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Marching in Circles: Egypt's Dangerous Second Transition

I. Overview

Nearly two-and-half years after Hosni Mubarak's overthrow, Egypt is embarking on a transition in many ways disturbingly like the one it just experienced – only with different actors at the helm and far more fraught and violent. Polarisation between supporters and opponents of ousted President Mohamed Morsi is such that one can only fear more bloodshed; the military appears convinced it has a mandate to suppress demonstrators; the Muslim Brotherhood, aggrieved by what it sees as the unlawful overturn of its democratic mandate, seems persuaded it can recover by holding firm. A priority is to lower flames by releasing political prisoners – beginning with Morsi; respect speech and assembly rights; independently investigate killings; and for, all sides, avoid violence and provocation. This could pave the way for what has been missing since 2011: negotiating basic rules first, not rushing through divisive transition plans. An inclusive reconciliation process – notably of the Brotherhood and other Islamists – needs more than lip-service. It is a necessity for which the international community should press.

There are many reasons for the current crisis: the Morsi administration's dismissive attitude toward its critics; its inability to mobilise the machinery of state to address basic concerns of an impatient citizenry; the opposition's reliance on extra-institutional means to reverse unfavourable electoral outcomes; state institutions' disruptive foray into partisan politics; and collective resort to street action to resolve differences. All these served as backdrop to the 30 June popular uprising and Morsi's overthrow by the military three days later and have left prospects for a successful democratic transition far dimmer than in February 2011. Social and ideological divisions are more pronounced, violence more normalised, a seemingly revanchist security apparatus more emboldened and a winner-takes-all approach more alluring than ever. And all this takes place in a deteriorating fiscal, social and economic environment.

Duelling legitimacies were on display on 30 June. The first was based on popular outcry against Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood, viewed as incompetent, arrogant, domineering and increasingly out of touch. The second was rooted in the ballot box. Both have been superseded in effect by the legitimacy the military bestowed upon itself as ultimate arbiter of politics. In so doing, the armed forces unquestionably are relying on deep popular backing among Brotherhood opponents. But this hardly is a stable formula. Their support base consists of an eclectic and awkward alliance of lib-

erals, leftists, businessmen, Mubarak-era conservatives and members of the establishment. The contradictions will be evident before long; some already have surfaced. Many Brotherhood critics remain ambivalent about the role of the army, which simultaneously has turned a sizeable portion of the Islamist camp into its foe. In short, and unlike 2011 when it could paint itself as above the fray, the military has sided with one camp against another.

The fate of the Muslim Brotherhood is at the centre of the equation. Reeling from its dramatic loss of power and persecuted in ways unseen since the 1960s, it is reviving its traditional narratives of victimhood and injustice. It is depicting the struggle as a battle between defenders and opponents of both democracy and Islam. It is closing ranks, banking on a war of attrition to expose the new rulers over time as a more repressive version of Mubarak's old regime; exacerbate divisions among their current backers; and discredit them with domestic and international public opinion. In mirror image, the new authorities believe that, by preventing a return to normalcy, the Islamists will continue to lose popular support and – if they refuse to retreat – justify a more forceful crackdown.

Averting a more violent confrontation and finding a pathway back to a legitimate political process is a huge challenge, one that, by the nature of current dynamics, domestic actors are in no position to meet alone. The European Union (EU) has emerged as an important potential mediator, a fact that reflects the intense anti-Americanism that has enveloped both sides of the Egyptian divide. Others (including, behind the scenes, Washington) should work in unison. The goal, easier said than done, must be to propose a middle ground between the Islamists' insistence that Morsi be reinstated and the constitution restored, and the resolve of the military and its allies that there will be no turning back. Some ideas have been floated, such as allowing Morsi to return with dignity in order to quickly resign, thereby transferring power to a different interim president or prime minister acceptable to all; and, through an inclusive process, establishing new institutional rules (to amend the constitution and organise new elections).

The current rulers, of course, are strongly tempted to press forward forcefully in order to establish facts on the ground: an effective government; economic progress thanks in part to massive Gulf Arab financial assistance; constitutional revisions; and elections. But this would come at a very steep price, as the bloody confrontations on 8 and 27 July readily attest.

