Executive Summary

With parliamentary elections scheduled for 28 November 2011, Egypt’s new political system, however, is far from being in place and there are many questions about whether it will in fact produce a stable democracy, particularly since unrest resumed in Tahrir Square and many other urban centers throughout the country on November 18.

Basic structure of post-Mubarak Egyptian politics

◊ Since Mubarak’s forced resignation Egypt has been ruled by a military junta, known as the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF).
◊ The SCAF timetable states that by April 2012 the elected Parliament must form a committee to write a new constitution, which must be written by April 2013. Only then can Presidential elections take place and the winner then take up executive authority and dissolve the military junta. The plans for elections, supposedly beginning with the first round of parliamentary voting on November 28, are now in grave doubt even the unrest in the country.
◊ Concerns over signs of instability—crime, violence, and social insecurity—have slowed the process of transition to a fully elected civilian government.

Factors determining the country’s future

◊ Economy – There is a very high likelihood that within the next three years Egypt will face the most serious economic crisis in its modern history. If food prices continue to rise, a junta or elected government could face unemployment, starvation, and mass protests.
◊ Rise of Islamism – While the majority of Egyptians think religious leaders should play an advisory role to government, Islamist groups – the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists – want sharia to be the main or the sole source of legislation. The question is whether political Islam will emerge as one of the main factors in Egyptian society or as the central organizing principle of the state.
◊ Attacks against Coptic Christians – Attacks against Coptic Christians have increased since the revolution and it remains unclear whether the junta or an elected government has the capacity – or the will – to stop them. Mass emigration may be possible if religious minorities are not adequately protected in post-Mubarak Egypt
◊ Foreign policy priorities – While the Egyptian armed forces want to maintain stability, they also know that domestic failures can be eased by foreign demagoguery, including blaming others for the country’s failures. One possible war scenario would be if Hamas launched attacks on Israel and tried to mobilise Egyptian backing, including opening the Gaza-Egypt border and supplying volunteer fighters, weapons, and money, although such a scenario would involve a complete recalibration of Egypt’s sense of its national interests.

The political parties

◊ While there are dozens of parties running, the main contest is between the Islamists and the Liberals. The four significant political parties, or alliances, in size of likely electoral success, are:
◊ Justice and Development Party – Islamists; dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood – polls indicate 39% support
◊ Al-Wafd – Egypt’s traditional liberal party; single party; left coalition with the Islamists in September – polls indicate 20% support
◊ Free Egyptians Party – secular liberal; largely
Christian support; heads the main moderate bloc – polls indicate 6% support
◊ Justice Party – left-liberal; origins in the January revolutionary movement – polls indicate 5% support
◊ As the three Liberal parties cannot cooperate, they will likely divide the non-Islamist vote, ensuring the election of more Islamists.
◊ There are also small leftist parties which all provide some blend of Marxism and radical nationalism as well as several ultra-conservative Salafist Islamist parties.
◊ The military and what remains of the former government establishment are also significant players, even if they are not directly involved in elections. Remnants of the disbanded National Democratic Party of the former regime, many of which appear to remain close to the military and other institutional powers, could also be a factor.

Regional impact of the elections
◊ Radical forces in the Middle East – notably Hamas in Gaza and Iran – will likely see the Egyptian revolution as a victory as it removes a key adversary. The extent to which either actually benefits in the long run remains unclear.
◊ For Western governments, an Islamist-sympathetic regime so close to Israel would be potentially worrying: worst case scenario could see Egypt back Hamas in a war with Israel or even be drawn into conflict itself; more likely is a continued freeze of the Israel-Palestine peace process.

Role of the Muslim Brotherhood
◊ Despite its public commitment to non-violence, the Muslim Brotherhood's consistent radicalism should not be underestimated: the group supports Hamas and violence as resistance to foreign intervention; its draft platform discriminates against non-Muslims; and recent pronouncements by senior figures accused Arab and Muslim regimes of failing to stand up to “the Zionist entity” and the US and of ignoring their religious commandment to “wage jihad against the infidels”.
◊ While a parliamentary majority for the Muslim Brotherhood is unlikely, a majority by radical forces – combining Islamists, far-leftists and radical nationalists – is conceivable. With cooperation from some liberals willing to work with the Islamists in exchange for power, a radical majority becomes more likely.
◊ If Egypt continues towards an economic crisis within the next two years, the Muslim Brotherhood could use the situation to claim “Islam is the answer” to all of Egypt’s economic woes and to take advantage of popular discontent.
Introduction

Egypt's uprising brought down the government of President Hosni Mubarak on 11 February 2011, and with it a regime that had governed the country for almost six decades.

The new Egyptian political system is far from being in place and there are many questions about whether it will in fact produce a stable democracy. There are also no clear answers about what this transition means for regional politics and Western interests. At the time of writing, the entire plan for transition has been thrown into serious question by the outbreak of sustained, mass protests in urban centers around the country and dozens of deaths.

This briefing presents the basic structure of post-Mubarak Egyptian politics; factors determining the country's future; the new political parties and their stances as well as scenarios for the November elections; as well as the regional impact of the elections and possible outcomes.
Post-Mubarak Politics – Governing Egypt

It is still not entirely clear how the Egyptian political system will be organised and what kind of regime it will produce. While a basic plan has been laid out by the current rulers, giving some sense of the direction, the proposed timetable puts off answers until a constitution is written and ratified, sometime in 2013.

Since Mubarak’s forced resignation Egypt has been ruled by a military junta, known as the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). The SCAF consists mainly of the armed forces’ five top commanders, all originally appointed by Mubarak, and all relatively elderly men who have never evinced any political ambitions.1

Despite the accusations of the political activists and politicians, it seems unlikely, therefore, that they want to keep power in their own hands. Moreover, the senior and mid-level officers have a variety of political perspectives, including moderate democratic, nationalist, and Islamist – and cannot be associated with any one party or worldview that they are promoting into civilian power. Nevertheless, the junta has thus far chosen to remain in power for a protracted period of time.

