixteenth century, this process had already begun. Civilians tend to think of Frederick Taylor, the late nineteenth century creator of so-called “scientific management” techniques, as the pioneer of labor process analysis, that is, the breaking down of a given factory practice into micromovements and the streamlining of these movements for greater efficiency and centralized management control. But Dutch commander Maurice of Nassau had already applied these methods to the training of his soldiers beginning in the 1560’s. Maurice analyzed the motion needed to load, aim and fire a weapon into its micromovements, redesigned them for maximum efficiency and then imposed them on his soldiers via continuous drill and discipline... This is but one example of the idea of militarisation of society. Recent historians have rediscovered several other cases of the military origins of what was once thought to be civilian innovations. In recent times it has been Michel Foucault who has most forcefully articulated this view.

top-down hierarchical structure and that it represents the strong-arm of what is still a colonized Egyptian State.

Issue 3: The Imperial U.S. and Mainstream Western Media

Without a doubt then, what happened yesterday, July 3rd, 2013, couldn't have happened without the will of the Egyptians masses, or at least a fair majority of them who partook in direct action and public protest. But what happened also COULDN'T have happened without the American government ultimately approving the Egyptian military's blueprint, including having a say in whoever will rise next from the opposition into the position of becoming the next Pharaoh, and inspite of Tamarod's disparaging ethical and political composition. Let's not be fooled, America may have been surprised, yes, but they are always prepared for alternate scenarios; you don't become a colonial and imperial superpower for over a century without diabolically planning far, far, ahead in advance, and in anticipation of 'impossible' scenarios, especially after the events of 2011. The United States, rather obviously, never cared who sits at the top of Egypt's pyramid and throne, or becomes the next temporary Pharaoh, given they already have the military in their pockets, the military brought and sold long ago; ultimately, the military's loyalty in practice is to the world's hegemonic superpower, even if in rhetoric, lip service is paid to Egyptians; so much for the myth of 'the people's army'. No one sits on the throne without the American government and the Egyptian military's political-economic approval in the midst of backdoor deals and ongoing proxy wars in a region fraught across from Iraq, to Syria, to Lebanon, the Arabian Peninsula, and Northern Africa. The policies that would have to be implemented by whoever is in power in Egypt, undoubtedly, would have to remain neoliberal in nature and as always Israel's security is to be safeguarded and protected at any and all cost, even if the price is Egyptian, Arab and Muslim blood itself, already rather cheap as it is all over the world. Today, the U.S. Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and U.S. Rep. Eliot Engel (D-NY), the Committee's Ranking Member, released the following statement in response to ongoing events in Egypt:

"It is now up to the Egyptian military to demonstrate that the new transitional government can and will govern in a transparent manner and work to return the country to democratic rule. We are encouraged that a broad cross-section of Egyptians will gather to rewrite the constitution. All parties in Egypt must show restraint, prevent violence, and prepare to be productive players in the future democratic Egypt. We encourage the military to exercise extreme caution moving forward and support sound democratic institutions through which the people and future governments can flourish."¹⁷

Moving forth, the fact that Western and specifically U.S. media outlets, were frazzled, and supposedly proclaimed 'solidarity' with Morsi, is beside the point; the U.S. is always at a loss for vocabulary when it comes to issues outside the purview of its own narcissistic affairs. The West's surprise is only a consequence of the fact that they want and expect stability in the Middle East, given the events ongoing regionally these past 2 years. The United States in particular isn't keen on headaches beyond the spinning plates they're already juggling (between economic reforms, health care debates, and immigration crises to the fiasco over intelligence leaks, Guantanamo force-feedings and drone controversies etc etc). In sum, the United States government and the

