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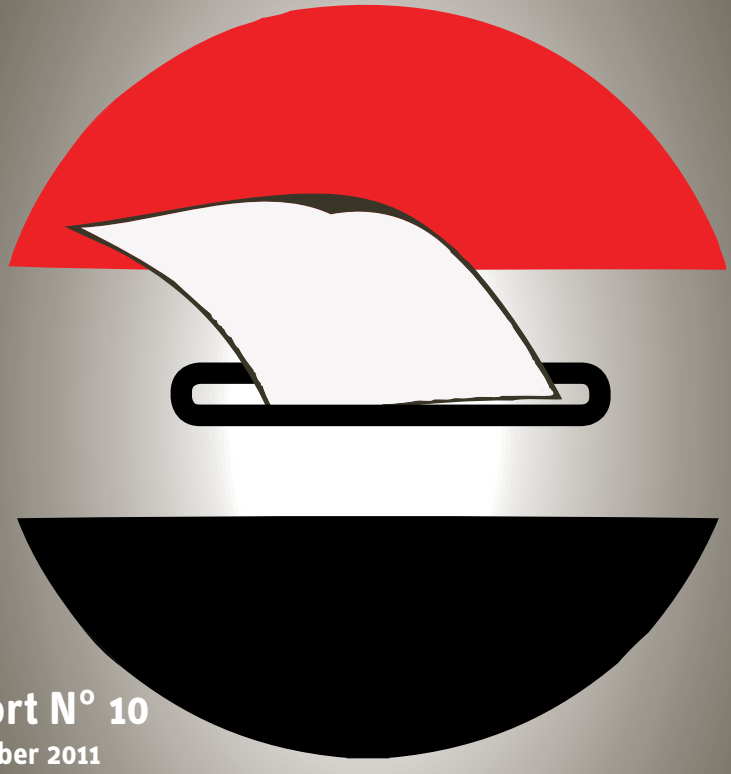
Egyptian Democracy and the Muslim Brotherhood



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This EUISS publication examines the current context and future prospects in Egypt ahead of the first round of parliamentary elections due in late November, with special attention to the role and position of the Muslim Brotherhood. The contributors examine the various options, opportunities and challenges facing both domestic and external actors with regard to the country's future and the Muslim Brotherhood's political trajectory.

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INTRODUCTION – EGYPT: DEALING WITH UNFAMILIAR VOICES

Álvaro de Vasconcelos

The most important issue on the EU's foreign policy agenda right now, it can be argued, is how to contribute to a fully free, democratic and peaceful Middle East and Mediterranean region. In order to respond to this challenge, it is essential for European policy-makers to formulate a strategy for dealing with new regimes, including governments and political parties with which the EU is not familiar and which over the years several EU Member States have regarded with suspicion and even as threats. The fall of authoritarian regimes in the southern Mediterranean and the democratic transition process that has followed in some countries means that it is essential for the EU to gain a better understanding of Islamist movements. In particular much more attention needs to be paid to how authoritarian and democratic institutions and processes have shaped and may further shape these actors' political trajectories, and in turn overall prospects for democracy in the region. Given how high the stakes are in Egypt, this is particularly relevant to our understanding of the newly founded Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt, a creation of the Muslim Brotherhood, the oldest and most influential Islamic movement in the region.

This dilemma confronting Europe is not new: in 1991, when the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) won the elections in Algeria, European leaders chose to either at worst support or at best close their eyes to the fierce crackdown on the Islamists by the military. The dilemma came back to haunt the Europeans after Hamas emerged victorious in the Palestinian legislative elections in 2006, considered at the time by the EU monitoring election team as fair and free: European leaders responded to the electoral result by refusing to recognise the new Hamas-led government

Today, overcoming this dilemma is critical for the ability of the EU to come to terms and engage with the democratic transformations in the Arab world. That the option of ignoring the Islamist parties is no longer viaible – if indeed it ever was – has been underlined by the victory of the Ennahda Party in Tunisia's first free elections. There is an urgent need for European leaders to make an effort to familiarise themselves with political Islam and the Muslim Brotherhood and the new party that that movement has founded, and to engage meaningfully in the democratic transition process in Egypt and its attendant difficulties. The aim of this report is to help in this process.

The Freedom and Justice Party is likely to emerge with a substantial share of the vote in the complicated Egyptian electoral process that will start on 28 November. It is

highly likely that they will be forced to form a coalition to run the country and need an even larger coalition to draft a new constitution. The question therefore is what will be the general political orientation of the Freedom and Justice Party ? The Islamists themselves do not seem clear about this, confronted as they are for the first time with the need to define their position with regard to a large number of issues that are of a political rather than religious or social nature.

Their adaptation to this new situation is proving difficult and painful. But, as Amr Elshobaki writes, 'with the fall of the Mubarak regime, the Muslim Brotherhood has a real chance of ridding its politics of religious overtones and becoming committed to democracy, the constitution, and citizenry, while retaining a specific attachment to Islamic identity and civilisation.' In his view, in order to ensure what he calls the 'safe integration' of the mainstream of Islamic currents in the political process, Egypt needs 'to clarify the legal and constitutional framework by which any political current, especially the Islamist newcomers, should abide'. For Nathan J. Brown 'while the Brotherhood's stances still contain some considerable ambiguity on this question, their further participation in a pluralistic order can – under the circumstances that Elshobaki outlines – pin down their commitments to building a society consistent with their conception of Islamic values in a manner that does not undermine the rights of those with other conceptions of the proper public order.' But for this to happen the first condition is that the democratic transition in Egypt proceeds, which means that the military will have to agree to relinquish power and set out a clear timeframe for the transition to civilian rule. In that context the Muslim Brotherhood will participate in the political process and will be confronted with the democratic voice of the Egyptian people and with their aspirations – aspirations which may challenge a conservative Islamist agenda.

Not only the Europeans are concerned about the conservative agenda of the Muslim Brotherhood, but also a significant number of Egyptians liberals, and this may lead to a dangerous polarisation of the political scene in Egypt. Such a polarisation could endanger the democratic process and legitimise for some the continuation of the military in power. As Kristina Kausch writes, 'Europe's excessive focus on Islamism diverts attention away from greater challenges. Currently, the main risk to a consolidation of Egyptian democracy is not a prospective Islamist takeover, but the increasingly tangible possibility that the Egyptian military via the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) will take advantage of its current position to engineer a sustained political role for itself, including far-reaching autonomy from civilian control and protection of its entrenched economic interests. The greatest risk for EU interests at the moment is not the Brotherhood, but a return of the old regime by the back door.'

