BETWEEN DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND STATE INTERESTS: THE UNITED STATES AND EGYPT AFTER THE UPRISING

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The January 2011 Egypt uprising and its aftermath have proven a difficult challenge for the United States. Washington’s policy has been marked by improvisation and constant change and four years later has yet to find a clear direction. The uprising took place at a time when the United States was rethinking its policies in the Middle East, trying without success to reduce its involvement. The brash, assertive confidence in US power that had led the Bush administration to go to war in Afghanistan and Iraq, announcing an agenda of nation-building and democracy promotion, had waned. It had been replaced by the more sober and cautious approach of the Obama administration, based on a realistic assessment of past failures. Events in Egypt added to the uncertainty of the policy because they did not unfold as expected. Washington believed the uprising would lead to a democratic transition, but liberal, democratic forces proved to be the weakest component of the Egyptian political spectrum, with Islamists and the military emerging instead as the dominant players. The United States had to work either with the military, which seized power in February 2011 and again in July 2013, or with the Islamists, who had won it in fair elections. The choice between Islamists and the military was a difficult one. Backing the elected Islamists meant basing the policy on democratic values. Supporting the military meant forgetting principles and focusing instead on state interests in maintaining good relations with the largest Arab country. The choice between values and interests is a classic dilemma of US foreign policy, but in this situation both choices were risky and neither offered a winning solution. The United States, as a result, has been and is still foundering, reacting to events rather than following a coherent course of action.

BEFORE THE UPRISING
During most of Hosni Mubarak’s 30-year presidency, US policy toward Egypt was clearly based on state interests – its own and those of Israel. Thus the United States maintained good relations with Egypt although Mubarak was an authoritarian ruler and his regime had become increasingly corrupt as time went by. As long as Egypt respected the Camp David Accords and maintained peace with Israel, Washington was willing to overlook the regime’s democratic deficit. Relations with Egypt were particularly cordial in the 1980s, with Mubarak benefiting from the reflected glow of the policies of Anwar Sadat, whose eventful presidency had transformed Egypt from an enemy to an ally of the United States. Sadat had turned his back on the Soviet Union, announced an ‘open door’ economic policy to replace the previous

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emphasis on the state's domination of the economy, and rejected the single party system. In practice, the domestic reforms did not go very far, but it was still a significant change from the policies of Gamal Abdel Nasser. Most important to the United States, Sadat had made peace with Israel and the United States wanted to make sure that peace would be maintained. In 1973, Sadat had gone to war with Israel, launching a surprise attack across the Suez Canal. Although quickly stopped by the Israelis, the attack served Sadat's goal of reviving the stalemated peace talks and to close the unfortunate chapter opened by the 1967 Six Day War. With the intervention of US National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger, Israel and Egypt quickly agreed on a ceasefire and continued negotiating increased separation of the troops on the ground. The tempo of the negotiations accelerated, and their goal changed, in 1977, when Sadat took the historic decision to travel to Jerusalem. That bold move eventually led to the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1978 and of the Egyptian Israeli Peace Treaty the following year.

The signing of the Camp David Accords brought the United States and Egypt closer, and also helped make Egypt one of the major recipients of US assistance. The Accords did not contain specific provisions requiring the United States to increase assistance to Egypt or Israel. Nevertheless US economic and military aid to Egypt increased sharply to over $2 billion after 1979. The military component of the assistance remained fairly constant from 1979 to 2014, hovering around $1.3 billion. Economic assistance, which reached more than $800 million in 1979, started decreasing after 2003, as Egypt's economy grew. By the time of the military takeover in 2013, economic aid was less than $250 million.

When Hosni Mubarak succeeded Sadat, who was assassinated by Islamists in 1981, he inherited the goodwill of the United States but soon squandered it. As cautious and risk-averse as his predecessor was bold and prone to swift decisions, Mubarak was hesitant to embark on the reforms needed to pursue Sadat's vision. He maintained peace with Israel, but relations remained extremely cold. Economic reforms stalled, although much change was needed to allow the private sector to operate effectively. For example, not only did the government control the currency exchange rate, but it maintained multiple exchange rates that applied to different sectors, fuelling unending confusion and a flourishing black market. And Egypt was spending much more than it could afford on poorly targeted subsidies for basic foods and energy. Despite pressure from the United States, the IMF and the World Bank, Mubarak was slow in tackling the currency problem and refused to touch subsidies. Critical of Mubarak's lack of dynamism and of his authoritarian rule in private, US officials nevertheless liked the stability he brought to Egypt. In fact, the half-hearted attempts by the George W. Bush administration to put pressure on Mubarak to rule more democratically came to an abrupt halt after Muslim Brothers won 20% of the parliamentary seats in the 2005 election.