¹⁷ For further details see: foreignaffairs.house.gov

Obama administration are hardly interested in preoccupying themselves with seductively selecting from the alternative factions composing Tamarod and that soon enough will be too divided and factional on their own; that is, given Tamarod's hodge-podge composition, even if they've temporarily formed a united front and uneasy alliance for a short-sighted particular objective i.e. the removal of Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood. Indeed, that there was a complete media blackout in the U.S. as such shouldn't be a surprise (besides of course it being close to the 4th of July, a day for America to self-obsess over how much of a divine wonder it is to the world, at the expense of the genocide and enslavement of indigenous peoples, people of color, and minorities of all kinds, as if America needs to obsess more than it already does the rest of the 364 days of the year). The American media's hesitancy to shift from 'supporting' Morsi and their insistence on calling it a coup is no less surprising given the colonial and imperial orientalist and blind reportage these same corporate outlets took when Hosni Mubarak was first being ousted and whom the American government had supported for 30 or so odd years. Indeed, this hypocritical stance shouldn't be strange and is in line with Hillary Clinton and the American government's hesitant position, at first, to support the Egyptian uprising of 2011 only then to hail the advent of the colonially dubbed 'Arab Spring' and the will of the people that led it when there was no stopping these revolts. The first, second, third, and infinite interest of the United States, Europe and the West will always be Israel's security and their own economic interests, indeed the resource exploitation¹⁸ of the Global South, but particularly the Middle East beginning with Egypt, guaranteed by the Egyptian military itself.

I detest, no less, than As'ad Abu Khalil the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood, but also agree with him when he writes:

"But Al-Sisi and his other henchmen have less legitimacy than even the lousy Morsi. Any popular legitimacy that is lent to Sisi can permit him in the future to overthrow a different elected government, perhaps a progressive government. The battle against the Ikhwan should proceed side-by-side with a battle against the military dictators of Egypt who serve US-Israeli alliance. Lastly, I wish to point out that the Likudnik House of Saud media, like Ash-Sharq Al-Awsat (mouthpiece of Prince Salman and his sons) are very pleased with Al-Sisi. That should be indicative"¹⁹ (2013).

Indeed, the Petro-monarchs of the Gulf must be pleased, if not thrilled, with these ongoing events, being the first to congratulate Egyptians, Al-Sisi, and the new interim president, Adly Mansour, who in 1992 was appointed vice president of the Supreme Constitutional Court by the now ousted Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak. I am speaking of Petro-monarchs, who at

¹⁸ Indeed, how are we to ever forget "the link between [an ongoing] colonialism and the conversion of many world areas into food supply zones for Europe (from the creation of sugar plantations to the taking over of the photo-synthetically most active areas of the world by Europe's ex-colonies) we can realize that this state of affairs does have consequences for equity and justice" (De Landa). For further details see: www.ctheory.net. The key point as Manuel De Landa says is "not to oversimplify: the Green Revolution, for example, failed not because of the biological aspect, but because of the economic one: the very real biological benefits (plants bred to have more edible biomass) could only be realized under economies of scale and these have many hidden costs (power concentration, deskilling of workforce) which can offset the purely technical benefits". In the end, it's corporate conglomerates that "are encroaching around the most sensitive points of the food chain [and which] is dangerous: they direct the evolution of new crops from the processing end, disregarding nutritional properties if they conflict with industrial ones; the same corporations which own oil (and hence fertilizers and herbicides) also own seed companies and other key inputs to farming; and those same corporations are now transferring genes from one species to another in perverse ways (genes for herbicide resistance transferred from weeds to crops)".

¹⁹ For further details see: angryarab.blogspot.ca

the very discovery of black gold sold their traditions and souls, becoming brown men who've embraced white values and masks, building phallic skyscrapers to no end, piercing heavenly clouds, skies and sun, in an attempt at attaining divine, as if in a wish to dethrone God himself. Meanwhile, the satire was that while the U.S. media turned a blind eye to the events in Egypt, Arab and Egyptian media outlets were interviewing police and interior ministry personal on the ground in Tahrir who were encouraging people further to get the military involved as if what happened during the events of Mohammad Mahmoud²⁰, Itahidiya, indeed the massacre of our martyrs at the hands of police and interior ministry forces on January the 25th, 2011, onwards, was forgotten; and, again, the media did this when hardly anyone belonging to these government apparatuses has been prosecuted throughout these 2 years following a 'revolution' still ongoing! Yet Egyptian and Arab reporters, more or less and bar none, were keen and quick to proclaim on air: 'the police and people are one; we're glad we've reconciled'.

