

4 CAN EGYPTIANS BUILD A CONSENSUS FOR FUNCTIONING DEMOCRACY?

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Nota Bene: As the Handbook's third edition goes to publication in late July 2013, the political situation in Egypt remains dire and fluid. In June and early July, widespread protests against President Morsi continued to grow. The Army threatened to intervene should no compromise be reached. On July 3, it followed through on its threat, ousting Morsi in a coup and detaining him with several other senior fellow Muslim Brotherhood figures. At time of writing, an interim government selected by Army Chief of Staff and Defence Minister Abdel Fattah al-Sisi is in control, proclaiming a "road map" back to democracy and the amendment of the controversial constitution that was adopted in a referendum in December 2012. The Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters have mounted widespread protests against the coup, calling for Morsi's reinstatement; scores have died in clashes surrounding these demonstrations. Wide restrictions on the media, especially those aligned with the Brotherhood and the ousted Morsi government, have been instituted. More than 1,000 citizens have been arrested, though a majority of them were later released (Hauslohner, 2013). The divide in Egyptian society — between those opponents of the Brotherhood and what they characterize as its insular and exclusivist decision making, and the Brotherhood, which claims electoral and democratic legitimacy — is deeper and wider than ever before. The military and security forces, which both sides attempted to enlist, maintains decisive power in determining the direction of the country.

External actors, particularly the United States, have struggled to manage this growing divide. Widely reported attempts were made to convince President Morsi to reach out more to his secular and liberal opponents and include them in decision making and governing (Kirkpatrick and El Sheikh, 2013) — but these were fruitless. Washington now is avoiding the use of the term "coup," as, by law, it would

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necessitate a curtailment of foreign assistance to Egypt. The US position in Egypt now is at the lowest ebb since the Sadat era, with all actors suspicious of its motives and seeing it as having supported or lent succor to their opponents.

INTRODUCTION

Of all the case studies covered in the *Handbook*, Egypt has seen the most wrenching change since 2011 — even more than in Burma/Myanmar. It remains the centre of gravity of the Arab Spring, which began in Tunisia some weeks before its own revolutionary change began.

A proud nation with an ancient history, Egypt lies at the heart of the Arab world and is typically viewed as a bellwether for broader trends in the region. With a population of over 80 million — more than twice that of any other Arab state — and its location bridging both Africa to the Middle East and the Mediterranean to the Red Sea, Egypt has long played a pivotal role in the region. Egyptian support over time for the Middle East peace process has been crucial to US foreign policy interests.

In a region that has seen more than its share of internal political crises — military coups, civil wars and revolutions — Egypt stands out as having, until recently, experienced remarkable continuity in its domestic political scene, though the apparent stability masked significant and rising public discontent. Since the early 1920s, Egypt's political system has undergone fundamental change only twice — from a constitutional monarchy under strong British influence to an independent, authoritarian state in the 1950s, in which the military played a guiding role, and, beginning in 2011, when the authoritarian rule of Hosni Mubarak was defeated by a broad and popular revolution. The shift to popularly elected government was bewildering for all involved. Deep social and political cleavages, which the context of authoritarian rule kept in the relative background, have now come to the fore, including, prominently, the challenge of reconciling widespread religious faith and democracy. The military has proven a decisive factor, holding the balance of power between religious and secular/liberal political forces. Despite the massive changes already seen, Egypt's successful transition to functioning broad-based democracy is far from assured.

Historical Background

Since the early nineteenth century, Egypt's history has been marked by Western colonial intervention, beginning with the arrival of French troops in 1798. Throughout the first half of the 1800s, Egypt was governed by Muhammad Ali Pasha, a governor in the declining Ottoman Empire who instituted far-reaching military, economic and cultural reforms that turned Egypt into one of the most modern, developed states outside of Europe at that time. Such efforts at modernization, culminating in the Suez Canal project, drove Egypt into severe debt, facilitating the colonial

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penetration of Britain, which maintained control of Egypt through World War I. After the war, the British declared Egypt's nominal independence in 1922 and instituted a constitutional, parliamentary monarchy, which would remain in place until 1952. The nationalist Wafd ("delegation") Party, which had led the domestic movement for Egyptian independence, dominated parliamentary elections throughout this period. In July 1952, British-backed King Farouk was overthrown by the Free Officers Movement, a group of Egyptian Army officers led by Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, who became president of Egypt and would rule the country until his death in 1970.

Upon seizing power, Nasser began to gradually establish authoritarian control over the Egyptian state, banning all political parties in 1952. Two years later, he also banned the Muslim Brotherhood organization. Following an October 1954 assassination attempt by a Muslim Brotherhood member, the Nasser regime jailed thousands of Brotherhood activists.

Nasser also eventually nationalized banks, private commercial enterprises and the Suez Canal, thus consolidating the authority of the Egyptian state over both the political and economic spheres. He established a short-lived union with Syria and later Iraq, the United Arab Republic, which dissolved in 1961. In 1962, Nasser established the Arab Socialist Union as the dominant ruling political party, representing Egypt's ruling elite.

With the death of Nasser in 1970, Vice President Anwar Sadat, another one of the "free officers" of the 1952 coup, became president. Early in his rule, President Sadat oversaw the establishment of a new constitution for Egypt. This 1971 constitution legally consolidated power in the hands of the president and rendered ostensibly democratic institutions such as Parliament as weak and inconsequential. Sadat undertook dramatic steps toward shifting Egypt's external orientation, as he expelled Soviet advisers in 1972 and changed the dynamics with Israel by initiating the October War in 1973. Following the 1973 war, the US became deeply engaged in promoting dialogue between Egypt and Israel, and eventual negotiations toward a peace settlement. This culminated in Sadat's historic visit to Jerusalem in 1977, followed by the Camp David Accords of 1978 and the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty in 1979. This solidified Egypt's standing as a uniquely powerful Arab ally to the West (particularly to the United States), while marginalizing Egypt in the Arab and Muslim world, symbolized by the Arab League expelling Egypt and moving its headquarters to Tunis. During this period, Sadat also reinstated nominal political pluralism, creating "loyal opposition" parties representing various political orientations, allowing the Wafd Party to re-emerge and allowing limited political and organizational activity by the Muslim Brotherhood.

Following the assassination of Sadat in 1981 by Islamists opposed to Camp David, his vice president and Air Force commander, Mohammed Hosni Mubarak succeeded him. Egypt experienced a short-lived period of tempered liberalization under Mubarak during the 1980s. The parliamentary elections of 1987, for example, created an assembly with 22 percent opposition representation. This trend was abruptly curtailed in the 1990s, however, as a resurgence of domestic terrorism

spurred the regime to crack down on political opposition and close the narrow openings that had emerged in the political landscape.

After 2000, the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) began to show signs of internal reform. The NDP was embarrassed by its initial showing in the 2000 parliamentary elections, in which independent candidates (most of whom later allied themselves to the NDP) won a majority of seats. This spurred the emergence of a new wave of younger-generation, Western-educated reformers within the NDP who aimed to increase Egyptian economic performance while ensuring party dominance — without opening up the political system, and by offering major economic rewards directed mainly to a cabal of party loyalists. This group was led by President Mubarak's son Gamal, who was appointed chairman of the newly instituted Policy Secretariat — the third-ranking position in the NDP — in 2002. Gamal Mubarak and his Policy Secretariat allies led an effort to transform the NDP into a modern institution modelled after Western political parties. The group around Gamal Mubarak was slick and well-schooled in marketing for Western investors and political elites, but this group had a very narrow base. They were suspected by the military of aiming to curtail their economic dominion, and by the opposition (civic and religious), which saw them as simply well-connected crony capitalists driven to ensure a dynastic succession.

Era of Hope (2004-2005)

By 2004, there were a number of signs of the potential for real political reform, owing, in part, to external pressures. In July 2004, a new cabinet was appointed, featuring Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif and 14 new ministers — most of whom were Gamal Mubarak's allies from the Policy Secretariat — who were widely perceived to be economic reformers. The Egyptian political opposition also showed signs of emerging pluralism and dynamism at this time. In late 2004 and early 2005, a new, loosely knit coalition of reformers known as Kifaya (“enough”) emerged, organizing an unprecedented series of regular protests calling for political reform and openly criticizing the Mubarak regime. The licensing of the new secular, liberal Al-Ghad Party, founded by Ayman Nour, a younger generation MP who had broken ranks with the Wafd Party in 2001, also occurred in 2004.

In addition, the leading Islamist movement in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood, which provided extensive social services, showed signs of modernizing and embracing reform at this time, issuing a pro-democracy reform initiative in March 2004. In February 2005, President Mubarak proposed a constitutional amendment to allow for Egypt's first multi-candidate presidential election. Moreover, the Muslim Brotherhood, though it remained banned and could only run candidates for parliamentary elections as independents, was nonetheless allowed to campaign openly and given much greater access to the media. The 2005 elections also saw the first widespread election monitoring by independent NGOs. Although the elections were marred by serious irregularities, the presence of thousands of monitors in

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polling stations trained by Egyptian NGOs was widely viewed as an important step forward, establishing the legitimacy of independent election monitors.

Disillusionment and Regression on Reform

Despite the many signs of progress on democratic development by mid-2005, the late 2005 elections did not meet expectations. By 2006, the trends toward reform sharply reversed. Following the presidential election, Nour — the only candidate who ran a serious campaign in opposition to President Mubarak — was convicted and sentenced to five years in prison for dubious charges of forging signatures during the formation of his Al-Ghad Party. He served more than three years in jail. Following the better-than-expected performance of the Muslim Brotherhood in the first round of parliamentary elections in November 2005, the second and third rounds were marred by increasingly blatant interference, with neighbourhoods sympathetic to the Brotherhood seeing their polling stations closed down and widespread violence used to prevent voting. Since those elections, Brotherhood members were targeted in a series of campaigns with arrests and seizure of financial assets.

