

SİSİ YANLISI İTTİFAKIN KIRILGAN SİYASETİ: NEOLİBERAL BAĞLAMDA NASIRCI DEVLET MİRASI

ÖZ

Mısır'da 26-27 Mayıs'ta gerçekleşen Cumhurbaşkanlığı seçimlerini eski general Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi %96.1 gibi yüksek bir oranla kazandı. Eski SCAF başkanı ve cuntanın lideri olan Sisi'nin Nasırcı bir aday olan Hamdeen Sabbahi karşısındaki zaferi, Mısır siyasetinin Mübarek devrildikten sonraki üç yıl boyunca geçirdiği süreçler göz ardı edilerek anlaşılabilir. Mübarek sonrası iktidarı devralan askeri yönetim, arkasından Mursi'nin Cumhurbaşkanı seçilmesi ile oluşan hayal kırıklığı ve akabinde gelişen darbe, Mısır siyasetini Müslüman Kardeşler ve karşıtları olarak kutuplaştırmakla kalmadı. Bu süreç 1952'de iktidar olmuş Nasırcılığın kurumları ve ideolojik mirasıyla farklı düzeylerde siyasette belirleyici olduğunu gösterdi. Ekmek, sosyal adalet ve eşitlik taleplerinin yerini alan güvenlik talebi nostaljik bir Nasırcılık ikonografisiyle Sisi'nin teröre karşı mücadele vaadine eklenildi. Eski rejim unsurlarının, generallerin ve laik-milliyetçik formasyonuna dayanan orta sınıfların oluşturduğu Sisi yanlısı ittifak, devrimin başlangıcından beri sokak ve işyeri mobilizasyonunun esas motoru olan ana talepler karşılanmadıkça kırılğan bir zemin üzerinde hareket etmeye devam edecekler. Müslüman Kardeşler'in idam, tutuklamalar gibi baskı araçları karşısında zihinlerde kazandığı mağduriyet kaynaklı meşruiyet, Mısır işçi sınıfının ve yoksullarının karşılanmamış talepleri ve ekonomik kriz, Mısır'da bugün baskın bir biçimde hakim görünen Sisi fenomeni için yıkıcı bir dinamik yaratabilir. Bu makale Mısır'da var olan kutuplaşmanın ve olası kırılmaların dinamiklerini Nasırcı mirasın etkilerini ve kısıtlarını sorunsallaştırarak tartışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Orta Doğu, Ordu, Darbe, Devrim, Mısır, SCAF (Silahlı Kuvvetler Yüksek Konseyi), Al-Sisi, Nasırcılık, Hamdeen Sabbahi.

سیاسة التحالف الهشة الموالية للسياسي: ميراث الدولة الناصرية من منطلق النيلويرالية جانان شاهين خلاصة

فاز الجنرال عبد الفتاح السيسي في الانتخابات التي تم إجراؤها في مصر في الفترة بين 26_27 مايو بنسبة %96.1. كما ان القائد السابق للقوات المسلحة عبد الفتاح السيسي حقق هذا الانتصار امام حامدين صباحي المرشح الممثل للفكر الناصري. هذا بالإضافة الى انه يصعب فهم السياسة المصرية دون الرجوع والنظر الى الثلاث سنوات والمراحل التي مرت بها الدولة خلال هذه الفترة بعد خلع الرئيس مبارك. علاوة على ان القيادة العسكرية التي تولت رئاسة البلد بعد خلع مبارك وخيبة الامل التي تلتها بعد انتخاب الرئيس محمد مرسي والانقلاب الذي نفذ بعد ذلك فلم يقف الأمر عند الانقسام الذي حدث بين مؤيدي الاخوان المسلمين ومعارضيه فحسب، بل واثبتت هذه الفترة ان الميراث الايدولوجي والمؤسسات الناصرية التي تولت رئاسة البلاد منذ عام 1952 لعبت دورا واضحا وفعالاً في تشكيل السياسة المصرية. واضيف هدف محاربة السيسي للارهاب الي مطلب تحقيق الامن وحب الوطن الذي ظهر كواحدة من مبادئ الفكر الناصري واحتل محل مطالب العيش والعدالة الاجتماعية والمساواة. كما ان التحالف الموالي للسياسي الذي يتمثل في عناصر النظام السابق والطبقة المتوسطة من ضباط الجيش وممن يعتقدون مبدأ العلمانية والقومية كلما عجزوا عن تحقيق المطالب التي تم رفعها في الشارع المصري وفي اماكن العمل منذ ان بدأت الثورة، سيستمررون في محاولة البقاء والتحرك بالاعتماد على ارضية هشة. اما عن الشرعية التي اعتمدت على الغدر بالاخوان المسلمين واعتقالهم والحكم عليهم بالاعدام، اضافة الي عدم تحقيق مطالب الشارع والتي تتمثل في مطالب الفقراء وطبقة العمال وكذلك الازمة الاقتصادية، كل هذا من الممكن ان يشكل الية يمكنها ان تهدم نظام السيسي هذا الذي يعتمد في حكمه على الظلم والطغيان. وسيتم في هذا المقال بحث ومناقشة الوضع العام لمصر بصفة عامة وكذلك الانقسام واليات سقوط نظام السيسي المتوقعة، بالإضافة الي الاثار المتبقية من الفكر الناصري وتأثيرها على تشكيل سياسة مصر الحالية.

الكلمات الدالة: الشرق الاوسط، الجيش، الانقلاب، الثورة، مصر، المجلس الاعلى للقوات المسلحة، السيسي، الناصرية، حامدين صباحي.

FRAGILE POLITICS OF THE PRO-SISI ALLIANCE IN EGYPT: NASSERIST STATE LEGACY WITHIN NEOLIBERAL CONTEXT

ABSTRACT

Former general Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi won the presidential elections held on 26-27 May with 96.1%. The electoral victory of Sisi, the former head of SCAF and the leader of the coup d'état, against Hamdeen Sabbahi, a Nasserist candidate, cannot be fully grasped without an analysis of the three-year period ensuing the overthrow of Mubarak. The SCAF-supervised transition period after Mubarak, Morsi's presidency with an accompanying disillusionment and the coup preceded by a massive popular protest not only contributed to the polarization of Egyptian politics along the Brotherhood and anti-Brotherhood lines but also provided evidence for the resilience of Nasserism with its institutional and ideological legacy. Replacement of demands for bread, social justice and equality with that for security was reflected in the pro-Sisi campaign with a nostalgic Nasserist iconography. The pro-Sisi alliance, composed of the remnants of the old Mubarak regime, the military and middle-class laicist-nationalists, seems to be residing on a rather fragile ground unless the first cluster of demands for justice and equality are met. The political legitimacy that Muslim Brotherhood seems to be gaining due to its victimized position, the unmet demands of the working classes and the economic pressures might produce a destructive dynamic for the seemingly prevalent Sisi phenomenon. This article discusses the dynamics of the polarization as well as the potential lines of fracture in Egyptian political scene with a special emphasis on the impact and the constraints of Nasserist legacy.