Several key considerations motivate them to take their time in turning over power: maintaining Egypt’s stability; preserving the extensive economic interests of the armed forces in Egyptian society; preserving military autonomy in terms of its budget and decision-making from civilian authority; and, above all, retaining de facto control of defense and national security policy. It appears that concerns over signs of instability—crime, violence, and social insecurity—have made them slow down the process of transition to a fully elected civilian government. Moreover, the other concerns have led them to press for a set of “supra-constitutional principles” that would have limited the power of any parliament or other elected authority over the military, first issued on November 1.2

Some elements of these “principles” were among the most controversial and provocative moves by the junta since it took power after the downfall of Mubarak. Article 9 held that, “The Supreme Council for the Armed Forces is solely responsible for all matters concerning the armed forces, and for discussing its budget, which should be incorporated as a single figure in the annual state budget. The Supreme Council for the Armed Forces is also exclusively competent to approve all bills relating to the armed forces before they come into effect.” This was generally understood as placing the military and its budget above and beyond any effective form of civilian control. Article 10 provides for a “national defence council” to preside over “all matters relating to the country’s security and safety.” Critics complained that these articles made the military, in effect, “a state within a state,” and immune from civilian and popularly elected authority.

Regarding the process of political transition, in September 2011 the military junta proposed and pressured many politicians – despite widespread dissatisfaction – to agree to the following timetable:

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28 November 2011 ◊ parliamentary elections scheduled  
April 2012 ◊ deadline for the elected Parliament to form a committee to write a new constitution  
April 2013 ◊ deadline for the constitution to be written ◊ Presidential elections can take place

As the timetable stands, only after the constitution is ratified – and it is not clear how this will be done – presumably in mid or late 2013 or in the following months, will an elected president take up executive authority and dissolve the military junta. This would mean that a fully democratic government would run Egypt only a full two and a half years after the overthrow of Mubarak by a pro-democracy revolution.

The military has also raised some other issues: that it would have the right to veto the constitution draft; that it wants the armed forces to determine its own budget, and that it wants a bill of rights in the document that would include protection for minority rights.

It should be remembered, though, that the uprising would never have succeeded—and certainly not have succeeded so easily and bloodlessly—without the armed forces intervening. The Tahrir Square demonstrators did not ultimately bring down Mubarak directly; the generals did by refusing to intervene against the protesters and eventually removing the president.

In the intervening months, the military tried to walk a delicate tightrope: they did not want to be unpopular or have a confrontation with their fellow countrymen, but they also did not consider themselves to be servants of the civilians, nor were they willing to risk either anarchy at home or war abroad if these things can possibly be avoided. On November 18, this balancing act collapsed altogether with the outbreak of mass protests in Tahrir Square and other urban centers throughout the country. At least 32 people have been killed in these protests at the time of writing this briefing.3 Protesters have been demanding the immediate resignation of the SCAF to some civilian authority, although there is no consensus as to what or who that might be.

The protests seem to be particularly animated by the “supra-constitutional principles” document. This demand was angrily rejected in a November 22 address to the nation by SCAF chief Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi, which opponents immediately compared to speeches by deposed President Mubarak in January and February.4 However, following the outbreak of protests, on November 19 it was announced that an amended version of the “supra-constitutional principles” had been drafted to state that “the military forces are owned by the people,” and that “the army's role gives it a special status that should be considered while discussing its budget and other related issues,” presumably as opposed to total control over these matters.5 The emendations did not appear to assuage opposition concerns that the military was seeking to place itself beyond the control of civilian, elected officials and bodies.

These confrontations not only transformed the relationship between large parts of the public and the military it to one of open confrontation, they threw the existing timetable for transition into serious doubt. At the time of writing this briefing, the military and election officials are insisting that the first round of polling will begin on November 28 as scheduled.

in spite of calls by many major parties for a two-week delay to restore calm.\[6\] Many observers in and outside of Egypt are skeptical that orderly polling can be conducted in such an environment and worry that flawed, non-credible, or improperly managed elections could deepen rather than resolve the country’s political crisis and derail an effective, orderly transition. On the other hand, outside the city centers, law and order seems to prevail in most of Egypt and the Army may be calculating that pressing forward with a first-round in a complex series of three-phase planned parliamentary elections, even in the context of urban unrest, would be a powerful assertion of its authority and, it would likely argue, unique ability to continue to manage the country and its transition in spite of widespread discontent or anger.

Factors Determining Egypt’s Future

Assuming that the junta’s timetable is put into effect, this will not necessarily ensure peace and stability in Egypt. During the roughly 18-month interim, an elected parliament without executive responsibility is likely to criticise the junta daily and clash with its decisions. This is the view of Amr Moussa, the former Secretary-General of Arab League, and as one of Egypt’s shrewdest politician a contender for Egypt’s next president, though according to the current schedule he would be 77 years old by the time he could run. Moussa’s concern is that Egypt will be plunged into a terrible crisis by growing violence and economic disaster. Certainly, the country has lost an estimated $10 billion due to the revolution and subsequent disruption alone.\[7\] “My biggest fear is anarchy,” Moussa told Reuters in an interview in October 2011: “a long transitional period [...] will create an opportunity for all those who want to play havoc with the Egyptian society.”\[8\]

Precisely such a scenario appears to have developed in late November immediately before the first round of parliamentary voting, and unfolding political calculus is complex but not surprising. The protest movement attempting to unseat the Army in the run-up to elections is largely led by liberals and was not officially joined or endorsed by the Muslim Brotherhood, although reportedly members of its youth cadre participated. It would also appear, however, that both the Army, to demonstrate its authority, and the Brotherhood, to maximize its present organizational advantage over other opposition groups, have a strong interest in going forward with elections at the earliest possible date.