In focusing on stability over democracy in the name of state interests, Washington was taking a short-term view of the situation. Behind the peaceful façade, trouble was brewing in the country. The 2005 election had provided a glimpse into the popularity of the Muslim Brotherhood, which had obtained remarkable success despite being a banned organization with some 15,000 members in prison – no party other than Mubarak's NDP had won so many votes since the restoration of the multiparty system. Other signs of discontent were also unmistakable. There was an exponential growth in the number of unauthorized strikes and labour protests for example, because the economy was growing but little trickled down to ordinary Egyptians. Income inequality was growing while state services, particularly in health and education, continued to deteriorate. By 2009, there was no hiding the anger among workers and youths. Egyptian newspapers and non-governmental organizations estimated that the number of strikes, labour sit-ins and demonstrations...
had increased from 222 in 2006 to 580 in 2007. By 2009, the number of such actions was over 1,000. The protests remained largely apolitical. Workers focused on wages, an issue on which the government was willing to make concessions, while rejecting attempts by other organizations, including youth groups and the Muslim Brotherhood, to broaden the scope of protest and draw them into larger political alliances. One of the best known youth organizations, the April 6 Youth Movement, took its name from the date of a short-lived general strike the group had helped to foment in 2008 in a unique display of cooperation between labour and political organizations (Ottaway & Hamzawy, 2011). In the midst of the growing turmoil, the United States did not appear to notice. It remained focused instead on the succession crisis expected to unfold in the near future, when the aging President Mubarak died or, worse, sought to install his own son Gamal as his successor before retiring. The position of the United States reflected that of Egyptian officials, similarly disinclined to take popular discontent seriously. As a high ranking official of Mubarak’s National Democratic Party explained to the author in 2010, there was no reason to worry because Egyptians were docile people and in any case the military would quickly deal with any potential unrest.

**SOWING DEMOCRACY AND REAPING THE MILITARY AND THE MUSLIM BROTHERS**

The January 2011 uprising thus came as a surprise to the United States, although it should not have. While the specific timing and unfolding of events, with unrest in Tunisia helping mobilize discontented groups in Egypt, was unpredictable, the uprising itself was a larger-scale manifestation of the discontent that had been bubbling for years. Nevertheless, jolted by the drama of the large crowds taking to the streets the United States rushed to embrace what they interpreted to be the beginning of democratic change in Egypt. Support for democratic values, rather than concern for state interests, was to guide US policy in Egypt for the next two and a half years.

When the demonstrations erupted in Tahrir Square on 25 January 2011, the first reaction of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was to defend the status quo. “We support the fundamental right of expression and assembly for all people and we urge all parties to exercise restraint and refrain from violence,” she declared as crowds surged in Cairo’s Tahrir Square, but she also hastened to add “our assessment is that the Egyptian government is stable and is looking for ways to respond to the legitimate needs and interests of the Egyptian people.” Clinton also dispatched to Cairo former Ambassador Frank Wisner, who was strongly supportive of Mubarak. “The president [Mubarak] must stay in office in order to steer those changes through,” he declared on 4 February. And he added: “It is his opportunity to write his own legacy — he has given 60 years of his life to the service of his country. This is the ideal moment for him to show the way forward, not just in maintaining stability and responsible government, but actually shaping and giving authority to the transition that has to be underway” (Lee, 2011). By this time, however, the official position of the Obama administration had changed from support for Mubarak to serious doubts about his willingness to accept change, let alone steer it, and Washington dismissed Wisner’s statement as a personal opinion that did not reflect US policy. President Obama instead warned Mubarak repeatedly that the transition had to start immediately. And on 11 February, when the military forced Mubarak to resign, Obama applauded the change. “The people of Egypt have spoken,” President Obama stated, “their voices have been heard and Egypt will never be the same” (Sliverleib, Starr, King, Bash & Walsh, 2011).