No the blood of our martyrs will not be forgotten, till those accountable are brought to justice to us, and by us, the people, not by politicians for them to score political points for their reelections. And certainly not by a judiciary, that isn't just in need of cleansing, but rather in need of purging, given the judiciary's complete ineptness, also unsurprising, given the judiciary's lack of concern with ethical and political commitments that would serve as foundations and a guide for any society striving towards social justice and upon which jurisprudence would be applied! Let's then not forget that there was an alliance signed off on by the United States, between the Muslim Brotherhood & SCAF, and that brought the Muslim Brotherhood to power; a Muslim brotherhood that initially in its inception and in practice, through the social services it provided to the disenfranchised (when the Egyptian state could care less for the better part of a century), was guided by concerns for social justice, even if the MB ultimately strayed from this trajectory. Of course, ample literature exists to confirm the Brotherhood's services to the disenfranchised (one of the most recent being Leila Ahmed's book *A Quiet Revolution* (2011)) but who hardly reads beyond what they think and what they know anymore! After all, all we like to do is point fingers, without reflecting critically and dealing with our own history, as we continue to escape looking at ourselves in the mirror out of disgust for what we might discover and see! Let's not forget that Qatar might be disappointed with the current situation in Egypt but certainly not Saudi Arabia and that has been supporting the even more conservative 'Islamist' Salafis in Egypt and their Noor party. Let's not forget, Let's not forget...let's never forget!

Issue 4: *The Muslim Brotherhood, Tamarod and the Alternatives*

Yes, the elite of the Muslim Brotherhood and ample of its indoctrinated blind-followers and members, were exclusionary, barbarically sectarian, and too zealous to get to power, but it must be acknowledged that the Muslim Brotherhood have been the most organized faction in Egypt given they've been building their own 'autonomous' zones and institutions (schools, hospitals etc) for the better part of a century and since their establishment in 1928, and without one needing to regurgitate the legacy of their indiscriminate torture and imprisonment at the behest of each and every former regime.

But then we need to ask ourselves the following question if there's any hope for us as Arabs and as Muslims to reconcile, indeed to engage in conflict resolution, *Usul Al-Ikhtilaf* or what

²⁰ For further details see: www.bbc.co.uk

I refer to, in my work, as an *Ethics of Disagreements*²¹: Where did this heightened sense of the fascistic tendencies of theirs (patriarchy, sexism, let alone queerphobia, ageism, ableism, classism, and let's be honest, that isn't exclusive to the Muslim Brotherhood) come from? And let those of us immune from such fascism, and its sins, be the first to cast the first stone if we're indeed self-righteous enough to proclaim as a patriarchal and homophobic society our immunity from the aforementioned fascistic tendencies ourselves! We're all fascists given that fascism has already won through the privileges we enjoy in relation to one another and our blindness and deafness to the power relations between us as a society, and that we do little about. After all, all one learns from oppression (in Arabic *zhulm*), is oppression, *zhulm*; along with what feelings of betrayal, despicable envy and vengeance accompany this oppression felt and that always finds a way out and an outlet; in other words, oppression and what visceral emotions it entails are always passed onto someone else, or else it'll make the individual implode if not explode. The Muslim Brotherhood, whether they realize it or not, were set up to fail; to fail themselves, and fail the core essence of what they could've represented and could've been in terms of ideals. The Muslim Brotherhood failed because they sought the same position of power they once despised instead of orienting themselves and the socially just pillars of Islamic beliefs (they supposedly believe in) correctly and appropriately towards far more different and radically anarchic and horizontalist horizons that encapsulate anti-statist and anti-capitalist spirits and alternatives (for what exactly I mean by this spirit and the political and ethical orientations that could guide Islam and Muslims towards anarchistic politics and ethics, and that in fact exist within Islam itself, please see what I refer to as *Islamatismo* or *anarca-Islam*²²).

If we (those of us who oppose the Muslim Brotherhood's particular 'style' of politics) think that the indiscriminate clampdown on the Muslim brotherhood, irrespective of whether they're in positions of leadership or not, is the solution then we need to wake up, because secular (neo)liberals as El-Baradei aren't the solution either! If we (those of us who oppose the Muslim Brotherhood's particular brand of 'political Islam') accept the prevalent absence of media coverage of pro-Morsi rallies and supporters, let alone accept the shutting down of their news channels, as bearded men mistakenly get taken to be brotherhood members are harassed, then we are no less fascist than the Muslim Brotherhood ourselves! I expect nothing short of the Muslim Brotherhood being blamed for all the atrocities and injustices that have gone on since January 25th, 2011, over the next period in Egypt, the Middle East, and beyond; indeed, that's proven to be the case since this 'article' was first written. One always needs to construct an enemy to overcome one's sense of insecurities, or at least the insecurities that emerge out of being unable or incapable of knowing how to deal with 'the Other'; indeed, 'an Other' that in reality composes our own sense of identity and belonging, after all there is no black race without 'white' (Fanon, 1952). And we, as Arabs and Muslims, have certainly been caught in a crisis of identity, having to choose between our identification as secular Arab or Muslim with the advent of modernity. We, as Arabs and Muslims, unfortunately, have brought into the false colonial binary of 'secular/Islamist' with all the mirroring it entails in demarcating the difference between 'civilized/savage'.

