Title: Plato’s Guardians’ Educational Program and The Process of Regaining Security Back in Egypt after the Revolution

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A state is like a mosaic piece, in terms of foundation and realization. A mosaic piece is founded or assembled by little glass pieces, and finally realized as a whole piece because of these little other pieces that it contains; the same concept can be applied to a state, as it is formed and founded on multiple bodies and institutions and therefore realized as an entity due to their existence. Additionally, the choice of color and the way the little glass pieces are assembled determine the beauty and value of the mosaic piece, the same case here can also be applied to the entity and existence of a state. Many years ago, during the age of Greece of Antiquity, when early discussions on what the ideal state is and what form could it take used to take place, Plato the famed philosopher came out with a set of rules in response to the previously mentioned questions. Plato concluded that “an ideal state should be run by ideal citizens, as it is the only way for a state to develop and progress and ultimately become ideal”. Moreover, for such state to become ideal, he created a well specified educational
program that can efficiently contribute to developing and progressing the processes of reaching an ideal state. As Plato divides the society into three classes, where, the ruling class is the Guardians and those who enforce the convictions of the guardians are the Auxiliary and the remaining ones are the Producers class, and thus it is concluded that, since the guardians are those who are in control, they are the neediest for a proper education. In the present time many of the Arab regimes are falling apart with the growing rise of public upheavals and revolutions in the region; one of such regimes was the previous Egyptian regime. Corruption has been flooding the Egyptian regime for more than thirty years due to the lack of a proper democratic and legitimate foundation. In addition, with the fall of the most detested institution of the previous regime, the infamous State Security Investigations Service (SSI) institution, the Egyptian citizens are now left deprived of one of their basic needs, which is security.

So if Plato’s Guardians’ educational program of an ideal state could be applied in creating the newly Guardians of Egypt, where it has witnessed a total collapse of its previously cracked system and along with its security apparatus, how could it eventually contribute in the process of reforming the Security Investigations Service? In order to be able to understand how this contribution could happen, it is logically preferable to compare and contrast between Plato’s Guardians’ educational program of an ideal state, with the ill status of those who were in control of the Egyptian regime before the 25th of January. So that a proper analysis and conclusion could be reached on how Plato’s educational program may finally lead to modifying the Security Investigations Service of Egypt.
First of all, Plato sets multiple foundations for the Guardians’ education. The Guardians shall be taught neither to fear death nor joy in life. The Guardians may tell Noble Lies, as Socrates asserted that a lie is prudent and useful to men in some limited situations. The Guardians must be taught to be temperate, cardinal virtue of temperance which is summarized as obedience to commanders and self-control in sensual pleasures. Those who speak ill of their rulers and those who have inordinate fondness for food or drink or lust or the love of money are condemned. Additionally the Guardians’ education should include music. According to Socrates the guardians cannot become musical until they have been trained in virtue. In this regime the beautiful soul harmonizes with a beautiful form to produce the fairest specimen of man, and the end of music--recalling that everything has its proper end--is beauty. In addition the Guardians’ should also have a Gymnastic Education. As Socrates asserts that body training does not improve the soul, but a good soul, that improves the body. He does have a few prescriptions for the gymnastic training of the guardians. They must abstain from intoxication. They must be wakeful as dogs, as Plato suggests that Guardians should act like dogs, quick to see and swift to overtake the enemy when they oversee him, in other words, they should be able to distinguish between their enemies and friends with the criterion of knowing and not knowing. He also favors gymnastics which, like the music he approves, is simple and good; especially the military gymnastics. So that the guardians would lead a healthy life and don’t give in to illness as it will hinder them from the practice of virtue. The aims of education then, according to Socrates, is the harmonious soul made temperate by music and courageous by gymnastic, for
there are two principles of human nature, one the spirited and the other philosophical, and two arts answering to them. And thus a well founded education for an ideal state Guardians is created, which will eventually aid them when they guard or rule the state.

But if the opposite of what Plato’s educational program asserted on happened and the state’s guardians became corrupt in every manner, so will their conventions will be. And therefore the auxiliaries will enforce the Guardians corrupt and unjust laws, brutally and unwillingly among the state’s producers. And eventually this coercion of such corrupted and misled rules will spread anger, fear and chaos among the whole state and as a result the state will start to fall apart and security will be gone too.