In April 2006, the Mubarak government extended the emergency law, despite 2005 campaign promises to eliminate it and replace it with a narrower set of anti-terrorism laws. Efforts to stifle public discourse through targeted jailing, intimidation and prosecution of dissenting voices, including bloggers and editors of independent newspapers, increased considerably beginning in 2006. In a single vote in Parliament in early 2007, the Egyptian government passed a set of constitutional amendments described by Amnesty International as the “greatest erosion of human rights [in Egypt] in 26 years.” These included measures expanding the authority of military courts over civilians, weakening the authority of the Egyptian judiciary to supervise elections and legally prohibiting the formation of political parties or any political activity with “any religious frame of reference.” This last amendment was clearly intended to block the main opposition group, the Muslim Brotherhood. Nearly all opposition candidates aiming to run for seats in the Shura Council (the upper house of Parliament) in 2007 and municipal councils in 2008 were denied registration by the authorities.

Intercommunal violence flared in early 2010, with a shooting outside a Coptic church and clashes with police. Later that year, more clashes between Copts and police took place in Giza over church construction. A church bombing on Orthodox New Year 2011 killed 21 in Alexandria, sparking further clashes and recriminations (BBC News, 2013). Sectarianism was rising, with the government increasingly seen as insensitive to Christian Copt concerns and allegations of discrimination and ill treatment by authorities.

Revolution and Post-revolution

With the launch of Tunisian popular demand for the end of the Ben Ali regime, Egyptians soon launched their own demonstrations against President Mubarak’s

nearly 30-year rule, peaceably assembling in Egypt's Tahrir ("freedom") Square and in other locations in Cairo, Alexandria, Suez and elsewhere throughout Egypt beginning on January 25, 2011. The velocity of the protest buildup, fuelled by the extensive use of social media, took citizens and the government alike by surprise; the latter showed itself to be behind the curve in response through much of the 18 days of protest prior to Mubarak stepping down. "When it erupted, the Egyptian revolution surprised civil society as much as it did the political forces," seasoned observer Mohamed Elegati noted (2012).

Attempts to shut down communications in late January had a contrary effect to what the Mubarak regime wanted: more people came to the street to demonstrate. When President Mubarak addressed an expectant nation without offering his resignation, the public reaction was indignant. Shoes were thrown at large screens projecting his address and those assembled jeered. Attempts to foment popular fears of chaos in true "après moi, le deluge" fashion followed — police disappearing, *baltagiya* (regime-paid thugs) staging crimes and a genuine reduction in public safety did not break the demonstrators' resolve. An attempt by security force proxies on camels and horseback to violently drive the camp out of Tahrir Square was similarly ineffectual. Broad social solidarity was also evident. In the words of one observer, looking back, "There was unity in the revolution, and not simply on getting rid of Mubarak. You could see Salafists and liberals cooperating closely."¹ The Muslim Brotherhood, long persecuted by the Mubarak regime (and his two predecessors), did not take a leading role initially in the protest movement, though it did later engage in it. The Egyptian Army was generally neutral and did not crack down on the demonstrations, despite fears it might be ordered to. The dramatic events transfixed the world, dominating television screens for weeks as the long-serving leadership was driven from power by popular will, not force. The Egyptian revolution was not without violence, however; an estimated 850 people were killed in the unrest.

The departure of Mubarak did not signal a linear path toward fully functioning democratic rule. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces took interim control of Egypt. Suspicions among large segments of the revolutionary public grew over time that the military had abandoned an unpopular president but had no intention of abandoning its privileged and commanding role in Egyptian society. Many doubted they would abandon their privileges without a struggle and voiced fears that Mubarak's departure would be far easier than uprooting the military-industrial complex in Egypt. As preparations were made for new elections in spring and summer 2011, demonstrations continued in Tahrir Square to demand faster movement toward unfettered democratic rule and civilian control. The Muslim Brotherhood emerged as a more vocal player in street politics at this stage. The square was cleared in August 2011. The same month, former President Mubarak was put on trial for

¹ Participant at "Pluralism and Democracy: Prospects for the Arab Middle East and North Africa," European Council on Foreign Relations and Council for a Community of Democracies round table, Canadian Cultural Centre, Paris, December 6-7, 2012.

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ordering the killing of demonstrators (BBC News, 2013). Further demonstrations in Tahrir Square occurred in November 2011 against continued military control. Prime Minister Essam Sharaf resigned in response. Parliamentary elections began that month (ibid.).

In January 2012, Islamist parties, with the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party as the largest single vote draw, won the parliamentary elections. In an election with low turnout, the Brotherhood's cohesion and discipline contrasted with the confusing profusion of "secular" democratic parties, which together, rivalled the Brotherhood in popular support, but split the non-Islamist vote among them. Many observers, including foreign diplomats, were surprised by the strength of religion-based parties, including the more orthodox and hardline Salafists.

In May and June 2012 presidential elections, the Brotherhood's former second in command Mohamed Morsi eked out a narrow victory over former Mubarak-era Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq, who was seen by many as a stalking horse for the Army. However, fears of Islamist political strength led many secularists, including long-time opposition figures, to plump for Shafiq, despite his baggage. This generated discord not only between the Brotherhood and non-Islamist political actors, but among the non-Islamists themselves. So despite having lost the presidential election, the military and security state emerged with perhaps greater leverage after the election than before (ibid.).

Morsi made an effort to proclaim himself as president of all Egyptians, but many remained skeptical of the Brotherhood's intentions in power. In June 2012, the Supreme Court ruled that the parliamentary elections were invalid. While initially resisting the ruling (in a court dominated by jurists from the *ancien régime*), President Morsi adhered to it in July. In August, Prime Minister Hisham Qandil formed a government composed of Islamists and technocrats, bereft of liberals, secularists and non-Islamists in general, further generating suspicion. That same month, jihadists attacked an Army outpost in the Sinai, killing 16 soldiers — the largest number of Army casualties since the 1973 war. President Morsi took the opportunity to dismiss Defence Minister Tantawi and the chief of staff, demonstrating civilian supremacy over the military for the first time since the revolution.

In the absence of an elected Parliament, a constituent assembly composed primarily of Islamists — most secularists had earlier withdrawn — prepared to submit a draft constitution, but President Morsi stated on November 22, 2012 that there was no authority that could overturn his decrees. This generated much protest domestically — and internationally. Public protests followed and it was later rescinded, grudgingly. Nonetheless, the draft constitution was put to public referendum in December 2012 and passed. Violent street protests followed into January 2013, killing 50 people. As 2013 went on, critics of President Morsi have come up for prosecution for insulting him and offending religious Egyptians with satire. In early June 2013, the Supreme Constitutional Court ruled that the rules by which the constitution had been prepared had been illegal, placing the legitimacy of that popularly adopted foundational document into question.

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Economic factors were very prominent in public disaffection from the Mubarak regime, especially on the part of the large class of underemployed professionals unable to pursue satisfactory careers in a culture of cronyism and corruption. Since the revolution, social cleavages and discontent with the lack of opportunity have deepened, especially since, as a result of the political turmoil, both tourism and investment have been hit hard, further increasing economic hardship on the Egyptian people.

International Policy Responses

Egypt's relations with its Western allies, and particularly with the United States, have long included strategic and economic partnership. The centrality of Egypt to the US agenda because of Sadat's "separate peace" with Israel deepened once the "war on terror" took over the US security agenda. Egypt became a key US partner in anti-terrorism and a favoured locale for the rendition of international terrorism suspects. The 2003 invasion of Iraq, which was vastly opposed by public opinion across the Middle East — including in Egypt, reinforced US commitment to Mubarak who was persuaded to support the US role.

There was, nonetheless, some attempt to pursue a reform agenda. Throughout the 1980s, Egypt partnered with the US on a series of economic reforms and modest steps toward political liberalization. In the 1990s, US Vice President Al Gore established a direct partnership with President Mubarak, including regular meetings between the two to address opportunities for reform. The EU's collective approach, largely subsumed under the 1995 Barcelona Process, dealt with economic prosperity, political stability and security questions such as counterterrorism and migration control.

Such partnerships, however, generally focussed more on economic reform and development than political opening. Some analysts and government officials in the US and Europe came to believe that Egypt's lack of progress on economic development owed much to its clear lack of political development, but the overarching policies did not change. The attacks of September 11, 2001 might have brought the repressive political climates across the Arab world into sharper focus, but had the effect instead of driving policy choices in the opposite direction.

US President George W. Bush's "freedom agenda" did include the use of various diplomatic techniques to spur political reform in Egypt. These appeared to contribute to some tangible steps in 2004 and 2005, such as the institution of direct popular election of the president, the organization of a large-scale electoral monitoring effort by civil society organizations, a loosening of restrictions on the media and freer campaigning by the opposition groups. EU support for these democracy promotion policies was muted; these countries had considerable business interests in Egypt. In private, European diplomats expressed skepticism that the policies would be effective. This was particularly the case with Mediterranean countries such as France and Italy, where political elites had good relations with the Mubarak regime,

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and where public opinion feared the risk of waves of refugees if the regimes in the region were destabilized.

The European approach was packaged alongside the promotion of trade ties and economic reform in the European Neighbourhood Policy, but the approach was heavily statist, confined mostly to cooperation with state or para-state institutions, and not with civil society. The EU's overall interest in supporting democratic development and respect for human rights was generally less pronounced in the Middle East than, for instance, in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. In the words of German scholar Annette Jünemann (2012), "convinced that Arab autocracy [was] insuperable and misperceiving the aspirations and capabilities of modern Arab society, the EU opted for autocratic regimes." A number of factors played into this stance, including a fear of Islamist political movements becoming dominant in a more democratic environment, mass migration and senior officials' desire to have easy access to their Egyptian counterparts because of a wish to stabilize the Middle East peace process and to promote bilateral business opportunities.

Although the EU approach tended to favour a more incremental (or implied) approach to democracy promotion, compared to the more robust US approach, there was wide divergence between EU member states on this issue throughout the Middle East, and with regard to Egypt in particular. Generally speaking, southern and Mediterranean European countries, which had stronger trade and security ties with Egypt (and neuralgic fears about migration), were increasingly reluctant to focus on democracy and human rights issues in their bilateral relations. Scandinavian and other northern European countries, on the other hand, have had fewer economic interests in Egypt and manifested the strongest interest on issues of democracy and human rights. This was evident from their greater focus on these issues at the embassy level and when coordinating EU policy in Brussels, as well as a greater proportion of their aid funding being earmarked for civil society support.