²¹ For further details see the blog entry *On Usul al'Ikhtilaf & Usul al'Dhiyafa (otherwise known as an Ethics of Disagreements & an Ethics of Hospitality) & Epithets on Love* here: mohamedjeanveneuse.blogspot.ca

²² See the following blog entry titled: *Arab and Muslim Crises & Other Vexations: From Zapatismo to Islamatismo/anarca-Islam* here: angryarab.blogspot.ca

Also see the thesis titled *Anarca-Islam* here: theanarchistlibrary.org

As I said and reiterate the Muslim brotherhood without a doubt are complicit in terms of what happened and what is happening to them but there are 2 things Egyptians, Arabs, and Muslims need to be paying attention to:

a) The now further heightened fervor to eradicate what's so wantonly and easily referred to as 'political Islam' and the desire to side line it as a political force. However, it bears consideration that if by political Islam (what is meant is 'Islamism') — then it needs to be clear that this is not a monolithic, homogenous, category, and is a colonial construct, appearing first, early 17th and 18th century, in works like Voltaire's play 'Fanatisme' as a synonym –Islamismus– for Islam, like other European constructs as Mohammadanism, & what followed of Enlightenment rationales, & attempts at imposing these terms and forcing those colonized to follow a 'secularized modernity'. Indeed, the same 'secular modernity' that operated under the auspices of doctrines of *Manifest Destiny*²³ and that was responsible for the genocide of Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, giving us modern concepts and practices as: capitalism, the nation-State, the prison and military industrial complexes that we've built our 'post-colonial' nations on. On the other hand, in my work, I argue that Islam is inherently political and those who use this term without understanding what it means, its etymology, and whether they self-identify as Muslim or not, have brought into the whitewashed false binary of 'Islamism/secularism' and all it entails in reifications when it comes to the 'War on Terror' and Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*²⁴ thesis; in other words, that 'Islam is against the West and is incompatible with liberal modernity and its values of freedom, democracy and liberty'. Let us not conflate then the term 'Islamist' or 'political Islam' with the Muslim Brotherhood (also not a homogenous group) when the Noor Party consisting of Salafis, and who practice an even more orthodox breed of Islamism are also present on the Egyptian, Arab, and Muslim landscape and scene. If anything, such calls for the eradication of 'political Islam' or misunderstanding what it is, is an indication of an internalized 'Islamphobia' by Arabs, Muslims, and others, heightened post-9/11.

Islamism aside then, if by 'political Islam' what is being suggested is that Islam is NOT inherently political and gets politicized by 'fanatics' then that is also a problematic assumption, as any faith based movement is, arguably, inherently political through the socially just pillars it establishes in relations to issues of social justice (think of the forbiddance of interest in Islam, let alone the concept of Khalifahs used in the plural form in the Quran as opposed to its singular authoritarian form, let alone the function of Ramadan, & hadeeths of the Prophet advocating for racial equality, let alone the Quranic verses addressing gender rights/relations and I certainly don't mean to homogenize Islam here, as many do, with its 73 or so odd interpretations). There is no getting rid of Islam's cultural and religious influence in the Middle East; indeed, there is no getting rid of Islam's political and ethical existence, in a society as Egypt's'. What needs to happen is that Islam needs to be redefined in terms of its ethical and political contours and orientations by its practitioners, in my opinion towards anarchism. Muslims and Arabs need to decolonize their identities, discourses, and traditions. Besides which it's impossible to make people 'forget' this spiritual component that informs a central part of their identity and that certainly exceeds cul-

²³ Briefly, the Doctrine of Manifest Destiny is the Christian religious fervour spawning "the Second Great Awakening", and that led many European settlers to believe that "God himself blessed the growth of the American nation" at the expense of the genocide of Indigenous peoples of the Americas. In other words, "Native Americans were considered heathens. By Christianizing the tribes, American missionaries believed they could save souls and they became among the first to cross the Mississippi River" and build their new world. For more details, see: ~ www.ushistory.org