A broad consensus that includes both Liberal and Islamist parties/stakeholders is essential for the drafting of a constitution that will not be dictated by a small majority but that will be representative in reflecting the rights and basic interests of all

Egyptians, that is to say a truly democratic constitution. Although the influence of the EU on the Muslim Brotherhood is, at this stage, likely to be negligible, the EU should not discount its own influence among some liberal sectors of society, and should craft its policies accordingly. The attitude that the EU displays concerning democratic norms, the importance of profound democratic reform and regarding the Muslim Brotherhood may prove crucial to the democratic future of Egypt. If the EU, as a consequence of an eventual victory of the Freedom and Justice Party, were to fail to recognise the results of elections in Egypt this would be interpreted not just as opposing the Islamists but as denying the right of the Arabs to choose their own leaders. The EU would be perceived as still preferring to shore up authoritarian regimes due to its fear of political Islam. Such a course of action would condemn the EU's Mediterranean policy to irrelevance and spell disaster for its relations with the most important Arab country in the region, and by extension for its relations with others.

I. THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, POST-ELECTION SCENARIOS AND POLICY OPTIONS IN EGYPT: A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

Kristina Kausch

Introduction

As Egypt prepares for parliamentary elections (due to start on 28 November), constitutional reform and presidential elections (due to take place upon finalisation of the new constitution), the domestic tug-of-war over the conditions and modalities of the transition process is becoming fiercer. Many Egyptians perceive the current momentum as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reset the ground rules for a new political order after three decades of political stagnation. Naturally, ensuing tensions lead to an ebb and flow of heated disputes over electoral provisions, alliances, transparency and transitional justice.

In Europe, observers have above all been preoccupied with the question of whether democratic elections in Egypt will lead to a Brotherhood-led government, what this would mean for Egypt's domestic social policies and, most importantly, how it would alter current Egyptian foreign policy positions. While these are valid concerns, they distort Europe's focus and attention away from three essential points. First, an Islamist majority in the coming parliament is likely but not certain, as polls differ considerably over the Brotherhood's electoral prospects. Second, Europe must come to terms with the idea that any democratically elected government in Egypt, Islamist or secular, will be likely to adopt a more assertive foreign policy than the Mubarak regime. And third, Europe's excessive focus on Islamism diverts attention away from greater challenges. Currently, the main risk to a consolidation of Egyptian democracy is not a prospective Islamist takeover, but the increasingly tangible possibility that the Egyptian military via the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) will take advantage of its current position to engineer a sustained political role for itself, including far-reaching autonomy from civilian control and protection of its entrenched economic interests. The greatest risk for EU interests at the moment is not the Brotherhood, but a return of the old regime by the back door.

The significance of this legislative election is enormous. The outcome will determine who leads Egypt into the post-revolution era, and, even more importantly, who will rewrite the ground rules of Egypt's new political order. The new parliament's first task will be to elect a 100-member constituent assembly from both houses to draft

a new constitution within six months of the legislative elections. Once finalised, the draft constitution will be put to popular referendum, followed by presidential elections. The whole process, according to the SCAF, is meant to be finalised before the end of 2012, but may well be carried over to 2013.

Equally important, the election will also be the first parliamentary vote of the post-revolutionary Arab Spring. As a potential turning point, the coming elections will draw the eyes of the world upon Egypt. A clearly rigged election outcome would constitute a major setback to the shared values of the protesters of Tahrir and the dynamics of the Arab Spring, and would likely lead to renewed political turmoil in Egypt and abroad.

In order to increase their electoral chances, the main political parties in Egypt have formed electoral blocs that will each present a common list. The Brotherhood's political arm, the Freedom and Justice Party, allied itself early on with 37 other parties in the 'Democratic Alliance' bloc, which includes both Islamist and secular parties ranging from the liberal Ghad to the Salafist Noor party (the liberal Wafd, Egypt's oldest legal party, has recently left the alliance). A second electoral bloc, and the Democratic Alliance's main competitor, is the 'Egyptian Bloc', which is composed of liberal, secular-oriented parties, including Mohamed El-Baradei's National Association for Change. A third bloc spearheaded by the centrist Justice party, the 'Third Way Coalition', recently broke away from the Democratic Alliance.

Electoral scenarios

Broadly speaking, possible post-electoral scenarios include the following three.

First, renewed massive protests ahead of the elections against the SCAF's misrule pressure the latter into further concessions. The electoral framework is amended accordingly and elections are held under genuinely free and fair conditions, allowing for genuine political competition. The Brotherhood wins the election with its electoral bloc and will eventually be required to form coalitions in order to attain a majority in parliament. Coalition-building would likely usher in moderating dynamics and political pragmatism, and force the Brotherhood's various factions to build a stronger internal consensus (probably leading to further fragmentation).

Second, instead of a Brotherhood win, the large number of swing voters cast a liberal vote, making the secular Egyptian bloc the strongest force. The new government aims to put Egypt on a liberal, secular footing, while also having to accommodate the demands of the non-secular opposition.

Third, the ruling military uses its current power to shape electoral provisions in a way that will secure an electoral outcome favourable to its own narrow interests.

It attempts to co-opt and strike deals with political opposition forces ahead of the elections. This would probably lead to a reasonable but limited Muslim Brotherhood showing, ensure a solid and broadly spread secular opposition representation in parliament, and establish a majority led by military loyalists, mostly former regime stalwarts, who would enter parliament via independent candidate lists and vote-rigging. This third scenario, or a mix between the first and the third, is currently the most likely.

The constitutional drafting process will be a lengthy negotiation in any of these scenarios, as all political forces are likely to be involved and a number of contentious issues – including the role of Islam and Islamic jurisprudence in the constitution, safeguards for civilian control over the military, and the protection of the rights of women and religious minorities – are certain to be the subject of controversial debates.

If the elections are free and fair, the Brotherhood's electoral chances are hard to quantify. The Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party announced it would present candidates for 50 percent of the seats, aiming to win 30 percent of seats overall, adding that a number of individuals linked to the Brotherhood would also run as independent candidates. Polls of voting intention differ substantially according to different sources, ranging the Brotherhood's prospects from 12 percent (International Peace Institute, March 2011) to 46 percent (Al-Jazeera, July 2011). The most recent poll by the Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy of August 2011 situated the Brothers at around 31 percent. Polls largely coincide, however, that voter turnout will be exceptionally high, with a large share of voters still undecided about who to vote for.

Fearing a cold *coup*

As elections approach and recently founded political parties are working hard to define their identity and shape their programmes, the Egyptian Islamist current has experienced a significant fragmentation over the past few months. While the regime-sponsored divide between Islamists and secularists has clearly left its marks, increasing intra-Islamist ideological cracks are beginning to blur the traditional poles in the Egyptian political landscape. Internal debates among the Muslim Brotherhood's various factions regarding the way in which overarching religious principles should translate into a concrete and attractive political programme have led to the splintering of a plethora of new Islamist parties from the mother organisation. This trend has considerably diversified the country's political spectrum of faith-based political parties. Islamists ranging from radical Salafists (an Islamist current which defends an inflexible, literal interpretation of the Qur'an) to moderate traditionalists to relatively progressive reformers thus all compete for the favour of Egypt's deeply devout electorate as parties face the challenge of translating sweeping religious ideology into concrete solutions for people's day-to-day concerns.