The Brotherhood strategy in dealing with the renewed protests appears to have been to let the junta and the liberals fight it out on the streets while they appear to remain above the fray. They may be calculating that, in the long run, the bulk of the Egyptian public concludes that both protesters and the military were to blame for chaos, violence and disruption of elections. By not directly endorsing or openly participating in the protests, and by simultaneously strongly denouncing SCAF repression of them, they may not win new adherents, but at least they will create no new enemies. Neither those primarily blaming the military


\[7\] Ibid.

for its crackdown nor those taking a dim view of the protesters for their uproar will have particular cause to point the finger at the Brotherhood, and the same applies to anyone who blames both equally. The Brotherhood may be trying to position itself as the only responsible party and far more trustworthy than oppressive, abusive generals with what they would cast as a clear butt unpopular agenda or riotous, chaotic protesters with no clear agenda or leadership. If the situation continues to deteriorate, Islamists and liberalism will increasingly join together to denounce the junta as anti-democratic and seeking to retain power for itself, and indeed this seems to be happening to some extent.

It could be argued that Egypt's problems are insoluble. The country has too many people, too little arable land, insufficient natural or financial resources, scant hopes of receiving large-scale foreign aid, bitter internal frictions and radical ideologies, a disproportionately large number of impatient young people, passionate external hostilities, the likelihood of higher food prices, and many other barriers to stability.

Consequently, it cannot be assumed that any possible policy or ideology could bring the country peace, development, and stability. Few states face challenges as daunting as Egypt's and this factor should always be remembered in assessing the country's situation. Here are some of the main problems that will shape Egypt's politics and society. It is noteworthy that these are not likely to be the issues on which the election is explicitly fought but they are implicit in the appeal of parties and the decision of voters.

1. Egypt’s Dire Economy

Sixty-five percent of Egyptians said they supported the revolution because of economic reasons compared to only 19 per cent who cited a lack of democracy, according to a June 2011 poll conducted by the International Republican Institute. Four in five Egyptians (80 percent) said they believed their economic situation would improve during the next year.⁹

In reality, however, the economic situation is worsening and even subsidies on the price of bread cannot keep pace with inflation.¹⁰ But no government in Egypt can offer stability or progress without money. The uprising began to a large extent because of Mubarak government's inability to maintain food price subsidies. How will its replacement do so?

According to the Egyptian media, food prices have been soaring – more than 60 per cent in the year between September 2010 and September 2011.¹¹ Foreign exchange reserves are low; foreign aid is minimal given Egypt's needs; and there are no good prospects for large injections of cash.¹² The West faces its own economic crisis while the Saudis, who have provided some aid, are not happy with the direction of events in Egypt. One of the best options – going to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank – is highly unpopular in Egypt since this step is associated with policies of the Mubarak-era and a loss of sovereignty.¹³

The problem for Egypt is that political popularity and effective economic strategy are mutually exclusive. While an elected parliament may be tempted to follow a populist policy of increased subsidies, higher pay, and the creation of artificial jobs, these so-called solutions require money Egypt doesn't have and even if they could be implemented are unlikely to produce new wealth.

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⁹ “Egyptians say economy tops their list of concerns, not democracy” The Washington Post, 5 June 2011
¹¹ “Government report says food prices up in September”, Almasry Alyoum (English Edition), 23 October 2011
¹² “Opaqueness and unrest burden Egypt’s economy”, Al Arabiya News, 23 October 2011
¹³ “Amid debt concerns, large World Bank projects continue”, Almasry Alyoum, 31 October 2011
There is a very high likelihood that within the next three years, and probably in a much shorter time, Egypt will face the most serious economic crisis in its modern history. If food prices continue to rise, a junta or elected government could face unemployment, starvation, and mass protests. How could such a regime avoid radical demagoguery, involving internal scapegoating and foreign adventures; possible repression; or its own fall?

2. The role of Islam and Islamism

Egypt is a relatively religious society compared to other Arab countries. The majority of Egyptians would like their religious principles to be reflected in the new democratic running of their country, but not in an authoritative or dogmatic sense. According to a Gallup poll published in July 2011, “most Egyptians think religious leaders should provide advice to government authorities, as opposed to having full authority for determining the nation’s laws.” Sixty-nine percent of those surveyed between March and April 2011 said religious leaders should play an advisory role; 14% said they “should have full authority to write legislation;” and 10% said they should “no authority to write national legislation.”

It is likely then that the majority of the population—and hence its elected representatives—will favor a constitution and system in which sharia, the religious principles of Islam, is a primary, but not sole, source of legislation. By contrast, the Muslim Brotherhood and the even more radical Islamist Salafist groups may push for sharia to be the sole source of legislation. The question is whether Islam will emerge as one of the main factors in Egyptian society or, as the Islamists want, the central organizing principle of the state.

Aside from conventional political activity, it is likely the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists will be organising—spreading their ideology and forming cohesive political blocs. It is likely they will make efforts to control professional groups and other institutions, including: al-Azhar University in Cairo, imam positions in mosques and jobs in Islamic jurisprudence. Such efforts, could however, might inspire clerics to oppose the Islamists as well as resistance by anti-Islamist forces within all sorts of professional groups.

Worryingly, some Salafists have already created groups that engage in violent activity, including: attacks on Coptic Christians and their institutions; attacks across the border on Israel; repeated sabotaging of the natural gas pipeline to Israel; and assaults on police stations. It is possible that in an increasingly chaotic, ungoverned situation in which elections appear either stalled or non-credible, such operations could extend to assassinations of secularists and attacks on tourists, off-licenses and bars, other targets—leading to a replay of the insurgency of the 1990s in which hundreds of people were killed.

14 “A recent Gallup poll found that, ‘religion remains important to most Egyptians (96%), and 92% say they have confidence in religious institutions’; an earlier Gallup poll in 2009 found Egyptians to be among the world’s most religious people”, see Egypt: From Tahrir to Transition, Abu Dhabi Gallup Center, June 2011 available at www.abudhabigallupcenter.com/147696/egypt-tahrir-transition.aspx; see also “Egypt debates true meaning of faith”, The National, 26 July 2009, available at www.thenational.ae/news/worldwide/afirica/egypt-debates-true-meaning-of-faith
15 “Egypt: From Tahrir to Transition”, Abu Dhabi Gallup Center, June 2011
16 “Religious radicals’ turn to democracy alarms Egypt”, The New York Times, 1 April 2011
17 “Salafists Challenge al-Azhar for Ideological Supremacy in Egypt”, Jamestown Foundation, 16 September 2010
18 “Sinai gas pipeline attacked for 5th time”, Haaretz, 31 July 2011
19 “Police shoot dead 17 attacking Egypt police stations”, Reuters, 29 January 2011
3. Attacks against Coptic Christians