For several months after Mubarak’s departure, United States officials, like most observers and analysts, succumbed to what can be called the ‘Arab Spring Syndrome’, an emotional enthusiasm for the popular uprising that led them to misread the situation. While the reaction was understandable – the scenes from Tahrir Square were captivating and the enthusiasm of the participants contagious – in reality it was the military that deposed Mubarak: there was no storm-
ing of the palace by the mob, no seizing power by ‘revolutionary committees’. Instead, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, entirely composed of high-ranking officers appointed by Mubarak, took over and started issuing proclamations. Yet nobody in or out of Egypt uttered the words ‘coup d’état’, while many insisted on discussing the events as a revolution. In part, this happened because popular enthusiasm was so great and in part because for months the military played its hand extremely well, seemingly intent on driving the country toward a genuine democratic transition.

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Yet many factors made it extremely unlikely that the Egyptian uprising would lead to democracy. The continuing control of the military was the most important. The class and ideological cleavages were also crucial, because they turned elections into a perceived existential choice between competing elites. The imbalance among political organizations also played a role. The Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups were strong, all other political organizations extremely weak. These factors greatly affected the political process. The secular political parties and leaders who saw themselves as liberal and thus could have been expected to champion democracy were in reality leery of the voters’ choice. They sought to delay or even opposed elections, did their best to obliterate their outcome after Islamists won, and finally embraced military rule as the better alternative. Islamists became the strongest supporters – and beneficiaries – of democratic processes.

A POLITICAL ELITE MEETS DEMOCRACY

Egypt, quite homogeneous in terms of ethnicity and religion, is deeply divided socially. It has been dominated for decades by a social, economic and intellectual elite quite conscious of its status and aloof from the rest of the population. This elite is proud of its position and its supposedly modern outlook. It is essentially secular and while it proclaims its adherence to Islam, it considers the views of Islamists as retrograde. It feels entitled to occupy positions of power – in government institutions, universities, media, and the courts. And it does not believe in social mobility. Former President Mohammed Morsi, a man of modest origins who had nevertheless earned a PhD from an American university, was not admired for his achievement but openly reviled as a country bumpkin and an upstart whose wife would discredit Egypt by dressing unfashionably. In an even more telling example, in September 2013 the judiciary's governing body removed from office 138 newly hired prosecutors on the ground that their parents did not have university degrees. The decision was upheld on appeal, with a senior judge explaining on television that “we have nothing against the job of garbage collectors, but their sons belong in other fields than the judiciary, because it is a sensitive job” (Kingsley, 2014). In terms of its ideas and social attitudes, the Egyptian elite would have been at home in 19th century Britain, with its strong class distinctions. Not surprisingly, an elite that despised much of the population had trouble mobilizing support and thus was poorly placed to compete in open elections. Although more than twenty secular political parties had been allowed to form in Egypt by the end of the Mubarak period, most of them existed on paper only. The parties that managed to win some seats in the parliament, including the Wafd, which had been in existence since the 1920s, did so by negotiating with the regime and its National Democratic Party rather than by building its constituency. Even secular political movements formed to challenge Mubarak toward the end of his presidency had been unable to gain broad popular support. The Egyp-
tian Movement for Change, better known as *Kefaya*, made its debut on the streets of Cairo in December 2004 demanding the resignation of Mubarak and protesting his supposed intentions to install his son Gamal as his successor. The movement attracted much media attention in Egypt and outside because it was a new phenomenon, and also because the people it mobilized tended to be members of the Egyptian elite. In reality, however, *Kefaya* mobilized remarkably few people – a few hundred at most joined any one demonstration – and never became a political force the regime had to reckon with.

The youth groups that engineered the uprising in 2011 were different from the old elite, although many of the leaders came from it. They were not afraid of reaching out to everybody and surprised even themselves by their prowess in generating support. One of the leaders of the April 6 Movement and of the uprising, Ahmed Maher, told this writer a year before the uprising that he believed that his and other youth groups might succeed in mobilizing at most 50,000 people countrywide. In January 2011, they brought out several times that number in Tahrir Square alone. But even the youth groups were organizationally weak. They operated through loose networks relying on social media, an approach that proved successful in mobilizing crowds but ineffective in the aftermath, when the time came to negotiate with the military and other groups about governance in the interim period. Refusing on principle to build hierarchical structures and tighter organizations, and without recognized leaders, youth groups could not participate in a constructive manner in discussions of the modalities of transition.

