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Dalia Ziada, *The Curious Case of the Three-Legged Wolf: Egypt's Military, Islamism, and Liberal Democracy*. Cairo: The Liberal Democracy Institute of Egypt, 2019. 221 pp. ISBN-10: 1696264731.

Reviewed by: Aman Nadhiri, Johnson C. Smith University, NC, USA.

In *The Curious Case of the Three-Legged Wolf*, Dalia Ziada examines the Egyptian experience of the Arab Spring. She privileges the perspectives and motives of both the activists and state officials by providing the conditions for the nonviolent transfer of power, as well as the rise and subsequent fall of Islamist groups (i.e. the Muslim Brotherhood) in the immediate aftermath of the popular revolution. Key in Ziada's analysis is her identification of a new form of governmental response to large-scale nonviolent action, namely "Reverse Nonviolent Action" (RNA); this type of response, she argues best, defines the Egyptian military hierarchy's reaction to the rapidly unfolding political and social unrest. According to Ziada, RNA is defined as

...the situation when the politically and militarily powerful opponents of the nonviolent movement make the strategic choice of deliberately using nonviolent tactics to maneuver the nonviolent tactics initiated by the nonviolent activists and reverse their results to the best interests of the opponent rather than serving the goals of the nonviolent movement (9)

Since Ziada views the events of the Egyptian Arab Spring through the prism of RNA, she identifies both the tactics of the political activists in organizing large-scale nonviolent resistance and the military elite's utilization of RNA; while the former employed it to maintain their position within the political hierarchy by engineering the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak, the latter leveraged their political power to orchestrate the removal of Muhammad Morsi from office and this meant the Muslim Brotherhood's defeat. For Ziada, it is this adoption of nonviolent action as a tactic by both grassroots activists and the military that currently maintains political stability in a nation with demographic and historical variables that could easily have produced very different results.

Ziada contextualizes her analysis of the Egyptian Arab Spring within the vastly divergent experiences of Tunisia, Yemen, and Syria. In her estimation, the fact that the Egyptian Arab Spring followed the trajectory of the Tunisian Arab Spring—a peaceful transfer of power—is noteworthy because Egypt more closely resembles Syria and Yemen in terms of demographics and citizens' self-identified religiosity. However, in these two countries, the Arab Spring rapidly devolved into civil war. To the casual observer, the fact that Egypt avoided the fates of Syria and Yemen is entirely attributable to the political activists' commitment to nonviolence and international pressure. However, Ziada contends

that it was the military's *strategic* use of nonviolence to thwart the activists' agenda that actually preserved the peace, albeit for perhaps less than noble reasons.

As part of the overall discussion, Ziada begins with an overview of the evolution of the various systems of government in Egypt, from its distant past to the Mubarak regime. Within this overview, particular attention is given to the Nasser regime and its efforts to marginalize the role of religious institutions, notably Al-Azhar University, and the reversal of this policy during the subsequent Sadat regime. The assassination of Sadat at the hands of Islamists serves as a watershed moment and is indicative of the steady rise of Islamist groups and the Muslim Brotherhood in particular, as a potent force in the Egyptian political landscape.

Moving from a discussion of the reemergence of Islamist groups as social and political players during the Sadat regime, Ziada analyzes the Mubarak era. She details the ways in which he managed to balance competing tendencies within his tenure, especially efforts to further democratization and the push toward authoritarianism. During Ziada's discussion of the Mubarak regime, she notes the steady rise of Islamist groups, notably the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafist groups, and she observes that despite the Egyptian administration's best efforts the period was punctuated by the Muslim Brotherhood's success in the 2005 elections. At the same time, Ziada details the work of the religious establishment in combating the ideology of these groups, particularly the work of Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayeb at Al-Azhar. The discussion of the Mubarak regime ends with a shift in focus to the rise of the Liberal Democratic Movement, signaling a change in Egypt's political trajectory.

The popular nonviolent movement that led to Mubarak's ousting, as well as the measures taken by the military establishment to contain, counteract, and direct the course of events, is the subject of the next chapter. A crucial component in the military's response is the decision to implement RNA as a strategy to stymie the most threatening aspects of the popular revolution, which she compares with the responses of Mubarak and the Egyptian police. Ziada identifies the military's strategic use of nonviolence as a successful counter to the protesters' nonviolent tactics and as the only available means of co-opting the popularity of the movement.

In her assessment, the spread of the protests to multiple locations, beyond the state's ability to contain it through the application of force, was crucial in forcing this decision. The military's adoption of nonviolence identified it as a neutral arbiter, part of the country's political evolution, whereas Mubarak's attempts to rein in the protests through coercive measures identified him as an impediment to the movement, and intensified opposition to his administration. Mubarak's miscalculation led to the rapid diminution of his political power, eventually alienating him from his former allies among the military elite and necessitating his resignation. Mubarak's adherence to older models of suppressing dissent led to his utter loss of power; the adoption of RNA by military leaders redirected the public's disaffection away from them and preserved their position as powerbrokers in the Egyptian political landscape.

Ziada closes the work with a consideration of the ways in which the Muslim Brotherhood successfully co-opted the Liberal Democratic Movement. This culminated in the election of Muhammad Morsi and electoral victories in Parliament; however, the Islamist group squandered their opportunity through the promotion of unpopular legislation, unsuccessful attempts to marginalize political enemies, and heavy-handed

responses to dissent. Beyond the reality that much of the Muslim Brotherhood's agenda was unpopular, Ziada cites their disavowal of nonviolence while in power as being crucial to their rapid exit from the political stage.

Unlike the military elite, who appeared to understand the strategic value of a nonviolent response for neutralizing dissent, the Muslim Brotherhood's ephemeral embrace of the movement, and nonviolence, was wholly opportunistic. Once in power, their style of leadership and response to dissent was more reminiscent of the values of the Mubarak regime than those of the movement that toppled it. This stance led to their ouster by the military, which once again proved strategic in navigating the rapidly evolving political terrain.

*The Curious Case of the Three-Legged Wolf* is singular in that it is perhaps the first analysis of the use of nonviolence as a tactic by powerful interests to actively counteract popular movements for political change. This is groundbreaking because it redefines the way in which we understand nonviolence, reclassifying it as a neutral tactic that can be used in the service of revolutionary and reactionary forces alike. In advocating this novel approach, Ziada demonstrates her ability to adopt a truly objective attitude toward political movements, eschewing facile, ready-made narratives for complex political phenomena. As such, *The Curious Case of the Three-Legged Wolf* is invaluable reading, not only for the insights it lends on the Egyptian experience of the Arab Spring, but for our understanding of political movements in general, and the factors that inform the actions of all parties involved.

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