By early 2006, the US administration's support for democracy in Egypt tapered off. Following the better-than-anticipated success of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt's parliamentary elections in late 2005, the United States became more apprehensive about the prospect of Egyptian democracy. This was then exacerbated by the Hamas victory in the January 2006 Palestinian elections (aggressively pressed for by the US), viewed by some as a warning of what could happen if Egypt were pushed to democratize. In addition, the effort to isolate the Hamas-controlled Palestinian Authority became a focus of US policy in the region, drawing energy and resources away from other priorities, including support for Egyptian reform. In the summer of 2006, the administration's focus was further diverted by the escalation of the Fatah versus Hamas conflict in Gaza and the Israeli attack on Lebanon. By January 2008, the Bush administration began to look toward the renewal of the Arab-Israeli peace process through a conference in Annapolis, the success of which would rely on Mubarak's cooperation. Around the same time, the administration also began to focus more on aligning its Arab allies against the threat of Iran's growing regional influence and nuclear program. Both of these issues contributed to a shift toward

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viewing Arab allies such as Egypt primarily as regimes needed for strategic purposes, further decreasing the emphasis on issues of internal reform.

President Obama attempted to reboot US relations with the Muslim world by giving an address at Cairo University on June 6, 2009. The speech was well received in much of the region, notably for its respectful approach to Islam and recognition of Palestinian suffering. President Obama raised the issue of democracy almost apologetically, recognizing that it had been tarred by association with the invasion of Iraq, adding “no system of government can or should be imposed upon one nation by any other.” He reiterated the US commitment to freedom of speech, rule of law, good governance and transparency. He also added a thinly veiled reference to Islamists, echoing Bush administration concerns after Hamas’ electoral victory in 2006:

There are some who advocate for democracy only when they are out of power; once in power, they are ruthless in suppressing the rights of others. No matter where it takes hold, government of the people and by the people sets a single standard for all who hold power: you must maintain your power through consent, not coercion; you must respect the rights of minorities, and participate with a spirit of tolerance and compromise; you must place the interests of your people and the legitimate workings of the political process above your party. Without these ingredients, elections alone do not make true democracy.

This signalled a move away from a primary focus on elections in US democracy promotion, later confirmed in statements by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. While it is true that elections alone do not ensure democracy, within the Egyptian context this was tantamount to a pro-government position. For the three years prior to the speech, the Egyptian regime engaged in a campaign of arrests against the Muslim Brotherhood not seen since the late 1960s, blocking them from participating in elections and amending the constitution to block their ambitions to launch a political party. Overall, the speech not only contained little of substance on human rights, but was also criticized by some for having taken place in Cairo at all, since it boosted a close US ally that, between 2006 and 2009, reversed tentative moves toward democratization and continued to be a serial abuser of human rights. Indeed, primary focus of the speech (and, as a result, in US funding) was given to women’s and minority rights from a US agenda, and away from the reform issues more prominent as factors in Egyptian public discontent.

Under the Obama administration, the previous administration’s policy effectively continued until 2011. In part, this occurred since the relevant senior officials in the State Department were not appointed until December 2009. But concern had shifted from pressuring Egypt to reform to supporting what was seen as an increasingly weak state ahead of an uncertain presidential succession process. In 2009, then Ambassador to Egypt Margaret Scobey’s chief mission was seen to be repairing the bilateral relationship that had been strained (outside of security issues) by the

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Bush administration. She had considerable room to manoeuvre to achieve this in the absence of clear leadership in the State Department and US focus on other issues, most notably the global economic crisis.

With President Mubarak's three-week hospitalization in Munich for gall bladder surgery in March 2010, the question of succession became the primary interest of US civilian and military policy makers, with a first priority being ensuring minimum political turmoil during a transition period. Secretary of State Clinton downgraded the importance of reform issues in the bilateral relationship, focussing instead on strengthening Egypt's role in the Middle East peace process and assuring a smooth presidential transition.

Many European countries were relieved by the change in the US approach. From 2007 onwards, even before the launch of French President Nicolas Sarkozy's pet Mediterranean Union project in 2008, the European Commission, for all intents and purposes, downgraded the question of support for democratization and human rights to the minimum. Advocates for greater focus on political reform issues were told over this period not to expect any EU engagement. Conciliatory attitudes toward the government of Egypt were the general rule. As Jünemann (2012) assessed, "For the EU, which has extremely dense yet almost exclusively intergovernmental relations with its southern neighbors, the Arab Spring was a mortifying embarrassment because it revealed the credibility gap between the EU's normative rhetoric on democracy promotion and its 'realpolitik' on the ground, supporting autocratic regimes at the cost of domestic agents of change...The EU hesitated to change sides as long as it was unclear whether the revolutions would succeed."

Western democracies were essentially caught flat-footed by the advent of revolutionary change in the MENA region, and were particularly ill prepared for it in the case of Egypt. The mental and policy dissonance generated by the upwelling of popular demands for Mubarak's departure was perhaps best spotlighted in a US public broadcasting interview of Vice President Joe Biden in late January 2011. When questioned whether Mubarak was a dictator, Biden replied: "Mubarak has been an ally of ours in a number of things. And he's been very responsible on, relative to geopolitical interest in the region, the Middle East peace efforts; the actions Egypt has taken relative to normalizing relationship with — with Israel...I would not refer to him as a dictator" (cited in Murphy, 2011). Biden added that he didn't believe Mubarak should step down, and appeared to question the legitimacy of some of the protesters' demands (ibid.). While later pronouncements by Western leaders adapted to changing conditions, they were often far behind the curve. However, as this case study shows, Vice President Biden himself became very heavily engaged in pressing the Mubarak regime and the security apparatus (mainly through his counterpart Vice President Omar Suleiman) to refrain from cracking down violently and to respond to persistent and growing popular demands for change (BBC News, 2011).

Resources and Assets of Diplomats in Egypt

For more than three decades, Egypt has consistently received **funds** from the West on a large scale. In conjunction with the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1978 and the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty in 1979, The US agreed to give billions in foreign assistance to each of the two countries, with overall assistance to Israel and Egypt remaining in a fixed 3:2 ratio until 2008. From 1979 to 2008, Egypt was the second-largest recipient of US foreign assistance each year, after Israel (in fiscal year 2009, Egypt was surpassed by Afghanistan in this regard, and Afghanistan and Pakistan have since each received more foreign aid than Egypt).

Egypt has received US\$1.3 billion in military assistance each year since 1987. Economic assistance decreased from more than US\$800 million annually in the late 1990s to around US\$400 million in 2008 and roughly US\$250 million in 2009 and 2010. Funding for democracy and governance programming peaked at approximately US\$55 million in fiscal year 2008.

Because of restrictions within Egypt and political considerations on the donor and consumer side, funds spent often do not have significant effect. The US, in particular, has occasionally had difficulties finding competent recipients; many NGOs coming from a leftist perspective, for example, refused any dealings with the Bush administration. This may have contributed to the misspending of much of the funding available to USAID and the US-Middle East Partnership Initiative, with NGOs created for the sole purpose of drawing such funds. There is a great degree of clientelism in the local NGO market, with projects being designed to meet donor criteria, rather than being based on actual local needs.

Under the Obama administration, the US government returned to a practice that had been stopped in 2002, which was only granting USAID funding to civil society groups that were registered under the notoriously restrictive and much-criticized Egyptian NGO law. The Obama administration sharply reduced bilateral funding for democracy and governance programs in Egypt for fiscal years 2009 and 2010 to around US\$20 million annually. Following Egypt's 2011 revolution, President Obama committed US\$1 billion in non-military assistance (mostly economic) to Egypt, as well as the Egyptian-American Enterprise Fund, with an initial endowment of US\$60 million, scheduled to rise to US\$300 million (Kerry, 2013b).

Democracy support funding, however, was stymied by Egypt's crackdown on financial support from outside for NGOs. Security forces raided the offices of hundreds of foreign and Egyptian NGOs in a classic exhibition of "fear of foreign meddling."

In 2013, Egyptian courts found a wide swath of foreign NGOs guilty of illegally interfering in Egyptian affairs by providing financial support to Egyptian NGOs. US NGOs such as Freedom House, which had only opened an office after the revolution, and the arms of the National Endowment for Democracy, which had operated in Egypt for decades, were found guilty and forced to close. As Sherif Mansour, an activist forced into exile in 2006 who had returned to open Freedom House's office

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in 2011, reflected, “I felt that this revolution would only succeed if NGOs and the judiciary are free and independent....so far, it has been a big disappointment” (cited in Hubbard, 2013).

Egyptian civil society analyst Mohamed Elegati (2013) has described the law as having three fundamental characteristics: “the near-absolute power of the Ministry of Social Solidarity; stiffening penalties which excessively criminalize and punish the activities of [civil society organizations]; and ambiguous terminology, such as forbidding organizations from performing any ‘political activities’ [Article 11/3] or disturbing ‘public order’ [Article 11/2], which gives way to arbitrariness on behalf of the government.” He added that the intelligence services were regularly consulted to vet applicants for licensing to receive foreign funds. Since requests were rarely responded to within the 45-day window stipulated by law, NGOs were left in legal limbo and accepted foreign funds at their own risk (ibid.). Although additional democracy and governance funding was available without strings through the Middle East Partnership Initiative, activists said that the funding cuts were not as important as the political message that the change in practice sent, i.e., that the US government considered the NGO law acceptable. The new Morsi government passed a new NGO law that is “even more repressive,” legalizing “direct intervention of the security services on the work of civil society” and lacking transparency provisions (ibid.). The US and EU both decried the new law, with EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton (2013) noting that the law “still contains elements that can unnecessarily constrain the work of NGOs in Egypt and hinder our capacity as a foreign donor to support their work.”