By contrast with the loosely structured secular groups, Islamists, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, were well organized. The Brotherhood was a hierarchical and disciplined organization, and it had a strong network among the very Egyptians the secular elite neglected or even despised. It had a presence both in the cities and in the villages, thanks to its network of charitable organizations that long antedated its political activity. It provided charity, but also health and education services that became increasingly important to poor Egyptians as the government services deteriorated.

The secular elite and its political organizations and the Islamist parties did indeed move in different worlds, among different categories of Egyptians and Islamists had a much better outreach to ordinary people. As a result, while Islamists from the outset agitated for a short transition period and early elections, the old elite and the secular parties they represented sought other mechanisms for transferring power, in particular setting their sights on individuals they hoped would somehow be placed by the military in important positions without being elected.

The best known among these would-be leaders favoured by the elite was Mohamed ElBaradei, a former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the 2005 winner, together with his agency, of the Nobel Peace Prize. After retiring, ElBaradei had returned to Egypt in February 2010 amidst high expectations that he would play an important political role, making it clear that he had presidential ambitions but that he would not run under the undemocratic conditions that prevailed in Mubarak’s Egypt. Nevertheless, hopeful supporters started gathering signatures so he could become a presidential candidate, but ElBaradei wavered, spending much of his time outside Egypt. He was absent when the demonstrations broke out in January 2011, but he rushed back to Egypt and Tahrir Square, announcing that he was ready to lead an interim government if that was the will of the demonstrators.

But the crowds were not prepared to choose a new leader by acclamation, nor were they ready to accept the efforts of a group of self-appointed ‘wise men’ that thought that the organizers of the demonstrations were too young and inexperienced to lead and that it was up to older and supposedly wiser people to guide the transition. The Committee of Wise Men was launched by Naguib Sawiris, one of Egypt’s wealthiest businessmen, and Ahmed Kamal Aboul Magd, a professor of constitutional history who had served as minister of information under Mubarak. It pulled
in other well-known figures such as Amr Moussa, the long-time secretary-general of the Arab League, Nabil Fahmy, former ambassador to the US, and Nabil Elaraby, a former judge of the International Court of Justice, with Amr Hamzawy, an intellectual and newspaper columnist serving as their spokesman. Membership in the group was somewhat fluid and eventually a rival group with the same name emerged, causing a great deal of confusion. The group soon fizzled, however, demonstrating for the first but not the last time the weakness, lack of organization and support, and internal division of the secular elite that aspired to lead Egypt in the post-Mubarak period. Secular organizations, whether liberal or leftist, had neither an effective message resonating outside intellectual circles, nor structures. The people who the United States hoped would lead the new Egypt showed from the beginning that they could not do it. The post-uprising parliamentary elections, held in an unprecedented climate of free choice, provided dramatic proof of the imbalance between the well-organized Islamists with a popular following and the secular organizations that had no organized constituencies. When the process was completed in early 2012, Islamists had won 70% of the seats, with the remaining 30% going to fragmented secular parties.

**THE VICTORY OF THE ISLAMISTS AND THE MISUNDERSTOOD US RESPONSE**

A resounding victory by the Islamists was not what the Obama administration had hoped for when it decided to withdraw its support from Mubarak and back the uprising in the name of democracy. But while Egyptian secular organizations cried foul, complaining the revolution that rightfully belonged to them had been hijacked by Islamists, the United States put on a brave face and accepted the election results. It did the same the following June when Mohammed Morsi, a Muslim Brother, was elected president by a narrow majority. Having advocated elections, Washington decided to accept the results. “We look forward to working together with President-elect Morsi and the government he forms, on the basis of mutual respect, to advance the many shared interests between Egypt and the United States,” the White House declared, exhorting Morsi to take steps to reach out to all segments of the population.

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The US decision to respect election results and accept the Morsi presidency upset much of the old elite. As the US embassy scrambled to develop relations with the Muslim Brotherhood, which it had shunned as an illegal organization under the Mubarak regime, secular parties and the press started complaining that Washington favoured the Muslim Brothers and neglected other parties – disregarding the fact that the Brotherhood had won the elections. But the opposition went further, promoting the myth that the United States had really wanted the Muslim Brotherhood to win the elections and rule Egypt – why, the myth did not explain. Signs started appearing at Tahrir Square demonstrations proclaiming that “Obama supports the dictator Morsi” and “Down with Morsi, America’s agent.” While Washington was willing to accept an election outcome it did not like, the Egyptian elite and its secular parties were not. Rallying quickly after their election defeat, they turned away from the democratic process where the better organized Islamists had the advantage and worked through the non-elected state institutions they controlled to bring down Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood. The military quietly sided with them. The battle between the country’s elected officials and the so-called deep state started as soon as the new parliament was seated and ended some
18 months later with Morsi’s overthrow in a coup d’état.