²⁴ For further details see: www.hks.harvard.edu

ture when it comes to issues as gender relations, queerness etc. Therefore, there is NO sidelining 'political Islam', and that arguably will remain a palpable force to be reckoned with globally.

b) To clarify further, what I mean by saying that the Muslim Brotherhood was 'set-up' is the fact that the fulool (members of Mubarak's ex-regime) have continued to exist, and given the way the Muslim Brotherhood was organized more than any portion of the Egyptian masses prior to the uprising, the Muslim Brotherhood represented the biggest obstacle for the fulool's ongoing agenda to return, whatever shape or form that attempt at a return takes. The fulool must be reveling in this scenario where everyone (from the Muslim Brotherhood to the Military to Tamarod) is being played for a fool as we all partake in proxy and asymmetric wars against members of our own society and communities, these splits even causing divisions and rifts within our own families. As for what hope lies with Tamarod, this broad coalition of a Rebel Campaign (that truly has yet to become rebellious) and that, as stated, consists of everything from police officers to the army, to (neo)liberals, to Nasserites, to revolutionary socialists, to anarchists, to the un-politically oriented, even disenfranchised Muslim brotherhood members themselves, well, Tamarod will be subject to infighting soon enough. Of course, the Salafis of the Noor party, more neo-orthodox 'Islamists' than even the brotherhood, too are on the playground, towing the line between the Muslim Brotherhood and Tamarod, as everybody tries to bed Al-Sisi and the military in this over-zealousness to attain and reach power. Each group has their own particular interests and schemes, given that we as Egyptians, Arabs and Muslims have internalized the colonial Manichean/Machiavellian logic of 'divide and conquer' and have not, as stated, partaken in the decolonization and re-indigenization of ourselves, our societies and our communities, choosing instead to model ourselves socially, politically, economically on Western societies as we try and prove to ourselves and the rest of the world that we're not savages but rather civilized beings.

To this end, how can Tamarod not fragment when it rallies around a 'single-issue' cause (of getting Morsi and the Muslim brotherhood out) at a time when politics has never been more fluid? For even when Tamarod claims²⁵ what they're against, they hardly claim the ethical and political framework for which they stand for, let alone the means to concretely achieve those objectives at the grassroots (referring merely to the buzz words 'social justice', 'freedom', 'bread', and 'democracy' that have become nothing more than empty rhetoric, impossible to reconcile amongst the broad coalition spectrum established). Tamarod has yet to truly become rebellious in the radical sense of the word. After all, a 'revolution'²⁶ is not about seizing power but rather knowing what to do with the power seized after; how will you organize socially, politically,

²⁵ Please see: tamarod.com

²⁶ As I've written before: I believe revolutions require a double movement (internal and external transformations of individual-communitarian-societal character). Revolutions will always remain indefinitely incomplete because of the power dynamics, differentials and relations that will forever undermine/underpin them, and that sustain oppression while also providing liberatory potentials with them. All one hopes for in the end is delineating power differentials between us, as individuals and communities, not getting rid of them. I therefore don't believe Egypt nor the Middle East has undergone a revolution yet, preferring instead terms/concepts like 'revolt', or 'uprising', even 'insurrection', but certainly not revolutions. This is because I believe in the need to differentiate and distinguish between the way revolutions are documented (or written about historically) and people's revolutionary becomings (i.e. what ontologically and epistemologically changes/takes place/happens when a people rise – physically, emotionally, mentally, individually, collectively and that leads to certain transformations of consciousness individually and collectively). The two, the way revolutions are documented and people's revolutionary becomings, are two different things, because they relate to two different sets of people in the process of casting off a shame or responding to that which is intolerable. 'Revolutions' ought be premised on dealing with practical questions – how are you going to deal with recycling, garbage, what are you going to do with a nuclear plant, the army, indeed how are you going to reconceive your