Keywords: Middle East, Military, Coup, Revolution, Egypt, SCAF (Supreme Council of Armed Forces), Al-Sisi, Nasserism, Hamdeen Sabbahi.

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Ascension of el-Sisi

Saudi King, Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz, was in Cairo on 20 June to congratulate Egypt's new President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on the electoral win he got and his inauguration. For the monarch, Sisi symbolized reversal of what he labeled the "strange chaos" of the Arab Spring.¹ Two days later, Secretary of United States, John Kerry, paid a personal visit to Egypt, voicing strong support for Sisi with the promise of constant influx of military aid, half of which had got frozen after 3 July coup.² What Egypt has turned into in three and a half years after the January 25 revolution seems pretty similar to what the Egyptians revolted against. Like Mubarak's Egypt, today's Egypt is an increasingly repressive security state with a former general, Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi as its president. Since Morsi was removed, the regime's crackdown has surpassed those of Mubarak's regime. "Security" has been a catch phrase that Sisi's electoral campaign was based on. With the anti-protest law passed in April 2014, demonstrations require police permission.³ In addition to over 40.000 detainees, the courts issued over 600 death sentences. Dwelling on a wave of extreme-nationalism, the assault launched after the coup has also been aimed at secular revolutionaries like Ahmed Maher, Alaa Abdel Fattah and Mahinour al-Masry⁴ in addition to dozens of university students of Islamist-leaning on the grounds that they opposed the coup.

Since the advent of the revolutionary movement in Egypt in 2011, the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) has always been the determining force in critical moments. In February 2011, when the security forces of the Mubarak regime failed to defeat the crowds in Tahrir, the SCAF intervened and generals declared commitments "to protect the people, and to oversee their interests and security... to protect the nation, and the achievements and aspirations of the great people of Egypt."⁵ The army had addressed the key demand of the uprising by ousting Hosni Mubarak; at the same time, it had gained formal control over "the nation". The generals acted on claims to authority relying on the historic legacy of Gamal Abdel Nasser and the Free Officers. They tapped resources of great importance in Egyptian society evoking

¹ Bruce Riedel, "Saudi king's short victory lap in Egypt," *Al-Monitor*, 22 June 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/06/saudi-arabia-egypt-king-abdullah.html#ixzz35UnT7gU9>.

² Jay Solomon, "John Kerry Voices Strong Support for Egyptian President Sisi," *The Wall Street Journal*, 22 June 2014, <http://online.wsj.com/articles/john-kerry-arrives-in-egypt-on-unannounced-visit-1403426551>.

³ "Activists defy Egypt's anti-protest law," *Al-Jazeera*, 24 April 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/04/activists-defy-egypt-anti-protest-law-2014426232020322134.html>.

⁴ Ahmed Maher is the founder of April 6 Movement. Alaa Abdal Fattah is a famous blogger. Mahinour Al-Masry is a leading member of the organization of Revolutionary Socialists.

⁵ Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, "SCAF Statement," *New York Times*, 10 February 2011, www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/02/10/world/middleeast/20110210-egypt-supreme-council.html?_r=0.

official histories and popular memories of the Nasser era in which the army is an embodiment of common interests. During the early weeks of protests and of clashes with police and Mubarak's thugs, protesters had chanted: "The army and the people are one hand!"⁶ The SCAF-supervised transition period over the next 12 months, on the other hand saw many fights between military troops and demonstrators, the most memorable ones of which were the clashes during the Maspero protests and Mohamed Mahmoud attacks of October and November 2011 respectively, when some 80 people were killed.⁷ These clashes led to a change in the mood of the protestors. On the first anniversary of the 25 January uprising the demonstrators who assembled in Tahrir Square chanted a new slogan: "The army and the police are one filthy hand!"⁸

SCAF's Preemptive Moves: Surviving the Regime

The generals retreated after the presidential elections which brought to power Mohammed Morsi in June 2012. What was lying behind this low profile was the fact that SCAF had struck deals with the Brotherhood in the early weeks of the revolution. The stipulation for the electoral participation of the Brotherhood was to restore public order. In other words, economic and political order in which the military and security apparatus had their own stake was to be protected by the SCAF's coalition with Brotherhood. The maneuvers SCAF adopted illustrate Marx's understanding of state as written in *18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*. Marx defines state as an autonomous apparatus whose action ranged between balancing the existing interests in the society and promoting the "parasiting" interests of the state personnel themselves.⁹ Hazem Kandil interprets the coalition between the Brotherhood and SCAF as following:

The 2011 uprising left the security apparatus intact, and the military regained the autonomy they had lost under Mubarak. But the question of who would hold political office was open to negotiation, and the generals didn't mind trying out the power-hungry Islamists. They were more organized than the activists who sparked the revolt and less embittered than the remnants of the old regime. They didn't pose a threat to military privileges and deferred amiably to the security forces that set out to crush the revolt. And they had no intention of dismantling the infrastructure of dictatorship and submitting

⁶ Malika Bilal, "The army and the people are one hand," *Al-Jazeera*, 26 November 2011, <http://blogs.aljazeera.com/blog/middle-east/army-and-people-are-one-hand>.

⁷ Sarah Carr, "A firsthand account: Marching from Shubra to deaths at Maspero," *Egypt Independent*, 10 October 2011, www.egyptindependent.com/news/firsthand-account-marching-shubra-deaths-maspero.

⁸ Philip Marfleet, "Egypt: after the coup," *International Socialism*, 2 April 2014, <http://www.isj.org.uk/index.php?id=965&issue=142>.

⁹ Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Maryland: Wildside Press LLC, 2008), p. 62.

*themselves to the volatile moods of a democratic process; they just wanted to take Mubarak's place at the top.*¹⁰

The Egyptian military acted to preserve its own interests and the regime that provides the safeguard for its privileges. General Sisi had been appointed by Mohamed Morsi as Defense Minister in August 2012.¹¹ However, Morsi and the Brotherhood failed to impose the order they had promised. Their partisan policies and failure to deliver promises caused massive demonstrations. They also failed to control working class activism, which in the early months of 2013 reached very high levels, an expression of frustration at power cuts, fuel shortages and price rises.¹² In this climate el-Sisi looked for a new strategy to discard Morsi in order to safeguard institutions of the state and restabilize Egyptian capitalism. He placed himself at the head of protests against Morsi and the Brotherhood, declaring that the “patriotic and historic responsibility” of the armed forces obliged them to intervene to “stand up firmly and strictly to any act deviating from peacefulness.”¹³ The officers moved behind *Tamarud* (Rebellion), a street-based initiative that had already called on the president to stand down.¹⁴ Businessmen like Naguip Sawiris, *feloul* (“remnants” of the Mubarak regime), prominent figures in the state bureaucracy and the judiciary, and most political parties established since 2011 stood behind the campaign.¹⁵ Talad Asad argues that anti-Brotherhood opposition consisted largely of an elite that was still in power:

*[...] the rich businessmen who established themselves during Mubarak's neoliberal regime; high court judges that maintained close links with the army; ambitious politicians and ex-politicians; television directors and show hosts; famous newspaper journalists; the Coptic Pope and the Sheikh of al-Azhar; and so forth. The fact is that the senior army officers are very much part of these elite [...].*¹⁶

¹⁰ Hazem Kandil, “Revolt in Egypt,” *New Left Review*, No. 68, March-April 2011, <http://newleftreview.org/II/68/hazem-kandil-revolt-in-egypt>.