The European Union also provided large-scale funding for Egypt, including €594 million during the period from 2000 to 2006. Only a very small portion of this funding was allocated to support democracy and human rights — approximately €5 million (less than one percent), within the framework of the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights. Similarly, in March 2007, the Egyptian government was allocated €558 million through the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument for the period from 2007 to 2013, of which only €13 million was allocated to democracy and good governance programs and an additional €16 million for human rights, with the Egyptian government having wide authority in supervising the implementation of such funds. However, neither the European Commission nor individual member states consider an NGO’s registration status under Egyptian law when awarding grants. The EU also has the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, which devoted over 25 percent of its €703 million in funding from 2007–2010 to the MENA region.² Since 2011, the EU has committed more funds, but roughly on the same scale — a total of €24 million that could be devoted to civil society (€17 million for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights Program to build Egyptian institutional and civil society capacity to respect international

2 Participant at “Pluralism and Democracy: Prospects for the Arab Middle East and North Africa,” European Council on Foreign Relations and Council for a Community of Democracies round table, Canadian Cultural Centre, Paris, December 6-7, 2012.

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human rights commitments; €7 million for the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures). The lion's share of funding went to various supports to government in the fields of justice, education, the environment and infrastructure. It remains to be seen what sort of civil society funding will follow in the 2014 EU budget, and whether flexibility to changing circumstances is built in. The European Endowment for Democracy, a body mirroring the US National Endowment for Democracy was just launched, with all EU member states being shareholders, and some civil society participation in the board. The endowment will split its grants 50/50 to the southern and eastern neighbourhoods.³ While its initial endowment is very modest, it could help to compensate for the EU's relative absence in an Egyptian civic sector, which would welcome its support.

The need in the extended and troubled transitional period is great for economic support. Some regional experts believe the West is being parsimonious with its economic assistance. "I am disappointed in the US and EU — they haven't stepped up with the economic and financial support we need. I hope we won't look back wistfully at a lost chance," one noted.⁴

On issues of democratic development, diplomats in Egypt have seen fluctuating **support of home authorities** over time. On the American side, such support rose from 2002 to 2005, when reform in Egypt was a high priority of the Bush administration's freedom agenda. After 2006, while support through funding for democracy programming continued to increase, support for addressing reform issues through diplomatic engagement was largely withdrawn, although President Bush continued to raise the issue in remarks given in Egypt and elsewhere. As noted, the first Obama administration sharply reduced support for democracy and governance programming. Despite the major changes and challenges since early 2011, it seems that supporting democratic consolidation in Egypt through donor support and diplomacy is a priority for the re-elected Obama administration. Obama administration officials have claimed that concern and pressure on democracy and human rights issues is continuing in private, with public admonitions considered ineffective. There is no way to verify the impact of these pressures on Egyptian positions. In 2009, the Obama administration made no pronouncement on developments in Egypt, and has only expressed concern on two occasions in 2010 — sectarian murders of Coptic Christians in Naga Hammadi in January 2010 (which coincided with a visit to Cairo of Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labour Michael Posner) and the renewal of the emergency law in May 2010. The hope of reviving the Israel-Palestine peace process with Egyptian involvement led to this softer approach. After the ouster of Mubarak in 2011, rhetorical support for democracy and human rights jumped, with some visible

3 Participant at "Pluralism and Democracy: Prospects for the Arab Middle East and North Africa," European Council on Foreign Relations and Council for a Community of Democracies round table. Canadian Cultural Centre, Paris, December 6-7, 2012.

4 Ibid.

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practical effect, but it is unclear how much local room for manoeuvre US diplomats in Egypt had to drive the policy.

During the Bush administration, several members of US Congress supported reform efforts in Egypt and aimed to apply pressure on the Egyptian regime, particularly through attempts to condition US military aid to Egypt on progress on reform. The post-2008 Congress has similarly reduced its previous emphasis on reform, in part due to satisfaction with greater Egyptian efforts to stem smuggling to the Hamas-governed Gaza Strip. But the US Democratic Party, in particular, made a point of distancing itself from democracy promotion, seeing it as a Bush-era signature policy. Of course, this changed when mass protests began. But as with the Obama administration, many congressmen and -women were slow to grasp the moment and reluctant to see the end of a regime long considered crucial to US policies, particularly the Camp David peace with Israel. While some legislators embraced the revolution, many others, particularly in the Republican Party, voiced caution and criticized the Obama administration for abandoning a long-term ally.

Similarly, support from the EU and individual European governments for democratic reform in Egypt has also waxed and waned. As the tenth anniversary of the 1995 Barcelona Declaration neared, the EU issued a document in December 2003 on foreign relations with Arab countries and a March 2004 progress report on the EU partnership with southern Mediterranean and Middle East countries. Both reports emphasized issues of political, social and economic reform, and the importance of developing diplomatic dialogue with Arab countries to support democracy; yet, support for Egyptian reform from European governments declined thereafter. European diplomats in Egypt often felt that they have lacked needed support on reform issues.

Generally speaking, the EU's approach supports reform through dialogue and largely depends on the political will of the host government, with Brussels being generally reluctant to apply political pressure for the sake of democratic reform. As noted earlier, there are wide (and possibly widening) differences in the manner in which different members of the EU have approached this issue in Egypt. The period between 2007 and 2011 represented a nadir in bureaucratic and political support within the European Commission and among member states for advocating reform. By way of example, a May 2010 statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on Egypt's renewal of the emergency law shocked Egyptian activists by not condemning the move. Since the EU was already on record supporting the abrogation of the law and this aim has been a component of bilateral talks, the timid language was surprising — and probably a reflection of the more indulgent attitudes of Mediterranean members of the EU. The US, in contrast, condemned the renewal.

Since the fall of the Ben Ali and Mubarak regimes, the European Union entered a phase of self-criticism and self-correction over its long-standing indulgence of the two dictators. EU Secretary-General of the External Action Service, Ambassador Pierre Vimont, acknowledged the EU's past shortcomings in a meeting in May 2011 with Egyptian and other civil society representatives. Since then, the EU and the

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European Commission have made “more for more” the bywords of their linkage of financial support to demonstrable progress on reform. On June 19, 2013, Ashton pressed the need of reform on President Morsi, as well as the necessity of being able to relate to Egyptian civil society. The Egyptian president undertook to ensure that NGOs would be cleared to pursue legitimate support activity.

European support for democratic change in Egypt came most often from the European Parliament. In January 2008, it notably passed a resolution criticizing the human rights conditions in Egypt. This sparked an angry uproar from the Egyptian government, which demanded an apology, cancelled the scheduled meeting of the Egyptian-European Sub-Commission on Human Rights and temporarily withdrew the Egyptian Parliament from the Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary programs. President of the European Parliament Jerzy Buzek visited Egypt in May 2008 and delivered a speech to the Egyptian Parliament in an effort to repair relations, but he neither offered an apology nor withdrew the resolution. Following this visit, relations essentially returned to normal, and the Sub-Commission met for the first time in May 2008. The European Parliament has consistently advocated assertive EU policies to promote and support democratic change in Egypt, as well as decry abuses of power.

Aside from these two actions of the European Parliament, the period from early 2007 until early 2011 was characterized by then President Nicolas Sarkozy's tendency to focus on theatre and fellow “big men.” The establishment of the Union for the Mediterranean in July 2008 was his pet project. Despite European assurances that this new initiative would be an extension of the Barcelona Process and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, rather than a replacement for them, it is clear that security and trade relations took precedence. The focus on political reform was abandoned altogether; the word “democracy” came up but once in the summit's final statement, as a commitment by heads of state to be pursued in 2009.⁵ The co-presidency of the new Union for the Mediterranean was awarded to France and Egypt, with both governments embracing the shift away from political reform. With its founding principal, Sarkozy, defeated in France's May 2012 election and his partner, Hosni Mubarak ousted in 2011, the Union now appears moribund, yet to be invested with new content from either side of the Mediterranean Sea. In the words of one well-placed observer, “the Mediterranean Union...was a visionary idea, but it came before its time. The concept was launched without having been thought through.”⁶ Another was more blunt: “The Mediterranean Union got off to a lousy start — we are now recalibrating.”⁷

5 See Final Statement, Marseilles, November, 3-4 2008, available at: <http://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/dec-final-Marseille-UfM.pdf>.

6 Participant at “Pluralism and Democracy: Prospects for the Arab Middle East and North Africa,” European Council on Foreign Relations/Council for a Community of Democracies round table, Canadian Cultural Centre, Paris, December 6-7, 2012.

7 Ibid.

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The Mubarak government certainly valued its relationships with Western governments, most of all with the United States, which gave Western — and US in particular — governments **influence** with the Egyptian government. However, the historical legacy of colonialism and Western intervention in Egypt has had a limiting effect on this influence, and the government of Egypt has at times cleverly manipulated this legacy to diminish the effects of Western diplomatic pressures. The Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs — particularly under the leadership of Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit — made the rejection of “interference in Egypt’s internal affairs” systematically part of the Egyptian discourse on human rights and political reform, arguing that Egypt would reform at its own pace. While this had some resonance among the Egyptian public and political elites, between 2005 and 2010, opposition groups shifted away from supporting the government’s rejection of international engagement on political reform. For instance, Mohamed ElBaradei, the former International Atomic Energy Agency director who returned to Egypt in February 2010 to lead a campaign for political reform, urged Western pressure to be applied to spur political reform, also calling for the presence of international election observers in polls in 2010 and 2011. Previously, these had been rejected by most of the opposition, in part because of a widespread rejection of US efforts at democracy promotion in the context of the invasion of Iraq.

During the January and February 2011 revolutionary developments in Egypt, influence was applied from high levels, particularly from the US, to try to prevent use of force against the demonstrators in Tahrir Square and elsewhere (more in the “Defending Democrats” section below). The links to Egypt’s security apparatus — and Army, in particular — were important. But the West’s influence with the new forces in Egypt has been limited because of the arm’s-length relationship with them, to the extent such contacts existed at all, prior to Mubarak’s fall. Jünemann (2012) writes that after “having neglected civil society and having antagonized political Islam, there are no established channels of communication between the EU and the new political actors in the southern neighborhood. The EU simply does not know them.”