economically, your communities and how will you do so autonomously; what will you do with a nuclear power plant, let alone how will you deal with issues as recycling and garbage; how will you deal with your crises of identity; how will you build a movement that centers on more than just a 'superficial' collectivity of people engaging in direct action or is that all we Egyptians, Arabs, and Muslims are capable of and have mastered now? No wonder the simulacrum of images of millions to Westerners have become too old and no longer eye-catching enough to warrant attention in comparison to two years ago; indeed, where's the substance that sustains and exceeds such mass gatherings in ethics and politics, needed to truly dazzle the eyes? You do not kill God as Friedrich Nietzsche teaches without a thousand upon a thousand demagogues rising, fighting amongst each other! Those directly involved with Tamarod will sell out or will be brought out, radical or not, young and old, enticed and given posts and positions with whatever vertical social order is reestablished after this tumultuous period in our history, as the pyramid and Egypt's hierarchical political-economic structures are rearranged and reorganized. The crackdown on 'Islamists' will begin yet again, indeed they will become worse than during Mubarak's time, given the legitimacy members of the Muslim Brotherhood feel they had and were robbed of despite the narrow vision of democracy being applied, as defined through the ballot box.

It is unfortunate, but I expect the Muslim Brotherhood to become even more essentialist, more hegemonic and aggressive, as vengeful attempts are made by state apparatuses to drive them underground. Indeed, I wouldn't be surprised if 'terrorist' attacks started again, sadly enough. In fact, if one were following one would notice the initial security reports of the retaliatory acts that have already begun against Churches, with Sinai yet again burning and on high alert, as regular Palestinians and Gazans are used by almost everyone as scapegoats for the ongoing events in Egypt. Muslim brotherhood members have already begun throwing²⁷ people off rooftops in Alexandria, Egypt, as a Military responds with disproportionate force towards Muslim brotherhood protestors killing²⁸ at least 51 of them.

All these events are, in part, a distractive war from what's going on externally outside Egypt. Indeed, these events are built on the colonial and imperial desire to see Egypt constantly unstable at least internally; that is, to see Egypt too preoccupied to get involved in anything except its own affairs. This is a continuing war of all against all in the Middle East, a war that will pre-occupy the Egyptian military, a war that will take place on Egypt's streets, and that will result in nothing less – irrespective of the calls for compassion, dialogue, reconciliation and calm – than further schisms amongst Egyptians, Arabs and Muslims. I expect splits amongst Islamists themselves (across their broad spectrum), only for that to produce fundamentalist extremes on all sides. The ultimate colonial and imperial entrapment that we have brought into is what's been stated above given that we have not undergone decolonization and re-indigenization. We need to move beyond the logic of a capitalist nation-State as a mode by which we as Arabs, Muslims and Egyptians socially, politically and economically organize.

This is important, after all, given that what happens in Egypt ripples across the region and subsequently across the world – not only because it's the largest Arab-Muslim society in the Middle East but also because of its geopolitical cartographic evolution and as such its historical influence

relationship to land through decolonization and reindigenization & beyond the individualist sense of self and land, indeed this earth's utilitarian use.

²⁷ For further details see: shoebat.com

²⁸ For further details see: madamasr.com

Also see: m.apnews.com

and significance. Tamarood will tear each other apart despite being an exemplary example of a people's power given 'this people's power' is and was only held together, as were the 18 days of January 25th, 2011, by colonial understandings of nationalism, (in Arabic, *Wattaniyyah*²⁹) as opposed to ethical and political commitments that are clear in their orientation and that should be what binds people together. Of course, it's not possible to understand these ethical and political commitments without decolonization and re-indigenization, as I discussed in my previous work titled *Arab and Muslim Crises of Identity*³⁰ as we, Arabs and Muslim, are caught between two sets of identifications and loyalties i.e. identifying as being pan-Arab and pan-Muslim. And so, where to go from here?

As Gustavo Esteva teaches:

We need to overcome our need for and dependency on the health and education systems. We must take these into our own hands, autonomously, without waiting for corporations and the State to do it for us. We need to escape the medical-pharmaceutical industrial system, where doctors and hospitals create more diseases than they cure.