¹¹ “Morsy sends Tantawi to retirement, appoints Sisi military head,” *Egypt Independent*, 12 August 2012, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/morsy-sends-tantawi-retirement-appoints-sisi-military-head>.

¹² Ahmed About Enein, “Labour strikes and protests double under Morsi,” *Daily News Egypt*, 28 April 2013, www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/04/28/labour-strikes-and-protests-double-under-morsi/.

¹³ General Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi, “Transcript: Egypt's army statement,” *Al Jazeera*, 3 July 2013, www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/07/201373203740167797.htm.

¹⁴ Yasmine Saleh, “Activists who backed Mursi's fall turn against military,” *Reuters*, 20 February 2014, www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/20/us-egypt-politics-tamarud-idUSBREA1J1E420140220.

¹⁵ Edmund Blair, Paul Taylor, and Tom Perry, “Special Report: How the Muslim Brotherhood lost Egypt,” *Reuters*, 26 July 2013, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/07/26/us-egypt-mistakes-special-report-idUSBRE96O07H20130726>.

¹⁶ Talal Asad and Ayça Çubukçu, “Neither Heroes, Nor Villains: A Conversation with Talal Asad on Egypt After Morsi,” *Jadaliyya*, 23 July 2013, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/13129/neutral-heroes-nor-villains_a-conversation-with-ta.

Demonstrations of massive size took to the streets with a demand for Morsi's resignation on 30 June 2013. The radical movement built from below against both the old regime (epitomized with Mubarak) and the anti-democratic and pro-capitalist agenda of the Brotherhood was gradually incorporated into a polarized confrontation, which culminated in the intervention of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF), as the "guardian of the public will." Since the removal of Morsi, Al-Sisi has become the supreme figure in Egyptian politics and has been widely supported to run in the presidential elections. On March 26, Sisi formally resigned¹⁷ from the Security Council of the Armed Forces and announced his candidacy to run for presidency.

General Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi's ascension to presidential palace came with a landslide win with 96.9 percent of the votes, leaving his only challenger Nasserist Hamdeen Sabbahi far behind. Nevertheless, Al-Sisi was not able to get the popular consent at the scale he was expecting, evident in the low turnout at the polls standing at 37 percent within the allotted days. As Al-Sisi seems to be enjoying this limited political legitimacy in his civilian garments, the political sphere in Egypt seems rather polarized, with almost no dissenting voices in the streets or Tahrir square, where it all began.

This polarizing policy framework conceals the fragile coalition around Sisi. Pro-Sisi bloc is not monolithic, ranging from the remnants of Mubarak-era (*feloul*) acting on a desire to maintain their networks of privilege to secular-nationalists feeling threatened by Islamism to those suffering due to economic instability. While the security forces, state bureaucrats and elites are likely to lend their support to Al Sisi on a long-term basis, those consisting mainly of impoverished Egyptians as well as the sections of the middle class hit hard by Mubarak's privatization programmes seek an improvement of their economic conditions and, therefore, offer a conditional loyalty to Sisi's presidency. In other words, the loyalty of this category hinges upon Al-Sisi's performance in achieving stability and economic improvement.

Nasserist Legacy

Corporatism

The major factor underlying this economically vertical and politically diverse coalition is the Nasserist legacy, which is evident in the analogies made between 1952 Free Officers' coup and 3 July 2013 coup. This analogy is even furthered by drawing parallels between Al Sisi and Nasser. There is a growing literature attempting to address this parallelism. Nasserist legacy can be traced back in two realms: institutional and ideological, between which there is a symbiosis. Institutional legacy is mostly related with the state, which had

¹⁷ Dina Ezzat, "Al-Sisi announces his candidacy", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 27 March 2014, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/News/5817/17/Al-Sisi-announces-his-candidacy.aspx>.

an amalgamated form of ‘corporative’ state and a ‘gendarme state’¹⁸ over the course of half a century from Nasserite period to Mubarak.

Corporative state became the political instrument that Nasserist political system enacted not only to implement a diluted form of socialism, a populist etatism¹⁹, which created corporatist mechanisms whether it be political bodies or state controlled trade unions but also to prevent the masses from acting independently from the state surveillance. This bargain was the backbone of the social pact Nasserist authoritarianism rested on. That is, economic inclusion of the middle and lower classes was accompanied by their political exclusion from the policy-making structures. Therefore, corporatist structures were locations of political exclusion through manipulation.

In 1953 Nasser set up a single legal political organization called *the Liberation Rally*. He stated: “The Liberation Rally is not a political party. Its creation was prompted by the desire to establish a body that would organize the people’s forces and overhaul the social set-up.”²⁰ Baker depicts Rally as ‘an instrument for depoliticizing public life,’ a means of preventing trade union activism, peasant activism in rural collectives that had emerged in response to land reform and the activities of communist and Islamist organizations.²¹

It was replaced by *the National Union* in 1956, which was an instrument of solidarity constitution against Britain, France and Israel during the Suez crisis. In 1962, this was replaced with *the Arab Socialist Union* (ASU), a body which at first sight looked like a conventional party, with mass membership and branches in villages, city districts, workplaces and educational institutions. However, the Union was also controlled autocratically by the military elite and by senior bureaucrats: in 1965 Nasser admitted, “The fact is we have no internal organization, except on the books.”²² The ASU did, however, provide mechanisms for co-opting dissidents who survived Nasser’s intensive repression. The clearest example was the Egyptian Communist Party, which dissolved itself in 1964.²³

ASU was meant to be a representation of the “national alliance of working forces” consisting of workers, peasants, intellectuals, national capitalists, and soldiers. “While the five parts of the alliance were far more a rhetorical device

¹⁸ Carl Boggs, *Gramsci’s Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 1976), p. 39.

¹⁹ Elie Podeh and Onn Winckler, (eds.), *Rethinking Nasserism: Revolution and Historical Memory in Modern Egypt* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2004), p. 12.

²⁰ Derek Hopwood, *Egypt, Politics and Society 1945-1990*, (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 87.

²¹ Raymond William Baker, *Egypt’s Uncertain Revolution Under Nasser and Sadat* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 26.

²² *Ibid.*, 96.

²³ Philip Marfleet, “State and Society” in P. Marfleet and R. El-Mahdi (eds.), *Egypt: The Moment of Change*, (London: Zed Books, 2009), p. 26.

than an organizational reality,” wrote Waterbury, “they served to focus attention on social categories that cut vertically across strata of income and privilege.”²⁴ Corporative structures of the regime were designed as reinforcements to Nasserist rhetoric, aiming to provide evidence to the feasibility of their narrative “National Unity.” However, these efforts were put into practice in an authoritarian top-down manner, which also involved the accompaniment of physical coercion to cooptation strategies.

