



## Uprising in Egypt

Standard Note: SN/IA/ 5865

Last updated: 15 March 2011

Author: Ben Smith

Section International Affairs and Defence Section

---

Egypt's remarkably peaceful and dignified popular revolt has been greeted as a historic moment that will have enormous consequences throughout the Arab world. This note describes the background to the crisis provides a simple account of events since 25 January. It profiles groups and individuals involved and considers some likely outcomes.

### Summary

- The demonstrations that led to hundreds of deaths in Cairo and elsewhere led to the Egyptian army ending its support for Hosni Mubarak, who was forced to stand down on 11 February
- Mubarak remained in Egypt and has been banned from leaving the country
- Power in the country is in the hands of the Higher Military Council
- The prime minister has been replaced twice since the unrest began; the post is now occupied by Essam Sharaf, a former transport minister in the Mubarak government
- Changes to the constitution have been proposed to strengthen judicial oversight of elections and to curtail the government's freedom to introduce states of emergency
- The changes have been criticised as leaving too much power in the hands of the presidency, but could at least provide for more convincing elections before a definitive new constitution could be drawn up
- The uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt had a profound effect on the region, sweeping away any notion that Arabs do not want democracy and shaking autocratic regimes throughout the Muslim world
- It is likely that the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel would remain in place, at least in the medium term; the Muslim Brotherhood has said that it does not want to dominate politics in Egypt and that, even if it were in control, its policy would be to put the treaty to referendum

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties and is not intended to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual. It should not be relied upon as being up to date; the law or policies may have changed since it was last updated; and it should not be relied upon as legal or professional advice or as a substitute for it. A suitably qualified professional should be consulted if specific advice or information is required.

This information is provided subject to [our general terms and conditions](#) which are available online or may be provided on request in hard copy. Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing with Members and their staff, but not with the general public.

## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Background</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1	Political structure	3
<b>2</b>	<b>Hints of liberalisation</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Raised expectations dashed</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1	Results of the 2010 parliamentary election	6
3.2	Freedom and human rights in Egypt	6
<b>4</b>	<b>The Egyptian crisis</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Main actors</b>	<b>14</b>
5.1	Omar Suleiman	14
5.2	Mohammed ElBaradei	14
5.3	Amr Moussa	15
5.4	Mohammed Tantawi	15
5.5	Sami Enan	15
5.6	Muslim Brotherhood	16
	Israel peace treaty	16
	The Brotherhood outside Egypt	18
	Muslim Brotherhood's reaction to the uprising	18
5.7	Kefayah	19
5.8	Wafd Party	20
5.9	Tagammu (Progressive National Union Party)	20
5.10	6 April youth movement	20
5.11	The business elite	20
5.12	The industrial workforce	21
5.13	The police	22
5.14	The Army	22
5.15	The United States	25
<b>6</b>	<b>Egyptian economy (by Gavin Thompson)</b>	<b>26</b>
6.1	UK economic interests	27
<b>7</b>	<b>UK government reaction</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Possible outcomes and consequences for the Middle east</b>	<b>29</b>
	<b>Egyptian constitution: main controversial articles</b>	<b>31</b>

## 1 Background

Robert Malley, of the International Crisis Group, argued in a recent article that the division of the Middle East into friends and enemies was distorting the West's perception of the region:

Washington still sees the Middle East as cleanly divided between two camps: a moderate, pro-American camp that ought to be bolstered and a militant, pro-Iranian one that needs to be contained. That conception is wholly divorced from reality.<sup>1</sup>

Authoritarian regimes in the Arab world, for so long assumed to be friendly, stable governments with whom western governments could cooperate, have been hit by a wave of demonstrations and revolt. It is not clear where this will lead, but Egypt, the Arab world's most populous state and once its most influential, will certainly never be the same after the events of January and February 2011.

### 1.1 Political structure

The Egyptian Constitution provides for a strong executive. Authority is vested in an elected President who can appoint one or more Vice Presidents, a Prime Minister, and a Cabinet. The President's term runs for 6 years. The lower house of Egypt's parliament, the People's Assembly, has 454 members – 444 popularly elected and 10 appointed by the President. The constitution reserves 50% of the assembly seats for "workers and peasants". The assembly sits for a 5-year term but can be dissolved earlier by the President. There also is a 264-member *Shura* (consultative) Council, in which 88 members are appointed and 174 elected for 6-year terms. Below the national level, authority is exercised by and through governors and mayors appointed by the central government and by popularly elected local councils.

President Hosni Mubarak assumed power in October 1981, after President Sadat's assassination by Islamist extremists. He was re-elected on 7 September 2005 for his fifth successive term. This was the first contested presidential election in Egypt, following a change to the constitution in May 2005. The President appoints the Prime Minister.

## 2 Hints of liberalisation

The November 2000 elections were generally considered to have been more transparent and better-executed than past elections, because of universal judicial monitoring of polling stations. On the other hand, opposition parties continued to lodge credible complaints about electoral manipulation by the government. There were significant restrictions on the political process and freedom of expression for non-governmental organizations, including professional syndicates and organizations promoting respect for human rights.

Progress was seen in the September 2005 presidential elections when parties were allowed to field candidates against President Mubarak and his National Democratic Party. In early 2005, President Mubarak proposed amending the constitution to allow, for the first time in

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert Malley, "Beyond Moderates and Militants", *Foreign Policy*, September/October 2010

Egypt's history, competitive, multi-candidate presidential elections. An amendment was drafted by parliament and approved by public referendum in late May 2005. In September 2005, President Mubarak was re-elected with 88% of the vote, according to official results.

### **3 Raised expectations dashed**

After the attempts at opening the system up during the first years of the new century, political and social conditions in the country began to deteriorate. The years-long uncertainty over who would succeed President Hosni Mubarak, 82 years old and in power for 30 years, was causing the regime to pull back from liberalisation experiments. The 2008 local elections, where the turnout was only 5%, marked a notable decline.

A US-based think tank commented on the implications of the local elections for Egypt:

Egypt's local elections of April 8, 2008 were a confirmation of a backward slide in Egyptian politics. They were plagued by social unrest and political discord. In the weeks prior to the elections, labor protests escalated, precipitating a harsh crackdown that resulted in at least two fatalities and many injuries. The country's largest opposition force, the Muslim Brotherhood, decided at the last minute to boycott the elections. Voter turnout did not exceed 5 percent and the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), facing virtually no competition, landed a sweeping victory—winning roughly 95 percent of the seats at stake.

These developments bring to light a broader deterioration in Egyptian politics. Three elements of this process stand out and deserve careful attention:

- First, the burgeoning social crisis caused by out-of-control inflation, a crippled welfare system, and persistent unemployment;
- Second, a return to the old authoritarian practices of the ruling establishment; and
- Third, worrying signs that call into question the very existence of a viable opposition capable of advancing reform through the political process.<sup>2</sup>

The report argued that:

Politically, the regime seems to have abandoned the option of using political reforms to defuse socio-economic tensions. This stands in contrast to what happened in the 2003–2005 period. [...]

Taken together, the Egyptian regime's policies in the past two years have put an end to the political mobility the country briefly experienced between 2003 and 2005, and reintroduced the stagnation that characterized the 1980s and 1990s. The space in which the opposition, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, can operate has been greatly restricted, resulting in widespread, severe polarization. [...]

During the first several months of 2008, it became evident that authoritarian practices were not going to recede any time soon.

The CEIP report concluded:

Egypt is trapped in an unenviable position, characterized by growing social unrest and political polarization. Choices made by the Egyptian regime will most likely determine whether the current social convulsions will be followed by more instability or, if matters

---

<sup>2</sup> Mohammed Herzallah and Amr Hamzawy, *Egypt's Local Elections Farce: Causes and consequences*, Carnegie Endowment for World Peace, April 2008

are handled prudently, sustainable recovery. In all likelihood the option of moderating the perilous effects of economic strain by orchestrating a new wave of political reforms is one that the regime will hesitate to embrace at this stage. The concern that such openings might make worse the odds of a trouble-free presidential succession seems to surpass any other considerations. The result of this conservative outlook has been a regrettable return to old authoritarian habits on the part of the regime.

In 2009, Mubarak was admitted to hospital for an operation, for the removal of his gall bladder or of a benign tumour, depending on whether the story of the hospital or the official media is right. His old age and obviously very fragile health further exacerbated uncertainty over who was really running the country, and the succession.

The regime's increasing insecurity contributed to a decision to maintain and strengthen the clamp-down on opponents, and the 2010 parliamentary election was very different from the 2005 election, when the Muslim Brotherhood affiliates had won 20% of the seats. While the Brotherhood and the liberal Wafd party (see below) decided to participate in the first round, the regime stepped up its repression in the run up to the poll. As one commentator for Chatham House put it:

The government's heavy handed tactics such as detention without trial and allegations of police brutality have become common place. Ahead of the elections there have been new controls. Nilesat, Egypt's main satellite operator, said that it had shut down twelve channels on grounds of violating broadcasting licenses. Newspaper editors have been removed from their jobs, bloggers and SMS messaging have been restricted.