Indeed, it is a price the army and the coalition that supports it should know well, for it is one Morsi and his allies just paid: by taking advantage of a favourable balance of power and rushing to create a new political order that essentially marginalised losers, they put the country's stability at risk and hope of a return to normalcy out of reach. Only this time around, the cost of failure could well include political violence at a level not experienced by Egypt since the early 1990s.

II. The Road to 3 July

A. *The Tamarrod Campaign*

Prior to 30 June 2013, the country had experienced numerous protests, whether against the interim administration of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) in 2011 and 2012 or against Morsi himself, notably in the wake of his 22 November

2012 constitutional declaration.¹ Demonstrations being nothing unusual, it was not surprising to hear Morsi dismiss the latest campaign – launched by a little known organisation, Tamarrod, and involving a petition urging early presidential elections – as “absurd and unconstitutional”.²

Yet, this turned out to be different. Planned long in advance by the new activist group (whose name derives from the Arabic for “mutiny” or “rebellion”),³ the success stemmed largely from the political establishment’s failure to resolve the crisis born of that constitutional declaration. Despite efforts by various mediators, the EU included,⁴ Morsi and the Brotherhood saw little need to compromise with a non-Islamist opposition – since December 2012 represented by the National Salvation Front (NSF)⁵ – that it viewed as “elitist”, out of touch with ordinary citizens, fragmented and wholly ineffective.⁶ In truth, the non-Islamist opposition, despite successive electoral losses, had tended to adopt maximalist demands vis-à-vis the Brotherhood and repeatedly boycotted Morsi’s invitations to dialogue.⁷

¹ On 22 November 2012, Morsi issued a constitutional decree with the purported aim of safeguarding the upper house of parliament and the constituent assembly against potential dissolution by the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC), which in June 2012 had dissolved the lower house. It went further, however, granting Morsi sweeping executive powers and dismissing a Mubarak-era prosecutor general, prompting a powerful and wide backlash against a president already distrusted by his non-Islamist opponents. After thousands poured onto the streets, and clashes took place outside the presidential palace, Morsi scrapped the declaration, and the constituent assembly rushed to complete a document in a process boycotted by much of the opposition. The constitution was approved with approximately 64 per cent of votes in a low-turnout referendum. Crisis Group Conflict Risk Alert, “A Way Out of Egypt’s Transitional Quicksand”, 26 November 2012.

² See *Al-Ahram*, 8 June 2013.

³ Tamarrod’s founders were veterans of Kifaya, the anti-Mubarak protest movement born in late 2004 that had campaigned against the former president’s re-election and potential transfer of power to his son. Tamarrod’s campaign aimed to collect by 30 June 2013 at least 15 million signatures calling for Morsi’s departure – more than the votes he won in June 2012.

⁴ “Despite our persistent efforts [at mediation], Morsi was convinced he was going to ride out the 30 June protest and so would not go the extra mile to accommodate his opponents. He felt offering concessions was a sign of weakness and would only encourage them to raise their demands. He just did not see the need to compromise”. The EU had attempted to broker an agreement pursuant to which a coalition government would be set up, amendments to the constitution agreed upon and a new prosecutor general appointed. Crisis Group interview, EU diplomat, Cairo, 10 July 2013.

⁵ For most of the first six months of 2013, the NSF demanded formation of a coalition government led by an independent figure; amending the 2012 constitution; and giving the Supreme Judicial Council, as opposed to Morsi, the right to name the prosecutor general. In June, the NSF officially demanded early presidential elections. See *Al-Arabiya*, 27 June 2013.

⁶ Crisis Group interview, senior presidential adviser and member of the Muslim Brotherhood Guidance Bureau, Cairo, 25 February 2013; Crisis Group interview, senior member of the Freedom and Justice Party (the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood) and former minister, Cairo, 25 March 2013. A Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) official acknowledged Morsi’s missteps that had alienated large segments of the public, yet insisted that the main reasons for the 30 June protests and subsequent military removal of the president were the opposition’s determination to ensure his failure, coupled with a hostile bureaucracy. Crisis Group interview, founding FJP member, Cairo, 3 July 2013. A non-Islamist opposition figure described the lead-up to 30 June: “Much of the popular discontent at the moment emanates from a feeling that the state is dysfunctional: no security, no economy and no services. True, state institutions went on an informal strike from the day Morsi was elected, but we in the opposition see no need to assist someone who refused meaningful cooperation. The frequent protests against his rule are hurting the Brothers’ popularity and making it even more difficult for Morsi to continue his solo style of governing”. Crisis Group interview, senior NSF member, Cairo, 9 June 2013.