Post-Morsi period also witnessed attempts to create corporatist political initiatives if not structures. Within domestic politics, the SCAF adopted the long-lasting authority consolidation policy of the Nasserist regime: cooptation by offering a wider representation of social democrats, working class leadership and some prominent Nasserists in the constitutional committee and the Cabinet. Prominent Nasserist figures became members of the 50-member committee after 3rd July coup. These include Sameh Ashour, the head of the Lawyers’ Syndicate and of *the Nasserist Party*, Mohamed Sami, head of *Al-Karama* and Mahmoud Badr, co-founder of the anti-Morsi *Tamarod* movement and member of the Nasserist-leaning *Popular Current*.²⁵ The last organization is particularly important since it was built around a civil Nasserist figure, Hamdeen Sabbahi, following his surprising success in 2012 presidential elections. His campaign had received the support of left-wing organizations and independent trade unions. However, his support for the army after the coup discouraged many around him. The percentage of the votes he got in latest presidential elections (3 percent) indicates the decrease in his support base. An opportunity to create an independent movement from both the military and the Brotherhood was missed by entering the coalition involving right-wing parties and figures.

The SCAF called for the establishment of an interim-government after the coup, headed by Hazem El-Beblawi, the founder of *Egyptian Social Democratic Party*.²⁶ The members of the government consisted mainly of liberals, technocrats and Nasserists. Al Sisi could not only depend on ministers drawn from among *feloul* and post-revolution officials but also, crucially, upon party leaders with their own constituencies among revolutionary activists. The design of such a government was essential to create a picture in which the armed forces were the servants of the civilian representatives of the opposition, marking a continuation with the Nasserist methods of cooptation and incorporation. The most striking example of this policy was the appointment of Kamal Abu-Eita as the Minister of Manpower.²⁷ Abu-Eita was the president of the

²⁴ John Waterbury, *The Egypt of Nasser and Sadat: The Political Economy of Two Regimes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 315.

²⁵ Leyla Doss, “The past return,” *Mada Masr*, October 27, 2013, <http://www.madamasr.com/content/past-return>.

²⁶ “Who’s who: Egypt’s full interim Cabinet,” *Abram Online*, 17 July 2013, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/76609.aspx>.

²⁷ “Cabinet ministers sworn in,” *Daily News Egypt*, 16 July 2013, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com>.

Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU), a co-founder of *Al-Karama*, a popular figure in the *Egyptian Popular Current* and a member of *the National Salvation Front*. Since Morsi's ouster, however, he has been openly supportive of the "30 June revolution" and called on members of EFITU to end labor strikes.²⁸

Militarism

In February 2014 the government formed by el-Sisi disintegrated, as ministerial resignations were followed by dissolution of the whole cabinet. Corporatist methods seemingly failed to create corporatist structures which could provide the military with a greater control over the lower strata of the Egyptian society. Another aspect of the Nasserite institutional legacy lies in the militarization of the regime with the 1952 coup. Egyptian political sphere witnesses a revival of the appraisal of the military for its role as a savior. This revival owes much to the position of the armed forces within the system since Nasserite period. The scale of power the armed forces attained in governance, politics and economy render this institution a significant power holder with a stake in the regime survival. Therefore, despite the corporatist mechanisms explained above, Egyptian state has been a "fierce state" aiming to preserve itself resorting to coercive measures when it fails to forge a historic social bloc that accepts the legitimacy of its rule.

The studies of Mills,²⁹ Nassif³⁰ and Abdel-Malek³¹ show how the armed forces gradually turned into a "power elite" with their appointment to civilian positions and ministries during Nasserite period. Nassif suggests Nasser provided officers with a stake in the regime by encouraging their private interests.³² After the 1952 coup, the members of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), the body formed consisting of the Free Officers, stipulated that officer would control the work of one or more ministries.³³ Nasser and his colleagues became the supervisors of every ministry. So as to establish loyalty and create clientele inside the military, RCC members appointed their fellow officers as advisors and representatives in the new administration. By 1953, officers occupied scores of prestigious and highly-paid civilian jobs that were unattainable under the monarchy. Anouar Abdel-Malek maintains that 1,500

com/2013/07/16/cabinet-ministers-sworn-in/.

²⁸ "Strikes under control", *Ahram Weekly*, 17 December 2013, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/Print/4970.aspx>.

²⁹ C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).

³⁰ Hicham Bou Nassif, "Wedded to Mubarak: The Second Careers and Financial Rewards of Egypt's Military Elite, 1981-2011", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 67, No. 4, Autumn 2013.

³¹ Anouar Abdel-Malek, *Egypt: Military Society; The Army Regime, the Left, and Social Change under Nasser* (New York: Random House, 1968).

³² *Ibid.*, 513.

³³ *Ibid.*, 92.

former officers were appointed to top nonmilitary positions between 1952 and 1964.³⁴

Nasserism, to summarize, placed military in the center of its regime building and regime survival project assigning the army a nationalistic ideological mission, a populist reformist appeal and a growing political power. While Nasserism interpreted the ideas through the prism of nationalism, the popular masses viewed Nasserism as an ideology radiating from the centrality of the military in governance and rule. As the state embarked on comprehensive development programs under Nasser, it relied on the military to provide technological expertise and bureaucratic supervision.³⁵ The Egyptian military became the symbol of the efforts to restore national dignity and achieve economic prosperity. The ideational link between liberation, development and the military was the main source of legitimacy of their residing the regime for the masses.

Nasser was succeeded by two other military presidents: Anwar Sadat (1970-1981) and Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011). As for the position of the military during Sadat period, he carried out a “demilitarization” project by lessening the number of army officers in administrative positions to a great extent in an attempt to make the army focus more on war-related issues.³⁶ However, Mubarak installed back the military influence on Egyptian society by allowing key officers to create economic enterprises and occupy high-level government positions.³⁷

Under Mubarak, the military enjoyed great leverage in politics through its maintenance of a close relationship with the US and its military-industrial complex. As part of the 1979 peace agreement with Israel, the Egyptian military receives USD 1, 3 billion in annual aid from the U.S. This includes training of Egyptian officers in U.S. war colleges, and sales of weapons to Egypt, such as F-16 fighter jets, Apache helicopters, and M1A1 Abraham tanks. The aid programme fostered close relationships between Egyptian generals and their counterparts in the Pentagon.³⁸

Mubarak did not have a nationalistic mission to offer to the officers. The armed forces were neither the heroes of the poor nor the liberators of occupied land.³⁹ During Mubarak rule the system of control was built on a prom-

³⁴ Ibid., 92.

³⁵ Ibid., 512.

³⁶ Mark N. Cooper, “Demilitarization of Egyptian Cabinet,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2, May 1982, pp. 204-210.