Although the regime may be able to control the outcome of the polls, it is being challenged, albeit weakly, across a range of political parties and groups which in itself represents a crossroads in Egypt's politics. The degree of discontent has manifested itself through different pockets of opposition, most significantly through workers protests. According to experts, since 2006 Egypt has experienced 1,600 labour protests. Riots may become a feature of economic and social discontent in a country that has become increasingly divided along economic and class lines during the Mubarak era.<sup>3</sup>

A commentator for the Council on Foreign Relations reported:

the conduct of the elections -- the security sweeps and wholesale disqualification of candidates in the weeks before the polls combined with a day of vote rigging, intimidation, and violence (eight deaths and numerous injured) -- indicates the manifest weakness of the Egyptian state.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Maha Azzam, "[Egypt's Elections: A Challenge to the Regime?](#)", Chatham House expert comment, 25 November 2010

<sup>4</sup> Steven A Cook, "[Egypt's Weakness on Display in Elections](#)", Council on Foreign Relations First take, 29 October 2010

**3.1 Results of the 2010 parliamentary election**

**Egyptian Parliament 2010**

---

Political Group	Total
National Democratic Party (NDP)	427
Independents	69
New Wafd Party	7
Tagammu party	5
Jil (Generation)	1
Social Justice Party	1
Democratic Peace party	1
Tomorrow Party (Al-Ghad)	1

---

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union

In the 2005 parliament, 88 independents had been affiliated to the Brotherhood. In the new parliament, only one of the independents is a representative of the Brotherhood. The other two parties with significant representation, the Wafd and the Tagammu parties, fall very far short of the ruling NDP (and of the Brotherhood’s potential, judging by the 2005 results). The 2010 parliament is now dissolved.

**3.2 Freedom and human rights in Egypt**

The US organisation that monitors democracy, freedom and human rights, Freedom House, labelled Egypt as “not free” and deteriorating in its Freedom in the World 2011 report.<sup>5</sup> Morocco, by way of comparison, managed a “partially free” rating in the report. The Economist Intelligence Unit’s *Democracy Index 2010* put Egypt at 138<sup>th</sup> position out of 167, less democratic than Jordan, Morocco, Algeria or Nigeria (but more democratic than Saudi Arabia).<sup>6</sup>

In Transparency International’s 2010 Corruption Perception Index, Egypt scored 3.1, which rated the country less corrupt than Algeria but worse than Saudi Arabia.

Egypt is not listed as a country of concern in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s Human Rights Report 2009,<sup>7</sup> whereas countries such as Israel, Iraq and Saudi Arabia are. The US pressure group Human Rights Watch, on the other hand, has long criticised Egypt for the permanence of its state of emergency, the torture “endemic” to the police force:

Human Rights Watch found that law enforcement officers routinely and deliberately use torture and ill-treatment - in ordinary criminal cases as well as with political dissidents and security detainees - to coerce confessions, extract other information, or simply to punish detainees.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2011 Table of Independent Countries*, 13 January 2011  
<sup>6</sup> *Democracy Index 2010*, Economist Intelligence Unit, 2010, p7  
<sup>7</sup> *Annual Report on Human Rights 2009*, FCO  
<sup>8</sup> “Egypt: Impunity for Torture Fuels Days of Rage” Press release, Human Rights Watch, 31 January 2011

Amnesty International likewise draws attention to serious human rights violations in Egypt:

The rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly were curtailed; journalists and bloggers were among those detained or prosecuted. Hundreds of families residing in Cairo's "unsafe areas" were forcibly evicted; some were left homeless, others were relocated but without security of tenure. Men perceived to be gay continued to be prosecuted under a "debauchery" law.<sup>9</sup>

In the United Nations Human Development Index, Egypt is 15<sup>th</sup> out of 19 Middle East and North Africa countries, with only Syria, Morocco Yemen and Sudan having worse conditions.<sup>10</sup>

#### **4 The Egyptian crisis**

Unrest in Tunisia was sparked by the self-immolation of a young graduate in a provincial town whose fruit and vegetable stall, his only source of income, was confiscated by police who said that he needed a permit. The emotional power of the act not only moved protesters to continue demonstrating, despite scores of deaths, until President Ben Ali fled the country; it also caused a wave of similar suicides across the region. At least five Egyptians burned themselves to death just during the week of 17<sup>th</sup> January.<sup>11</sup>

The Tunisian unrest had struck a chord with the anger and humiliation suffered by Egyptians and it raised the confidence of demonstrators that largely peaceful protests were capable of removing a hated president, and perhaps bringing in a political regime that respected the dignity of the population and was not corrupt.

The virtual collapse of negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, based on the "road map" for a two-state solution, and subsequent *Wikileaks* revelations of the compromises that the Palestinian negotiators were prepared to offer, can only have added to Egyptian frustrations. Combined with economic difficulties, including a recent surge in inflation and persistent high unemployment, particularly among the young, these factors caused emotions to boil over.

- Demonstrations started in earnest on 25 January with a day of protests mainly in the capital Cairo and the port city of Suez. Three were reportedly killed that day. Police cleared Tahrir Square in the centre of Cairo with teargas at around midnight.

Protesters again gathered in Cairo the following day and, although police again used teargas and water cannon to disperse demonstrators, the massive presence of security forces, usually expected to smother demonstrations in Egypt, was not to be seen.

---

<sup>9</sup> [Egypt](#), *Amnesty International Report 2010*, Summary

<sup>10</sup> Source: UNDP, Human Development Report, 2010, in "Database: living standards", Economist Intelligence Unit, 1 January 2011

<sup>11</sup> "Flames of fury spread", *Sunday Times*, 23 January 2011

Central Cairo (Source: BBC News Online 10 February 2011)



- After Friday prayers, on 28 January, unrest increased. Police clashed with thousands of protesters, using teargas and rubber bullets again to disperse the crowds. Troops arrived on the streets for the first time, to attempt to enforce a curfew. By this time some 26 people were reported to have died and hundreds to have been injured. The demonstrations had spread to other Egyptian cities such as Alexandria. The headquarters of the ruling party, the National Democratic Party (NDP) were set on fire and the state television building was besieged.

Internet sites, such as Facebook and Twitter which had a role in organising the demonstrations, and phone services were severely disrupted by government action.

- Having kept a low profile for several days, President Hosni Mubarak made a statement to the nation on the evening of 28 January. He said he would dismiss his cabinet and appoint a new one, with instructions to deal with the unrest. He said that he understood the protesters' grievances, but that he would not let the country descend into chaos.

Mohamed ElBaradei dismissed the move, saying that what the people wanted was a change of regime.

Meanwhile, unrest spread to other centres such as Ismailiya. In Cairo, Tahrir Square remained full of protesters. The number of casualties rose, with as many as 102 now reported to be dead and some 2,000 injured.

Looting was reported in richer neighbourhoods, and many shops were ransacked. In another worrying development, several hundred prisoners were reported to have escaped from a prison in Fayoum, south of Cairo. Security forces were said to be unwilling to fire on the prisoners.<sup>12</sup> Police almost completely disappeared from the streets, and vigilante groups were set up all over Cairo to protect buildings and property.

Demonstrators were increasingly drawn from the full spectrum of Egyptian society and no longer just from the youth.

- The head of Egypt's General Intelligence Service, Omar Suleiman, was appointed vice-president over the weekend of 29/30 January. This was the first time the post had been filled during President Mubarak's presidency, although Mubarak occupied it himself before becoming president. A new cabinet was also appointed with Ahmed Shafiq, most recently Minister for Civil Aviation, becoming Prime Minister.

Thousands of demonstrators defied the curfew on the Sunday night to continue the occupation of Tahrir Square.

- On 31, the army announced that it would not fire on demonstrators.
- On Tuesday 1 February, the protests reached what one correspondent called a "tipping point". Mubarak made another television announcement to the effect that he would not seek re-election in September but that he would remain in office for a process of constitutional reforms until then.

This was the first time that he had accepted that his rule was ending. Increasing pressure from both the US and the Egyptian army was credited with the shift, which was greeted with jubilation as a capitulation by the Cairo crowds. Reports stated, however, that it was not enough for most demonstrators, who intended to stay on the streets until the president resigned.

- At the same time, there were the first reports of growing pro-Mubarak demonstrations, and some clashes between rival groups in Cairo and Alexandria. 20,000 pro-government demonstrators were reported in a middle class district of Cairo on 2 February.<sup>13</sup> Also on Wednesday, an Army spokesman appeared on television to ask protesters to disperse so that life could get back to normal.

Later, protesters accused the Army of allowing a crowd of some 3,000 supporters of the regime to enter Tahrir Square to attack the demonstration. Anti-government protesters alleged that some of the pro-government demonstrators were paid thugs and others were public sector workers forced to come out in favour of the government. The Army did very little to prevent the two sides from clashing. Five deaths and more than a thousand injuries were reported.

- Battles between the two sides continued on the morning of 3 February, but later in the day, the Army moved to separate the demonstrators, with one tank turning its turret

---

<sup>12</sup> "As it happened: Egypt unrest day five", *BBC News Online*, 29 January 2011

<sup>13</sup> "Egypt army fires warning shots as pro, anti-Mubarak protesters clash" *Haaretz*, 2 February 2011

towards the pro-government demonstration and advancing towards them with foot soldiers to push them back. The Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq apologised for the previous day's violence, calling it a mistake.

In another worrying development, there were reports of what the US State Department called a "concerted campaign" against foreign journalists and human rights campaigners, both Egyptian and international.<sup>14</sup> Dozens of foreign journalists were said to have been arrested or attacked and beaten, and a representative from British-based rights group Amnesty International, together with another from the US group Human Rights Watch, were arrested.

- On 4 February, senior members of the ruling National Democratic Party resigned from their party posts, including Gamal Mubarak, the president's son. Vice President Omar Suleiman invited representatives of opposition groups to discuss reforms. The Muslim Brotherhood said that it would partake only if Mubarak resigned. There was consternation when the US president's special envoy, Frank Wisner, said that Mr Mubarak's "continued leadership is critical. It's his opportunity to write his own legacy."<sup>15</sup> The remarks were later described as "personal" by both Mr Wisner and the State Department. It later emerged that the special envoy had business links to the regime.<sup>16</sup>
- 6 February saw the Muslim Brotherhood in discussions with the government, along with five other opposition groups. The MB's demands for full participation in negotiations were:
  1. the immediate resignation of President Mubarak
  2. lifting of emergency laws
  3. dissolution of parliament
  4. release of all political prisoners<sup>17</sup>

The response of most of the groups was that the government's offer was not enough. One of the government's suggestions was a panel of experts to propose amendments to the constitution, which was agreed. Mohammed ElBaradei was not at the talks but was represented by one of his deputies. Meanwhile, protesters continued to occupy Tahrir Square but banks opened for the first time in days, albeit briefly. The total number of dead from the uprising was now estimated at 300.