The most visible instrument of the old secular elite was the judiciary. Under Mubarak, the judiciary had not always been independent of the executive, but it became so under the Muslim Brotherhood. Independent did not mean apolitical, however. Many judgments were deeply political, seeking to void the electoral victories of the Islamists. In April, the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) dismissed the 100-member Constituent Assembly the parliament had elected to write a new Constitution. The reason, clearly more political than legal, was that the assembly was unbalanced, including too many Islamists as well as too many members of parliament. Then the SCC proceeded to dismiss the entire parliament just before the presidential elections, making sure that, if Morsi won, as he did, the Muslim Brothers would not control both the executive and the legislature. The legal justification was that the 2011 parliamentary election law was unconstitutional. In reality, an American analyst deeply familiar with the Egyptian judiciary declared, it was a “judicial coup” (Brown, 2012).

By the time Morsi was elected in June the courts had thus annulled the Islamists’ electoral victory. The only trace of that victory was the second Constituent Assembly the parliament had formed before being dissolved. The formation of the second assembly had been the object of much discussion and bargaining among political parties. Nevertheless, the new body was immediately targeted by law suits demanding its dissolution. It limped on, under threat of an adverse judicial decision and boycotted by most of its secular members, until it managed to enact a new Constitution on 30 November 2012.

Islamist rule was also challenged by the bureaucracy, staffed at the top level by Mubarak appointees who did their best to slow down policy implementation or even sabotage the Morsi regime (Hubbard & Kirkpatrick, 2013). Although Islamists were accused by their enemies of trying to ‘brotherize’ Egypt by appointing their own people to positions of power, they never gained control of state institutions.

Behind the scene, the ultimate weapon of the anti-Islamist opposition was the military. In June 2012, the SCAF had seemingly accepted Morsi’s victory and officially turned over executive power to him. In August, it even appeared that Morsi and the military had forged an alliance, agreeing that Field Marshall Mohammed Tantawi, the Mubarak era chief of staff, would retire in favour of General Abdel Fatah al-Sisi. In reality, there was no alliance. The military was biding its time.

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In the midst of this turmoil, the United States adhered to the fiction that Egypt was in the middle of a democratic transition. It reiterated its support for the elected president, kept silent about the political verdicts the courts were issuing, and increased funding for democracy-promoting NGOs, which had flocked back to Egypt after the uprising. The disconnect between US policy and reality on the ground continued to grow.

By early 2013, the break between the Islamists, on one side, and the state institutions, the old secular elites and the military and security apparatus, on the other, was complete. State-controlled and private media no longer hid their distaste for the Islamists and portrayed the 2012 Constitution as a retrograde document seeking to impose sharia on Egypt. Secular politicians refused any form of cooperation with the Muslim Brothers. The courts blocked new parliamentary elections, which Morsi had tried to schedule for April 2013, by rejecting the proposed election law not once, but twice. Once again, the problem was not legal but political: the secular opposition...
did not dare challenging the Islamists at the polls again. While Islamists had undoubtedly lost some support, as a result of their clumsy governance and of the relentless hostile propaganda in the media, the parties representing the old elite were as disorganized as ever and thus feared the Islamists could win again.

Instead of taking their chances on election results, the military and the old elite chose to get rid of Morsi outright. A campaign to collect petitions for Morsi’s resignation, launched in April by a new youth movement called Tamarod, was soon taken over by police and state security forces with all the means at their disposal (Saleh, 2014). The effort culminated in massive demonstrations on 30 June 2013 and was followed three days later by a military coup d’etat. As in 2011, the crowds paved the way and the military ultimately brought about the change.

The United States remained largely a spectator during this tumultuous period. Washington had accepted military rule, but did not like it and had no influence over the Muslim Brotherhood. It did not like the intervention of the military but it had no sway over it either, despite the large amount of military aid it had provided for three decades and the supposedly strong ties to the hundreds of officers who had received training in the United States. Nor could the United States hope to work with the so-called liberal parties, which had no independent clout and were counting on the military to defeat the Islamists. As in 2011, events in Egypt were unfolding without Washington being able to influence them.