As discussed below, US and European governments, but especially the US Congress and the European Parliament, have shown **solidarity** with some prominent Egyptian activists, most notably Saad Eddin Ibrahim and Ayman Nour. These governments later extended support to a number of younger generation bloggers targeted by the Egyptian regime. Many Egyptians viewed such solidarity, however, as having been selective, as it rarely extended to many other political activists, notably the hundreds of members of the Muslim Brotherhood who were jailed in repeated crackdowns on the organization.

A variety of regional issues — the Iraq war, the post-September 11 “war on terror,” the perceived willingness of Western governments to overlook Israeli violations of international human rights law in the Palestinian territories, and the discounting of one of the Arab Middle East’s two democratic elections in the Palestinian territories in 2006 — seriously undermined the **legitimacy** of Western countries in the eyes

of the Egyptian public. The Mubarak government exploited this lack of legitimacy to call into question Western objections to human rights violations in Egypt. It also exploited the need for anti-terrorism measures to crack down on political opposition and excuse human rights violations under the pretense of anti-terrorism. Western countries generally had stronger relationships with Egypt's government than with its people, due to large-scale foreign assistance and valued military and trade relationships. Post-9/11 developments gave new ammunition to the Mubarak government to deflect pressure. Officials, for instance, frequently compared the emergency law to the US Patriot Act or Britain's Terrorism Act when criticized over the former's renewal — with Western diplomats rarely engaging in rebuttals to point out the vast differences between these pieces of legislation. Criticism of some of the worst aspects of Egypt's human rights practices, such as torture and prolonged administrative detention, was undermined by the rendition of terrorism suspects to Egypt by the US, often with the cooperation of European states. This legacy colours the relations with the new Morsi government, whose members were often on the receiving end of such harsh Mubarak-era policies.

There appears to be an interesting paradox when it comes to the perceived legitimacy of foreign funding in the eyes of the Egyptian public, and the civil sector in particular. European funds for civil society are viewed as being positive by 80 percent of civil society respondents in a recent survey, while American funds are viewed as suspect by about 80 percent of the respondents. Only funds from the Gulf states were viewed with more skepticism — only 10 percent of respondents approved of them (Elegati, 2013). In the general population, the same relationships held sway: European and Japanese funding were seen in a generally positive light by 70 percent and 63 percent respectively, while American and Gulf funds were seen as negative by two-thirds of respondents (*ibid.*). According to Elegati (2013), "Broad reservation against US government agencies are a regional feature rather than a specifically Egyptian one, which has not meaningfully changed since the fall of the Mubarak regime." NGOs often fear being tarnished by having a US donor label, though this applies more to direct US government funding than to private foundations. "European donors face less suspicion...their contribution is largely welcomed" (*ibid.*). The gap between the perception of US funds and their relatively greater practical sensitivity to the ground reality is noteworthy. An Egyptian civic activist noted that "France and Europe have a lot to learn from the US" in terms of relations with civil society.⁸

⁸ Participant at "Pluralism and Democracy: Prospects for the Arab Middle East and North Africa," European Council on Foreign Relations and Council for a Community of Democracies round table, Canadian Cultural Centre, Paris, December 6-7, 2012.

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WAYS DIPLOMATIC ASSETS HAVE BEEN APPLIED IN EGYPT

The Golden Rules

In the past, Western diplomats described **listening** as a fundamental part of their diplomacy with Egypt. However, their listening then was generally restricted to a wide variety of actors within the Egyptian government — within the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Commerce and Energy, and the Ministry of International Cooperation, among others. During the Bush administration, there was an effort to identify genuine reformers within the government and to listen to their advice. Such listening took place through regular, formal meetings in Cairo, as well as in some private, closed-door meetings abroad. Clearly, civil society also got some face time with diplomats in Egypt, and not merely as recipients of assistance. The relationship was overwhelmingly government-to-government, however, and dominated by principals in national capitals. Now, this listening must expand to all the disparate — and often opposing — forces in Egyptian society, which should put a premium on the role of diplomats, though it is unclear whether their input will affect the overall direction of policy with their home authorities.

Diplomats met regularly with civil society activists. But some diplomats noted that they had limited **understanding** of internal reform issues, because they had not interacted with a broad enough coalition of Egyptian non-governmental actors. On the US side, such meetings increased during the Bush administration and were continued as a way of demonstrating support for Egyptian reform even after diplomatic pressure waned in 2006.

In late 2012, Middle Eastern civic activists and human rights defenders criticized a Western woodenness in response. “The West, but especially the EU, is playing an autistic role,” one remarked.⁹ The US and EU have both understood the profoundly negative impact of the new NGO law, which impedes their ability to assist civil society in its crucial efforts to define and ground Egyptian democracy. However, the donor approaches of Western democracies have yet to reflect such situational awareness, especially given what Mohamed Elegati (2013) calls the dominant “paranoia” of foreign influence stoked by the prior regime and held by the Morsi government and Egyptian society as a whole. Marrying greater US willingness to fund civil society to the EU’s greater perceived legitimacy through some creative collaboration would be one such avenue.

Demonstrating **respect** for Egypt’s government was a regular component of diplomats’ engagement with Egypt, yet this was lacking for Egypt’s civil society, even to the point of accepting draconian restrictions on NGO funding. However,

9 Participant at “Pluralism and Democracy: Prospects for the Arab Middle East and North Africa,” European Council on Foreign Relations and Council for a Community of Democracies round table, Canadian Cultural Centre, Paris, December 6-7, 2012.

there were a number of occasions when the US government aimed to pressure the Mubarak regime on reform issues. The government responded by accusing the US of showing insufficient respect for Egypt's independence and sovereignty. This was the case when the US raised the issue of re-examining the foreign assistance relationship, as well as when the US offered proposals for a draft memorandum of understanding, which aimed to offer additional assistance to Egypt in exchange for the Egyptian regime fulfilling promises made during the 2005 presidential campaign. Egyptian activists often saw the Western countries as excessively deferential in their dealings with the Egyptian government, and insufficiently respectful of the rights of Egypt's citizens. Mohamed Elegati (2012) has written that "we need more involvement of civil society organizations in Euro-Egyptian relations, so they can become an effective party whose role is recognized by decision-makers. It seems that those running the state in Egypt know nothing of about civil society other than its charity role." He added that Egyptians have rejected "privatization in the economic field" and "normalization with Israel in the political field...The EU should take people's and civil society's rejection of old policies into consideration" (ibid.).

There has been some degree of **sharing** of information and tasks among Western governments on democracy and reform issues in Egypt, but seemingly less than is the case in other undemocratic countries. This is an area which needs improvement.

Such coordination varied considerably over time as the approach and priorities of Western governments have shifted and the personalities involved have changed. Such efforts included planning to jointly attend trials of political activists or to visit such activists in jail. Diplomats commented that coordinating such moves increased the impact of such gestures. Most coordination and information-sharing took place among political officers on the ground in Cairo, although at some moments, higher-level meetings of Western foreign ministers have been useful in coordinating efforts on Egypt. Western diplomats also coordinated democracy and governance assistance programs to some degree, mostly through a monthly meeting of diplomats tasked with monitoring domestic politics and human rights. Diplomats opined, however, that such efforts needed to be institutionalized. There is also a wide discrepancy in the resources that different embassies allocate to this task: in some smaller embassies, such as those of Austria or New Zealand, a political officer monitors not only several issues in the country (with the focus being on economic relations), but also issues in neighbouring countries. Embassies with dedicated staff who are well informed about the political and human rights situations and are able to attend trials, protests and other events can have much influence in informing other countries' perspectives. These include diplomats from large embassies such as those of the US, Canada, the UK and France, but also those from smaller embassies that have prioritized human rights in their relationship with Egypt, such as Sweden, the Netherlands and Ireland. Egyptian activists noted that greater awareness of the situation in Egypt can bolster their case in international platforms.

As noted previously, the level of engagement of individual countries differs widely. A division of labour seemed to emerge based on countries' policy approaches,

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but there was no apparent effort to coordinate strategically. The US officially committed to promoting democracy long ago through long-running programs to fund government reform efforts and NGOs, though recent restrictive laws governing outside financial support for NGOs have greatly constrained support for civil society.

The European Union delegation handled a large amount of funds, but these were mostly targeted toward economic and institutional reform efforts, with human rights and political reform playing a comparatively insignificant role in the big picture of its approach. Furthermore, reflecting disinterest in democracy promotion in Brussels and the bureaucracy of aid spending, EU delegation officials had a strong incentive to minimize any source of friction with the Egyptian government under Mubarak and to ensure that funds were disbursed quickly rather than efficiently. A failure to disburse funds, even if there is no adequate recipient, can negatively impact diplomats' careers; disbursement is seen as a criterion for success in Brussels. Reports from within the EU delegation revealed pressure on funding officers to stay away from potentially controversial programs, such as funding civil society election monitoring efforts, for fear of slowing down negotiations on trade relations should the Egyptian government take umbrage. A presentation in 2009 at a *Handbook* workshop at the College of Europe in Poland by a frequent expert consultant on financial support to Egypt made it clear that democratic governance was in no way part of the European Commission brief.

Egyptian civil society held widely varying views as to the postures and approaches of individual EU members. Generally speaking, France, Italy and Spain were seen as most likely to support the Mubarak government's position and scale down pressure. They rarely made condemnations of the government's practices, or stressed issues of human rights or political reform in public statements, and exerted pressure and influence to ensure that European Commission officials also downplayed human rights issues, including in the Commission's human rights division. Most reform-oriented funding was directed at either training programs for officials or other programs dealing with institutions.