- On 7 February, Bedouin tribesmen attacked Egyptian security forces at Rafah, the crossing point into the Gaza Strip. There has been growing unrest among the nomadic Bedouin, who complain of discrimination by the authorities. Violent Islamic militants have been associated with bomb attacks in the holiday resorts in the south of the Sinai Peninsula. Egypt deployed two battalions to Sinai, having secured the agreement of Israel.<sup>18</sup>
- Tuesday 8 February saw a crowd of some 250,000 people gather in Tahrir Square, showing that the protests had not lost momentum, despite lack of progress on negotiations.

---

<sup>14</sup> "Egypt cracks down on foreign journalists", *Guardian*, 4 February 2011

<sup>15</sup> "US envoy's business link to Egypt", *Independent*, 7 February 2011

<sup>16</sup> "US envoy's business link to Egypt", *Independent*, 7 February 2011

<sup>17</sup> "Egypt protests: Opposition wary after Suleiman talks", *BBC News Online*, 7 February 2011

<sup>18</sup> "Amid Turmoil in Egypt, More Clashes in Sinai", *New York Times*, 8 February 2011

- On 9 February, the Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit criticised US calls for the lifting of the emergency law, saying that the US should not try to impose its will.

In an important escalation, thousands of other workers across Egypt were reported to have stopped work, including health workers, railway and bus workers, state electricity staff, Suez Canal technicians, workers in factories manufacturing textiles, steel and beverages. Demonstrators blocked access to the parliament building.

Omar Suleiman warned that, if negotiations with the opposition did not succeed, the alternative was "that a coup happens, which would mean uncalculated and hasty steps, including lots of irrationalities".<sup>19</sup> Opposition groups responded angrily to the comment. A spokesman said:

He is threatening to impose martial law, which means everybody in the square will be smashed. But what would he do with the rest of 70 million Egyptians who will follow us afterward?<sup>20</sup>

- On 10 February, Hassan al-Roweni, an Egyptian army commander, told the demonstration in Tahrir Square that "everything you want will be realised today".<sup>21</sup> Later in the day, state television showed the Supreme Council of Egyptian Armed Forces meeting under the chairmanship of Mohamed Tantawi, the defence minister, rather than Hosni Mubarak, who would normally have led the meeting. This was taken as a sign that Mubarak's days were numbered. The council's statement was labelled "Communiqué number 1", and it said that it would remain in permanent session. For one analyst writing for *Associated Press*, both were suggestions that a military coup had taken place.<sup>22</sup>

Later, Hassam Badrawi, the secretary general of the ruling National Democratic Party, told the BBC and Channel 4 News on that he expected Mubarak to hand over his powers to Omar Suleiman, the vice-president (although Suleiman was not at the meeting of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces). The director of the CIA said that he expected Mubarak's resignation that day.

Huge numbers of protesters excitedly gathered in Tahrir Square to hear the president's televised address, which they expected to include a statement of his resignation. The crowd was shocked to hear instead that he would transfer powers to his deputy Omar Suleiman and that he would remain president until elections in September.

- The following day, 11 February, clashes were expected between the angry and disappointed protesters and the security forces. Even more people congregated in the centres of Cairo, Alexandria and other cities and observers suggested that the Cairo demonstrators might march on the presidential palace. In the morning, the military command council issued communiqué number two, to the effect that the emergency powers would be lifted when the current situation ended and that free and fair elections would be held. It was then reported that President Mubarak had gone to his residence in the resort of Sharm el-Sheikh. At about 6pm, Omar Suleiman appeared again on television to announce Mubarak's resignation and the transfer of the powers of the presidency to the military supreme command council. Later in the evening, the Supreme Military Command Council issued communiqué number three, in which it said

---

<sup>19</sup> "Egypt protests: People's Assembly rally amid strikes", *BBC News Online*, 9 February 2011

<sup>20</sup> "Strikes in Egypt add to pressure from protests", *Associated Press*, 9 February 2011

<sup>21</sup> "Egypt army takes control, sign Mubarak on way out", *Associated Press*, 10 February 2011

<sup>22</sup> Hamza Hendawi, "Analysis: Military coup was behind Mubarak's exit", *Associated Press*, 11 February 2011

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces will issue further statements that will announce forthcoming steps, measures and arrangements, and it affirms at the same time that it is not a replacement for the legitimacy that is acceptable to the people.<sup>23</sup>

- On Saturday 12, communiqué number four from the Supreme Council said that the existing cabinet and provincial government would remain in place as a caretaker government. It said that the Supreme Council “aspires to guaranteeing a peaceful transition of authority within a free and democratic system”.<sup>24</sup> Omar Suleiman appeared to have been completely sidelined.
- On Sunday 13, the Supreme Military Command Council issued another communiqué, the fifth, setting out some of the detail of the new structure:
  1. The constitution would be suspended.
  2. The Council would hold power for six months or until elections
  3. The chairman of the Council would represent the council both domestically and abroad
  4. Both houses of parliament were dissolved
  5. The Council would approve legislation during the interim period
  6. A committee set up to reform constitution and set the rules for referendum
  7. The caretaker Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq's cabinet would continue work until the formation of a new cabinet
  8. Parliamentary and presidential elections would be held
  9. All international treaties would be honoured<sup>25</sup>
- On 14 February, Tahrir Square was cleared of protesters. Later, however, there was a demonstration in support of the protesters by police officers in the square. Also, industrial unrest did not end with the resignation of President Mubarak: bank, public transport and tourism workers all demonstrated in Cairo for better pay and conditions, and some workers called for the sacking of their bosses.
- On 17 February, the military announced that it would not put forward its own presidential candidate.
- On 21 February, British Prime Minister David Cameron visited Egypt, a visit that had been added to the itinerary of a previously-arranged tour of the Middle East. He was the first world leader to visit since Hosni Mubarak was ousted as President. Cameron met up

---

<sup>23</sup> 3rd and 4th Communiqués of Egypt Army [full text], Danielberhane.wordpress.com [accessed 14 February 2011]

<sup>24</sup> 3rd and 4th Communiqués of Egypt Army [full text], Danielberhane.wordpress.com [accessed 14 February 2011]

<sup>25</sup> “Text of Communiqué No. 5 issued by the Egyptian military Sunday”, McClatchy.com, 13 February 2011 [accessed 14 February 2011]

with the country's interim military leaders, as well as some of protest movement leaders to encourage electoral and political reforms, though not the Muslim Brotherhood.

- On 24 February, three members of former President Hosni Mubarak's regime appeared in court charged with various offences ranging from abuse of state power to squandering public wealth. The three charged are former housing minister Ahmed Maghrabi, former tourism minister Zuheir Garana and Ahmed Ezz, a steel tycoon and secretary general of Mubarak's NDP Party. The Transitional Military Council has widened its corruption investigations to include other former colleagues of Mubarak, and many fear they will be forced to appear in court.
- In the face of continued protests in Cairo's Tahrir Square, Egypt's interim ruling government announced a set out a package of constitutional reforms on Saturday 27 February. Amendments were proposed to seven articles, to be put to a national referendum in April. The amendments proposed were as follows:

**Article 77:** Shorten presidential terms to four years and limit presidents to a maximum of two consecutive terms.

**Article 148:** Constrain the president's powers to announce a state of emergency and require a popular referendum to extend the state of emergency beyond six months.

**Article 179:** Void presidential power to suspend citizens' civil liberties and political rights.

**Article 76:** Allow for pluralistic presidential elections in which multiple candidates compete, rather than restricting candidacies to members of the National Democratic Party's general secretariat. To be eligible to run, presidential candidates must now secure either the support of 30 elected members from the People's Assembly and the Shura Council, or 30,000 voters from at least 15 provinces -- with at least 1,000 votes from each province; or they must have membership in a political party with at least one elected seat in the two parliamentary chambers. In addition, the amendment states that a higher judicial commission oversee presidential elections.

**Article 60:** Stipulate that a higher judicial commission supervise the elections and the referendum. This will restore complete judicial oversight of electoral processes and place voting and vote counting under the supervision of judicial committee members.

**Article 93:** Abolish the principle that "the council is the master of its decision" by giving the Supreme Constitutional Court jurisdiction to rule on the validity of deputies' membership in the People's Assembly and the Shura Council.

**Article 189:** Require the elected People's Assembly and Shura Council to choose a constituent assembly of 100 members to draft a new constitution for Egypt within six months of the election of the two chambers.<sup>26</sup>

- On 28 February, the Attorney general banned former President Mubarak from leaving Egypt and also froze his domestic assets, pending further legal investigations.
- On 3 March, Egypt's prime minister, Ahmed Shafiq resigned. Shafiq was appointed by Hosni Mubarak in the dying days of his own presidency. Egypt's interim military rulers named **Essam Sharaf** as Egypt's first post-revolutionary prime minister to replace him.

---

<sup>26</sup> Amr Hamzawy, "Egypt: Evaluating Proposed Constitutional Amendments", Carnegie Middle East Centre, 7 March 2011

The former Transport Minister had joined in the protests in Tahrir Square and is popular amongst the young revolutionaries. Both opposition groups in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood and the secular 6 April Youth Movement have welcomed Sharaf's appointment.