³⁷ Robert Springborg, *Mubarak's Egypt: Fragmentation of the Political Order* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 95-133.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Nassif, “Wedded to Mubarak,” 514.

ise of the accumulation of rewards and post-retirement career opportunities for officers who were considered to be loyal throughout their career.⁴⁰ Senior officers expected appointments in high-rank positions in the state bureaucracy. They could also receive direct cash payments, or if they were involved in the arms trade, they received commissions.⁴¹

In addition to being appointed in the bureaucracy in large numbers⁴², retired officers held managerial positions in what Robert Springborg designates “Military, Inc.,” i.e. the armed forces’ economic empire.⁴³ The main military bodies involved in economic activities are the ministry of military production, the Arab Industrial Organization (AIO), and the National Service Projects Organization (NSPO). They run 35 factories and farms in total. According to Zeinab Abul-Magd, a historian writing articles on the Egyptian Armed Forces’ economic power, 40 percent of the goods manufactured by the Ministry of Military Production are nonmilitary products. The NSPO exclusively manufactures nonmilitary equipment.⁴⁴ Some of the retired senior military officers who were deemed loyal to the regime were gradually co-opted into the presidential system of Hosni Mubarak’s double attributes of “privilege and patronage”. In the words of Yezid Sayigh, the officers’ corps did not disappear from the scene but, rather, “became invisible by virtue of its ubiquity.” Sayigh adds that the officers’ role in the civilian sphere “became as pervasive as to be deemed normal and natural, not only by others but also, crucially, by its members.” Egypt, in Sayigh’s words, has become an “officers’ republic.”⁴⁵

The power of the SCAF stems from its economic, political and institutional power. During the transition period from February 2011 to June 2012, SCAF consolidated its dominance over state institutions. First, SCAF issued a law which provided army officers with immunity from prosecution in civilian courts. Moreover, it opened a chemical industrial complex to produce fertilizers and a cement factory in North Sinai. In 2012 constitutional amendments, the economic, political and juristical privileges of the armed forces were kept. 2014 constitution drafted after Sisi-led coup formed a committee even extended some articles entrenching the position of the armed forces. Article 197 of 2012 constitution kept the military budget from civilian scrutiny. Its coun-

⁴⁰ Springborg, *Mubarak’s Egypt*, 95–133.

⁴¹ Nassif, “Wedded to Mubarak,” 516.

⁴² Zeinab Abul-Magd, “The Egyptian Republic of Retired Generals,” *Foreign Policy*, 8 May 2012, http://mideastafrica.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/05/08/the_egyptian_republic_of_retired_generals.

⁴³ Nadine Marroushi, “US Expert: Leadership of ‘Military Inc.’ Is Running Egypt,” *Egypt Independent*, 26 October 2011, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/us-expert-leadership-militaryinc-running-egypt>.

⁴⁴ Zeinab Abul-Magd, “The Egyptian Republic of Retired Generals.”

⁴⁵ Yezid Sayigh, “Above the State: The Officers’ Republic of Egypt,” *Carnegie Endowment*, 1 August 2012, <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48996>.

terpart in 2014 constitution, article 203, maintains this immunity.⁴⁶ It gives the authority to oversee the military budget to the National Defense Council, a governmental institution consisting of seven civilians and seven military officers. Parliament is obliged to consult the council on any prospective laws concerning the armed forces, before they are introduced. The constitution also ensures that the Minister of Defense should always be chosen from ranking officers.⁴⁷

Secularist Nationalism

Having looked at the militarist institutional legacy and corporatist public administration methods in a comparative manner, core ideas that the regime relies on can be visited briefly. According to Gramsci, state is an entity comprised of “the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules.”⁴⁸ After 1952 coup installed Gamal Abdel Nasser as the first military president, the whole set of practices were imbued with ideological configurations. The political system formed with the Free Officers’ coup, therefore, was based on major ideological premises, which can be referred to as Nasserism and whose core ideas can be summarized as, firstly, Egyptian nationalism embedded in pan-Arabism, which elevates Egyptianism by reinventing its authenticity and commonalities in relation to its Arab geo-political context and by aspiring to lead the anti-colonial and anti-Israeli struggle in the Arab world⁴⁹; Arab socialism, which positions the state as a medium of industrial development in a populist manner and sustains itself in the political economy of state capitalism⁵⁰; and finally secularism with a rhetorical religiosity⁵¹. In today’s political scene, pro-Sisi campaign seems to be based on supra-nationalism with a poignant hostility against Brotherhood. A brief comparison between the nationalisms of the two periods might reveal the linkages and discontinuities.

⁴⁶ “The 2014 Egyptian Constitution: Without accountability, checks or balances,” *Daily News Egypt*, 24 March 2014, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2014/03/24/2014-egyptian-constitution-without-accountability-checks-balances/>.

⁴⁷ Dr. Zeinab Abul-Magd, “The Egyptian military in politics and the economy: Recent history and current transition status” October 2013, No: 2, CMI Insight, <http://www.cmi.no/publications/file/4935-the-egyptian-military-in-politics-and-the-economy.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Antonia Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), p. 244.

⁴⁹ Israel Gershoni and James P. Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁵⁰ Shahrough Akhavi “Egypt’s Socialism and Marxist Thought: Some Preliminary Observations on Social Theory and Metaphysics,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 17, No. 2, Apr. 1975.

⁵¹ Joel Gordon, “Secular and Religious Memory in Egypt: Recalling Nasserist Civics,” *Muslim World*, Vol. 87, No. 2, April 1997.

The Nasserite period was marked with both a strong sense of Egyptian nationalism and pan-Arabism. Although the latter seems to negate the territorial connotations of the first, the case was the opposite. Although pan-Arab discourse of the Nasserite period was a reflection of the anti-colonial, anti-western and anti-monarchical mood of the middle and lower classes, it was the national interests of Egypt that determined the alliances and conflicts during the period. Egyptian nationalism was, in other words, built upon the regional anti-colonial mood and placed itself in the center of the anti-western independence struggle. The concept of Arab identity entered Egyptian intellectual discourse in the early 1930s, gradually amounting to an influential political particularity in Egyptian society.⁵² The identity built on Arab-Islamic origin was adopted as a sort of defense mechanism against Western cultural hegemony. However, this nationalism was replaced by an exclusivist Egyptian territorial nationalism that began to be voiced more loudly and this orientation also contended that Egypt was a member of a greater Arab community with which its destiny was intertwined. Egypt's Arab policies under Nasser displayed continuity with the nature of nationalism that had marked previous decades.⁵³ The leadership of the Egyptian revolutionary regime viewed Egyptian involvement in Arab nationalism through the Egyptian prism.⁵⁴ Regional alliances of the time served the purpose of placing Egypt at the heart of Arab politics rather than erasing the contours of its territorial interests. Nationalization of the Suez Canal Company and the political merge with Syria under the political title United Arab Republic (1958-1961) were all strategic steps to further Egypt's national interests against the colonial domination within a political geography consisting of countries transitioning through a similar course of regime building experiments.