The emergence of increasing political competition among Islamists is in principle a healthy and positive process which, if undisturbed by renewed authoritarian repression, may lead in the longer term to the formation of a moderate, pragmatic mainstream. Liberal observers hope that, over time, the Brotherhood may undergo a similar election-driven evolution to that of the Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP), which progressive Islamist currents across the region cite as their source of inspiration. Such hopes must be entertained with much caution and patience, however, as reformers in the Brotherhood are facing strong resistance from the increasingly assertive conservative constituencies, and the current mainstream within the Brotherhood fervently rejects a nominal commitment to any notion of a separation between state and religion, as evidenced during Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan's recent visit to Egypt. At the same time, the emergence of Salafist political parties has worried many observers. The emergence of these groups is not worrying in itself, however, as long as they remain a controlled minority. The integration of these unlikely 'democrats' into political contestation, it is hoped, will keep them in check and soon unveil their lack of concrete political solutions.

Europe is ill-advised, however, to focus all its attention on the non-secular forces of Egypt's political spectrum, apparently under the mistaken presumption that secular equals democratic. The Egyptian military, initially hailed for its refusal to use force against protesters during the 25 January revolution, is now eyed by the public with increasing suspicion and contempt. They owe this reputation largely to a chaotic *ad hoc* transition management marked by a lack of transparency, participation and coherence, and a creeping authoritarian tendency that for many recalls the Mubarak era. Democracy activists rightly complain that the SCAF is overstepping its responsibilities by ruling the country, instead of just administering it during a clearly limited interim period. Decisions regarding the sequencing and modalities of the constitutional reform process were largely taken top-down by the SCAF, throwing the occasional breadcrumb concession to the angry crowds in the street. Egypt's new constitution, if adopted, is likely to lack legitimacy.

It is becoming increasingly clear that ensuring a swift withdrawal of the military leadership from its current governing tasks will be a central challenge. Some media reports have been fuelling suspicions that the military council's head, Field Marshal Tantawi, although unlikely to seek the presidency himself, may be attempting to establish a shadow military rule. While the SCAF has been firmly expressing its commitment to a quick return to civilian rule, many of the council's actions appear to signal the opposite. These include the council's resistance to cancelling the emergency law, its forceful repression of political civil society and rejection of foreign funding, bans on peaceful public assembly, its rejection of international electoral observation and the right to vote for Egyptians residing abroad, and its long-standing resistance to meaningfully change the electoral law. Most importantly, public remarks by leading generals hinting that Egypt should follow the Turkish example in terms of establishing the military as a constitutional safeguard of the democratic order are hardly auspicious.

Popular calls for the SCAF to commit to a specific date for stepping down have so far remained unanswered. Debates around the details of the upcoming elections are becoming fiercer as fears persist that the new parliament and president-elect may try to unduly influence the content of the constitution. Mismanagement and shrinking legitimacy, paired with the deteriorating security situation, have the SCAF's popularity hitting new lows every day. Progress on transitional justice – a major demand of protesters – has also been slow. Instead, since February, 12,000 civilians have been tried before military tribunals – more than during three decades of Mubarak rule. Impatient revolutionary crowds are calling for a second revolution to oust the SCAF and 'reclaim the revolution'. Egypt's democratic gains and outlook are highly fragile, making a swift transition to legitimate, constitutional civilian rule imperative. The electoral and constitutional process in particular will need to regain Egyptians' trust through genuine transparency.

The SCAF's recent adoption of new electoral legislation by decree without meaningful previous consultation provoked a public outcry among political groups and parties, as the SCAF clearly overstepped its powers by decreeing legislation contradictory to the constitutional amendments approved by referendum in March. Parties were united in their demand that legislative elections should be organised through full proportional representation, whereas the SCAF's electoral law designated only 50 percent of the seats to party lists, and the other 50 percent to individual candidates. Opposition parties assume, with good reason, that individual party lists will favour former National Democratic Party (NDP) members, allowing them to use money and their entrenched local patronage networks to get into parliament. An individual list system would therefore likely favour a re-entry of former regime stalwarts through the backdoor. For the same reasons, the opposition demands limits on former NDP members' political activity and right to run as candidates in elections.

As 60 political parties threatened to boycott the elections in reaction to the new electoral law, the SCAF partly gave in and invited the 12 major parties to a consultation meeting, which ended with a joint declaration signed by the majority of the parties. In the declaration, the SCAF committed itself to increasing the share of seats to be designated by proportional representation to two thirds, and to limit former NDP members' political role. However, concessions so far are but promises which the SCAF still needs to deliver on. In particular, the lifting of the emergency law remains just a matter to be 'studied', and in spite of the now quite precise timetable for the transition period, the council remains vague as to when it will definitely step down. It remains unclear to what degree the SCAF's enhanced consultations with political parties and other recent concessions are an expression of genuine democratic commitment, or an attempt to gain legitimacy and improve its worsening image in the eyes of the public.

Elections and the European Union

In spite of a number of notable new policy initiatives following the Arab Spring, the European Union and its Member States have yet to make their pledged change of paradigm in the EU's Mediterranean policies a tangible reality. When attempting to translate the sudden seismic shift in the region's political landscape into a qualitative shift in its policies towards the Southern neighbourhood in general, and Egypt in particular, Europeans should take into account a number of considerations.

- *Political Islam is neither the problem nor the solution*

The EU needs to stop looking at the issue of Arab democracy through the eternal prism of political Islam, and focus more on issues, less on ideologies. In their approach towards political Islam, Europeans need to move beyond the counterproductive notion of engagement vs. containment. Years of excluding Islamists from political initiatives now risk being replaced by the devotion of excessive attention to Islamist political groups. Both ways of singling out Islamists are mistaken, as the key is not to focus on specific groups but to engage all relevant political forces on concrete political issues. Political Islam will form part of new MENA political landscapes, and possibly governments, whether the EU likes it or not. This will probably lead to more conservative social policies. In terms of foreign policy, any democratically elected government, Islamist or secular, is likely to adopt a more assertive line on many key issues. At the same time, geopolitical problems in the region are more likely to flow from social anger if democratic transitions fail, rather than from the inclusion of Islamist parties. EU interests will depend much more on the success of economic strategies through which social justice is pursued, and on political reforms to establish effective safeguards against any group's abuse of power.