- On 8 March, a demonstration by hundreds of women to coincide with International Women's Day descended into chaos and hostility when they were harassed and intimidated by a group of men. The men were rejecting the calls for the new constitution to permit women to stand for the presidency.
- On 9 March, violence erupted in the capital, Cairo, which left 11 people dead and more than 90 people wounded. The trouble started during a protest by thousands of Christians against the burning of a church the previous week. The Church was burnt due to a love affair between a Muslim and Christian that set off a violent feud between the couple's families.

## **5 Main actors**

### **5.1 Omar Suleiman**

Omar Suleiman, 74, was long considered the second most powerful figure in Mubarak's regime and a possible contender to succeed him. He is respected for his strategic thinking and has been the key figure in many of Egypt's recent negotiations, particularly with Israel. He also has a close relationship with interlocutors in the United States.

With a strong military career dating back to 1954 and including involvement in the 1967 and 1972 wars against Israel, General Suleiman has some support in the Army. He played an important role in suppressing the radical Islamist uprising by such groups as Islamic Jihad that threatened the state in the 1990s. He held the post of minister without portfolio in Mubarak's last government and from 1993 to 2011, he was head of the General Intelligence Directorate or *Mukhabarat*.

He is said to be deeply hostile to the Muslim Brotherhood, who he once described as "liars who only understand force".<sup>27</sup>

His support in Army circles was his most valuable card in attempts to hold on to power but his recent past as the head of the intelligence service distanced him from military circles and, as a close ally of Mubarak, he was a symbol of continuity rather than change. Despite his closeness to Mubarak, he is not and has never been a member of the National Democratic Party.

### **5.2 Mohammed ElBaradei**

Mohammed ElBaradei, 68, is a former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency and a winner of the Nobel peace prize. He has credibility in the Arab world for being perceived to stand up to US President George W Bush on the issue of weapons of mass destruction as a pretext for the US-led invasion of Iraq.

When he first returned to Egypt in February 2010, maybe as many as a thousand Egyptians defied official warnings and turned out to welcome him home at Cairo airport -- and to ask him to run for president in 2011. He founded the National Association for Change, an

---

<sup>27</sup> "Omar Suleiman, Mubarak deputy who may be key to resolving Egypt protests", *Guardian*, 1 February 2011

umbrella group of the opposition, with some participation from the Muslim Brotherhood. The coordinator of the National Association for Change is Mustafa Al-Naggar.

The 2010 return did not transform the political scene in Egypt, however. ElBaradei complained of the “culture of fear” in Egypt and said that he had difficulty raising funds, establishing a headquarters or holding public meetings.<sup>28</sup>

Mr ElBaradei returned again to Egypt on 27 January 2011 and immediately called for change. As he was leaving Vienna, he said, “If [people] want me to lead the transition, I will not let them down.”

On arriving in Cairo he said:

I continue to call on the regime to understand that they better listen and listen quickly, not use violence and understand that change has to come. There's no other option.

Since his return to Egypt, he has remained with the protesters and has presented himself for a leadership role in any opposition negotiations with the Army.

However, Mr ElBaradei does not have a clear constituency in Egyptian society and such support as he has appears to come from minority middle-class anti-regime circles. He is also inexperienced in politics and may not fully understand the concerns of Egyptians, having lived outside the country for so long. Analysts doubt whether he will have sufficient popular appeal to be anything more than a transitional figure. Some argue that his long absence in Vienna is an advantage, because it makes it difficult for the regime to accuse him of any crimes (other potential presidential rivals have ended up in jail, with doubtful convictions for political offences).<sup>29</sup>

### **5.3 Amr Moussa**

Amr Moussa (74) is a former Egyptian foreign minister. Since 2001 he has been the secretary general of the Arab League. He is very popular and well-known with the Egyptian public, and he has involved himself in the uprising. He may play some role in the transitional arrangements. The question is whether the protesters and the opposition would accept him as a convincing replacement for Mubarak.

### **5.4 Mohammed Tantawi**

Mohammed Tantawi is an old ally of Mubarak's (to the extent that he is sometimes called Mubarak's “poodle”) and was defence minister in the Mubarak government for more than 20 years. His position as chairman of the Supreme Military Command Council means that he is technically the country's new leader. However, it is reported that his abilities are not rated highly and, with his reputation as a Mubarak loyalist, he is unlikely to be more than a figurehead, with no plans to run for the presidency.

### **5.5 Sami Enan**

Sami Enan (62) is the chief of staff of Egypt's military and sits on the Supreme Military Command Council. When the protests started he was in Washington for a week of meetings with US military officers. Stories circulated as early as 1 February that he could be Mubarak's successor, when a leading member of the Muslim Brotherhood said that he was not known

---

<sup>28</sup> “Mohammed ElBaradei”, *Financial Times*, 31 January 2011

<sup>29</sup> Steven A. Cook, Is ElBaradei Egypt's Hero?, *Foreign Policy*, 26 March 2010

by the people for corruption and a liberal reformer with good ties in Washington.<sup>30</sup> It was Lt General Enan who announced on television early in the protests that the army would not fire on the people.

## 5.6 Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) is the opposition group with the largest support in Egypt. It is officially banned, but in practice it is tolerated, and its policy has traditionally been not to provoke the Mubarak regime excessively. Some speculate that Mubarak wants the Brotherhood to be the most visible opposition party to show that the alternative to his rule is Islamism. At the same time, the Mubarak regime has suppressed and weakened all opposition parties so that there is no clear challenger to his rule.

The MB, sometimes known by its Arabic name the *Ikhwan*, is according to some commentators, an ageing organisation. Its reaction to the oppression of the Mubarak regime has led to divergence between the younger members and the older leadership.

The MB has sometimes participated indirectly in elections and, after the 2005 election, it held some 20% of seats in the parliament, held through nominal independents. In the last few years, the regime cracked down on the MB, arresting hundreds. After the first round of the 2010 election was marked by violence and fraud, the Brotherhood withdrew from the second round.

The MB has adapted its political theory, partly in response to the Iranian Revolution, to accept the notion of some involvement of clerics in the politics in an Islamic state. In a 2007 policy document, the MB proposed a council of clerics that would veto any legislation put forward by the executive or legislature that contravened sharia law.<sup>31</sup> This would quite closely reflect Iran's Guardian Council. In response to the present crisis, however, the Brotherhood has re-stated opposition to an Islamic state:

...the Muslim Brotherhood is against a religious state because Islam is against such an entity, [however,] the movement looks for a civil state whose reference is Islam.<sup>32</sup>

### ***Israel peace treaty***

Western governments remain focused on the question as to whether the Muslim Brotherhood would withdraw from the 1979 peace treaty with Israel. Some spokesmen for the Brotherhood have indicated that they would, while others have said that they could accept the existence of Israel. While the Brotherhood has called for diplomatic relations with Israel to be ended, it has not officially called for war. The present policy is that the treaty would be put to a referendum.

On the other hand, the Jerusalem Post carried a story originating in a Hebrew-language newspaper which reported on 1 February that Muhammed Ghannem, a leading member of the Brotherhood and its representative in the UK, had told an Iranian news service that war was possible: "The people should be prepared for war against Israel".<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> "Egypt general could be new leader: Islamist", *Reuters*, 1 February 2011

<sup>31</sup> Samuel Helfont, "the Muslim Brotherhood and the emerging Shia Crescent", *Orbis, A Journal of World Affairs*, Spring 2009, pp284-99

<sup>32</sup> Muslim Brotherhood, "[Muslim Brotherhood rejects a religious state because it is against Islam](#)", Press release (translated by the Middle East Monitor), 9 February 2011

<sup>33</sup> "Muslim Brotherhood: 'Prepare Egyptians for War With Israel' *Jerusalem Post*, 1 February 2011

Analysts doubt whether any Brotherhood-influenced government would make radical changes to the present policy of “cold peace” with Israel, pointing out that the Egyptian MB is a very pragmatic organisation. Israel’s military superiority to Egypt is generally accepted and would be a disincentive to military confrontation between the two countries. Bruce Rutherford, in an interview with the Council on Foreign Relations, described the breaking of diplomatic relations with Israel by a new government as “very unlikely”.<sup>34</sup>

On 9 February the Brotherhood released a press statement in which the Israel issue was addressed:

...Egypt is a mature state with its own institutions and parliament. When parliament is elected by the will of the people, the government will define which foreign treaties will still be compatible with the political will.<sup>35</sup>

### *Gaza*

Hamas, the group that controls the Gaza Strip, is the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, but is generally seen as more radical than the parent organisation in Egypt. President Mubarak was very hostile to Hamas, seeing the organisation as a threat to stability in Egypt as well as among the Palestinians. During the Israeli attack on Gaza, *Operation Cast Lead* over the winter of 2008-2009, Mubarak resisted calls for Egypt to support Hamas against the Israeli attack. He provided some humanitarian assistance, but generally stayed close to the Israeli position throughout the conflict, earning himself unpopularity at home.<sup>36</sup> A Muslim Brotherhood-influenced government (or any other democratic Egyptian government) would likely take a more friendly approach to Hamas.