The experiences of European countries with fewer vested strategic interests in Egypt seem to provide a better model. Sweden and the Netherlands are generally considered to be the best examples of Western engagement on human rights and democracy promotion, both in the quality of their approach and knowledge of terrain as well as the proportionally large part of their aid earmarked for those issues. The Netherlands and Denmark, for instance, focussed on the issue of torture — an urgent issue in Egypt, where it has been endemic and normalized as a tool in routine police work. They have collaborated with the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims and well-regarded local NGOs, such as the Nadeem Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture, to develop an Egypt-specific program. Some medium-sized and small embassies, such as Canada and Ireland, have also chosen to use their discretionary funding to focus on issues that others ignored, such as gay rights. In general, however, funding allocation has taken place more ad hoc than as

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a result of consultations between embassies, leaving room for enhanced cooperation and greater visibility in overall foreign efforts in this area.

It is also important to note that some analysts observed a blind spot in the civil society engaged by external actors, particularly the EU. Jünemann (2012) writes that, prior to 2011, in European Commission usage:

Only a very narrow spectrum of Arab society was considered “civil society.” Groupings that draw their identity and their political programme from their religious beliefs were excluded. The official argument goes that religion is a primordial structure and therefore is incompatible with a European concept of “civil society.” The decisive reason for not considering Islamist groupings as civil society, however, is the perception that political Islam is anti-Western, hostile, and prone to terrorism. In contrast, individuals with an explicit secular outlook became privileged partners in the EU’s modest attempts to also construct a partnership on the level of civil society.

Of course, the Muslim Brotherhood’s function prior to 2011 was in most respects that of civil society. Such blind spots limited not only the contacts external actors had, but their sense of the relative weight of civic actors, in the broadest sense, in Egypt.

Truth in Communications

Diplomats in Egypt regularly **report** back to their home governments on issues of concern regarding democracy and human rights, occasionally generating a high-level policy response. In addition, diplomats have been involved in **informing** not only their own governments, but also the public and the media at home and in Egypt. This has occurred not only through official annual reports on the state of human rights, but also through testimony in US congressional committee hearings, and through sporadic public statements or responses to press inquiries. This was fuelled by important openings to the media climate in Egypt — with the emergence of independent newspapers, satellite television, the Internet and new media — issues of political reform and human rights were addressed publicly in Egypt before Mubarak’s ouster in ways impossible a decade before.

In addition, important foreign news outlets such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* developed a keen interest in the state of democratic development in Egypt unmatched by other countries in the region. The post-September 11 interest in democracy as an antidote to extremism, along with the arrests of high-profile dissidents such as Saad Eddin Ibrahim, whose case the Western media followed closely, increased such coverage. The unfinished revolution in Egypt continues to draw popular interest and concern, with corresponding policy effects.

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The emergence of social media in Egypt and its catalytic communications role in the immediate run-up to the toppling of the Mubarak regime has been a seminal feature of analysis. The murder of computer programmer Khaled Said while in custody assumed the iconic impact of the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi in Tunisia when images of his battered face were posted on a Facebook group called “We are all Khaled Said,” created by Wael Ghonim.

The importance of social media and the Internet during Egypt’s revolution underlined the direct advocacy of freedom to communicate by the US government after the Mubarak regime attempted to limit access to social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, and then to restrict Internet provision altogether just days after the revolution began. US President Obama stated that Egyptians had fundamental human rights to speak and assemble, calling on the Mubarak regime to “reverse the actions that they’ve taken to interfere with access to the Internet, to cellphone service and to social networks that do so much to connect people in the twenty-first century” (cited in Moos, 2011). Julie Moos (2011), the author of an article on Obama and Secretary Clinton’s activities on this score, writes that, “in mentioning social media in the same breath as physical protests and traditional forms of dissent, Obama elevated it to a place alongside several protections offered by the First Amendment” to the US Constitution.

When a strongly anti-Muslim film, produced privately in the US, was discovered on the Internet in September 2012, it generated major protest throughout the Muslim world, including attacks on US diplomatic posts. The US Embassy in Cairo had to explain that while the film was hurtful and not backed in any way by the US government, the government could not ban it. Explaining this values balance is often difficult.

Embassies themselves now regularly use social media as part of their public outreach to inform the public in host countries. But as with all communications methods, messaging can backfire. After the announcement of the prosecution of a popular television comedian, Bassem Youssef, for poking fun at (and “insulting”) President Mohamed Morsi, his US counterpart, Jon Stewart, used Morsi’s archived denunciation of Jews in a segment of his program. The US Embassy retweeted a link to the Stewart program, prompting the Egyptian government to accuse the embassy of “negative propaganda” (Khalaf, 2013).

Working with the Government

The Egyptian government worked irregularly with Western governments on economic reform issues since the 1970s. At times, there was significant tension over such reforms, though the regime was generally more receptive to economic reforms and willing to cooperate on economic development issues than on political issues. The Mubarak government was receptive to external **advising** on certain economic reform issues, including financial sector reform and efforts to increase the independence of the Egyptian Central Bank. Since 2011, international efforts to advise post-Mubarak governments on economic policy have been mainly aimed at

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promoting policies that will allow a deal with the IMF. At the time of writing, this arrangement has yet to be concluded.

Inevitably, the political environment affects the economy. Since 2011, the impact has been decidedly negative. Cooperation with the Mubarak regime — and his successors — on political reform has generally been much more difficult. The European Union established an EU-Egypt Task Force to promote cooperation and deliver advice on a host of issues, including **institution building**.¹⁰ There had been some success in the Mubarak era on this front as well, aimed at improving the quality of educational, judicial and legislative institutions; however, critics noted that while such programs may have improved the internal capacity and performance of institutions such as the Egyptian courts and Parliament, they did not address the fundamental need for such institutions to have increased power to act independently of the regime — nor did such programs have a benchmarked track record of having improved the situation on the ground. There was a general lack of engagement, particularly among Europeans, with the Ministry of Interior and other security institutions when it came to discussing human rights issues. Most diplomats generally raise these issues with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and sometimes with the Ministry of Justice. However, the Ministry of Interior was typically the chief source of such problems. Human rights activists have recommended engaging it directly on such issues rather than going through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is believed to be a poor address for such messages — and had limited leverage in the domestic power hierarchy, even assuming goodwill. As the Ministry of Interior is an interlocutor on other issues, such as counterterrorism, channels often already exist, and directly addressing human rights could at least help make it more responsive and create channels to act quickly on specific cases, when possible. The US has had the best relationship with the Egyptian security services, and has on occasion intervened to get Ministry of Interior officials to meet with US rights groups such as Human Rights Watch. Europeans — especially the French, British, Dutch, Belgians, Italians and Germans — have had counterterrorism and counter-radicalization ties with the security services, but not on the same level.

For years, the excessive focus of external actors on institutions was generally welcomed by the government and civil servants. “Egypt is proud of its bureaucracy — there is very little pride on the decision making side,” one regional analyst noted.¹¹ In general, Egypt’s officialdom has proven highly resistant to advice, despite the large amount of external funding.

Most recently, the US and EU tried to **demarche** the Egyptian government of President Morsi not to adopt an even more restrictive NGO law. EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton noted in June 2013 that the EU “in a spirit of true

10 See *EU-Egypt Task Force: Supporting the Reform Process in Egypt*, available at: http://eeas.europa.eu/top_stories/2102/141112_eu-egypt-taskforce_en.htm.

11 Participant at “Pluralism and Democracy: Prospects for the Arab Middle East and North Africa,” European Council on Foreign Relations and Council for a Community of Democracies round table, Canadian Cultural Centre, Paris, December 6-7, 2012.

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partnership has engaged with the government and has provided technical advice to the authorities in the process of drafting a new law on associations, the NGO Law.” This statement, acknowledging previously delivered advice, represented a significant switch. When 43 NGO personnel, including some Westerners, were convicted for breach of the restrictive law in June 2013, US Secretary of State John Kerry (2013a) bluntly called the trial “politically motivated” and stated that the verdict was “incompatible with the transition to democracy.” He added that the “the decision to close these organizations’ offices and seize their assets contradicts the Government of Egypt’s commitments to support the role of civil society as a fundamental actor in a democracy and a contributor to development, especially at this critical stage in the Egyptian people’s democratic transition” (ibid.). The US State Department had previously issued a strong statement of concern on Egypt’s December 2012 constitutional referendum following its passage, noting that “the future of Egypt’s democracy depends on forging a broader consensus behind its new democratic rules and institutions. Many Egyptians have voiced deep concerns about the substance of the constitution and the constitutional process... We hope those Egyptians disappointed by the result will seek more and deeper engagement. We look to those who welcome the result to engage in good faith. And we hope all sides will re-commit themselves to condemn and prevent violence” (Ventrell, 2012). President Morsi’s November 22, 2012 decision that his decrees were beyond review infuriated Egyptian civil society and political opposition, and also elicited statements of concern from Washington. “One of the aspirations of the revolution was to ensure power was not be overly concentrated in the hands of any one person or institution,” State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland (2012) stated.

Reaching Out

During the Bush administration, US diplomats regularly sought to foster dialogue on reform issues by **convening** a group of key Egyptian elites whom they believed shared a commitment to genuine reform. In 2002 and 2003, as support for Egyptian reform first emerged on the Bush administration’s agenda, US officials convened a series of closed-door meetings outside the country with Egyptian government officials, including cabinet-level ministers, who were perceived to be reformers. The United States intended such meetings to provide a safe forum for discussion and to identify steps that the US government could take to support reform efforts, including demands that they could make of the Egyptian government as a whole (i.e., beyond the small group of reform-minded Egyptian government officials). While such meetings produced serious dialogue, US diplomats came away with the lesson that the agenda for reform should be based on interactions with a broader coalition if possible, as progress through such meetings was limited and the influence of the participating reformers within the Egyptian government waned over time.