- *Greater strategic use of EU statements*

With regard to the upcoming elections in Egypt, the EU will need to make a qualitative jump in discourse. In the highly sensitive pre-electoral atmosphere in Egypt, direct statements or actions regarding the electoral process are likely to be interpreted as 'illegitimate foreign intervention' by both the SCAF and the wider public. EU actions and statements must cautiously stress general values and the requirements of democratic elections. After the elections, an unequivocal tone in the EU's reaction to any irregularities will be essential to show Arab publics that the EU is indeed on the right side of history. At the same time, it will be of the utmost importance that any statement carefully avoids the impression that the EU is picking favourites. Be it in a more open or in a lower-key manner, the victory of any political force in Egypt's first democratic election must be publicly acknowledged. This is even more important as the strategic mistake of the EU's Janus-headed reaction to Hamas's 2006 electoral win, which was widely perceived in the region as a lack of respect for

the Palestinian people's expression of free will, is still very much present in people's memories. In the upcoming election, the whole region will be watching as the EU is given a singular opportunity to reverse this impression and to show it has learnt from past mistakes.

- *Put pressure on the SCAF*

Throughout the transitional period, the EU and its Member States must actively seek to engage the SCAF in private in order to have them commit to a concrete transitional timetable, including detailed provisions regarding the date and modalities of handing over power to the new civilian government. Again, this will require strong diplomatic skills as the SCAF is currently very sensitive to such attempts.

- *Do not be afraid to openly define and pursue EU interests in the MENA*

The EU's policy response to transitions in Egypt and elsewhere in the region needs to move away from *ad hoc* management of crises as they arise and attempting to resuscitate moribund bureaucratic initiatives. Ten months into the Arab Spring, the EU has yet to start drawing up a comprehensive strategic policy response, a larger vision, from which to work its way back to adapting existing policy frameworks. Such a larger strategy will need to define EU strategic interests, determine how Europeans would like to see Euro-Mediterranean relations evolving in the long term, and above all, radically reposition the EU in terms of changing regional geopolitics.

II. BUILDING DEMOCRACY OR CONFRONTING THE ISLAMISTS? THE CASE OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN EGYPT

Amr Elshobaki

Introduction

When it comes to Egypt's civil legacy and republican system, the Muslim Brotherhood has historically been an outsider. The relations between the Brotherhood and the political authorities have traditionally been complex. Since Hasan al-Banna founded the movement in Egypt in 1928, the group has been embroiled in a struggle with the authorities that has fluctuated in intensity but continued to be a constant feature of the political scene. The movement is the most important religious political group in the Arab world and one that garnered 88 seats in the Egyptian parliament in the 2005 elections.

The Muslim Brotherhood spent its formative years outside the regime, the state, and the national movement, and was often at odds with all three, also remaining outside the Egyptian national movement in the 1930s and 1940s. It was in conflict with the regime during the era of national liberation in the 1950s and 1960s. Periods of calm have followed periods of confrontation, periods of respite have followed violence. The movement's members, viewed as foes of the political system, have been subjected to suspicion and repression by the authorities, stereotyped and misrepresented, in part through the excesses of the security services and in part due to the Brotherhood's own strategic failures. It is a struggle that has been a salient feature of the country's political landscape for most of the twentieth century and to this day.

The Brotherhood now has a chance to be part of the future. The formation of a legitimate political party affiliated with the group, the Freedom and Justice Party, is a big step for it and for Egyptian politics. The state should accept the right of the Muslim Brotherhood to operate legally and compete for power, and the group should in turn uphold the legal and constitutional rules of the Egyptian state. It is crucial to distinguish between the doctrinal and intellectual legacy of the Muslim Brotherhood and that of the *jihadist* groups espousing violence. Integration into the political scene can only be available for peaceful Islamist currents, regardless of their political doctrine.

The chapter argues that peaceful and durable integration of the Brotherhood into a viable Egyptian democratic framework presents challenges but is essential. In the

following sections, the author first examines the importance of the relationship between regimes, institutional frameworks and Islamist currents, outlining the Brotherhood's historical journey and evolving positions regarding politics and democracy. The author then goes on to examine the impact of this year's developments on the requirements for, and challenges surrounding, successful integration of the Brotherhood into a functioning Egyptian democracy. The chapter concludes with policy recommendations for the EU.

Despotic regimes and political Islam

Unless we understand Islamist movements it will be hard to tackle reform issues in the Arab world. Some have voiced the view that political reform is too risky because it may bring Islamists to power, at which point the latter may proceed to wreck the very process of democratisation. This view is part of an arsenal of arguments all serving to hold back political and democratic reform in the Arab world. Proponents of such arguments from the previous authoritarian regime usually reject any form of foreign intervention in Egypt's internal affairs, urge the country to hang on to its cultural and political identity, and portray democracy as a risky business. Those who warned, before the 25 January Revolution, of the Islamists 'wrecking democracy' usually varied their arguments according to who is listening. Speaking to the domestic audience, they would stress the need to stand up to foreign intervention. Addressing foreign audiences, they would dwell on the alleged perils to stability posed by the Islamic current and plead for help in keeping political Islam at bay. However, both arguments are meaningless since while the Egyptian regime accepts the monitoring of elections in Sudan, when it comes to Egypt it considers such monitoring as foreign interference. At the same time, the absence of a state defined by the rule of law and durable institutions is the real danger to democracy and to stability.

The history of all political ideas and movements cannot be understood in isolation from their social and political context, for text and context often interact. It is difficult, for instance, to separate the European communist ideas popular in the 1960s from the liberal context of Western Europe, which has spawned social democratic movements that are now part and parcel of the political scene. Looking back, one may say that the historical journey of the Muslim Brotherhood is intertwined with that of Egyptian regimes. The Brotherhood was created during the monarchy, under a semi-liberal regime. It underwent a traumatic clash with the Nasserist regime, and many of its members suffered the indignities of incarceration. The group felt more comfortable under President Sadat, and members generally stayed out of politics during his presidency, while Sadat freed members from prison early in his presidency before imprisoning them near the end of his rule. They were in two minds about President Mubarak, who tried to keep the group at a distance rather than crush it completely. The current situation in Egypt is extraordinary in that the authorities are taking a neutral stand on the Muslim Brotherhood and other political groups.

The question that must be posed in connection with Islamist groups and especially the Muslim Brotherhood, as the largest such group in Egypt and the Arab world, pertains to democratic reform. Does this Islamist current suffer from intrinsic flaws that impede its participation in democratic processes? In other words, are the problems hindering its integration in a process of democratisation inherent in its discourse and the religious doctrines it espouses? And to what extent is the problem due to the nature of the political context in which it functions? Could a democratic context lead to the restructuring of the Islamist discourse so as to make it compatible with democracy?

It is essential, following the Spring of Arab revolutions, to develop a new attitude toward Islamist currents. First of all, we must acknowledge the need to integrate these currents into democratic political frameworks. In Egypt, this process started with the creation of the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Freedom and Justice Party. We must also establish legal procedures and political guarantees that guard against any political current, Islamist or otherwise, revoking democracy.