### *Iran*

Iran has reacted with official enthusiasm for the Egyptian uprising, and has said that a new, Islamic Middle East is under construction. However, Iran and Egypt are very different: Iranians are mostly Persian Shiites whereas Egyptians are mainly Arab Sunnis. The Muslim Brotherhood is much older than the Iranian revolution and many in the Brotherhood feel that they have nothing to learn from Iran. On expert says that the Brotherhood will see things differently:

I think the Muslim Brotherhood thinks that it has influence over Iran, not the other way round. In terms of ideology it is very self-confident. Its members think it was the Muslim Brotherhood which influenced Iranian clerics to carry out the [Iranian] revolution. Ideologically the Muslim Brotherhood is not influenced by Iran.<sup>37</sup>

On 11 January it was reported that Iran had blocked the BBC Persian television. British newspapers interpreted this as a move to prevent the service’s coverage of the Egyptian crisis.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Bruce K Rutherford, “Military Holds Key to Egypt’s Future”, Interview for the Council on Foreign Relations, 7 February 2011

<sup>35</sup> Muslim Brotherhood, “[Muslim Brotherhood rejects a religious state because it is against Islam](#)”, Press release (translated by the Middle East Monitor), 9 February 2011

<sup>36</sup> For more on *Operation Cast Lead*, see the Library briefing [Gaza: The conflict between Israel and Hamas](#), 23 January 2009

<sup>37</sup> Mehdi Khalajai, quoted in “Are uprisings a ripple of Iran in 1979?”, *BBC News Online*, 3 February 2011

<sup>38</sup> “Egypt crisis: BBC blocked in Iran over Mubarak coverage”, *Daily Telegraph*, 11 February 2011

### ***The Brotherhood outside Egypt***

The Brotherhood is one of the most important Sunni groups in the Middle East and it is not confined to Egypt; it is a major political force in the whole Arab world. The Palestinian group Hamas is an offshoot of the MB.

Unlike the Sunni establishment in Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, the MB supported the radical Shia group Hizbollah in the 2006 war between Israel and Lebanon. Even the Lebanese MB supported Hizbollah during the war, although since then divisions between the Lebanese MB and Hizbollah have sharpened.

Syria's closeness to Shia Iran is another example of the partial success of Iran in transcending the Shia/Sunni divide. Syria is a majority-Sunni country although the ruling Assad family is Allawi, a form of Shiism. However, Syria also illustrates the complexity of relations in the Middle East: in Syria, the Muslim Brotherhood is outlawed and was harshly repressed in the 1980s, leading to between 10,000 and 30,000 deaths.<sup>39</sup> The Syrian branch is firmly opposed to Iran and to Shia ascendancy.

In Jordan, the MB is one of the most important opposition forces. The Jordanian Brotherhood has formed its own political party, the Islamic Action Front, which is the biggest party in the Jordanian parliament.

The MB also has a branch in Iraq, the Iraqi Islamic Party. The party fought the 2010 election as the most important part of the Tawfuq coalition. The coalition did not do well at the election, winning only six seats in the Council of Representatives. Most Iraqi Sunnis supported the more secular Iraqiyya coalition of Iyad Allawi.

### ***Muslim Brotherhood's reaction to the uprising***

Reaction to the recent events has been cautious and ambivalent perhaps reflecting divisions within the movement. In any case, after so much repression, it is not clear exactly how strong the MB is, nor which of its various strands may come to the fore in the new situation.

On 28 January, days after the beginning of the protest, the Brotherhood encouraged supporters to join in but did not contribute to organising them itself. It has used its network of social services to provide the demonstrators with practical support. The leadership may be waiting to see what happens before committing itself. It may also be concerned not to provoke the armed forces or the west by moving ostentatiously to take over the reform movement.

Despite the arms-length approach to the uprising, the MB has shown an interest in its success. When the demonstrators in Tahrir Square were threatened by the pro-regime counter-demonstration, the MB is credited with protecting anti-government protesters, to the extent that it has been suggested that the demonstration might have lost Tahrir Square had it not been for the Brotherhood's intervention.

It at first refused to enter any discussions with the regime, saying that Mubarak's departure was a precondition. On 2 February the MB told reporters that it was in negotiations with Mohammed ElBaradei to form a national unity government, without any participation from the National Democratic Party.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> International Crisis Group, *Syria under Bashar (II): Domestic policy challenges*, ICG Middle East Report N°23, 11 February 2004, p4

<sup>40</sup> "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood eyes unity gov't without Mubarak", *Haaretz*, 2 February 2011

On 6 February, the Brotherhood changed tack and participated in discussions with the government, along with other opposition groups. It said that these were “talks about talks”, rather than negotiations. Afterwards, the Brotherhood announced:

We do not have a personal agenda and we are not trying to ride the wave. We have repeated many times that we do not seek power... Therefore, we will not nominate any of us for the presidency.<sup>41</sup>

Although the MB has undertaken not to put up a candidate at the presidential election, it would compete in any parliamentary election, and would form one of the biggest parliamentary groups. Perhaps in a sign of the group’s pragmatic approach, the MB has called on the US to intervene in the situation to prevent an escalation of violence.

In the absence of regular polling in Egypt, the state of the Brotherhood’s popularity is not known. Some analysts have pointed to the 20% of seats that the movement won in the 2005 parliamentary election. However, with competition from other parties and no regime to run against, the results in a genuinely free election might be very different.

#### *Which way will the Brotherhood develop?*

In earlier statements the Brotherhood has said that it wants a democratic constitution with an independent judiciary and the rule of law under civil law, not sharia law. On the other hand, they do not embrace a fully secular state of full equal rights for women (they have said that they would not accept a president who was either Christian or female).<sup>42</sup>

The future of the Brotherhood will depend to a large extent on what happens when the present leadership generation makes way for younger people. The present leadership has been cautious about confronting the state and has preferred to concentrate on the movement’s social services whenever it has feared that more political activity would threaten the movement’s existence. Younger members have argued for a more modern approach, including the creation of a political party. With the beginning of the uprising, the Brotherhood leadership allowed the younger members to decide their own approach to the events.

Many commentators caution about seeing the MB as bent on seizing power. A writer in *Foreign Affairs* argued recently that the Brotherhood has become very pragmatic over the years and only half-engaged in the political process. That has limited its desire and ability to ride the protest wave to a position of dominance. However, she concludes:

With a track record of nearly 30 years of responsible behavior (if not rhetoric) and a strong base of support, the Muslim Brotherhood has earned a place at the table in the post-Mubarak era. No democratic transition can succeed without it.<sup>43</sup>

## **5.7 Kefayah**

Kefayah (Enough), or the Egyptian Movement for Change, is a broad opposition umbrella movement including Islamists, Marxists, nationalists and liberals. It is not a political party but a movement in favour of transition to democracy.

---

<sup>41</sup> “Egypt’s regime in talks with opposition groups in push to end two-week uprising”, *Financial Times*, 7 February 2011

<sup>42</sup> Bruce K Rutherford, “Military Holds Key to Egypt’s Future”, Interview for the Council on Foreign Relations, 7 February 2011

<sup>43</sup> Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, “The Muslim Brotherhood After Mubarak: What the Brotherhood is and how it will Shape the Future”, *Foreign Affairs*, 3 February 2011

Kefayah organised the first ever openly anti-Mubarak rally, held on 12 December 2004. The rally's demand was the by now familiar one: Mubarak's resignation. The movement has cooperated with Mohammed ElBaradei's National Association for Change, but differences in tactics were reported in 2010, with Kefayah opting for a more complete boycott of official institutions and processes, including the elections.

One high-profile spokesman for Kefayah, Abdelhalim Kandil has been one of Egypt's most high-profile opposition journalists, known for writing hard-hitting articles critical of the regime.

Osama el-Ghazali Harb is a liberal and secularist thinker, and leader of the Democratic Front Party, Editor of *Al-Siyassa Al-Dawliya*, a quarterly periodical specialising in politics and international affairs, and a Shura Council Member.

### **5.8 Wafd Party**

The liberal Wafd party is one of the oldest parties in Egypt. It pursues liberal democratic and free market policies and participated in the 2010 election, winning a small number of seats. Party officials have appeared at the Tahrir Square demonstration and have joined other opposition groups in calling for the departure of President Mubarak before participating in political negotiations.

### **5.9 Tagammu (Progressive National Union Party)**

Tagammu is a moderate socialist party that campaigns for better conditions for Egyptian workers. It boycotted the 2005 election but participated in 2010, when it won five seats. Both Tagammu and the Wafd party have been criticised as "cosmetic" parties, allowed a small presence in parliament to bolster the regime's democratic image.

### **5.10 6 April youth movement**

The 6 April movement was founded in 2008, with the calling of a general strike for 6 April of that year against rising prices. The strike coincided with a textile workers' dispute and spiralled into a serious challenge to the regime. Two were killed in clashes with security forces in a town two hours from Cairo. The movement used Facebook to organise supporters. It attracted the full attentions of the security forces and some 500 supporters were arrested at the time of the 2008 strike.<sup>44</sup>

The movement's membership is generally educated and young, and its goals are freedom of expression, an end to nepotism and economic exclusion.

An activist who visited Washington in December 2009 argued to US representatives that the Mubarak regime would never reform and that it should be replaced with a parliamentary democracy. A leaked cable described the movement's aim to replace the regime with a parliamentary democracy before the 2011 presidential elections as "highly unrealistic", and "not supported by the mainstream opposition."<sup>45</sup>

The movement was involved with organising demonstrations in Tahrir Square.

### **5.11 The business elite**

The economic elite of Egypt is an essential element of support for the Mubarak regime, as well as the cause of fierce resentment against it. The Free Officers' movement that brought

---

<sup>44</sup> "Fledgling Rebellion on Facebook Is Struck Down by Force in Egypt", *Washington Post*, 18 May 2008

<sup>45</sup> "Wikileaks: secret US document discloses support for protesters", *Daily Telegraph*, 4 February 2011

down the Monarchy in 1952 used socialist rhetoric to mobilise the population. Particularly in the last decade, the regime has been unashamed in associating itself with a “fabulously wealthy” business elite, often with connections to the president’s son Gamal.<sup>46</sup>

The distribution of income in Egypt is no worse than the average for the region (and indeed not very different from the UK’s- see the section on the economy, below). Nevertheless, the association of the super-rich with the government and the upper echelons of the national Democratic Party has featured in the discontent of the protesters. Estimates of the wealth of the Mubarak family range up to \$70 billion,<sup>47</sup> although the basis of these estimates is not clear and this is likely to be a large exaggeration.