We need to realize that we are: a network of relations, not individuals. This is the way to develop wisdom. We cannot in one day invent autonomous schools and hospitals, but we have

²⁹ I take *Wattaniyah* as 'patriotism' and not strictly 'nationalism' not solely because of the term's connection with a certain territory, but rather a statist logic, that assumes a homogenous populous, even if the term also signifies that that populous, as Al-Barghouti notes, opposes "foreign invasion" and do "not hold much content regarding the political identity of the form of government" they share (2008: 179). The term in fact only refers in reality to the bond "among different groups of people that have little in common other than being against colonial domination" and living on what's constructed and perceived to be a common territory (Al-Barghouti, 2008: 179). Make no mistake about it, only the most politically naïve and trusting would wager that nationalism nowadays carries coherence, and isn't philosophically bankrupt, when even its avid and most sympathetic of students, Tom Nairn, acknowledges that 'Nationalism' is a: "Pathology of modern development history, as inescapable as 'neurosis' in the individual, with much the same essential ambiguity attaching to it, a similar built-in capacity for descent into dementia, rooted in the delimitas of helplessness thrust upon most of the world (the equivalent of infantilism for societies) and largely incurable" (2003: 347; Anderson, 2006; Hobsbawm, 1983). Nations are invented, imagined, enmeshed in contradictions no less than 'tradition'. Indeed, imagined as political communities and as "both inherently limited and sovereign", for "even the smallest nation will never know most of its fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 2006; Hobsbawm, 1983). Nationalism "is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist" (Gellner, 1964: 169, Anderson, 2006; Hobsbawm, 1983). This concoction isn't to be thought of as "fabrication" and 'falsity', rather than 'imagination' and 'creation'", even if it exudes elements of both, because in imagining – what is fabricated or 'the narrative' established – 'falsities' and 'truths' are recreated and re-envisioned (Anderson, 2006: 6; Hobsbawm, 1983). In the words of the wise Bell Hooks writes: "I have been thinking about the notion of perfect love as being without fear, and what that means for us in a world that's becoming increasingly xenophobic, tortured by fundamentalism and nationalism". As I have previously argued, the territorial concept and post-colonial Arabic notion is a problem as it plays upon sentimentalist hearts, as it always acknowledges an absent consensus on the legitimacy of the colonial and imperial European idea of modern States, the most active contributors, and agents of hetero-patriarchy, for they legalize it through law (Piscatori, 1986: 77; Habeeb, 2011, emphasis added). For as Al-Barghouti writes, "just as 'Ummah' was mistranslated into 'nation' by Europeans, Arabs have had problems with translating the term 'nationalism' into Arabic" (2008: 178). And thus though presently, the word for 'nation', "has two Arabic translations that are sometimes seen as mutually exclusive: *Qawmiyyah* and *Wataniyyah*", this book defers and distinguishes between the two, with *Qawmiyyah* referring to belonging to "a certain group of people, 'qawm'" whereas "*Wataniyyah*, on the other hand, means belonging to the homeland, to a certain territory: 'watan'" (2008: 178). It's modern States that manipulate nationalistic sentiments, imprison their imaginings, when it is possible to imagine nations, but more so peoples, no longer obsessively bound by statist imaginaries that facilitate the evocation and morphing of nationalism through the shameless conformist promotion of loyalty and devotion, to create exclusionary territories while producing the commoditized patriotic rhetoric and phantasies that accompanies it.

³⁰ On what I call the *Arab and Muslim Crises of Identity* please refer to: mohamedjeanvenouse.blogspot.ca

to think about what it is to heal and live in health. 'I want to live with dignity in my house and not with tubes that are uselessly prolonging my life'. Some technologies are necessary, but we need a collective redefinition about living healthily. For us to indeed heal ourselves, we need to redefine the body and soul: it is about becoming well, physically, emotionally, and mentally so that we may ourselves renew the nourished capacity to rebel every moment and every day. Millions of people go to bed with empty stomachs. The rest of us know that our bodies are full of toxic agro-chemicals, which have come from our food. We are either afraid of hunger or afraid of eating.

We must propose how we will challenge the institutional production of truth. Will we wait for the government to change things? We need to define for ourselves what we eat, not have the market or the State define these things for us.

We need to produce our food ourselves, by ourselves. We must recuperate our food autonomy, and realize its importance in the construction of another world. We need to produce our own food, to decide what we eat, and how we can organize to define our own food. Each of us needs to ask every day, what did I do to begin to advance the production of my own food, to define what I eat?

The corporations, the market, and the State will do everything possible to impede transformation and autonomy. As for labor, for the Left, heir to the protestant work ethic, work has become an idol. The word labor comes from torture. They torture us with work. We need to stop working and reactivate our lives and engage in activities that reproduce our ability to live.