It can be argued that up until the Tahrir uprising, anti-authoritarian, anti-corruption and anti-war movement was on rise without an explicit pronouncement of Egyptian nationalism. Preceding the Tahrir revolution, this mood was reflected in anti-war movements against Mubarak's collaboration with US's invasive policies and in labor strikes against IMF-driven economic policies. In other words, anti-western sentiments of the 1950s were substituted with anti-neoliberal mood against the agenda of Western institutions like IMF, while anti-colonial sentiments of the Nasserite period were replaced with an anti-occupation mood against USA intervention in Middle East. It was this shared motive that made a great variety of people from different organizations, whether it is Nasserist or Islamist, take to Tahrir square three years ago. However, in the course of protests, Egyptian nationalism with a patriotic

⁵² Gershoni and P. Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation*, pp. 7-11.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁵⁴ James P. Jankowski, "Nasserism and Egyptian State Policy, 1952-1958" in James Jankowski and Israel Gershoni (eds.), *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 166.

tone came to be articulated more loudly. Ahmad Shokr observes how the popular mood and dominant ideas changed from 25 January up to 11 February when Mubarak resigned:

People arrived demanding free elections, regime change, and an end to police brutality, improvements in their economic lot, or all of the above. As the days passed, the discourse was slowly taken over by expressions of patriotism. The people's art in every corner of the square became less and less visible in a staggering mass of Egyptian flags. The consensus against Mubarak developed into a jubilee of national pride. Following Mubarak's resignation on February 2011, Tahrir erupted in joy. "Hold your head high," chanted hundreds of thousands. "You are Egyptian!" Smaller groups demanding "civilian, not military rule" were drowned out.⁵⁵

Shokr's observation reveals that the masses calling for more freedom and social justice expressed their grievances in a nationalistic vocabulary placing a special emphasis on Egyptian identity. The slogan Shokr quoted belongs to a speech delivered by Nasser⁵⁶. This shows how the myth of Nasserism can be translated into slogans addressing the contemporary concerns. However, this patriotism was then incorporated into the official nationalism of the SCAF for the sake of regime survival.

Today, Egyptian nationalism seems to be pronounced against the threat of Islamism. This nationalism is coupled with a notion of secularism, sponsored by the SCAF and promoted by the predominantly middle and upper class pro-Sisi alliance. Islamism, on the other hand, is represented by the aspirations of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), which projects itself as one of the leaders of the initiatives challenging the status quo and part of the Arab Spring. In other words, Islamism of MB can be situated in a cross-border context. While the pan-Arab nationalism of Nasserism involved cooperation with the concurrent movements of Ba'athist tendency sharing the same affiliation with military cadres and the same policy framework epitomized with a state-led industrialization project, Brotherhood's Islamism rests on the civilian cadres, urban and rural poor and disadvantaged segments of the bourgeoisie with an Islamist agenda. Today's Islamist movements resemble the secular anti-colonial movements of the Nasserite period in that both have a supra-Egyptian notion. However, Islamist agenda of these movements as well as their class configurations differ significantly from the anti-colonial movements of the 50s. Therefore, secularist nationalism against Brotherhood mostly refrains itself from the anti-establishment movements in the Middle East and tends to relate Islamist movements to terrorism and US plots. Sinai conflict, tunnels

⁵⁵ Ahmad Shokr, "The Eighteen Days of Tahrir" in Jeannie Sowers and Chris Toensing (eds.), *The Journey to Tahrir: Revolution, Protest, and Social Change in Egypt*, (London: Verso, 2012), p. 45.

⁵⁶ Gad Silbermann, "National Identity in Nasserist Ideology, 1951-1970," *Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 8, 1972, pp. 57-68.

to Gaza, issue of refugees from Syria and Palestine are presented as the factors serving to strengthen the sense of Egyptian nationalism which portrays the country threatened by a foreign plot. There is a strong belief that Egypt is the target of many pernicious schemes from hostile nations and entities. Once Muslim Brotherhood started to be perceived as an agent of the USA plans, similar oppositional currents Middle Eastern countries like Syria and Palestine, where the opposition consisted of a considerable number of Islamist organizations were thought to be the part of the same plot played in Egypt. Samih Naguib, a leading member of Revolutionary Socialists in Egypt says in an interview:

There's a campaign of fear saying that the Syrians and the Palestinians are all part of a plot to destabilize Egypt, to create enough paranoia in Egyptians so that they begin to feel that Syrians, or anybody who has paler skin and who might be a Syrian, might be planting a bomb somewhere. The Americans are involved, the Europeans are involved, the Israelis are involved, the Syrians are involved, the Palestinians are involved, the Qataris are involved... you know this big international plot to dismember Egypt, and to have a kind of Syrian scenario in Egypt, to dismantle the state and to tear it apart.⁵⁷

This common sentiment can be interpreted as both continuity and discontinuity from the Nasserist framework of Arab nationalism. It marks continuity in that Western powers were still considered to be responsible for the instability, reactionary movements and insecurity in the Arab geography. However, it also signifies a radical break away from the Nasserist line of thinking in that Syrian and Palestinian refugees in Egypt started to be seen as unfriendly intruders. The reason for that seems to be the fact that although Arab nationalism was an important component of the Nasserist mental framework, it was wedded to civic secularism from the beginning. Therefore, Arab solidarity and unity is today redefined depending on the ideological tendencies of the oppositional movements in the region. In short, the notion of nationalism in Egypt is situated in opposition to Brotherhood's Islamism and rests on secularism as its concomitant.

Secular nationalism provided the SCAF with an ideological mission in its reconsolidation of the ruling power blocks in domestic field and in its attempt to resume the international state of affairs inherited from the Mubarak era. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were strong supporters of the military-sponsored interim government. They offered eight billion⁵⁸, and Kuwait

⁵⁷ Rana Nessim, Rosemary Bechler, And Sameh Naguib, "Sisi's Egypt," *Open Democracy*, 8 November 2013, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/arab-awakening/sameh-naguib-rosemary-bechler-rana-nessim/sisi%E2%80%99s-egypt>.

⁵⁸ Lee Jae-Won, "Saudi Arabia and UAE to lend Egypt up to \$8 billion," *Reuters*, 9 July 2013, <http://rt.com/news/uae-saudi-egypt-loan-849/>.

granted four million dollars.⁵⁹ Saudi Arabia has been very close to the Salafists and not to the Muslim Brothers. The United Arab Emirates like Saudi Arabia were afraid of a populist Islamist movement, which could threaten its international and domestic benefits and privileged status. Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries were not only very strongly against the Morsi government, but they have also been very close allies of the United States.⁶⁰

The nature of the international solidarity for the SCAF intervention shows the contradiction between today's nationalistic perceptions and that of the Nasser period. While the former bases its nationalistic discourse against Islamisation and Brotherhoodisation of the Egyptian identity, Nasserism employs a highly anti-colonialist and pan-Arab rhetoric. Despite the pursuit of a pro-American and pro-Israeli international policy, the defense of the military coup tried to create legitimacy through a discourse of independence and the right of the Egyptian to mould their future without any foreign intervention. Yet, such an emphasis on independence was tactical rather than a long-term shift in international policy, evident in John Kerry's visit to Egypt declaring the US endorsement for the military "road map."⁶¹

Today's secularist-nationalist currents in Egyptian society display continuity with the Nasserist understanding and practices. Nasser saw necessary for the officers' group to keep its independence.⁶² Therefore, when the Free Officers came to power in July 1952, they immediately avowed their autonomy, acting against the independent trade unions and then the left, and later against the Muslim Brotherhood.⁶³ By 1954, 450 members of the Muslim Brotherhood were arrested, and by the end of 1954 the organization was banned.