The government has begun getting rid of the members of the business elite that used to be part of it. On Friday 4 February, Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq said to a satellite TV station:

Investigation is currently underway over the corruption of some businessmen who were ministers in the former government and that's why their assets are currently under freeze and they are banned from leaving the country pending probe.

We have decided not to include any businessmen in the new government.<sup>48</sup>

Officials have imposed asset freezes and travel bans on Ahmed Ezz, a highly unpopular steel magnate and leading member of the National Democratic Party, Rashid Mohammed Rashid, a former trade and industry minister, Ahmed el-Maghraby, formerly a housing minister, and Zuheir Garana, a former minister of tourism.

As the crisis wore on, some top businessmen were reported to be attempting to put a distance between themselves and the regime. Increasing numbers of businessmen reportedly joined the anti-government demonstrations and large companies paid for advertisements emphasising their independence from the government.<sup>49</sup>

While many in the business elite have profited from links to the regime, others are frustrated with the system of patronage and look forward to a more open economy. Naguib Sawiris, owner of extensive telecoms interests in Egypt, said in February that the uprising would in the end result in “a more solid foundation for future growth.”<sup>50</sup>

## 5.12 The industrial workforce

Trade unions and unofficial workers organisations have played an important role in the opposition to the government, but the influence of organised labour has perhaps been underestimated by the western media. Industrial action was associated with the growth of the April 6 protest movement and with the protests against election-rigging after the 2008 local election. According to an article for Chatham House, since 2006 Egypt has experienced 1,600 labour protests since 2006.<sup>51</sup> Industrial action spread during the Tahrir Square protests, becoming widespread by the second week in February, and may have been decisive in maintaining the momentum of the protest after the concession that Mubharak would not fight the forthcoming election.

---

<sup>46</sup> “Discontented Within Egypt Face Power Of Old Elites”, *New York Times*, 5 February 2011

<sup>47</sup> “Egypt: Mubarak wealth: pounds 43bn family fortune, from Belgravia to Beverly Hills”, *Guardian*, 5 February 2011

<sup>48</sup> “Mubarak unlikely to give power to VP: Egypt's PM”, *al-Arabiya*, 4 February 2011

<sup>49</sup> “Egypt's economy suffers as strikes intensify”, *Guardian*, 11 February 2011

<sup>50</sup> “Egypt's economy suffers as strikes intensify”, *Guardian*, 11 February 2011

<sup>51</sup> Maha Azzam, “[Egypt's Elections: A Challenge to the Regime?](#)”, Chatham House expert comment, 25 November 2010

After the resignation announcement, industrial unrest increased rather than dying down; commentators suggest that dealing with the strikes and their effect on a fragile economy will be one of the biggest tasks for the new government.

### **5.13 The police**

The police come under Mahmoud Wagdi, who replaced Habib el-Adli as head of the Interior ministry. It is divided into:

- the National Guard, with 60,000 personnel. This force is highly experienced at dealing with street protests
- the Central Security Force, with 325,000 personnel. The largest and best-equipped of the forces, it is equipped with armoured vehicles
- the General Directorate for State Security Investigations.

For most Egyptians, the police are the unwanted face of the regime. Human rights bodies have found that the police use of torture and ill-treatment against both political detainees and common criminals is “routine”, both to extract confessions and information, and simply to punish detainees.<sup>52</sup> While the army has in recent years stayed off the streets, the police have been at the forefront of the regime’s efforts to stifle dissent and have in the past crushed anti-government protests ruthlessly.

The relationship between the police and the army has been essential in the uprising. The army is trusted by the populace while the police are not. The police acted aggressively against the demonstration for the first few days, then withdrew, to be replaced by the army.

Many commentators, both inside Egypt and elsewhere, have argued that the almost total absence of police on the streets on the Saturday night, 29 January, coinciding with the escape of prisoners and the onset of widespread looting, was a deliberate scare tactic on the part of the regime. Having seen the chaos that ensued when the regime was challenged, the regime would hope, Egyptians would welcome the re-establishment of calm by President Mubarak. This may be evidence of the police and the army playing a “good cop/bad cop” routine to break down the resistance of the demonstrators.

### **5.14 The Army**

The army has played a central role in Egyptian politics since 1952, when a military coup ejected the British-sponsored monarchy and brought in Colonel Nasser. In recent years, however, it has sought to keep a low profile and leave internal order to the police. An exception was the low-level Islamist revolt during the 1990s, where the army did play an important role in controlling the rebellion.

- Egypt spends more than \$4.5 billion per year on defence, of which \$1.3 billion comes in the form of US military aid. The army is 280,000 to 340,000 strong, of which about 200,000 are conscripts. It is equipped with 3,723 main battle tanks, of which the main type is the US Abrams tank.
- Iran’s annual defence budget is \$9.5 billion, it has an army of 500,000 plus 350,000 reservists and 1,613 main battle tanks.

---

<sup>52</sup> “[Egypt: Impunity for Torture Fuels Days of Rage](#)” Press release, Human Rights Watch, 31 January 2011

- Israel spends \$9.78 billion a year on defence, of which \$2.55 billion is US military aid. Israel has an army of 140,000 soldiers plus 565,000 reservists and 3,501 main battle tanks.<sup>53</sup>

The appointment of Omar Suleiman to the post of vice president, whose incumbent would be a strong contender for the succession to the presidency, could have been a result of the army's resistance to the president's son, Gamal Mubarak, becoming president. Gamal's ascendancy had become very clear in the last few years, to the point where he was the clear favourite, and the army may have taken the opportunity of the street protests to block Gamal. It is reported that senior officers were worried that Gamal, who does not have a military background, would not guarantee the army's privileged position in Egypt's society after the death of his father.

One complaint of the army is that its status has already been eroded by the regime. Salaries are said to have fallen relative to those in the private sector, and the regime has been careful to make sure that no-one apart from the highest-ranking officers can control the army across the country. Wikileaks cables have suggested that many officers view the present Minister of Defence, Mohammed Tantawi, as "incompetent."<sup>54</sup>

Another motive for mistrust between the military and Gamal is suggested: it was the army which led the coup to remove the monarchy and install President Nasser in 1956 (and to end British influence in Egypt). The military would not take kindly to the re-establishment of hereditary rule.

The army is generally said to be supported by Egyptians, and the demonstrators have shown a friendly attitude towards soldiers, but the army's policy is not yet clear. With vast supplies of armaments and money coming from the US under the present arrangements (see below), the idea of elections that might bring in a government with an anti-US and anti-Israel foreign policy is likely to be treated with caution by the military. The present regime's foreign policy is certainly not popular with the population: 17% of Egyptians had a favourable impression of the United States in a 2010 poll, putting Egypt joint bottom in the list of countries surveyed.<sup>55</sup>

The Army, too, is faced with a difficult balancing act. Its announcement that it recognised the legitimacy of the protesters' demands and that it would not use force against the demonstrators cemented its image as a friend of the people. But it is also the regime, even if it does not quite have that image among the protesters. On Wednesday 2 February, a spokesman appeared on television to call for protesters to go home and allow life to return to normal. This was interpreted as a sign that the Army had thought the demonstrations had gone far enough and that it was time to protect the regime.

#### *Divisions?*

There have been reports of divisions within the army or between the Army and other parts of the regime. It has been suggested that clear instructions have been given to the army not to fire on the demonstrators, and that these instructions originated in the US. On Saturday 29 January, an Arab television station was reporting that a rift had opened between Mubarak and the Defence Minister Mohammed Hussein Tantawi. There was speculation that Mubarak had ordered the Army to clear the demonstration using live fire, and that Tantawi had refused

---

<sup>53</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2010*, IISS 2010, p248

<sup>54</sup> "WikiLeaks cables portray army riven by factionalism", *Financial Times*, 5 February 2011

<sup>55</sup> [Pew Global Attitudes, 2010](#)

the order. At this point, the anti-government demonstrators cheered the Army, one demonstrator even handing a baby up to a soldier on a tank.

Any potential rift may have been closed by Mubarak's appointment of Omar Suleiman as Vice President and Ahmed Shafiq as Prime Minister later in the day. When the Army failed to intervene to keep government supporters from entering the square and engaging in battles with the anti-government protesters on 2 February, it seemed as if the regime was again united and intent on regaining control. The following day, however, the Prime Minister apologised for the violence and the Army began to protect the anti-government demonstration.

The reputation of the Army as "the people's Army" and as protectors of the uprising had by then been severely tarnished. It had become clear to the protesters that the appointment of top military men as Vice President and Prime Minister was a demonstration of the continuing power of the military within the regime. To this was added the insult of Tahrir Square being buzzed by fighter jets and helicopters, menacing the demonstrators in an attempt to make them respect the curfew.

On 9 February, a report emerged of the army's involvement in the detention and even torture of anti-government protesters. According to the director of the Egypt Initiative for Personal Rights, hundreds and possibly thousands of ordinary civilians disappeared into army custody.<sup>56</sup>

The Army has a number of interests to look after.

- Mubarak is their man and, though the Army may see him as a liability and a threat to the regime, top officers are unlikely to want an excessively humiliating exit for him, nor do they want chaos.
- Top officers do not want to lose the army's status as the last remaining public institution with broad legitimacy.
- The army is largely equipped with US military aid. This should lead them to oppose any sharp change in foreign policy, particularly any withdrawal from the peace treaty with Israel.
- The army wants to keep its autonomy within the system, and to protect its economic interests. The military has investments in land, agriculture and other sectors.