Egyptian analyst Mohamed Elegati (2012) believes that an opportunity has been lost to date, in failing to **connect** civil servants and revolutionaries to each other, permitting the growing gulf of mutual incomprehension to continue. He — and

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other observers, such as the Center for Islam and Democracy's Radwan Masmoudi — believe that connecting and **facilitating** is essential to sensitizing both sides to normal interaction in a democratic framework, rather than a habitual, inherently adversarial relationship (ibid.). He noted that in 2011,

a statement was issued by more than one-third of those who work in the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in support of the demands for change; meanwhile, doctors of the Ministry of Health stood side by side with the revolutionaries in field hospitals but there was no communication with them or attempts to support them inside their institutions. NGOs worked in keeping old methods and customs, with state institutions regarded as part of the regime, whereas they were emerging as part of the revolution as well... its only experiences are in dealing with oppressive regimes and mainly focusing on “exposing” abuses and violations. (ibid.)

This persistent friction is likely to have helped generate the current dire situation. Egypt's NGO law impedes the forging of such needed connections. Foreign officials are still attempting to bridge these divides, though with little obvious success. In a background briefing prior to Secretary Kerry's March 2013 visit to Cairo, US State Department officials noted that it was “not only on Morsi to build consensus,” and the opposition was advised to participate in the electoral process rather than boycott it.¹²

Looking forward, several civil society activists focussed on the region have advocated a far more ambitious effort to connect European and the MENA region societies in the broadest sense through emulating the European Union's Erasmus educational exchanges and other such programs.¹³ “It's time to think big. Like Erasmus — we need large-scale exchange programs for teachers, others. Why not something like the Peace Corps? We need to demystify the Arab reality to the West,” one speaker advocated, with general agreement on its desirability.¹⁴ Several others, however, questioned how practical this would be in the current straitened financial circumstances of the Euro crisis.¹⁵

External support for political parties has generally fallen from favour among Western democracies because of its vulnerability to charges of political interference. Nonetheless, Elegati (2013) reports that the “specialized training and dialogue programs for example for political parties during elections,” provided by foundations

12 See Senior State Department Official (2013), Background Briefing En Route to Cairo, Egypt, Special Briefing, March 2. Available at: www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/03/205570.htm.

13 Participants at “Pluralism and Democracy: Prospects for the Arab Middle East and North Africa,” European Council on Foreign Relations/Council for a Community of Democracies round table, Canadian Cultural Centre, Paris, December 6-7, 2012.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

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such as the German Stiftungen, were cited by his interviewees as being among the best benefits of external financing. “Donor policies that are focused on supporting ‘collective cooperation’ between local organizations for the purpose of agreeing common positions,” and “supporting issues and agendas that are not endorsed by the Egyptian government,” were similarly cited (ibid.).

As discussed at length earlier in **funding**, diplomats have also provided support to democratic development in Egypt through **financing** for democracy and governance projects, which increased significantly after 2002. From 2004 to 2009, US\$250 million was distributed by USAID in bilateral funding for democracy and governance programs in Egypt. But the impact of such programs was extremely limited, as described in an October 2009 audit by the USAID Office of the Inspector General. The audit report noted that “a major contributing factor to the limited achievements for some of these programs resulted from a lack of support from the Government of Egypt.”

Legislatures have worked to ensure that their governments do not accept restrictions on what can be funded. For example, an amendment to the US appropriations bill for foreign operations, offered by then Republican Senator Sam Brownback and passed in December 2004, asserted that “with respect to the provision of assistance for Egypt for democracy and governance activities, the organizations implementing such assistance and the specific nature of that assistance shall not be subject to the prior approval by the Government of Egypt.” After passage in late 2004, such language remained in each annual US appropriations act for foreign assistance through 2008. In fiscal year 2009, this language was amended to explicitly assert the authority of USAID to determine the distribution of funds in *all* countries that receive US assistance for democracy and governance, rather than specifically focussing on Egypt.

The support for indigenous civil society has been and remains perhaps the single most effective tool of the international community in Egypt, yet, restrictions on the NGO sector, carried over from the Mubarak regime, severely restrict external assistance to civil society. Established democracies are in the midst of a reassessment of how to work in this vital field after the June 2013 conviction of 43 civil society actors, Egyptian and foreign.

Defending Democrats

US and European diplomats clearly **demonstrated** their support for prominent democrats who were arrested and persecuted in Egypt. Two such cases that drew much international attention were Saad Eddin Ibrahim and Ayman Nour.

Saad Eddin Ibrahim, Egyptian-American sociology professor, author, democracy activist and head of the Ibn Khaldun Center, was arrested in June 2000 on charges of defaming Egypt’s image abroad and embezzling funds received from the EU. The arrest followed a public statement and newspaper column by Ibrahim, raising concerns that President Mubarak was grooming his son Gamal to succeed him. Initially, the US Embassy made a conscious decision to respond to the case through

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private discussions, contacting the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, advisers to President Mubarak and even raising the issue directly in a meeting with Mubarak. Gradually, the US Embassy increased pressure on the Egyptian government in private, while at the same time steadily increasing the level of public criticism. This gradual, sequential, multi-faceted approach seems to have worked — Ibrahim was released after 45 days in prison.

Upon release, however, Ibrahim returned to his activism and questioning of the Egyptian government and was soon arrested again. This time, the US ambassador was not as directly involved in negotiations, but other officials at the US Embassy continued to engage extensively with Egyptian officials (including President Mubarak), on the case and were repeatedly reassured that if the United States would let the Egyptian justice system work, Ibrahim would ultimately be released. Ibrahim was tried and convicted of all charges in May 2001, however, and then lost an appeal in July 2002, confirming his sentence of seven years in prison with hard labour. His health deteriorated sharply due to a series of strokes in prison, leaving him partially paralyzed (he now walks with a cane). In August 2002, US President Bush informed President Mubarak in a letter that the United States would withhold US\$133 million in planned supplemental economic assistance because of the case. This was the first time that the US had publicly linked foreign aid to an Arab country with that government's record on human rights issues.

This clearly angered the Egyptian government, and many in the US government were alarmed by the anger and tension and potential consequences for the US-Egypt bilateral relationship. Yet US diplomats attest that during this period, Egypt's cooperation with the US on key strategic issues — counterterrorism, Israel, military overflight privileges and Suez Canal rights — remained undiminished. On the contrary, it appears that the Egyptian government may have made more of an effort to cooperate on strategic issues in the hope of reducing pressure on the reform front. Moreover, this application of clear conditionality was apparently successful, as Ibrahim was eventually referred to a higher court, which cleared him of all charges in March 2003.

Ibrahim continued his strong criticism of the Egyptian regime, however, and in 2007, private attorneys affiliated with Egypt's ruling parties brought several suits against him while he was abroad, effectively preventing him from returning to Egypt for fear of immediate arrest. He remained outside the country, in the US and in Turkey, until 2011. The authors of the *Handbook* personally witnessed Ibrahim being verbally attacked by Egyptian diplomats who attended the Community of Democracies meeting in Lisbon in July 2009. They called for him to be handed back to face trial for his "crimes."

Foreign diplomats also defended opposition politician Ayman Nour, another high-profile figure. In January 2005, authorities arrested Nour, charging him with forging signatures filed in forming the Al-Ghad Party. Having learned the lesson from the Saad Eddin Ibrahim case, the US government responded immediately to Nour's arrest in a more assertive manner than they had done with Ibrahim. In February

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2005, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice abruptly cancelled a visit to Cairo as a sign of protest against Nour's arrest. At around the same time, a group of members of the European Parliament, led by the British Conservative Vice President of the Parliament Edward McMillan-Scott, threatened to raise the profile of the Nour case by paying a visit to him in prison as a group. Nour was released in March 2005 and was allowed to run in Egypt's presidential election in September 2005. He finished a distant second to President Mubarak, with just under eight percent of the vote. While this was the first time Mubarak campaigned in a competitive election, the deck was stacked against opposition candidates.

Soon after the election, Nour was arrested again, convicted and sentenced to five years in prison in December 2005. On the day of Nour's conviction, the White House released a public statement calling on "the Egyptian government to act under the laws of Egypt in the spirit of its professed desire for increased political openness and dialogue within Egyptian society, and out of 'humanitarian concern,' to release Mr. Nour from detention." As in the case of Ibrahim, the White House also expressed its displeasure through a tangible act, in this case cancelling negotiations on a free trade agreement that were scheduled to begin in January 2006. Although the international community continued to raise concerns about Nour's imprisonment, he remained in jail for more than three years until his release in February 2009, when Mubarak wanted to reset his relationship with the US under the Obama administration.

Diplomats involved with both the Ibrahim and Nour cases noted that the US government, in particular, seemed to have considerably more leverage in the former case than in the latter. Ibrahim's dual US and Egyptian citizenship and his extensive ties to the United States (he has taught at numerous US universities and his wife is American) made it much more difficult for the Egyptian government to dismiss US government efforts on his behalf as illegitimate interference in Egyptian affairs. Such claims were frequently made regarding the Nour case by many actors in the Egyptian government, including several officials generally perceived to be reformers.

In addition to these two high-profile cases, Western diplomats have provided support for a number of other imprisoned political reformers and activists in Egypt. Of the dozens of bloggers in Egyptian prisons, Abdel Karim Nabil Soliman (known on his blog as Kareem Amer) was the first person imprisoned in Egypt purely for the content of his online blog. The case attracted particular attention, including in separate letters to President Mubarak and to President Bush written by numerous members of the US Congress. Incidents such as sectarian clashes or human rights abuses involving religious discrimination by the state also drew a higher profile in North America and Europe, in part due to the political weight that churches and Christian interest groups can play as lobby groups, in influencing media coverage or through elected representatives. Both focus on discrimination against Christians and politically motivated attacks on liberal reformers show the narrow base of support that exists in the West for a more thorough and approach on human rights and political freedoms. Such cases remain in the spotlight because they have a supportive and vocal constituency in Western countries. These may be émigré

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Coptic groups and Christian solidarity networks, or in the case of Ibrahim and Nour, these individuals' contacts among political and media elites in Europe and the US. *The Washington Post*, for instance, campaigned continuously for both men, as well as greater US pressure on Egypt in general, in good part because its editorial page editor, Jackson Diehl, is personally committed to reform in Egypt and has good contacts with Egyptian reformists.