This repression on Muslim Brotherhood was accompanied by the attempts to incorporate religion in 1956 constitution, designating the Egyptian state as 'Islamic'.⁶⁴ Nasserist ideology treated religion both as a marker of Arabness and as a potentially dangerous field to be exploited, resulting in efforts to contain its popular appeal as well as oppress its political configurations. Today, the constitution still views *sharia* as the main source of its jurisdiction. At the

⁵⁹ "Arab aid to Egypt reaches \$12 billion, after Kuwait pledges \$4 billion," *Egypt Independent*, 10 July 2013, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/arab-aid-egypt-reaches-12-billion-after-kuwait-pledges-4-billion>

⁶⁰ Rod Nordland, "Saudi Arabia Promises to Aid Egypt's Regime," *The New York Times*, 19 August 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/20/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-vows-to-back-egypts-rulers.html?_r=0.

⁶¹ Michael R. Gordon "Egyptians Following Right Path, Kerry Says," *The New York Times*, 3 November 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/04/world/middleeast/kerry-egypt-visit.html>.

⁶² Khaled Mohi El Din, *Memories of a Revolution: Egypt 1952* (American University in Cairo Press, 1995), p. 25.

⁶³ Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 105-106.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

same time, 2013 constitution prohibits formation of political parties based on religion.⁶⁵ The same containment and coercion efforts seem to prevail.

Challenges Facing Sisi

Lack of a Political Party

Despite its institutional and economic power and substantial legitimacy among the Egyptian society, the military faces serious challenges. So far, the military managed to keep the mass mobilization behind its “road map,” but how far this support can be sustained remains to be a puzzle. Hegemony and coercion seems to be kept in a rather fragile balance. For Gramsci, the state constitutes hegemony protected by the armor of coercion of the state.⁶⁶ A class, he argues, establishes hegemony in two ways: by ‘leading’ and ‘dominance’. He explains “the state leads the classes which are its allies, and dominates those which are its enemies.”⁶⁷ Today, Sisi bloc tries to create a political body to “lead the allies” and continues to issue death sentences for the “enemies.”

Ayubi argues that Nasser’s state was an authoritarian-bureaucratic state, consisting of three layers: a boss state, a security state, and a party state that dominated most associations in society, while the civil bureaucracy was directed and controlled by all three. The mobilization of the people within the system, Ayubi contends, “was partly charismatic (via the boss), partly ideological/political (via the party) and partly organizational (via the bureaucracy and sometimes the army).”⁶⁸ Today, Sisi serves as the means of “charismatic” mobilization, the fronts or blocs such as National Salvation Front serve as a medium of political mobilization and the SCAF serves as the instrument of organizational mobilization. Among these, the political party seems to be the most fragile and hard to be designed in such a way that potential contenders of the regime can be contained.

Ayubi contends that Nasser aimed to mobilize the loyalties of the common people by implementing corporatist organizational principles without allowing an accompanying increase in their political power. Today, Sisi’s main challenge appears to be creating such a mechanism. In other words, today Sisi does not have a political body similar to *the National Rally* of Nasser, *the Arab Socialist Union* of Sadat or *the National Democratic Party* (NDP), which served as Mubarak regime’s parliamentary front and ruling party.

⁶⁵ Hicham Mourad, “Sharia and the new Egyptian constitution,” *Al-Ahram*, 19 December 2013, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/4/0/893336/Opinion/Sharia-and-the-new-Egyptian-constitution.aspx>.

⁶⁶ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 263.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-57.

⁶⁸ A Nazih N. Ayubi, *Over-Stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1995), p. 203.

Currently, there are certain attempts to form a bloc called *the National Alliance*, which aims to secure the diverse segments of coalition for Sisi. The alliance already includes the *Congress Party*, *Free Egyptians Party* (founded by businessman Naguib Sawiris) and the branch of the *Tamarod* movement led by Mahmoud Badr. It is also likely to include *Al-Tanami*, *the Arab Nasserist Party* and also *the National Movement Party* founded by former presidential candidate Ahmed Shafik. Anti-Brotherhood bloc is an alliance of negation rather than construction. Therefore, apart from preventing MB from re-entering the political sphere, there is little agreement on how to address the challenges for the basic demands of the Tahrir uprising: freedom, bread, social justice.

Before the presidential elections, *National Salvation Front*, which had been launched against Morsi's initiative to concentrate power in his hands, accounted for the political body securing the same bloc. In November 2012, Morsi had issued a constitutional declaration centralizing a massive amount of authority in his hands.⁶⁹ All anti-Brotherhood political currents had been drawn to a new coalition which involved figures from the old regime. Hamdeen Sabbahi of the nationalist *Karama Party*, together with Mohamed El Baradei of the liberal *Destour Party*, had welcomed Mubarak-era foreign minister Amr Moussa into *National Salvation Front*, which brought together liberal *Wafd*, right wing party *Free Egyptian Party*, *Social Democratic Party* and the Nasserist-leaning parties including *Al-Karama*, *Tagammu* and *The Nasserist Party*.⁷⁰ This bloc then formed the transitional government after the 3 July coup; however, it was not able to act as a coherent body because although the mass movement supporting Brotherhood was suppressed with full-fledged state violence, industrial struggle was still in place. In January 2014, there was a widespread strike action across the country, focusing on demands for a minimum wage, for delivery of promises made and broken by employers and by government, and for *tathir*, which means cleansing of corrupt managers and officials associated with the Mubarak regime. In the face of this crisis, in February 2014 the government appointed by el-Sisi disintegrated. A new prime minister was appointed and in his first speech new Prime Minister Ibrahim Mehleb urged: "Stop all kinds of sit-ins, protests and strikes. Let us start building the nation."⁷¹ Therefore, the new political body built around an anti-Brotherhood campaign is likely to suffer disintegration similar to the preceding blocs.

⁶⁹ "English text of Morsi's Constitutional Declaration," *Ahram Online*, 22 November 2012, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/58947.aspx>.

⁷⁰ "Profile: Egypt's National Salvation Front," *BBC News*, 10 December 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-20667661>.

⁷¹ Hamza Hendawi, "Egypt's New Premier Calls for Protests to End," *ABC News [Associated Press]*, 2 March 2014, <http://world.time.com/2014/03/02/egypts-new-premier-calls-for-protests-to-end/>.

Entrenched Authoritarianism: A By-Product of Neoliberalism in Egypt

A corporatist political strategy is only possible when the incorporated parties are economically included. Otherwise, the state is obliged to implement coercive measures at an increasing scale, which might be hard to sustain. As often reported there has been a long-standing disregard for socioeconomic rights which creates poverty and worsening in standards of living for the middle and lower classes. The most recent official statistics reveal that over a quarter of the population lives in poverty, a third of young people are unemployed, and three out of five children are malnourished. These problems mainly driven by corruption, unemployment, and failing public services are the same ones that triggered Hosni Mubarak's removal three years ago.⁷²

Hazem Kandil argues that neoliberal policies which require the shrinking of social benefits, an increase in prices and high unemployment among public and private sector workers result in social unrest, whose control compels the ruling strata to resort to constant repression. Therefore, neoliberal project which started with Anwar Sadat did not diminish the coercive nature of the Nasserite institutions; rather, this project rested on coercion. In the same line as Kandil, Mitchell argues against the advocates of neoliberalism who suggest that “repression is an unforeseen, unfortunate, intermittent, and probably temporary side effect of the shocks that accompany the expansion of the global market.” She objects to that proposition arguing that “violence is a common instrument of capitalist development, in particular the penetration of capitalist relations into new territories.”⁷³ Michael Mann maintains a similar view about the coupling of authoritarianism and neoliberalism. He argues that authoritarian regimes especially have a tendency to introduce policies which result in “short-term economic misery for the sake of some dubious neo-liberal vision of the long term” because they are not concerned about winning elections.⁷⁴ Sisi might not be worrying too much about the elections, but Tahrir uprising and long-lasting waves of protests in Egypt provide reasons for worry if their basic demands are not delivered.