It is generally believed that Coptic Christians in Egypt comprise between 10 and 15 per cent of the population of 82–85 million, making them by far the largest Christian community in the region, though the exact figures are unknown.\(^{21}\) Coptic Christians have long suffered discrimination in Egypt – the country recognises only conversions from Christianity to Islam, for example but not the other way. Throughout the 1990s many were attacked by the Islamist terrorist group Jama'a al-Islamiya. Many Coptic Christians now fear an increase in sectarian violence in post-Mubarak Egypt.\(^{22}\)

In September 2011, the Egyptian Union of Human Rights Organizations (EUHRO) reported that 95,000 Coptic Christians had fled Egypt since March 2011.\(^{23}\) While these figures have not been independently confirmed, they suggest mass emigration may be possible if religious minorities are not adequately protected in post-Mubarak Egypt. According to Naguib Gabriel, a Coptic Human Rights lawyer who heads EUHRO, “Copts are not emigrating abroad voluntarily; they are coerced into that by threats and intimidation by hard line Salafists, and the lack of protection they are getting from the Egyptian regime.”\(^{24}\)

Since then the situation has deteriorated: 27 Coptic Christians protesting against church burning were killed and over 329 more injured in Maspero in October 2011.\(^{25}\) The Maspero massacre is particularly controversial as Egypt’s armed forces have been accused of complicity. In November 2011, the official enquiry by Egypt’s National Council for Human Rights reported that those firing live ammunition were “unidentified civilians.” A number of activists, including prominent Coptic businessman turned politician, Naguib Sawiris,\(^{26}\) claim, however, that the report deliberately whitewashes the military’s role,\(^{27}\) and Egypt Daily News has reported that lawyers who specialize in working with Coptic Egyptians have since seen a sharp rise in enquiries from Christian clients looking to leave Egypt.\(^{28}\)

Coptic Christians are worried about their status in a country whose future is uncertain. In particular they protest against a law requiring presidential permission for churches to be built. Some believe that the government and Muslim politicians are reluctant to protect them because they may lose support among the Sunni Muslim majority. Currently it appears that attacks on Christians are unlikely to abate and it remains unclear whether the junta or an elected government has the capacity – or the will – to stop them.

4. Foreign policy priorities

While the Egyptian armed forces want to maintain stability, avoid war, and ensure the continued flow of U.S. aid, they also know – like previous Egyptian governments – that domestic failures can be eased by foreign demagoguery, including blaming others for the country’s failures.

What is critical for the military is that no one touches its privileges, money, and business enterprises. Accepting radical foreign policy rhetoric in exchange

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24 “100,000 Christians Have Left Egypt Since March: Report”, Assyrian International News Agency, 27 September 2011
for institutional immunity may seem to the generals to be a good deal. Islamists, radical nationalists, leftists, and liberal moderates have no such constraints: they know that blaming the West, Israel, Saudi Arabia or Iran are vote-winning propositions. In this foreign policy militancy, the different ideologies and parties are united, no matter how much they might bicker over domestic issues.

Given Egypt’s Sunni and Arab composition, most potential governments might have decent relations with Iran but would look at Tehran with suspicion. The relationship with Saudi Arabia would be similarly ambiguous since Cairo wants Saudi financial aid but is suspicious of that country’s pro-Mubarak and anti-Islamist stance, and jealous of its leadership role in the broader Arab world. Similarly, decent formal relations with Turkey, which Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is keen to cultivate, would also be balanced by ethnic suspicions and national rivalry.

One key question is whether Egypt will attempt, for the first time since the 1970s, to assert some regional Arab leadership. Even a protracted, painful but successful process of transition towards popularly legitimate government might again catapult Egypt into a leading Arab role due to the political and cultural impact this would have in many Arab states. A more radical Islamists-sympathetic Egyptian regime might seek to accomplish this through direct or indirect support for the Islamists in the Gaza Strip or for the Sunni Muslim rebels within the Syrian revolt and other Arab uprisings. Some Israelis fear that a very extreme Egyptian government might consider asserting its regional authority through war scenario if Hamas launched attacks on Israel and tried, with Muslim Brotherhood support, to mobilise Egyptian backing. This could include opening the Gaza-Egypt border and supplying volunteer fighters, weapons, and money. Salafists, or possibly Muslim Brotherhood militants, may even try to cross the Egypt-Israel border to join the attacks. But any such scenario involves a total reconceptualization by the Egyptian state of its fundamental national interests, especially the value of its peace treaty with Israel, its relationship with the United States, and its interest in not again becoming directly responsible for what happens in Gaza.

In any such scenario, a ruling military junta would have to exert a lot of political capital to keep things from escalating into all-out war, but they would almost certainly be able to prevent this. For an elected government, answerable to popular concerns, the prospects for conflict are still remote but become much greater. Western leverage could help to avoid a crisis but would not inevitably persuade an Egyptian regime from a popularly fueled confrontation if it calculates that this would cement its domestic popularity and Egypt’s regional leadership in the Arab world.

It is likely that whatever regime emerges from the transition in Egypt will be less sympathetic to American and Israeli concerns than the Mubarak regime had been. Indeed, in some ways this is already the case with the junta. However, Egypt’s national interests will not entirely transform as its political structure and power balance changes during any period of transition. The extreme scenarios outlined above are troubling, but unlikely because the military is unlikely to be completely subject to civilian political authority and will probably retain a large, if not decisive, role in national security and defense policy, and also because even Egyptian Islamists, if they have a share of power rather than operating as an opposition faction, will have to take Egypt’s broader national interests into consideration. The more probable scenario, therefore, is a more assertive and aggressive Egypt, less cooperative with Israel or the United States, but one that would still seek to maintain the peace treaty, avoid direct confrontation with Israel, and remain not directly involved with conditions or events inside the Gaza Strip.
Analysis Of Egyptian Political Parties

The alliances and fortunes of Egyptian political parties are rapidly shifting and will continue to do so through to the 28 November elections. Moreover, the full rules under which the election will be conducted are still not entirely clear and the situation is clearly complicated. Over 55 political parties have nominated some 15,000 candidates to compete for a total of 498 seats in the People’s Assembly; there are 76 multi-candidate proportional representation districts and 113 single-seat districts.