⁷ The NSF declined repeated invitations for dialogue over the constitutional declaration, constitutional amendments and other issues, insisting that Morsi meet their preconditions first, including firing

Morsi had alienated not only secularists, but Salafis as well; in particular, the Al-Nour party that in 2012 had won 121 seats (24.3 per cent) in the lower house of parliament and sided with the Brotherhood in December 2012 to secure an Islamist-leaning constitution was unsparing in criticising his performance. It too tried in vain to mediate between the Morsi camp and its detractors.⁸

By early June, Tamarrod's momentum was growing; its message, *irhal!* (leave!), captured the simplicity and raw emotions of the 2011 uprising and attracted support from activists, political parties and establishment figures, as well as ordinary citizens angered by deteriorating economic and security conditions.⁹ They were joined, sometimes tacitly but increasingly publicly, by an array of actors who previously had disdained street activism. These included businessmen, and members of the Muslim and Christian religious establishments of Al-Azhar and the Coptic Church respectively, as well as of the security services and, eventually, the army itself.¹⁰

The extent of the 30 June protests took many by surprise, participants included. It also allowed the military – already exasperated by Morsi's rule¹¹ and frustrated by his unwillingness to listen to their demands for compromise – to make its move.¹² A

the government and the prosecutor general. The NSF justified its boycott by claiming Morsi intended to use the dialogue as a photo-op to boost his flailing presidency. Crisis Group interview, founding member of the Egypt Freedom Party, Cairo, 22 July 2013. An aide to the former president's team said that NSF leaders used to ignore phone calls from the presidency requesting their attendance at dialogue sessions. Morsi had made clear he would not offer compromises without first engaging in a dialogue. Crisis Group interview, aide to Morsi's adviser for political affairs, Cairo, 18 April 2013.

⁸ Al-Nour is the political arm of the Daawa Salafiyya (Salafi Call), a religious association primarily based in Alexandria. The party and movement subscribe to a strict and literal interpretation of Islamic law and practice. In February 2012 Al-Nour President Younes Makhion announced an initiative to forge a coalition government, but his calls were unheeded by Morsi. See *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, 9 March 2013. Al-Nour earlier had voiced objections to the delay in completing the transition toward a stable political system as a result of what it perceived as the Brothers' unilateral approach to government: "Exclusion of the opposition curtails the political system's build-up process. Reconstruction necessitates the broadest political participation possible. And only after that we can enjoy the luxury of political conflict". Crisis Group interview, Ashraf Thabet, vice president of Al-Nour, Cairo, 19 September 2012.

⁹ A poor elderly Egyptian woman living in the slums of Cairo's Masr al-Qadima captured the mood, breaking into tears as she explained that her electricity bill had reached LE35 (about \$5) per month. She said, "we thought Morsi was one of us and was going to change our lives for the better. But we are only getting poorer and poorer. Now, thugs are roaming our neighbourhoods forcefully evicting defenceless people like me and taking over their residence. There is no police". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 5 June 2013.

¹⁰ Neither the military nor the interior ministry was willing to protect Muslim Brotherhood offices and pro-Morsi supporters from violent attacks. On 30 June, many police officers in Cairo openly joined the Tahrir Square protests. In the lead-up to that day, statements from Al-Azhar, the church and the army suggested official approval of the demonstrations. See *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, 25 June 2013. Activists from Tamarrod also reportedly met with military officials and received backing from prominent businessmen and members of the security services in the run-up to 30 June. See *The Wall Street Journal*, 19 July 2013; and *The Financial Times*, 3 July 2013.

¹¹ Sisi complained in a recent interview that Morsi was "not president for all Egyptians, but a president representing his followers and supporters". See *The Washington Post*, 3 August 2013.