The dilemma is not unique in the region. It is difficult to speak of the Islamist currents without commenting on the nature of the state that anchors and organises the democratic process. As shall be shown below in relation to Egypt, one of the conditions for the safe integration of Islamist currents in the democratic process is having state institutions which are durable and capable of setting the tone for the democratic process. This condition has been met in the case of Turkey but is absent in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq, and to some extent Pakistan. Turkey exemplifies a largely successful and peaceful integration of Islamist currents, while the latter countries are examples of failure. In the case of Palestine for example, Hamas remains outside the legacy of Palestinian national liberation embodied by the PLO, requiring integration intellectually and politically.

Assuming that Egypt will be able to put together the kind of institutional structure normally associated with democracy, it would be helpful here to examine the Muslim Brotherhood's evolution and position on democracy, so we may anticipate the difficulties attending the democratic integration of the movement.

The Brotherhood's journey

The founding members

Since Hasan al-Banna and his colleagues created the Muslim Brotherhood in Ismailia in 1928, the group has become one of the biggest political organisations in the Arab world. It has survived so far due to its ability to vary its tactics according to circumstances, lying low sometimes and pushing the envelope at others. The movement's organisational skills allowed it to stay relevant both in monarchical and in

republican times. Some people wonder how the Muslim Brotherhood managed to stay cohesive and maintain its organisational structure. Others are amazed that Muslim Brotherhood members are capable of staying together despite their considerable intellectual and age differences.

Hasan al-Banna, defined his organisation in very loose terms, describing it as a 'new spirit' rather than a welfare society, political party or single-issue organisation. Al-Banna rejected political parties, mostly because of his impatience with the squabbling among pre-1952 parties. In his view, Islam as the religion of unity in everything, calling for cooperation across humanity, does not approve or condone partisanship.

The founding members of the Muslim Brotherhood mostly believed in peaceful propagation of Islam and rejected violence. But this did not prevent the presence of other strands that occasionally engaged in violence, such as the Special Outfit of the 1930s and 1940s. The movement's resolve to put together a broad-based and diverse organisation was not coincidental, nor was it motivated solely by the desire to attract the largest number of members and supporters. In fact, the group's composition was in harmony with its special brand of political awareness.

The Muslim Brotherhood's founders envisioned a complex structure for their group, with multiple levels each having its own programme for religious and doctrinal indoctrination. This sets it apart from other political organisations and religious groups. The multi-tiered structure, encompassing general members, 'associate brothers' and 'active brothers', also allowed for multi-layered recruitment. The Muslim Brotherhood may seem homogenous to outsiders, but within it there are many distinct strands and channels allowing each member to play his organisational role in a specific fashion.

The rise of the political brothers

The world has changed since 1928. The Muslim Brotherhood has undergone many changes in the past three decades, during which time it maintained the essence of the mission stated by its founder, especially with regard to blending religious and political matters and asserting the broad spectrum of the movement's mission, which covers all social, spiritual, political and cultural aspects of life. The assumption here is that Islam is an all-inclusive religion capable of leading its followers into a genuine renaissance. So while in time, the Muslim Brotherhood accepted the multi-party system and declared its belief in democracy as a means of managing the rivalry among various political forces, it remained a firm believer in combining religious preaching and political action.

As of the early 1980s, the now 'political brothers' made a strong appearance in trade unions and the parliament. The Muslim Brotherhood fielded candidates in the 1984 and 1987 elections and did rather well. Members also succeeded, through democratic means, in taking control of more than one professional union in the 1980s. In the

early 2000s, they were prominently represented in the Lawyers' Syndicate, and two of their members took leading posts in the Journalists' Syndicate. The Muslim Brotherhood secured 17 seats in the 2000 parliamentary elections and 88 seats in the 2005 elections. Throughout this period, the movement was haunted by the need to reconcile its interpretation of holy texts with the requisites of social and political reality. Members ran for parliament more than once in alliance with other parties. In 1984, they forged an alliance with their historical nemesis, the Wafd Party. In 1987, they were at the centre of what was generally called the Islamist Alliance. They ran as independents in the 2000, 2005 and 2010 elections.

In time, Muslim Brotherhood functionaries acquired new skills through their political and publicised alliances with other political parties. They became adept at 'forming fronts' and grew familiar with the concept of 'sovereignty for the people'. They even came up with a civil political programme, although one that was loosely worded and kept asserting the authoritativeness of Islamic tenets. In all, they have acquired new experience that has influenced their political discourse and their public statements. What we have now, as a result, is a Muslim Brotherhood which differs substantially from the one that existed under the monarchy, President Nasser and President Sadat. The Brotherhood has engaged in debate within its ranks and with society at large, tackling intellectual differences and grappling with generational malaise.

The Muslim Brotherhood of the 1980s did not completely subscribe to democratic concepts and political pluralism, even though its members generally accepted the methods and practices of democracy. Nor did it give up the linkage between religious and political premises. There is no doubt, however that politics, in its practical and peaceful sense, occupies a central place in the thinking of the Muslim Brotherhood. This was not true under the monarchy, when the movement focused mainly on social activities and the propagation of religious and moral uprightness. It may safely be said that the relative weight of politics in the thinking of the Muslim Brotherhood has grown steadily over the past three decades.

Still, the main problem facing the movement is the overlap between the holy and the mundane. This overlap makes it hard for outsiders to view it as a completely political group. Many members have joined the group solely on the premise that it is a 'pious' group made up of 'good people' who are devoutly committed to the values and tenets of Islam, and have no particular political input to offer. If the Muslim Brotherhood were to rise above this mixing of the religious and the political, then this would herald a new phase in the movement's development. What we are witnessing currently is that the movement is moving partially in this direction but still has a long way to go. The first sign of this separation between politics and religion is the formation of a political party, following the 25 January Revolution, that is seeking political power through peaceful means and playing by the rules of democracy. This is certainly a far cry from the Muslim Brotherhood's past as a group that aims to promote religiously-based morality while at the same time practising politics.

Before 25 January 2011, the Muslim Brotherhood argued that its reluctance to acquire a clear and well-differentiated 'political identity' (such as being transformed from a group into a political party) was due to it being barred from politics. This argument seems to imply there is no point in separating religious and mundane matters when you are not allowed to engage in politics anyway. For the Brotherhood, the close intertwining of the religious and the political has been a defence mechanism, allowing the group to portray any repressive acts against it as an assault on Islam, or an assault on 'religious Muslims' and 'God-fearing' people. It is a tactic that brought the Muslim Brotherhood a measure of sympathy among a section of the public.

With the fall of the Mubarak regime, the Muslim Brotherhood has a real chance of ridding its politics of religious overtones and becoming committed to democracy, the constitution and citizenry, while retaining a specific attachment to Islamic identity and civilisation.