Yezid Sayiigh of King's College London argues that the army, unlike their Algerian and Turkish counterparts, has no command council that could act as a policy-making forum. Reforms under President Sadat de-militarised the cabinet and de-politicised the military, and since then the army has not played a central role in politics. The academic says that the army does not want to return to politics: "There will be no return to military rule, not even a partial one".<sup>57</sup>

However, it seems clear that any transitional government will need the backing, if not the participation, of the military. Other commentators have suggested that the regime is basically a military regime and has been in control of events all along:

---

<sup>56</sup> "Egypt's army 'involved in detentions and torture'", *Guardian*, 9 February 2011

<sup>57</sup> Yezid Sayiigh, "Egypt's army looks beyond Mubarak", *Financial Times*, 3 February 2011

With the protesters caught between regime-engineered violence and regime-manufactured safety, the cabinet generals remained firmly in control of the situation.<sup>58</sup>

### 5.15 The United States

Since the signing of the Israeli/Egyptian peace accord in 1979, under the Egyptian leadership of Anwar Sadat, Egypt has been a cornerstone of US policy towards the Arab world. Sadat was assassinated in 1981 and his successor, Hosni Mubarak, has maintained the policy of a close relationship with the US and peace with Israel. Egypt receives some \$2 billion of US aid each year, of which the majority goes to the military. For 2011, the Obama administration is seeking \$1.3 billion in military assistance and \$250m in economic aid.<sup>59</sup> The great fear for the US is that Egypt could become a new Iran, sponsoring violent groups and hostile towards Israel.

From the onset of the unrest, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton gradually distanced the US from Mubarak. On 25 January, she said that the administration supported “the fundamental right of expression and assembly” and called on all parties “to exercise restraint”.<sup>60</sup> She also said that the Egyptian government was “stable” and “looking for ways to meet the Egyptian people’s aspirations.”<sup>61</sup>

On 26, Clinton’s message was that the government needed to introduce reforms:

We believe strongly that the Egyptian government has an important opportunity at this moment in time to implement political, economic and social reforms to respond to the legitimate needs and interests of the Egyptian people.<sup>62</sup>

On 29 January, the hope was that Mubarak would go quietly and that a stable government would replace him:

We want to see an orderly transition so that no-one fills a void, that there not be a void, that there be a well thought-out plan that will bring about a democratic participatory government.<sup>63</sup>

On 2 February, in the firmest comments so far from the administration, Barack Obama said that he had told Mubarak:

It is my belief that an orderly transition must be meaningful, it must be peaceful and it must begin now.<sup>64</sup>

The US position was not easy. To move abruptly from supporting Hosni Mubarak to calling for his departure would attract accusations of hypocrisy. Nevertheless, some Egyptian commentators have criticised what they see as the US siding with the regime. US officials discussed with their Egyptian counterparts what form the “orderly transition” might take. While the administration was open about the fact that talks were taking place, it was also at pains to emphasise that the choice is for Egyptians to make. A spokesman said on 3 February:

---

<sup>58</sup> Joshua Stacher, “How Cairo’s Authoritarian Regime Is Adapting to Preserve Itself”, Council on Foreign Relations, 7 February 2011

<sup>59</sup> Jeremy M Sharp, *Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations*, Congressional Research Service, 28 January 2011, Summary

<sup>60</sup> “Egypt protests: Three killed in ‘day of revolt’”, *BBC News Online*, 26 January 2011

<sup>61</sup> “US urges restraint in Egypt, says government stable”, *Reuters*, 25 January 2011

<sup>62</sup> “Egypt has chance to make political reforms: U.S.”, *Reuters*, 26 January 2011

<sup>63</sup> “Egypt protests: Hillary Clinton urges ‘orderly transition’”, *BBC News Online*, 30 January 2011

<sup>64</sup> “Pressure mounts on Egypt’s Mubarak”, *BBC News Online*, 2 February 2010

We have discussed with the Egyptians a variety of different ways to move that process forward, but all of those decisions must be made by the Egyptian people.

It is assumed that, in private, the US gradually increased pressure on Mubarak to leave office quickly. However, rumours emerged later of a rift between the White House, which wanted to support the protests more firmly, and the State Department, which wanted to proceed more cautiously.

#### *Options for the US?*

The Obama administration does not have many clear options, and the events in Egypt are likely to result in a diminution of US influence in the Middle East however the administration plays the situation. An analyst at the Council on Foreign Relations remarked:

simply retooling U.S. assistance to focus on promoting democracy, creating benchmarks for a new Egyptian government, and making Washington's expectations (whatever they are) known to Egyptian political actors is unlikely to influence the trajectory of Egypt's transition.

The United States should greatly lower its expectations of what is possible in the post-Mubarak era and come to terms with the end of the strategic relationship. Expecting the new Egyptian president -- whoever that may be -- to carry on a partnership with Washington is like Václav Havel asking the Soviets for assistance after Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution in 1989.<sup>65</sup>

This analogy is perhaps rather extreme. Other analysts have suggested that the deep relationship between the US and Egyptian militaries may preserve some US influence in the country. However, the administration has been cautious. It is rumoured that President Obama has received telephone calls from other Arab leaders, such as King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, urging the administration not to "abandon" President Mubarak.

## **6 Egyptian economy (by Gavin Thompson)**

Egypt is the third largest economy in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, after Iran and Saudi Arabia: its Gross Domestic Product in 2009 was \$152.3bn, making it a similar size to the Czech Republic and Singapore. After adjusting for differences in purchasing power, per capita incomes in 2009 were \$5,700, below the MENA average of \$7,000.

Standard measures of income inequality (e.g. the Gini coefficient, or the share of income held by the top 10%) show levels of inequality that are only slightly higher than those seen in the UK, and lower than the US, Russia, South America and sub-Saharan Africa. 18% of the population live on less than \$2 per day, a similar proportion to the regional average.<sup>66</sup>

The one indicator that had sharply deteriorated in recent years was inflation, which reached a 17-year high of 16.2% in 2009.<sup>67</sup> Otherwise, Egypt's economy appeared to be making steady progress, albeit lagging behind that of neighbours. There is persistent and widespread unemployment among its growing young population. This latter phenomenon has been widely cited as the chief economic factor underlying recent developments: IMF Director Dominique Strauss-Kahn has described youth unemployment in Egypt and Tunisia as a 'time bomb'.<sup>68</sup> Whilst overall unemployment in Egypt is below the regional average (8.7%

---

<sup>65</sup> Stephen A Cook, "The US-Egyptian Breakup", Snapshot, *Foreign Affairs*, 2 February 2011

<sup>66</sup> World Bank *World Development Indicators 2010*

<sup>67</sup> IMF *World Economic Outlook, October 2010*

<sup>68</sup> CNBC 1 Feb 2011 *Egypt Youth Unemployment was 'Time Bomb'*

compared with 10.6%), youth unemployment (those aged 15-24 actively seeking work) was estimated at 34%, compared with 27% regionally in 2005.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, young Egyptians have faced persistent problems of underemployment and low wages. This was highlighted in a 2001 International Labour Organisation (ILO) working paper:

Most of the unemployed [in Egypt] are young and educated labour market entrants. They need a higher level of income than child labourers, but have neither the skills nor the practical work experience of adult workers. The frustration of these young people may push them to passivity or various forms of destructive behaviour. The longer they need to find their first job, the more difficult it is to integrate them into the economic and social mainstreams. Coping behaviours include migration, prolonging the educational track, and postponing marriage and independence from their parents.<sup>70</sup>

In a statement in response to the civil unrest on 2 February, the ILO Director General reiterated this idea:-

For many years, the ILO has been pointing to the gravity of the decent work deficit in Egypt and a number of other countries in the region, where unemployment, underemployment and informal work have remained among the highest in the world. The failure to address this situation effectively, with all of its consequences for poverty and unbalanced development, together with limitations on basic freedoms, has triggered this historic outpouring of popular demands<sup>71</sup>

## 6.1 UK economic interests

Major British companies with interests in Egypt include Vodafone, BP and BG, formerly part of British Gas (Egypt is a focus for energy companies since the discovery of a gas field in the Nile Delta in 2010). Banks such as Barclays have exposure to Egypt.

Vodafone has been criticised for obeying the Egyptian government's instruction to shut down the mobile network in the second week of the unrest. The chief executive defended the action, saying that the government was within its legal rights to issue the instruction.<sup>72</sup> Vodafone Egypt is majority-owned by Vodafone plc and employs some 6000 people. It has more than 25 million customers (June 2010) in Egypt.<sup>73</sup>

BP, along with other energy groups, has also been criticised by the environmental pressure group Platform, for its close relationship with the Mubarak regime:

For decades, British and American oil companies worked hand in glove with the Egyptian dictatorship, enjoying its "stability" (lack of democratic change), "security" (repression of dissent) and "favourable business environment" (neoliberal policies and restrictions on trade unions).<sup>74</sup>

BP says that it has invested a lot in the Egyptian economy and in its Egyptian workforce:

---

<sup>69</sup> World Bank *World Development Indicators 2010*. Other estimates put youth unemployment in Egypt at around 25%. This figure is similar to European countries, such as the UK and Italy, and lower than Spain; however, the issue in the Middle East and North Africa, and in Egypt in particular, is the *persistence* of youth unemployment.

<sup>70</sup> ILO Working Paper (2001) *Youth Unemployment in Egypt*

<sup>71</sup> ILO *Statement By Director-General on the Situation in Egypt*, 2 Feb 2011

<sup>72</sup> "Oil companies and banks in limbo", *Guardian*, 5 February 2011

<sup>73</sup> Vodafone website, *About Vodafone Egypt* [accessed 11 February 2011]

<sup>74</sup> Platform website, "BP support for Mubarak dictatorship revealed" [accessed 11 February 2011]

BP Egypt has been a significant part of the Egyptian oil and gas industry for more than 44 years. During this time, we've been responsible for almost half of Egypt's entire oil production and we are the single largest foreign investor in the country.<sup>75</sup>

The company goes on to give information about its training and scholarship programmes for Egyptian employees.