THE UNITED STATES AND THE NEW MILITARY REGIME

Since the July 2013 coup d’etat, the United States has found it especially difficult to formulate a coherent policy toward Egypt. The policy based on the upholding of democratic values it pursued after the uprising proved a failure. It did not contribute to the advancement of democracy in Egypt and exacerbated instead antagonism toward Washington on the part of the Egyptian elite and the military. At the same time, and unrelated to US policy in Egypt, the security situation deteriorated in the entire region, giving renewed salience to state security interests.

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Certainly many voices in Washington, particularly in the Pentagon, argued in favour of strengthening ties to the military regime, citing the deteriorating security situation in Sinai, the collapse of Libya, and the turmoil in Levant as reasons for pragmatism. The new regime’s democratic deficit, in this view, was less important than the United States’ security interests. US policy started to waver between upholding values and safeguarding security interests the day after the military takeover. Commitment to democratic legitimacy and respect for US legal clauses embedded in every foreign assistance appropriation bill required the United States to condemn the military takeover and to suspend aid. State security interests suggested that it was better for the United States to safeguard its relations with Egypt. Unable or unwilling to choose, the Obama administration settled for ambiguity. US law, state department lawyers argued, required the US government to suspend aid if it determined that a coup d’état had taken place. The law, however, did not oblige the government to make such determination, so none would be made.

Nevertheless, the administration took some steps to penalize Egypt. As a mild rebuke to the Egyptian military and the civilian government it had put in place, it cancelled joint military manoeuvres scheduled for September – dubbed ‘Bright Star’, the joint manoeuvres had taken place every two years since the signing of the Camp David Accords. On 9 Ocoto-
ber the administration further announced that military assistance would be ‘recalibrated’ by suspending delivery of 10 Apache helicopters and of a number of F-16 fighter jets, M1A1 tanks and Harpoon anti-ship missiles. It also announced a halt to the transfer of $260 million in cash assistance to Egypt until credible progress was made toward the restoration of democracy and the establishment of a government through fair elections.

The suspension did not last. The deteriorating security led the United States to resume military aid to Egypt within a few months. In April 2014, it announced that the Apache helicopters and half the $1.3 million in military aid would be released. At the time, Egypt had not held either presidential or parliamentary elections, so it was impossible to argue that Egypt had made credible progress toward the restoration of democracy. But concern about the growing presence of radical Islamists groups in Sinai, including Ansar Beit al-Maqdisi, which a few months later was to declare its allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, was sufficient to override doubts about the Egyptian government's democratic credentials.

The decision was not a turning point in the relationship. Eighteen months after the military takeover the reciprocal distrust between the governments of Egypt and the United States government has not decreased, and public opinion in Egypt remains hostile as well. There is a long list of policies pursued by Egypt that the United States cannot disregard completely, although it seems to be trying. The country has held presidential elections and it now formally has a civilian president, although he is the same Abdel Fattah al-Sisi who, as a general, led the 2013 coup. It still does not have an elected parliament and al-Sisi de facto rules by decree. The procrastination in electing the parliament could be overlooked as a temporary problem of transition, but the regime's authoritarianism has become well entrenched. It now includes not only the systematic dismantling of the Muslim Brotherhood that started with the coup, but the silencing of independent voices of any kind in the media, the mass death sentences the judiciary is imposing on the basis of absurdly short trials, the pressure on all non-governmental organizations to register with the government and fall in step with its policies, the adoption of an election law that limits the role of political parties and enhances that of independent candidates and many other measures. Taken together, such policies suggest that Egypt is moving toward a deeper authoritarianism than what it experienced under Mubarak.

Security concerns remain real, however, and so far the United States has toned down the criticism of the regime. Although it joined in the international chorus of condemnation directed at Egypt when in November 2014 the United Nations issued a new, highly critical human rights report, it subsequently reverted to business as usual. So policy continues to waver and there seems to be no satisfactory solution. When Washington tried to uphold democratic values, it was accused of being in cahoots with the Muslim Brotherhood; no matter how ludicrous such an accusation appears to Americans, it gained a lot of credence in the region. A policy based on state interests is hardly likely to prove more satisfactory. Support for a blatantly repressive regime, routine during the Cold War, is an embarrassment to the United States in the 21st century. And the policy is also likely to backfire, with repression inviting the growth of a radical opposition and a new round of instability.

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