Formation of the Freedom and Justice Party and Brotherhood thinking on democracy

For the first time ever, the Muslim Brotherhood has formed a political party that is theoretically 'separate' from the group, although it remains part of it in practical terms. The Brotherhood has chosen the party leaders from among the members of its top-level Guidance Council. The party succeeded in opening offices across the provinces. The founders of the party number around 9,100 and include Copts and about 30 percent non-Brotherhood members. Yet while the Freedom and Justice Party has (for the time being) set the limit of party affiliation of non-Muslim Brotherhood members at 30 percent, the Brotherhood has declared that Brotherhood members joining other parties will be expelled and has expelled dozens of its young activists on that basis.

There are nevertheless several questions and challenges surrounding the Muslim Brotherhood's thinking on democracy. These problems have to do with whether the group's belief in democracy is confined to the methods and lineaments of democracy, for example the parliament and elections; or if this belief also extends to the cultural and political values of democracy. Furthermore, is the Muslim Brotherhood's belief in the methods of democracy a first step towards embracing democratic values, or at least the basic principles of democracy? In other words, would the movement regard democracy as a Western 'product' to be rejected or as a worthy legacy of humanity, one that every nation and culture is entitled to enrich and build upon?

On the one hand, the Muslim Brotherhood has a flexible intellectual and political mindset. This has allowed it to embrace a general view of Islam that allows its members to get engaged in politics if they so choose, but also to act as benevolent propagators of piety, preach in mosques, become parliamentarians, turn Sufi, espouse revolution and so on. Muslim Brotherhood leaders have included both conservative figures

such as al-Hodeibi, who worked as a judge, and radical individuals, such as Sayyed Qotb. The diversity in the group's attitudes reflects diversity across the historical eras and various regimes it has experienced or witnessed. This makes it the only political group in Egypt that has had 'first-hand experience' of both the country's monarchical and republican phases.

On the other hand, the Muslim Brotherhood still believes in a grand, all-encompassing Islamic doctrine. In concrete reality, holy texts may not help much in political situations. This is why there is a need for a restructuring of the Muslim Brotherhood in terms of organisation and discourse. It should both foster a more democratic organisational structure that accepts criticism, especially from young people, and be more open to new and different ideas. The group must come to accept that intellectual commitment and religiously-based indoctrination may make 'good people' but will not necessarily lead to a modern and democratic political system. In other words, it is important for the Freedom and Justice Party to come to the realisation that the values and principles of democracy are supreme in this time and age. With the fall of the authoritarian Mubarak regime, the Muslim Brotherhood has a historic opportunity to open up by adopting a pragmatic and flexible vision that can read the real socio-political needs of society and achieve them free of rigid doctrinal lenses. Only by doing so can the Muslim Brotherhood embrace a realistic view of the international environment and the global balance of power.

This first challenge is closely related to a second one concerning the role of ideals in government. The Muslim Brotherhood has always been in opposition, never in power. And the ideals of austerity and religious piety, as advocated by Hasan al-Banna, are easier to maintain while in opposition. These values offer less insight into how to run a country or how to appreciate regional and international challenges. When it comes to running a country, the checks and balances of modern governments are more important than the piety and personal integrity of the leaders.

A further related problem is constituted by the Muslim Brotherhood's and other Islamist groups' tendency to elaborate on global and American conspiracies against Islam, Muslims and Islamist movements. Conspiracy claims are of little help in handling intricate international situations. To argue that Hamas is in a fix because of the blockade and that the inhabitants of Gaza are suffering because of external double standards is only a half-truth that ignores the rigidity of Hamas's discourse and positions and serves to avoid the real task of understanding international and regional complexities. The kind of questions Islamist movements should start asking themselves include those concerning how they can successfully navigate a 'biased' international scene and how moderate Islamist movements, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, can become part of the international system, influencing it and learning from it.

The Egyptian Constitution, democracy and integration of the Muslim Brotherhood

If Egypt successfully manages its transition to democracy, this would boost the chances of the safe integration of the Muslim Brotherhood in a durable and democratic polity. Considerations related to the doctrinal beliefs of the Muslim Brotherhood may not prove as great of an impediment as some think.

Over the past few months, there has been an escalation in political polarisation, as many civil groups initially demanded the abolition of the constitution before changing their mind for fear that the Islamists may end up writing the new constitution. Following the proposed time plan, which was agreed on in the referendum that was held in March 2011, the Egyptian people would first vote in parliamentary elections to elect parliamentarians who would select the constitution assembly or committee that will draft the constitution, after which the people would elect a president. However, no clear time frame was set for this schedule, something which all political forces are demanding now.

The most important thing to notice here is that if the Islamists were to secure the majority in the coming parliament, they may be in a position to elect the committee which will write the constitution. Although civil forces had been often critical of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which conducted thousands of military trials, refused to set a clear agenda for the transition of power to civilians, and was reluctant to dismantle the old regime, these same civil groups asked the SCAF to put together a set of supra-constitutional principles. They also asked the SCAF to set rules for the selection of the committee which would write the constitution.

There is a divide between two political positions and orientations in Egypt. On the one hand, there is a majority which maintains that you can change regimes without having to dismantle the institutional foundations of the state, which has been historically true in various instances of regime changes over the past half a century, including Eastern Europe, Latin America, Portugal, Spain, Greece, Turkey and Indonesia, with Iran being the only exception. On the other hand, there is a minority which is intent on dismantling the Egyptian state in the hope of accelerating change, but often ends up helping the counter-revolutionary cause.

In fact, the true meaning of change is not in changing people, but in changing (or beginning to change) the system within which these people function. In other words, change happens when the state apparatus begins to operate differently from before. Genuine institutional reform is a condition for democratisation.

The main task concerning the 'safe integration' – by which we mean a process of integration that will not endanger democracy – of the Islamist current has to do with commitment to the legal and constitutional rules by which the Egyptian state has functioned for many decades, and at least since the 1923 constitution. These con-

stitutional and legal rules had adopted a civic code that constitutes a tradition for the Egyptian state. Thus, this set of rules must not be treated as outmoded as many constitutional law experts have disastrously argued. This civic code should not be destroyed when discarding the Mubarak regime since it is a part of the state's long traditions inherited from its legal and constitutional framework since 1923. We should differentiate between the undesirable vestiges of the undemocratic regime and the indispensable state framework.

We must not forget that any political current coming from outside the existing political system, as was the case with the revolutionary communist currents in Europe, should not be allowed to write a new constitution. Nor should we countenance the dismantling of the traditions of the state. In fact, the civic legal and constitutional framework should be seen as a guarantee for the successful integration of new currents into the political process, as they help newcomers abide by democratic rules. This is what happened when Islamist currents entered the political arena in Turkey; and they have so far become part and parcel of the secular democratic system. If anything, these Islamist currents enriched democracy with new concepts that brought it closer to what the late Abdel Wahab El-Messiri used to call *partial secularism*, which does not exclude religion from the public sphere, but only separates it and distances it from politics.[1]

It is true that Mubarak's Egypt was despotic and barred the opposition from real participation, unlike the case in Turkey where democracy, however incomplete, provided political opponents with considerable scope of manoeuvre within a certain legal and constitutional framework. For all these reasons, we need to maintain and combine the country's constitution with the fundamental rules of modern democracy.