Despite this, there are four parties considered the main contenders; and roughly four political blocs made up of a number of parties – though the situation has changed repeatedly and may do so again. It is possible, however, to explain the parties, their blocs, positions, and – drawing on polls – their possiblefortunes in the forthcoming ballots.

The Islamists – the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists

Founded in Egypt in 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood is an international socially conservative movement centred on making Islam the basis of state and society. In Egypt, it has been tolerated to various degrees a religious organisation, but under former President Hosni Mubarak was not allowed to engage in political activity. In 2005, with candidates standing as independents, the party won 20 per cent of the total seats; and was often described as the best organised opposition force within Egypt. The group advocates social and political reform, believing that Sharia, Muslim principles for society, should be the sole source of state legislation.

The Freedom and Justice Party

All polls indicate that the most popular party, and the one most likely to emerge as the largest, is the Freedom and Justice Party. Despite the Muslim Brotherhood’s attempts to distance itself from the party, it is generally believed that the Freedom and Justice party represents the organisation. Polls tend to indicate that party’s support in the electorate is at the roughly 39 per cent level. This estimate, however, may underestimate its appeal.
The Freedom and Justice party heads a multi-party bloc called the Democratic Alliance, which can be used to promote allied candidates and gain support for the party from non-Islamist voters. The Muslim Brotherhood is also highly organised across all of Egypt, not just in Cairo, including in the villages where liberal parties have almost no presence.\(^{32}\) It is likely to get its voters out on Election Day; furthermore, intimidation and the pressure for conformity may also count in its favour, especially in the many tradition-oriented villages and poorer areas of the big cities.

In addition, the other parties are badly divided. Moderate voters must choose among three major and many minor parties; with other candidates splitting their blocs of voters, the Freedom and Justice Party candidates could come in first in many jurisdictions. (In a parallel example, Hamas won the Palestinian elections in 2006 in part because Fatah candidates ran against each other). Many moderate Egyptian politicians, who were unsuccessfully insistent on postponing elections, believe the Muslim Brotherhood is far better organised than its rivals and will come in first.

**Problems with radicalism**

Despite its public commitment to non-violence, the Muslim Brotherhood’s consistent radicalism should not be underestimated. While internal debate within the organization should be acknowledged, there are notable reasons for concern, particularly the group’s 2007 draft platform, its position on foreign resistance and recent pronouncements by senior figures.

**Draft platform**

The organisation’s draft platform, circulated in 2007, envisages an Islamist state in which Sharia would determine law with a Supreme Council of Clerics with the power to veto laws as contrary to Islam. Non-

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\(^{32}\) "MB goes rural", Al-Ahram, 4 November 2011

**Electoral cooperation blocs**

While the main political blocs often started out as genuinely multi-group alliances, one party has tended to become dominant with many of the others subsequently dropping out. One issue that disrupts these broad coalitions is an inability to agree on whose candidates would gain the support of the other members in each electoral district.

**Islamists –**

- The 11-party Democratic Alliance Bloc – Islamist; dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party; originally included the liberal al-Wafd party
- The Salafists – Islamist; currently trying to come together around the al-Nour Party and smaller groups; al-Nour claims to be coordinating with the Freedom and Justice Party in order not to split the Islamist vote

**Liberals–**

- The 21-party Egyptian Bloc – liberal; collapsed after only two months; dominated by the liberal Free Egyptians Party; includes the tiny Egyptian Social Democratic Party and the radical leftist Tagammu Party
- The Revolution Continues Bloc – left-liberal; led by the Justice Party

**Single party –**

- Al-Wafd Party – liberal; does not currently belong to any bloc; internal splits led to its departure from the Democratic Alliance Bloc; unwilling to join the Egyptian Bloc

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Muslim citizens would be “protected” but “no ritual, propaganda, or pilgrimage contradicting Islamic activities” would be permitted; women would be second-class citizens; and the peace treaty with Israel would be “revised”.

**Position on foreign resistance**

The Muslim Brotherhood’s worldview belongs in political spectrum of the Islamist religious right:

Although it maintains a strictly political and nonviolent approach in its quest for domestic power within Egypt, the Brotherhood supports as legitimate violent resistance against the Israeli occupation that began in 1967. It is generally accepted that Hamas is the Palestinian franchise of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Muslim Brotherhood’s statement following the US killing of Osama bin Laden held that, “the legitimate resistance against foreign occupation of any country is a legitimate right guaranteed by divine laws and international conventions, and shuffling papers between legitimate resistance and violence against innocent people was intended by the Zionist enemy in particular.”

**2010 statements by the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood**

In his 10 October 2010 speech, Muhammad al-Badi accused Arab and Muslim regimes of failing to stand up to “the Zionist entity” and the US and of ignoring their religious commandment to “wage jihad against the infidels.” Al-Badi further called on Muslims to support Hamas rather than the Palestinian Authority, implying that the latter had “sold out” the Palestinian cause. He complained that, “[The Arab and Muslim regimes] are disregarding Allah’s commandment to wage jihad for His sake with [their] money and [their] lives, so that Allah’s word will reign supreme and the infidels’ word will be inferior...,” and insisted that, “Resistance is the only solution against the Zionist-American arrogance and tyranny, and all we need is for the Arab and Muslim peoples to stand behind it and support it.”

**Generational gap within the Brotherhood**

An additional complication with both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Freedom and Justice Party is a long-standing and in some ways increasing split between traditional authorities within this movement and its youth wings, which have been divided on numerous issues before, during and after the overthrow of the Mubarak regime. No doubt when it comes to political calculations as straightforward as campaigning to win elections and getting out the vote they will put their differences aside. But tensions within the movement, particularly between the ruling elite and the youth wing, which were simmering for several years before the January protest movement that led to the overthrow of the Mubarak regime, have again bubbled to the surface on several occasions since SCAF took power. The current round of protests is only the latest instance in which the youth wing of the Brotherhood appears to be moving in a different direction from the traditional leadership.