We are the words that we use. Words have been placed in our heads without our permission being asked and we use these words without knowing what these words mean; we have to reclaim the words we use through decolonization and re-indigenization. We have to recover the 'we', and in every 'we', we are not individuals, we are relations, we are part of different communities. We need to define what our ethical and political commitments are, and to define these commitments, we must know them, and we must understand and have a conviction in them. We can recreate community relations starting with a few friends, to create a new society, like the inverted roots of a tree that germinate and spread in all directions and to no ends without a center; a rhizome. One of the sins of the Left was an inability to work together because of schisms and disagreements. If we are boiling with horror and rage, and confusion, feeling that we can't connect with others, we must get past that misconception and re-conceptualize our struggle, understanding how we can ethically disagree amongst ourselves and others.

Moreover, we need to recognize that anti-capitalism today must also mean anti-patriarchy. We need to recognize that capitalism is patriarchal. We need to re-invent new worlds, creating new types of societies to liquidate the sexist and patriarchal regimes that already fester deep within us. Gender is a fundamental site of struggle that we need to center our societies around. With the feminization of politics, women can recover the histories of our peoples, indeed our sense of being people still learning what it is to become human and for us to commit ourselves as such to this task is pivotal. It is women who will take us forward into the new world (Esteva, 2013)³¹.

³¹ For further details see: upsidedownworld.org

To conclude on a positive note, it is the constant Bakhtian “carnavalesque”³² element of this people’s power nonetheless, indeed its ability to oust anyone seated in an impatient moment’s notice, even with a few days over a year in power, that I see hope. Indeed, I see hope that a people are able to this day, still, to organize themselves horizontally and without a leader (even if most of them are yet searching for one, not realizing that all power is to the people and that we are all leaders, rulers and ruled by the laws that we determine on the street between us ourselves and not through a hierarchical capitalist-State or its apparatuses’ interventions between us). That is what offers promise, us, the people, and no one else. The ‘revolution’ will not arrive today, or tomorrow, but rather the day after if and only if people choose to remain honest, critical and conscious, indeed if they/we are willing to learn through reading and experimentation, always already mobilized with a cause, not in need of waiting for one to appear, or harkening to party and vanguard politics for that matter.

In the end, we need to recognize that resisting is like breathing, so let us look to new horizons, beyond our own conception, of what radical, hopeful, ‘revolutions’ could mean, and let us learn from examples as that set by the *Zapatistas*³³. Indeed, let’s exercise direct democracy not for a day or two or three but everyday of our lives, no longer harkening to build the Egyptian State, or its institutions, with what endless bureaucratic laws they bring, but rather alternatives to them, as we exercise non-hierarchical forms of horizontalist economic-political-and social organizing, where no one is in power and where everybody is in power to see through a true people’s power rising. Let’s refrain from vanguard practices and their associated party politics because political factions will never benefit us nor will they look to causes beyond their own! Let’s take control of our own lives together, holding each other’s hands, outside the dominant orders of capitalism and the nation-State, asking each other what each of us knows, so that we can walk together, leaving no one behind, and so we can build together with compassion, love and humility, becoming forever radical rebels in rebellion and revolt!

³² Mikhail Bakhtin’s famous ‘Carnival and Carnavalesque’ offers four categories of what he calls the “carnivalistic sense of the world: 1. Free and familiar interaction between people: in the carnival normally separated people can interact and freely express themselves to one another. 2. Eccentric behavior: behavior that was otherwise unacceptable is legitimate in carnival, and human nature’s hidden sides are revealed. 3. carnivalistic misalliances: the free and familiar attitude of the carnival enables everything which is normally separated to connect – the sacred with the profane, the new and old, the high and low etc. 4. Sacrilegious: the carnival for Bakhtin is a site of ungodliness, of blasphemy, profanity and parodies on things that are sacred. For Bakhtin, these categories are abstract notions of freedom and equality, but rather a lived experience of the world manifested in sensual forms of ritualistic acts that are played out as if they were a part of life itself”. See: culturalstudiesnow.blogspot.ca

³³ For a brief introduction to the Zapatistas see: www.zapatistarevolution.com

Also see John Holloway’s essay Urban Zapatismo here: www.squiggryrubio.net

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Mohamed Jean Veneuse
Goodbye, Welcome, my 'Revolution'
...Egypt, The Military, The Brotherhood & Tamarod
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