In the absence of such rules, many of the secular civil groups have developed a mounting phobia with regard to the Islamists, thus reviving an exclusivist secular discourse. The secular discourse views the Islamist current as inherently flawed and incapable of democracy, not as one that reacts to the surrounding social and political circumstances. This discourse also casts doubt on whether the Islamists are capable, in a democratic context, of reinventing themselves and conforming with the new rules. Yet building democracy, and cementing its rules and institutions, is a condition for the successful integration of the Muslim Brotherhood into Egyptian politics. Conversely, the dismantling of Egypt's constitutional legacy, coupled with institutional weakness, which Egypt is currently experiencing, would make it hard to integrate the Islamists.

The legacy of the 25 January Revolution has already given the Islamists a taste of the future. Take for example the secular-Islamist coexistence seen in Tahrir Square and the extraordinary unity and cooperation among the revolutionary youth dur-

1. For further information, see: Abdel Wahab El-Messiri, *Partial and complete laicism* [*El elmaneya el gozeya wela elmaneya el kamela*] (Cairo: Dar El-Sherouk, 2002).

ing the 18 days of struggle against the Mubarak regime. It was this cooperation that enticed a group of Muslim Brotherhood youths to split from the Muslim Brotherhood and form a separate party called the Egyptian Current. The latter party has a clear democratic vision and believes in peaceful politics. If this case is compared with that of Salafi currents which had never taken part in elections before and which have already formed political parties without revising their old views or clarifying their views on democracy, it can easily be seen that the Muslim Brotherhood has clearly evolved, especially in the aftermath of the revolution. The movement has for the first time formed a political party, which, if Egypt succeeds in strengthening its institutions by reforming the security sector, the judiciary and the bureaucracy, may lead to the group's full integration into a political process while building rather than undermining democracy. Eventually, the Freedom and Justice Party may distance itself from the Muslim Brotherhood and begin to formulate its own policies.

Conclusion and policy recommendations

To summarise, there is no inherent reason for the Brotherhood to fail to embrace democracy. But democracy will present the movement with new challenges, which it cannot meet unless it works in a democratic environment and within durable institutions which, in Egypt's case, are still taking shape. Over the past six months, a real opportunity has emerged for the 'safe integration' of a major section of Islamic currents. But success will depend on the country's ability to 'build democracy first'. The field needs to be levelled before the game starts. The country needs to first clarify the legal and constitutional framework by which any political current, especially the Islamist newcomers, should abide.

We can conclude with some recommendations for the EU regarding its policies towards Egypt on the cusp of unprecedented and historic elections:

- *Demonstrate clarity and consistency on Egyptian democracy*

At the official level, the EU should clearly support democracy and democratic transition in Egypt. Its previous perceived double-standards towards democracy in the Middle East must end. Europe has to understand that it must deal with those Islamists that are now a part of the political spectrum.

- *Support effective electoral monitoring*

The EU should exercise pressure on the Egyptian authorities regarding the implementation of election monitoring in Egypt to facilitate free and fair elections. If those pressures fail to yield results, Egyptian civil society organisations will require the support of their European counterparts to undertake the monitoring effectively.

- *Share European expertise and experience, especially with new actors*

European expertise in terms of the reform of state institutions is relevant and significant for Egypt. Europe should also give special attention and support to the new actors on the ground such as the new trade unions and new political parties. Cooperation in terms of exchange of expertise and experience will be extremely useful.

III. CAN THE BROTHERHOOD BE BROUGHT INTO THE DEMOCRATIC TENT? AN OUTSIDER'S VIEW

Nathan J. Brown

Introduction

For many years, external analysts and political activists in Egypt have debated the extent of the Muslim Brotherhood's commitment to democracy. Since its re-emergence in the 1970s and 1980s, the Brotherhood has become increasingly political in its focus and increasingly adept at electoral politics. Of course, its development has hardly been linear – it was shut out of the 2010 parliament and indeed showed an inclination in the last years of the Mubarak regime to turn gently away from politics in an effort to protect the organisation and its myriad activities (many of which remain non-political) from the regime's wrath. The forced departure of President Hosni Mubarak in February 2011 and the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections invite us to return to the question of the Brotherhood's credentials as a democratic actor.

Amr Elshobaki asks us to turn our attention in a different direction: rather than focus so much attention on the Brotherhood's (lack of) democratic credentials, he directs our gaze to the Egyptian political system. He is right to do so. Elshobaki certainly pays attention to the Brotherhood's history, ideology and structure. But his starting point is not the movement's beliefs but the Egyptian political system: he is insistent that we pay far greater attention to the rules under which the Brotherhood operates, since these shape the movement's behaviour and ideas. To ask for a fully democratic movement to emerge in a non-democratic setting is to demand that it show an ability to accept rules that are not yet written, much less enforced. Elshobaki expresses a hopeful but far from naïve view about the prospects for integrating the Brotherhood as a normal political actor. Keenly aware of the pitfalls and obstacles, he rightly insists that the process requires not simply the evolution of the Brotherhood but more importantly the creation of a stable democratic system for Egypt.

To be sure, the stakes are very high in Egypt, both for Egyptians and those who deal with them. And in many ways, the policy positions of Islamists pose a special challenge. In internal matters, Islamists might be expert (and increasingly sincere) democratic actors, but they are not liberal ones. When they speak of 'freedom' and 'justice' (as the Brotherhood's new party does), that freedom is primarily political (and not broadly social and cultural) and the view of justice is drawn from religious sources. In matters of foreign policy, Islamists question many aspects of Egypt's foreign and

security policy over the past generation; an Egypt that is influenced by Islamist policy prescriptions might be far less of a partner for the Western alliance than the country was under both Presidents Sadat and Mubarak.

In this regard we need to be frank: it is rarely the Islamists' democratic credentials that cause deep concern; it is their policy positions – and the fear that those positions are actually deeply popular and therefore not likely to be abandoned in the practice of democratic politics. The Brotherhood is likely to be at best a headache for Western governments to deal with. Can its gradual incorporation into the Egyptian political system make it only a headache and not a threat to Western interests?

Elshobaki leads us to think that such an outcome is quite possible by offering us a calm and reasoned understanding of the transition process in Egypt. His views are those of a close observer of the Brotherhood and a participant (on the non-Islamist side of the political spectrum) in Egypt's dynamic political scene today. Is there anything in the European and American experience that can help us understand the possibilities for democratic evolution in Egypt? And is there anything that external actors can do to facilitate the process?