On the other hand, this is exactly what led to the events of the 25th of January and after as the SSI institution fell apart, as injustice became intolerable to the Egyptians. Through the past thirty years, the former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak accompanied by his regime, have committed every possible act that could be counted as the complete opposite of how the acts of real guardians should be. It can be safely said that this happened, because Mubarak and his cabinet were never fit to act the legitimate and lawful guardians of Egypt. As both corrupt and materialistic Mubarak was, so was his entire regime, and as a result the conventions that were advocated by his rule, in terms of laws and regulations, that were enforced and brutally practiced by the Security Investigations Service, were extremely unjust to the Egyptians. According to the Human Rights Watch 2007 report, “State Security Investigation’s aggressive policies and strategies are made possible by special powers conveyed to the Interior Ministry and SSI under Egypt’s Emergency Law of 1958 and
pursuant to a state of emergency that has been in effect continuously since 1981, as well as Egypt’s Law to Combat Terrorism of 1992, which amended Egypt’s penal and criminal procedure codes. These laws allow the Interior Ministry to detain and interrogate persons without arrest warrants and issue detention orders that allow detainees to be held for up to six months without a hearing or arraignment.” In addition to this, it was notable that the existence of the emergency law made the “Security Investigations Service operate ruthlessly, above the law, to protect the regime from internal political assault and any marked disruption of the status quo, trafficking in fear and intimidation and not hesitating to use more brutal methods when necessary”. And as the auxiliary or the Security Investigations Service in this case are supposed to be motivated by their spirit along with possessing the virtue of courage, the spirit of the Security Investigations Service became distorted and their understanding of courage became disfigured. “As Mr. Qutri brigadier general and others say the problem is more basic. Many officers, he said, have been taught to see themselves as enforcers for the government, rather than as servants of its citizens. That perception is underscored by a subtle change to the police department’s slogan under the interior minister, Habib el-Adly, who has served in his post since 1997. “The Police in the Service of the People” was changed to “The People and the Police in the Service of the Nation.” And when it comes to the way that the police or members of the SSI are practically trained, Mr. Qutri says that, “when he was a young patrol officer in Port Said, his superiors quickly taught him the ways of the department, he said, recalling how his boss forced a Palestinian woman caught smuggling
goods to have sex with him or face arrest. In other police stations, Mr. Qutri saw how suspects were interrogated: hung from the edge of a door with their hands tied”.

Another reason for the falling out of the Security Investigations Service, was that they were forced to act on behalf of the government or guardians, since they were too busy with their ongoing corruption, they faced major handicaps like, “technological advantages that may aid them and the quality of human resources they have (education, training, motivation etc.)”, that may have lead directly or indirectly to their inhumane brutal attitude towards the citizens. Not to mention that those who seek a career in the police force or Security Investigation Service many reasons, including the promise of secure government jobs. Mahmoud Qutri, a former brigadier general in the police department who has written about the corruption that he witnessed while on the force, said that Egyptian officers also had a “special status” in society. “Every house in Egypt wishes their son would become a police officer,” he said.

Thus as a result, of all the previously listed problems and reasons behind the deteriorated that the Security Investigations Service had reached before the revolution of the 25th of January, a major event was needed to trigger a huge public uproar not just against the Security Investigations Service, but against the whole system. In 2010, when a 28-year-old man named Khaled Said was “brutally murdered by police officers in the lobby of a building in Alexandria city”. Pictures of his disfigured corpse surfaced on the famous social networking website Facebook and eventually acting as one of the sparkles behind the 25th of
January revolution. Of course such inhumane crimes were nothing new to the deeds of the SSI, but as they it is always the little things that always act like a catalyst.

Accordingly when Plato’s Guardians’ educational program is put in a comparison and in a contrast with the previous status and level of wisdom that the former guardians of Egypt had, it can be easily concluded that any state requires a specific solid foundation that through it could progress and develop. And this is the case with the Guardians’ educational program that Plato suggests, through this program, acting like the state’s foundation; multiple layers will begin to exist upon this program. That is, if the Guardians do follow such education, the right laws and regulations will be formed and later enforced correctly by the auxiliaries among the willingly producers. In other words, it can be safely said that this kind of proper foundation was what the Egyptian state has been missing all along through the past thirty years to become ideal. When prominent political scientists, political analysts, Human Rights personnel and all those who openly opposed the hideous corrupt practices of the previous Egyptian regime, which was perfectly embodied in the SSI institution, have been calling for one thing which is “reforming the security apparatus” but since such proposals where proposed before the events of the 25th of January, these proposals were usually accompanied by the following question on “whether the reforming of the SSI should be an independent target or should it be part of an overall reform process to the political and economic system?”

But now after the revolution, it can be easily seen that the problem wasn’t with the SSI alone, it was in the whole system. The whole system needed to be reformed from its roots. Furthermore, the reason that Egyptian citizens have loathed the SSI institution the
most during Mubarak’s regime was because of the SSI they have lost one of their basic needs, which is security. Ironically, the existence of the SSI was to provide the Egyptian citizens with security and peacefulness. Moreover, one could assume that the former regime started to collapse the moment the SSI collapsed in the face of the uproars of the 25th of January, as the state at this point had lost its law enforcers and most importantly its legitimacy among the citizens.

So in conclusion with the current situation in Egypt, where most of the Egyptian people are calling for the police to return and protect them again, so that Egypt could stand on its feet again, the Egyptians need to realize that things will start to become better when the newly guardians are perfectly chosen. And here Plato’s Guardians’ educational program will become handy as it will guide the whole state in the simplest comprehensible way in choosing their guardians and later on in aiding the Guardians themselves in ruling, whom in return will create the justified rules and laws that will lead to the abandoning of the infamous emergency law and thus SSI will be automatically reformed. This automatic reform will happen as the SSI personnel will be enforcing what everyone, including them, think is the best for the citizens and state. Therefore, security and peacefulness will be restored to the state and respect will be publicly shared between the Guardians, the auxiliaries or the SSI and the Egyptians/ producers. And hopefully the state/ Egypt will start developing and progressing towards the ideal state.
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