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34 While they differ in methodology, the end goal of both organisations is to create an “Islamic state”. To legitimise terrorism as a tactic, militant Islamists utilise the writings of popular theorists of modern Islamism, such as the intellectual ideologue for the Muslim Brotherhood, Sayyid Qutb; the founder of Hizb ut-Tahrir, Mohammed Taqjuddin an-Nabhani; and founder of the Islamic revivalist party Jamaat-e-Islami, Syed Abul A’ala Maududi. Al-Qaeda, for example, justify mass casualty attacks against civilians by combining Nabhani’s call to implement an expansionist Islamist state with Qutb’s classification of all Muslim and non-Muslim societies as jahaliya, or ignorance. See for example See Al-Qaeda Training Manual, The Al-Qaeda Documents – downloadable from the United States Department of Justice, www.usdoj.gov/ag/manualpart1_1.pdf


In March, Brotherhood youth leaders protested what they said were the undemocratic attitudes within party structures of its old-guard leadership, generally reserved for those over 65 years of age, and declared, “the marginalised status of women in the group is no longer acceptable39.” The issue of women’s roles was the reemergence of a dispute between more open-minded youth members of the Brotherhood and traditional leaders during the final years the Mubarak regime, who also challenged anti-Coptic stances and other positions by the Brotherhood leadership they described as retrograde and outmoded.

Leaders of the youth wing more outraged that when the Brotherhood founded the Freedom and Justice Party, its ruling council was appointed rather than elected. They pushed for “quotas to ensure participation of large numbers of women, Christians and other non-Muslims,” a demand totally unacceptable to the traditional leadership40. And consistently throughout 2011, the youth wing has been not only pushing for innovative policies that might bring the party more up-to-date but also aggressively participating in demonstrations and other provocative actions that the traditional, risk-averse and cautious leadership sometimes genuinely disapproves of, and at other times winks and nods at but publicly disavows.

Even this latter strategy, however, points to significant generational divisions within the movement. The Brotherhood, however, probably maintain sufficient party discipline and loyalty to ensure that on the most crucial questions such as supporting officially appointed candidates, enthusiastically participating in electoral campaigning for the Freedom and Justice Party and others, and getting out the vote on polling days, its cadres across the board will act in unison, giving it an enormous strategic advantage over all other existing political parties and movements.

40  Ibid.

The Salafists

Not all Islamists back the Freedom and Justice Party: a variety of independent Salafist groups are also running candidates, having split from the Muslim Brotherhood-dominated Democratic Alliance Bloc. While a proportion of Salafists have found the Muslim Brotherhood either too radical or not radical enough in its activities, there is no obvious impediment to an alliance based on either broad ideological compatibility or political convenience.

Al-Nour Party

Al-Nour, meaning “the light,” was founded after the revolution in January 2011. Originally a member of the Democratic Alliance dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Nour left in September 2011 and has since become the focal point of a loose Salafist alliance. The party's slogan, “The only reform we desire is the reform we can achieve,” is rooted in its support for article two of the Egyptian Constitution, which states that Islam is the religion of the state and the Islamic law is the main source of legislation. Al-Nour believes that sharia principles should guide all political, social and economic as well as legal issues.41

Jama’a al-Islamiya’s Building and Development Party

Of the independent Salafist groups, the most significant is the Jama’a al-Islamiya’s Building and Development Party. The Jama’a, many of whose members were formerly in the Muslim Brotherhood, attempted to build neighbourhood and campus Islamist communities group in the 1980s and 1990s. It became involved in violence during the 1990s’ insurgency, though it was never so enthusiastic about launching armed struggle, and its leaders renounced violence from prison after the insurgency’s defeat.

Al-Wasat Party

Al-Wasat is a relatively moderate Islamist party. Its leaders quit the Muslim Brotherhood after years of trying to get the organisation to wholeheartedly support the electoral route and work within democratic norms.\(^{42}\) In some cases, members have been very critical of the Muslim Brotherhood and outspoken in calling it a radical group. Al-Wasat, however, is unlikely to get more than one per cent of the votes and few, if any, parliamentary seats.

Some small militant Islamist groups have advocated violence, and some have been involved in attacking Coptic Christians and, in some cases, other violent actions.\(^{43}\) While broadly the Salafists claim a fairly large base of support, their electoral base is unproven and the different radical groups are often at odds with each other.\(^{44}\)

If the Salafists were to work with the Muslim Brotherhood, however, the blocs could withdraw weaker candidates to increase the possibility of Islamist dominance.

On 9 November 2011, an al-Nour Party leader told the Egyptian newspaper Al-Masry Al-Youm that his members had met with the Freedom and Justice Party the week before to coordinate candidate nominations ahead of the elections in order not to split the Islamist vote. Nader Bakkar, of the al-Nour Party’s Supreme Committee, told the paper that the strategy would help ensure that Islamist candidates, either affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood or Salafis, would win their elections. The Freedom and Justice Party, however, deny the allegations.\(^{45}\)

The liberals – al-Wafd, the Free Egyptians Party & the Justice Party

Of the many liberal parties, the three most important – certain to gain significant representation in parliament – are al-Wafd, the Free Egyptians Party & the Justice Party.

Al-Wafd Party

The al-Wafd Party often dominated Egyptian politics during the 1920s –1952 era,\(^{46}\) but has played no active role in 60 years.\(^{47}\) The party lacks charismatic leadership and has worked closely several times with the Muslim Brotherhood. Many al-Wafd leaders were reluctant to break the Democratic Alliance Bloc in September, suggesting a preference to gain power than assert liberal values.\(^{48}\) Significantly, al-Wafd has refused to join the Egyptian Bloc, the main bloc of moderate parties. Based on voter polling, it can reasonably be estimated to gain roughly 20 per cent of the parliamentary seats.\(^{49}\)

The Justice Party

The newly formed Justice Party has emerged largely from those most active in igniting the 2011 uprising and the active opposition to the Mubarak regime. Many of these leaders, however, don’t like each other for personal and power-seeking reasons. The party leans to the left and has worked closely with the Muslim Brotherhood in the past. Based on voter polling, it can reasonably be estimated to gain around 5 percent of the national vote.\(^{50}\)

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\(^{43}\) “Egypt warns of ‘iron first’ response after clashes”, BBC News, 8 May 2011

\(^{44}\) “Salafist groups find footing in Egypt after revolution”, BBC News, 7 April 2011


\(^{47}\) While al-Wafd’s historic role as a moderate nationalist party makes it popular, there is no way of telling what policies the party might actually follow. For example, a few years ago two contending factions engaged in a bloody gun battle over control of its headquarters.