Travel companies, such as Tui Travel, have warned that the unrest in Egypt will affect their revenues.<sup>76</sup>

## **7 UK government reaction**

On 31 January, Alistair Burt, Middle East minister, made a statement on the situation in Egypt.<sup>77</sup> He stressed the importance the Government was attaching to the safety of British nationals and expressed sympathy for victims of violence in Egypt:

The calls for political reform in Egypt have been peaceful, but the general unrest has become increasingly dangerous, with elements of violence leading to lawlessness in some areas of major cities such as Cairo, Alexandria and Suez. Severe restrictions on freedom of expression, including the closure of internet access and mobile phone services, have only fuelled the anger of demonstrators. We have called on the Egyptian authorities to lift those restrictions urgently.

I am sure that the House will join me in expressing our deepest sympathies to all those affected by the unrest in Egypt, including the families and friends of those who have been killed and injured. Casualty figures remain unclear, but it is estimated that at least 100 people have died. On Saturday, the army took over responsibility for security in Cairo, and its role has so far been welcomed by protestors. Our aim throughout these events has been to ensure the safety of British nationals in Egypt and to support Egypt in making a stable transition to a more open, democratic society.

I turn first to consular issues. There are an estimated 20,000 British tourists in Egypt, the majority of whom are in the Red sea resort of Sharm el Sheikh, where, according to our latest information, the situation remains calm. We estimate that there are a further 10,000 British nationals in the rest of Egypt.

...Additional staff reinforcements from London and the region have been sent to Egypt to help embassy staff maintain essential services in these difficult circumstances. A 24-hour hotline is available for British nationals to call if they need assistance or advice, and help is also available around the clock from the crisis resource centre at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I am sure the House will join me in recognising the hard work and dedication shown by all our staff, in both Egypt and London, in responding quickly and professionally to the unfolding events.<sup>78</sup>

Mr Burt went on to talk about the political situation in Egypt and the message that the UK Government wished to convey:

I turn to the political situation in Egypt. The UK has major strategic interests in Egypt, which has played an important role as a regional leader, including in the Middle East peace process, and we are the largest single foreign investor. The scale of the protests is unprecedented in Egypt in the past 30 years. We have called on President Mubarak

---

<sup>75</sup> BP website, [BP in Egypt](#) [accessed 11 February 2011]

<sup>76</sup> "Tui Travel hit by unrest in Egypt and Tunisia", *Financial Times*, 3 February 2011

<sup>77</sup> HC Deb 31 January 2011, c591-2

<sup>78</sup> HC Deb 31 January 2011, c591-2

to avoid at all costs the use of violence against unarmed civilians, and on the demonstrators to exercise their rights peacefully.

It is not for us to decide who governs Egypt. However, we believe that the pathway to stability in Egypt is through a process of political change that reflects the wishes of the Egyptian people. That should include an orderly transition to a more democratic system, including through the holding of free and fair elections and the introduction of measures to safeguard human rights. Such reform is essential to show people in Egypt that their concerns and aspirations are being listened to.

We continue to urge President Mubarak to appoint a broad-based Government who include opposition figures, and to embark on an urgent programme of peaceful political reform. We are also working with our international partners to ensure that those messages are given consistently and that technical and financial support for reform is available. The Prime Minister has spoken to President Mubarak and President Obama. The Foreign Secretary has spoken to Egyptian Foreign Minister About Gheit, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and EU High Representative Baroness Ashton over the weekend, and he will also be discussing the situation in Egypt with EU colleagues at the Foreign Affairs Council today.<sup>79</sup>

The Foreign Office's travel advice remains against any but essential travel to Cairo, Alexandria and Suez.<sup>80</sup>

#### *Evacuation arrangements*

ON 2 February, it was estimated that about 30,000 UK nationals were in the Red sea area, which had remained generally calm, about 3,000 UK citizens in Cairo and about 300 in Alexandria. UK nationals were returning fairly rapidly, with some 1,000 making it back to the UK on 31 January and 1 February.<sup>81</sup>

On 1 February, the UK Government announced that it was chartering a flight to bring nationals back to Britain on 2 February. The flight cost £300. Foreign Secretary William Hague undertook to provide more flights if necessary.<sup>82</sup>

## **8 Possible outcomes and consequences for the Middle east**

Since the signing of the treaty with Israel in 1979 and the ensuing "cold peace," Egypt's traditional role as the leader of Arab world has diminished. The street demonstrations may be the first sign that Egyptians intend to regain that role.

Until it is clear what type of government will emerge from the end of the Mubarak era, it is not possible to say with any confidence what the consequences for the Arab world and the Middle East will be. However, a number of possibilities present themselves:

- The regime manages to reform itself enough to stay in power. The present foreign policy is maintained and meaningful democracy is not established. This would encourage other regimes to hold on and would mean that the Egyptian uprising did not change the status quo in the Middle East very much.

---

<sup>79</sup> HC Deb 31 January 2011, c591

<sup>80</sup> FCO, [Egypt travel advice](#) [accessed 11 February 2011]

<sup>81</sup> HC Deb 2 February 2011, c851

<sup>82</sup> HC Deb 1 February 2011, c730

- Stalemate, as neither side is prepared to back down. Instability continues for some time, with sporadic violence, economic dislocation and mounting frustration on all sides. The situation could lead to a more violent explosion later.
- The reduction in US dominance frees Egypt to regain its role as a cultural leader of the Arab world, and a pragmatic democratic regime, perhaps modelled on Turkey's, with more "Arab street-friendly" foreign policies challenges the extreme Islamism of Iran.
- Democracy leads the Muslim Brotherhood or other conservative Islamists to dominate the new political scene and some sort of Islamic republic is established. Conflict with Israel increases, and an overtly anti-US and anti-western posture leads to more instability in the region, clashes with remaining pro-US authoritarian regimes, the sponsorship of violent groups and an end to anti-terrorist intelligence cooperation.

## Egyptian constitution: main controversial articles

The following analysis of significant parts of the constitution was provided by Nathan J Brown, professor of political science and international affairs at the US George Washington University, and published by BBC News Online.<sup>83</sup> The constitution is at present suspended, but the

### Main contested articles

**Article 76** (key clauses) Each political party, for which at least five consecutive years have passed since its establishment before the opening of candidacy, and which has been active the entire period, and whose members obtained in the last elections at least 3% of the seats in the People's Assembly and Shura Council, or an equivalent number of seats in one chamber, has the right to nominate for the presidency a candidate who has been a member of the party's senior leadership for at least one uninterrupted year. An exception to the foregoing is that each of the indicated parties, if it holds at least a single elected seat in either of the chambers, may nominate a candidate who has been a member of the party's senior leadership for at least one uninterrupted year in presidential elections that take place in the 10 years following 1 May 2007.

This article makes it close to impossible for any party but the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) to nominate a candidate for the presidency, because only it could marshal the number of signatures from MPs and other elected officials. The latter part of the article cited here does seem to give opposition parties a chance, but the only ones that qualify under its provisions are the small and weak Wafd and Tajammu parties, as well as four others that are virtually unknown. And those parties can only put forward names from their own leadership, barring them from nominating a popular independent (such as Mohamed ElBaradei) or a candidate from the Muslim Brotherhood. In short, the system is effectively designed to allow either the incumbent or a candidate handpicked by the current holders of power to be elected with only nominal opposition. The opposition would prefer to have a system open to all parties and to leading independents.

**Article 77** The term of the presidency shall be six Gregorian years starting from the date of the announcement of result of the plebiscite. The President of the Republic may be re-elected for other successive terms.

Some Egyptians like to joke that they want to be able to use the term "former president". Egypt has had only three presidents since 1954, so the opposition wants shorter terms and term limits.

**Article 88** The conditions to be fulfilled by the members of the People's Assembly shall be defined by law, which shall set out the rules on the organisation of the ballot. The ballot shall take place in one day. A Higher Committee which enjoys independence and impartiality shall supervise the elections in the manner regulated by the law. The law shall set out the competencies of the committee and the procedure for its formation. Current and former members of judicial bodies shall be among its members. The committee shall form the general committees supervising the elections at constituency level, and the committees charged with the monitoring of the ballot operations and the counting of the votes. The general committees shall be composed by members of judicial bodies, and the

---

<sup>83</sup> "At a glance: Egypt's constitution", *BBC News Online*, 11 February 2011

counting of the votes shall take place under their supervision in accordance with the rules and procedures defined by the law.

Before 2007, elections were supervised by the judiciary. Considerable abuse was still possible (harassment of the opposition, vote buying) but there was some limitation on manipulation at the polling place. In 2007, a new system was brought in that formed an election committee. While the committee had some judicial members, it inspired much less trust. And in fact, the 2010 parliamentary elections were widely regarded as the most problematic in recent memory. The opposition wants a return to full judicial monitoring of balloting as well as guarantees for a fairer electoral process.

**Article 179** The state shall be responsible for protecting security and public order from the dangers of terrorism. The law will set stipulations concerning procedures for investigation and identification of suspects which the state deems necessary in confronting these dangers, provided that the procedure stipulated in the first clauses of Articles 41 and 44 and the second clause of Article 45 of the constitution do not obstruct such an effort. All will be carried out under the oversight of the judiciary. The President has the right to refer any crime of terrorism to any judicial authority under the constitution or the law.

This language on terrorism has been used against political opponents. For instance, the president has referred leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood to military courts for trial. Egypt has lived in a state of emergency with only brief interruptions since 1939. Article 179 was viewed as part of a process of taking supposedly emergency measures and converting them into permanent constitutional language. The opposition wishes to end the state of emergency; they also want to prevent any attempt to convert emergency measures into regular legislation.