Nasserite regime was based on a bargain that involved the delivery of social rights in exchange for political ones. In that bargain, the state offered employment opportunities, free education, free health care, and subsidies for goods and services. In return, it asked the citizens to sacrifice their right to participate in politics. Yet, with the advent of neoliberalism from Sadat period onwards, another policy framework was put into practice. To be able to receive IMF and WB loans, Sadat put into effect new economic policies that

⁷² Allison Corkery and Heba Khalil, “Egypt must Stop Penalizing the Poor”, *Foreign Policy*, 23 May 2014, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/05/23/egypt_must_stop_penalizing_the_poor.

⁷³ Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 297–98.

⁷⁴ Michael Mann, *Incoherent Empire* (New York: Verso, 2003), p. 70.

reduced the amount of public spending and lift certain subsidies.⁷⁵ Under these new policies the government lessened the financial support for public education and health care services, removed rent control and subsidies on food and clothing, and ceased the building of low cost housing.⁷⁶ In brief, the government abandoned the policies and attributes which constituted Nasser's social contract. The *Infitah* policies caused a large amount of social disillusionment and dissatisfaction. These policies produced a rift between the government and the population.⁷⁷ There were huge protests called as 'food riots' that took place against Sadat's attempts to remove subsidies on staple foods and fuel as part of the loan deals with IMF.

As for Mubarak, he launched structural economic reforms, privatized public companies, and passed laws to introduce incentives for local and foreign capital entrepreneurs.⁷⁸ Even one of the greatest achievements of Nasserist rule, the September 1952 Agrarian Reform, was eradicated in a new Land Act (Act 96, 1992)⁷⁹, which cancelled the forceful control over land-lease fees that Nasser had set up.⁸⁰ The act gave the landowners the right to determine leasing fees according to market prices.

The economic framework of Mubarak era was associated with the term 'Crony capitalism,' which is used to describe "privatized economies in which rent-seeking bureaucrats were closely linked to businessmen, and their mutual interest and patronage were reflected in economic policies" by Sadowski.⁸¹ This strategy was designated as 'productive *Infitah*', which he promised could bring the developmental benefits of privatized capitalism without the expenses of the Sadat period. However, this 'well-balanced' strategy turned into a "missionary zeal"⁸², in Springborg's terms, as a result of the pressure from Western advisers and officials over Egypt to pursue a faster and broader program.

In the wake of a deepening debt burden and with a significant encouragement from the business lobby Mubarak accepted to implement most of the IMF's demands without sacrificing the interests of "his bedrock support – the

⁷⁵ Bjorn Olav Utvik, *Islamist Economics in Egypt* (Boulder CO.: Lynne Rienner, 2006), p. 4.

⁷⁶ Raymond A. Hinnebusch, *Egyptian Politics under Sadat: The Post-Populist Development of an Authoritarian-Modernizing State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 269-270.

⁷⁷ Marfleet, "State and Society," p. 20.

⁷⁸ Robert Springborg, *Political Structural Adjustment in Egypt: A Precondition for Rapid Economic Growth?* (San Domenico: European University Institute, June 1999), pp. 22–26.

⁷⁹ Ray Bush, "The land and the people," in *Egypt: The Moment of Change*, eds. R. El-Mahdi and P. Marfleet, (London: Zed Books, 2009), p. 52.

⁸⁰ Hatina, "Egypt," *MECS*, No. 21, 1997, pp. 321–22.

⁸¹ Yahya M. Sadowski, *Political Vegetables? Businessman and Bureaucrat in the Development of Egyptian Agriculture* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 1991), p. 139.

⁸² Springborg, *Mubarak's Egypt*, p. 257.

officer corps and the cadre of senior officials which have continuity with the Nasserist era.”⁸³ Consequently, the state evolved into an entity which concentrated centralized control over economic and political issues in its hands with a special promotion for private capital at the highest level. By the mid-1990s, Henry and Springborg contend, Egypt came to be a country “in the grip of a nexus of cronies, officers, bureaucrats and public sector managers.”⁸⁴

The entangled nature of private and public interests led to seemingly contradictory consequences. Mitchell argues US aid enterprise and the ostensible encouragement of ‘pluralism’ actually reinforced the position of the state. The military maintains its position in the state with the maximum benefits, accessing a larger share in production, agriculture and construction. Kandil points to the emergence of new billionaires who occupied the highest political positions in the cabinet and in the party along with the increasing power of the security forces and the military. It was these high-profile businessmen, he writes, who designed policy rather than middle or rural classes. For the first time since 1952, he adds, economic elites were manipulating the state rather than being manipulated by it during Mubarak’s rule.⁸⁵ Increasing authoritarianism, growing economic power of the military, rising impact of the business elite on policy desing, culmination of economic embitterment and corruption in an authoritarian regime gave rise to Tahrir uprising. Therefore, today’s authoritarian initiative is also vulnerable to a challenge from below.

Postscript

The new faces of the ruling strata in Egypt have to strike a balance between the demands of economic elites for stability and those of the middle and working classes for employment, higher salaries and social justice, which is the paradox of neoliberal framework. Within neoliberal context, creating resources by introducing IMF-designed economic policies means the working class will pay the price, which might lead them to take up another turn of mass movement this time challenging Sisi and his supporters from the business circles and *feloul*.

All in all, in Egypt the Armed Forces seem to maintain their status quo as the major factor in the political process. The SCAF mostly undertook a preemptive strategy, removing Mubarak and then Morsi to abort a deeper revolutionary change and protect itself. In its intervention, the SCAF made use of the Nasser’s heritage, invoking the memory of calls for national unity, fierce crackdowns on Islamists, and development of the country. Nasser’s institutional and ideological legacy might have strengthened the hands of the status quo for the time being, but without a new social pact, ideologically loaded

⁸³ Marfleet, “State and Society”, p. 22.

⁸⁴ Henry Clement Henry and Robert Springborg, *Globalization and the Politics of Developments in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 155.

⁸⁵ Hazem Kandil, *Soldiers, Spies, and Statesmen: Egypt’s Road to Revolt* (London: Verso, 2012), p. 239.

discourses are highly likely to be short lived. Today's heroic figures might be challenged from below, leading to a new mass movement and new political bodies to be born outside Sisi and Brotherhood dichotomy.

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