\(^{48}\) “Muslim Brotherhood and Wafd deny dissolving their alliance”, Ahram online, 2 October 2011

\(^{49}\) “2nd National Voter Survey in Egypt (September)”, Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies (ACPSS), 9 October 2011

\(^{50}\) Ibid.
The Free Egyptians Party

The Free Egyptians Party is the most Western-style liberal, secular-oriented party. It was formed by Coptic Christian businessman Naguib Sawiris. Its appeal, however, is undercut by the underlying reason for its secular stance: it is largely backed by the Coptic minority. Based on voter polling, it can reasonably be estimated to gain about 6 per cent of the national vote.\(^{51}\)

Problems with vote-splitting and the planned election system

The liberals are weakened by their divisions; there are literally a score of such parties. While the potential combined vote for these three main parties is impressive – 31 per cent – it should be noted that this support will go to competing candidates. It seems unlikely that these parties will be able to work out an agreement to withdraw from races in certain districts in order to “share” their votes. Consequently, they are likely to get far less than that potential total, which will most likely benefit the Islamists. David Jandura argued that the complex electoral system envisaged by SCAF will favour large, highly organised parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood at the expense of smaller parties or individual candidates.\(^{52}\) According to his analysis, “Egypt’s electoral system will benefit conservative factions and harm liberal parties in three distinct ways: the need it creates for effective coordination, the power it affords to local elites, and its unrepresentative district boundaries.” Mazen Hassan came to a similar conclusion in November, that in the evolving election process being developed by the junta, “party organization and a clear ideological profile would be the greater asset, especially the type of organization that stretches over extended regions. In Egypt right now, only Islamists possess those advantages.”\(^{53}\) He also warned that, “enlarged majoritarian constituencies in the new election law will likely encourage more candidates to build such electoral alliances with the Muslim Brotherhood candidates,” and that as a consequence of this system, “political competition in the country for the coming years will remain to be fought along the religious-secular axis.”

There are four main parties combining hardline anti-American, neo-Marxist or radical nationalist views: Egyptian Labour Party,\(^{54}\) al-Ghad Party,\(^{55}\) Tagammu,\(^{56}\) and al-Karama party.\(^{57}\) While each of these may reasonably be expected to gain only one or two per cent of the parliamentary seats, that would take ballots away from more centrist parties. It cannot be assumed that these parties would oppose the Islamists alongside the liberals; on foreign policy (anti-Americanism, even more hostile attitudes towards Israel, etc.) some of their views parallel those of the Islamists.

Possibility of a Muslim Brotherhood-moderate alliance

The identification of many parties and leaders as moderates can be challenged on several grounds. Radical leftist and radical nationalist parties often join with moderate parties in alliances for political gain while retaining their views. For example, both the Egyptian Communist Party and radical leftist Tagammu Party were members of the moderate liberal Egyptian Bloc.

Even those parties that can be reasonably called moderate have often been willing to ally with the Muslim Brotherhood. Al- Wafd, the largest liberal
party, was in a coalition with the Muslim Brotherhood for years, only breaking the alliance in September this year.58 The Justice Party, comprised largely of those moderates active in the January revolution, also includes many leaders who worked closely with the Muslim Brotherhood.

The likelihood of a Muslim Brotherhood-moderate alignment in battling the junta during the 2011-2013 interim period is very high. During the late November protest movement, the Brotherhood kept a distance from the mainly liberal protesters but was harshly critical of the regime and appeared to be consistently inching closer to backing the demonstrators. In a post-election environment, it is likely that even a strong showing from the Freedom and Justice Party would necessitate some form of coalition-building in order to secure parliamentary majorities. In Tunisian elections in October for a new Constituent Assembly that will draft the country’s next constitution, the Islamist Ennahda Party, that country’s equivalent to the Brotherhood, gained the largest number of seats but not an outright majority. Eventually it agreed to a coalition with the liberal Congress for the Republic and the moderate socialist Ettakatol Party to form a majority and divide the most important positions in the country.59

This experience suggests that parliamentary processes in post-dictatorship Arab societies could produce what are ideologically and historically unlikely bedfellows in order to gain power. While most non-Islamist observers were uncomfortable with Ennahda’s strong performance, the fact is noteworthy that it was both forced and willing to engage in compromise and coalition building with liberal and left-wing parties in a quasi-parliamentary environment. This suggests that once they are no longer operating from a position of simply oppositional politics but are negotiating for shares of power in a pluralistic environment, mainstream Arab Islamist parties, whatever their radical origins or inclinations may be, are prepared to engage in the give-and-take of coalition politics -- at least for the short-term. While there are illiberal groupings that have been successfully incorporated into functional parliamentary democracies in many countries, these rarely attain a plurality of votes as Ennahda has just done and as the Muslim Brotherhood may well do in Egypt. However, the Tunisian experience suggests this is possible for Arab Islamists as well, as long as they continue to “play by the rules.”