Parallels from the Western political experience

With regard to understanding the political dynamics, both Europeans and Americans can draw on their own experience to understand a key element of the situation in Egypt. Europeans can recognise the complexities of drawing diverse ideological movements into an uncertain democratic process. Indeed, many governing parties on the continent today trace their origins to ideological movements that, even when they were willing to accommodate themselves to democratic politics, were often far from liberal: Christian democrats and social democrats, among others, represented broad social movements that seemed to challenge the tenets of the existing social and political order – and to do so at times through the ballot box.

The European experience with such movements suggests that the sort of democratic incorporation that Elshobaki endorses is quite possible but it is likely to be a protracted process and success is not inevitable. It was really only in the post-war order that the full integration of such forces on the left and the right occurred as they made the transition from being broad social movements at odds with much of the prevailing order to electoral political parties.

The US experience can offer us something a bit different: a reminder that not all democratic actors have to be fully secular in order to be responsible political actors. In the US, the lack of an established church hardly means the absence of religion from the public sphere. Just the opposite is the case, in fact: US political leaders are expected by many, if not most, voters to show religious faith; religious themes

(admittedly sometimes of a general or merely sentimental nature) are a regular part of public (and even political) life; and secularism is understood to be a posture of official neutrality toward any specific creed or sect rather than a separation of the religious and political realms.

Islamist movements in the Arab world mean many things when advocating a greater role for Islam in public life, and some of the things they advocate could exclude members of society whose right to participate as full citizens should not be questioned in a modern state. But we also need to remind ourselves that it is not religion *per se* or even its public role that is at issue; it is only an understanding and application of religious teachings that imposes exclusion on some members of society. While the Brotherhood's stances still contain some considerable ambiguity on this question, their further participation in a pluralistic order can – under the circumstances that Elshobaki outlines – pin down their commitments to building a society consistent with their conception of Islamic values in a manner that does not undermine the rights of those with other conceptions of the proper public order.

Can outsiders play a role?

Is there anything that Western actors can do to facilitate this process? Yes, but only if they remind themselves that Egypt's evolution is likely to be gradual; that this is a supremely inward-looking moment in a society in which external advice and guidance is not always received as well-intentioned; and that there is a real history (which local political actors are unlikely to forget) of Western states valuing the services of authoritarian rulers over the liberal and democratic principles that they often see themselves as upholding at home.

In such a context, it might be possible for outside actors to shape some of the political dynamics in Egypt but it will be impossible to dictate any outcome. Certain guidelines can assist Western policymakers in playing a helpful role:

- *Resist the urge to play winners and losers*

Western concerns about the Brotherhood are real, but the concerns are with the policy positions that the Brotherhood takes, not with the movement itself. And those positions (especially those on foreign and security policy) are often also adopted by other political actors, even those deemed secular and liberal. An effort to back one political force and to treat another as a pariah is not only likely to be futile; it might also raise internal tensions and encourage liberal and secular political forces to fall back on perceived Western support rather than undertake the hard work of political organising, party building and popular mobilisation among their fellow citizens.

- *Stress human rights and universal values*

The Egyptian revolution was about many things, but at its core was a demand on the part of ordinary Egyptians to have their human rights recognised. Political discourse in Egypt today still tilts in favour of those who make claims that political authority has to respect the rights of the people. While the Brotherhood itself has a more restrictive view of human rights than some other actors, its dedication to political rights seems to be sincere and to stem from bitter experience. This is an opportune moment to make clear that Egyptians who demand that political authorities and party leaders show their fealty to protecting human rights do so with the support of the international community.

- *Act multilaterally*

No external actor – and certainly not the United States – is regarded as purely altruistic in Egypt today. And unlike the 1989 transitions in the former Soviet bloc, there is no prospect of joining the EU to help guide and motivate the Egyptian transition. But coordinated efforts among international actors to communicate emerging international standards in critical matters – elections and constitution writing to name but two – will still carry some weight with Egyptians anxious to show each other and the world that they are full participants in an international community based on the values that they have come to hold dear.

CONCLUSION

Esra Bulut Aymat

The citizens of Egypt are preparing for historic elections, due to begin later this month. In a period of considerable uncertainty over the actual and potential trajectories of post-Mubarak Egypt, the EUISS has invited three experts to share their insights, analysis and recommendations on Egyptian democracy and the Muslim Brotherhood with EU policymakers. Hailing from Egypt, the EU and US, the authors hold up three different prisms through which we can better understand developments in Egypt and the policy implications for the EU and US. Madrid-based Kristina Kausch provides us with a succinct guide to the pre-electoral political landscape, electoral scenarios, 'cold *coup*' risks, and EU policy implications. She draws attention to the significant risks posed to EU interests by an electoral and constitutional charade that would undermine Egypt's democratic prospects and invite further turmoil. Cairo-based Amr Elshobaki presents a short overview of the Muslim Brotherhood's historical evolution, and a survey of the current constitutional, institutional and ideological challenges facing Egypt. In light of this analysis of the Brotherhood's journey and his survey of the evolving political framework, he advocates the careful and sustained integration of the Muslim Brotherhood into a democratic polity as a difficult but essential process. Washington DC-based Nathan J. Brown discusses the policy implications of these findings for Europeans and Americans wishing to play a constructive role in Egypt's transition, underlining potentially instructive parallels in Western political experience, and inviting outside policymakers to be frank, patient and consistent.

In addition to the rich food for thought to be derived from reading their concise analyses, each chapter concludes with clear-cut policy recommendations, ten in all. Kristina Kausch recommends that the EU move beyond a counter-productive focus on political Islam and Islamist ideology in its approach to potential and emerging Arab democracies, to focus instead on policy issues, all relevant actors and the importance to EU interests of successful democratic transitions and economic strategies. The EU should make greater strategic use of its statements, put pressure on the SCAF and move away from *ad hoc* crisis management towards a comprehensive strategy. Amr Elshobaki calls on the EU to demonstrate clarity and consistency on the question of Egyptian democracy and put an end to perceived double standards towards democracy in the Middle East. He recommends the sustained support of effective electoral monitoring and the sharing of European expertise and experience, in particular with newly emerging Egyptian political actors. Nathan J. Brown cautions against outsiders playing winners and losers by variously supporting and excluding different political actors, pointing to the dangers of such tactics raising internal tensions and

undermining liberal and secular forces in Egypt. He recommends that external actors should act multilaterally to communicate emerging international standards of governance, including with regard to holding elections and constitution-writing, as well as place sustained emphasis on human rights and universal values.

In sum, the report underlines the scale of the significant and inescapable choices facing Egyptians, Europeans and other actors at present. It invites us to look more closely at developments on the ground, their historical background and the risks of a stillborn democratic transition in Egypt. Together the authors advise caution, although not in the sense of inaction, indecision or ambivalence. All concur that it is imperative that European leaders do not miss the historic opportunity at hand to support a genuine democratic transition through reasoned, timely and strategic policies.

ANNEXES

Abbreviations

AKP	Justice and Development Party
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NDP	National Democratic Party
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces

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