The arrest of hundreds of other political activists, however, did not draw this kind of assertive response from Western diplomats. This includes the numerous members of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt who had been jailed prior to Mubarak's ouster. While the State Department's annual Country Report on Human Rights in Egypt regularly noted the use of closed military tribunals and emergency courts to detain and convict members of the Brotherhood, they have clearly not received the same kind of support from the West as the celebrated cases described above.

The high-level statements by Western officials during the 2011 revolution to refrain from violence and for Mubarak to heed the popular will also constituted **protecting**. US Secretary of State Kerry's March 2013 high visibility meetings with civic activists and opposition figures, as well as then President Morsi, the foreign and defence ministers and the intelligence chief **demonstrated** that the US government valued their role. This came at a time when the relationship between the Morsi government, opposition and civil society was fraught. These forces are even more divided now.

The ongoing issue of restrictions on NGO funding and activity has provided perhaps the biggest post-2011 demonstration of external support for democrats and the democratic process, as broadly defined in the democratic world. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay, for example, stated in 2012, as the NGO law was being discussed, that "if passed in its current form, [the law] would seriously undermine the spirit of Egypt's revolution, in which civil society played a pivotal role" (cited in Elegati, 2012). Many other such statements were cited earlier in this study.

CONCLUSION

Egypt's strategic centrality to the West, and particularly the United States, elevated policy decisions on the country to the highest stratum of policy making. Prior to the fall of the Mubarak regime in 2011, strategic considerations were in large part responsible for the inadequacy of understanding of the popular political forces in the country.

The Muslim Brotherhood's history as a persecuted opposition, unable to even officially compete in slanted electoral politics, clearly affected its approach to politics. Once it assumed power, civil society actors in Egypt harshly criticized its majoritarian approach to governance, noting that this undercut the potential for Egypt to develop democratically, as well as betrayed the spirit of the revolution, in which popular unity was a notable feature. The approach to constitution drafting

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was seen as exclusivist, both in content and participation, defying Egypt's own pre-military rule constitutionalist history. The postures of Western powers were seen as aloof or indulgent of the Brotherhood and the military, which disappointed many in the disparate civic-oriented opposition. "There are two vast segments of society which don't know how to deal with each other," according to one observer speaking in December 2012, when violent clashes accompanied President Morsi's decree that his decisions were beyond review to facilitate the Brotherhood's desired constitutional draft, which civic and secular opposition believed at the time gave the army too much sway.¹⁶

The relationships among the triangle of Muslim Brotherhood and its more austere Islamist political allies, the non-Islamist opposition (which covers a wide ideological spectrum), and the Mubarak-era security apparatus around the Army have defined the post-revolutionary/transitional context in Egypt to date. All three actors have manoeuvred and negotiated for political and social advantage. But the "deep state" has remained the most powerful — the swing vote/kingmaker between those operating in the political realm. The July 2013 military coup has only served to underscore its abiding power.

The Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party thought it had made peace with the security state in the interests of maintaining power and seeing off its political rivals. President Morsi was apparently the last to believe that the Army, commanded by a general he himself appointed, would overthrow him (Kirkpatrick and El Sheikh, 2013). There was a lack of civilian consensus on what the political rules of the road should be, giving the military much more leverage than it should ever have had in a democratic system. Civilian control of the armed forces remained a major question mark, despite high-level dismissals by Morsi in 2012, until it took over and demonstrated it answered to no authority.

Support for the secular and liberal opposition has grown in the aggregate since Mubarak's fall (and during Morsi's presidency), but the Muslim Brotherhood's early organizational advantage and social credibility was pivotal in its ability to attain power. The growth of Salafist parties to the right of the Brotherhood has surprised many observers, who see it as an ominous development.¹⁷ The Muslim Brotherhood's performance in office, however, diminished its credibility. This appeared to increase its insularity and the polarization in Egyptian society. The perceived betrayals and compromises felt by civic political forces impeded a democratic consolidation, establishment of stability and a return to economic growth.

On July 3, 2013, a week of massive protest against Morsi by his opposition, including both those who assembled against, and who were part of, the Mubarak regime, was ended by military intervention, which suspended the new constitution and took President Morsi into custody. At time of writing, it remains unclear

16 Participant at "Pluralism and Democracy: Prospects for the Arab Middle East and North Africa," European Council on Foreign Relations/Council for a Community of Democracies round table, Canadian Cultural Centre, Paris, December 6-7, 2012.

17 Ibid.

whether promises of a new election will be met — or whether the Brotherhood and other Islamists will react violently to their removal from power. Ongoing protests have involved violence, but have not been “violent protests” per se; military and police reaction has usually involved violence. The Army justified its takeover by the massive protests, which they claim involved 20 million Egyptians, which immediately preceded in late June/early July 2013. Subsequently, the military called on citizens to mobilize once again in Friday demonstrations against the Brotherhood, which decried such calls as invitations to civil war. It is clear that the Mubarak-era old guard, including former NDP figures, is reasserting itself (Hauslohner, 2013). The current glidepath is far from encouraging for Egyptian democracy. This is dire for the wider Arab world.

As has long been the case, Western countries seem to lack a longer-term strategy for supporting Egyptian democracy. Due to Egypt’s unique strategic importance as a critical Western ally, support for Egyptian democracy has tended to come directly from Western capitals. But in the aftermath of Morsi’s election, US Ambassador Anne W. Patterson became heavily engaged as a conduit and adviser to the Morsi presidency. Patterson lobbied successfully for Secretary of State Clinton to visit Egypt. She was the most visible focal point and target for ire from opposition figures, having said in June that “I don’t think the elected nature of this government is seriously in doubt,” and questioning whether “street action will produce better results than elections” (cited in Landler, 2013). Such comments generated opprobrium from Morsi’s opponents. But her meetings with opposition figures, also part of her mandate, earned skepticism from the Morsi camp as well. As one pro-Morsi demonstrator stated, “she should not interfere; she needs to watch from a distance” (ibid.).

Generating such widespread suspicion and condemnation is a reflection of the frequently held view that the US is dominant in Egyptian politics, but also, as commentator and former US official Vali Nasr put it, this “only represents the fact that the rest of the American administration is absent” (ibid.). At least it appeared so publicly. But the Obama administration, up to the highest level, had apparently advised Morsi to open up his government and the constitution-drafting process to a wider cross-section of Egyptian society, months before the military moved (Kirkpatrick and El Sheikh, 2013). In the final days prior to the military’s ouster of Morsi, *The New York Times* reports that an Arab foreign minister acted as emissary of the US government, asking “if Mr. Morsi would accept the appointment of a new prime minister and cabinet, one that would take over all legislative powers and replace his chosen provincial governors” (ibid.). The appointment of a governor in Luxor who had been involved in an infamous attack on tourists in 1997 had generated much anger at home and abroad. The entreaty was rebuffed, with the rejection conveyed directly to Ambassador Patterson (ibid.).

Since the coup, the Obama administration has felt compelled to engage in verbal contortionism, fearing the legal necessity of curtailing US\$1.3 billion in aid to Egypt if the military takeover is deemed a “coup” (Baker, 2013). “We are

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going to examine this and monitor this and take the time necessary in making the determination in a manner consistent with our policy objectives and our national security interests,” White House spokesman Jay Carney told reporters. “But we do not believe that it is in our interests to make a precipitous decision or determination to change our assistance program right away” (cited in Baker, 2013). While Speaker of the US House of Representatives John Boehner basically applauded the military seizure of power as representing the popular will, his fellow Republican and former presidential nominee Senator John McCain was direct in his condemnation. “Morsi was a terrible president, their economy is in terrible shape thanks to their policies, but the fact is that the United States should not be supporting this coup” (ibid.). In late July, a shipment of F-16 fighter aircraft scheduled for delivery was delayed.

While much is opaque about Egypt’s future, it does seem clear that strategies for supporting democratic development in Egypt cannot rely on the political will of the new Egyptian government. Neither was this possible with the troubled, democratically elected Morsi government. It was clearly and logically the hope of the established democracies that after 2011, the relationship could really begin to tackle development and cooperation in an environment of democratic accountability. Yet, as events have demonstrated, this cannot be taken for granted. There are a variety of views from within Egyptian civil society as to the posture external actors should take. But there are few in the community who wish to operate in a restricted environment, as the Morsi government seemed willing impose. The “deep state” security apparatus is bent on tightening further, with the acquiescence or outright cheerleading of much of secular and liberal Egyptian society.

Sadly, some lessons drawn from the Mubarak era may still apply to post-Mubarak Egypt — particularly if the old guard (feloul or “remnants”) return to formal (as well as behind-the-scenes) power. A multi-faceted approach, in which private dialogue and selective public criticism are complemented by leveraging assets like foreign assistance, seems to show the greatest promise. Direct engagement with the beleaguered civil society actors in Egypt must continue, as must direct engagement and — where necessary — pressure upon the new Egyptian government. In applying such pressure, foreign governments should not be afraid to condition economic benefits such as trade agreements and foreign assistance — including defence assistance — on positive and meaningful steps toward instituting democratic norms.

Several Western diplomats noted the need to directly engage Egyptian government officials at the very highest levels on issues of democratic development. Willingness to apply increasing leverage in private, while accompanied by public criticisms and conditioning of benefits such as foreign aid and trade benefits, may yield results.

This case study’s conclusion in the 2010 edition of the *Handbook* included the following statement: “Ultimately, it is up to the Egyptian people to bring reform and work for the transition to a genuinely democratic Egypt in the years ahead, rather than merely the transition to a new autocratic president.” While the way the Mubarak regime came to an end — and may well be revived — was not envisioned by the authors, this statement remains apropos in their view. Just two years ago,

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a monumental paradigm shift appeared to be underway; this remains without completion. While Egyptians need to chart their own course, it is the responsibility — and in the interest — of established democracies and their representatives to support their efforts to achieve the freedom and accountable government they have so long deserved and been denied. The democratic world needs to recalibrate its diplomatic engagement to today's Egypt in recognition of how much has been irrevocably changed — and how much has stayed the same.

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