The old regime

An unknown factor is how well candidates who represent the old regime – whether they admit it or not – will do. Polls seem to indicate that such people might get 3 per cent of the national vote,60 but the number could very well be higher. Anarchy, crime, and economic problems might increase their appeal due to nostalgia for the “good old days.” Such candidates, if successful, would likely be coalition pariahs in parliament. The National Democratic Party (NDP) was formally dissolved in April and its assets seized by the government.61

However, in mid-November the Egyptian Supreme Court ruled that former members of the NDP could run for elections, ending speculation that there would be a formal legal barrier to their candidacies.62 There is widespread speculation that many remnants of the former regime, including much of the bureaucracy and state hierarchy, former NDP political leaders and organizational structure, and even SCAF itself and

58 “Muslim Brotherhood and Wafd deny dissolving their alliance”, Ahram Online, 2 October 2011
60 “2nd National Voter Survey in Egypt (September)”, Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies (ACPPS), October 9th 2011
the junta generally, represent the combined forces of the old order and will be loosely coordinating their efforts to try to limit change as much as possible. How far former NDP candidates can use what remains above and under ground of its previously extensive organizational structure, and support from the existing establishment and the military, as well as its traditional power base, remains a major wild card in any election.

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### The Revolution’s Regional Impact

Egypt’s new regional role – a likely move from a “pro-Western” to a “neutralist” stance on regional issues – that may prove a strategic loss for European Union and United States interests. Radical forces in the Middle East – notably Hamas in Gaza and the Iranian Republic – will likely see the Egyptian revolution as a victory as it removes an adversary in the Middle East. The nature of the new Egyptian government will determine how significant this loss or victory is, although for now it is difficult to see how Iran in particular has benefited in any significant manner from changes in the domestic Egyptian power balance.

For Western governments, an Islamist-sympathetic regime so close to Israel would be potentially worrying: worst case scenario could see Egypt back Hamas in a war with Israel or even be drawn into conflict itself; more likely is a continued freeze of the Israel-Palestine peace process, as internal politics restrain the flexibility of Egypt’s junta and could push an elected government into a more uncompromising stance and weaken its ability to be willing to push Palestinians towards compromise or have any leverage with Israel.

While the junta has promised to sustain the current peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as a number of well-known moderates – Ayman Nour63 and Muhammad el-Baradei,64 for example – have spoken of the need to revise the treaty, hold a referendum, or dispense with it altogether, although this final option seems extremely remote and no matter how militant a government comes to power. Even if the treaty is not formally rescinded – and such a contingency is extremely unlikely – it could be undermined and not prevent the rise of increased tensions and even hostility between the new Egypt and Israel.

In the event of a future war with Hamas, Israel could not assume that an Egyptian government would not support Hamas, although this would probably be indirect support. According to Pew Global Attitudes Survey conducted in 2009, 52 per cent of Egyptians have a “favourable” view of Hamas compared with 44 percent who hold an “unfavourable” view.65 Depending on the outcome of the elections, being seen to support Hamas could become a populist policy for the new government. Furthermore, there is the possibility of Egyptian generals – in the junta or under a civilian government – being unable to control junior officers and soldiers, elements of which may hold radical views. On the other hand, Egypt’s powerful national interest in not becoming again responsible for the conditions and behavior of groups in Gaza is likely to be clear to any government, no matter how populist

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63 ‘Egyptian opposition figure: Revise Israel peace treaty’, Ynet News, 13 February 2011

64 ‘ElBaradei on democracy’s chances in Egypt’, Der Spiegel, 6 February 2011

or Islamist-sympathetic. Rhetoric in opposition and demagoguery are simple and appealing for groups not in power. Once they become responsible, or partly responsible, for the national interest, ideological considerations and populism must be tempered by the burden of the consequences, both nationally and politically, of crucial foreign policy and national security decisions. And, of course, the military is likely to play a major role in defense and national security policy into the future under whatever governing structure emerges. Therefore, extreme scenarios, especially direct or indirect war with Israel, are unlikely, and an open or de facto alliance with Iran is an extremely remote possibility at most. The new Egypt is unlikely to have a foreign policy more in tune with Western interests than the Mubarak regime, no matter what path the transition follows or outcome emerges. However, the most extreme scenarios are also unlikely given Egypt's core national interests, which will not change based on a change of power in government, and the continued role of the army in almost any plausible post-transition power structure.

Conclusion

There is a large unpredictable element to the forthcoming elections: Egypt is again wracked by severe and sustained protests; it has not had a free election within living memory; a democratic political culture has not taken hold; most of the parties and candidates are new and the electoral system has still not been made completely clear.

A parliamentary majority for the Muslim Brotherhood is unlikely and a majority for the Islamists is also not probable but is possible. However, a majority by radical forces – combining Islamists, far-leftists and radical nationalists – is conceivable. With cooperation from some liberals willing to work with the Islamists in exchange for power, a radical majority becomes more likely.

Although there are secularised, urban Egyptians who look down on the Muslim Brotherhood, the group is highly organized and has a long history of reacting to – and surviving – political suppression. The organisation is likely to proceed with caution: focusing on getting a Constitution that provides a foundation which secures it maximum influence in the religious and educational institutions.

It will also likely play a leading role in a coalition criticising the junta's continuing control and demanding a faster turnover to elected politicians. However, if Egypt continues towards a social and economic crisis within the next two years, it will be more advantageous for political parties be on the outside when the crisis comes so as to avoid responsibility for the consequent suffering and discontent. The Muslim Brotherhood could use the situation to claim "Islam is the answer" to all of Egypt's economic woes and to take advantage of popular discontent.

The elections in Egypt represent an opportunity for the Muslim Brotherhood to become a legal political party as well as to increase its base of support within Egypt. However, it is unlikely to seize absolute power over even a clear-cut majority in the foreseeable future and will have to deal with many rivals on its left and its right flanks as well as the military and other elements of the existing establishment and remnants of the previous regime, which is the other powerful and already organised force in the society. At present, the two most important players vying for power in Egypt's transition are the remnants of the old regime
and the establishment, most particularly SCAF in the military on the one hand, and the Muslim Brotherhood on the other hand. But there are many other forces at work in Egypt, playing “catch-up” with these other two groups and that also may emerge over time, even quickly, as significant forces in the country.

A stable, constitutional post-Mubarak Egypt will likely be characterised by a series of uncomfortable compromises by groups that have profound disagreements. This could, of course, be read as a normative description of a parliamentary democracy. Perhaps the greater challenge in the long run for any emerging post-dictatorship order in Egypt will be containing and managing the exceptionally difficult social and, above all, economic challenges facing the country which will almost certainly prove the deepest stressors facing any coming governing system.