¹² Military leaders reportedly were furious at steps they viewed as jeopardising national security and at the fact that the president had not consulted with them prior to making major foreign policy announcements. An important event purportedly involved the change of policy toward Syria Morsi announced on 18 June, arguably to rally wider Islamist support; in that speech, pronounced in the presence of former Islamist militants and prominent Salafi leaders and preachers, he said Cairo was cutting diplomatic relations with Damascus and appeared to endorse calls for jihad against the Syrian regime. A retired general said, "this guy [Morsi] lost his mind. He thinks he can break our ties with and declare jihad against Syria, threaten Ethiopia with war and surround himself with mil-

week before, on 23 June, the defence minister, Lieutenant-General Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, had urged all political forces to resolve their differences prior to the day of demonstrations; when that failed to yield results, and in the wake of the massive protests, the SCAF gave the presidency 48 hours to meet the “people’s demands” (read: accept early presidential elections), or it would impose its own “roadmap”,¹³ thus, closely mirroring Tamarrod’s demands.¹⁴ Morsi – apparently doubting the army would dare intervene¹⁵ – ignored the warning, belittled the demonstrations and offered insufficient concessions, which included formation of a national unity government and review of the constitution as well as of electoral legislation.¹⁶

B. *New Roadmap; Old Stalemate*

The combination of a public outpouring of discontent and reassuring army signals helped convince the overwhelming majority of protesters – some of whom initially wanted Morsi to call for early presidential elections; others who wanted him to resign; and still others who advocated a collegial presidency linking Morsi to other political leaders – to endorse a military solution.¹⁷ They warmly welcomed the announcement by General Sisi that the constitution had been suspended, the president relieved of his functions and an interim government would soon unveil a blueprint for the transition. The military’s argument that its intervention had saved the country from spiralling civil strife was widely echoed in anti-Brotherhood circles and contributed to initial relief.¹⁸

In theory, the interim government is led by civilians. That said, the cult of personality that has grown around Sisi, as well as his appointment as deputy prime minister in charge of national security (on top of his existing role as defence minister), have made him the regime’s de facto strongman. That this has been readily embraced by many politicians who had previously been emphatic about the need for civilian rule, most notably Mohamed ElBaradei, the former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), is telling of how positions have shifted since 2011, when many Islamists and non-Islamists alike were weary of military rule.

On 3 July, Sisi proposed a new roadmap, endorsed by Sheikh Al-Azhar Ahmed el-Tayyeb (Egypt’s highest Sunni Muslim authority) and Pope Tawadros II (the patri-

itants who have kidnapped and killed our soldiers in Sinai. This is Egypt. We cannot be ruled by ignorant amateurs”. Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 1 July 2013.

¹³ See *Al-Arabiya*, 1 July 2013.

¹⁴ See *Al-Dostour*, 23 June 2013.

¹⁵ Even during critical stages of the tug-of-war with the military, when its leaders were reaching the limits of their patience with the president, both Morsi and the Brothers appeared persuaded that the army would remain in its barracks, having accepted a “professional” role in a civilian-led political system. Crisis Group interview, Muslim Brotherhood member and adviser to presidential team, Cairo, 25 May 2013. An opposition member confirmed this view: “Morsi really thought he could cut off ties with Syria without consulting leaders of the armed forces. He was delusional”. Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 17 July 2013.

¹⁶ See www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9re_xBb6u0. Former Prime Minister Hisham Qandil later claimed that Morsi was “open” to the idea of early presidential elections, but only after parliamentary elections had been conducted, in order not to create a constitutional or institutional vacuum. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=-yd1MC0gjkc.

¹⁷ Tamarrod’s petition campaign was based on the simple request of early presidential elections. An NSF statement two days prior to 30 June reiterated this call. See *Al-Arabiya*, 28 June 2013.

¹⁸ U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry on 18 July reinforced the claim that the army’s actions helped forestall a potential civil war and “enormous violence”; he also affirmed that “now you have a constitutional process proceeding forward very rapidly”. See Reuters, 18 July 2013.

arch of the Coptic Orthodox Church, the country's largest Christian congregation), as well as NSF and Al-Nour party leaders.¹⁹ In accordance with it, Adli Mansour, head of the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC), became the interim president; this marked a departure from the army's approach during the first transition, when it had carried the burden of ruling and governing itself.²⁰ However, although Mansour is supposed to oversee the nine-month transition period leading to new elections, his role is expected to be largely ceremonial.

The roadmap, as codified by Mansour's 8 July constitutional decree, grants him authority to name a legal committee to amend as many articles of the 2012 constitution as it deems necessary.²¹ Once voters approve these amendments, they will be invited to take part in parliamentary and then presidential elections.²² In the meantime, Hazem el-Biblawi, a respected economist,²³ will head a cabinet whose members are chiefly technocrats and non-Islamist political figures – a clear attempt by the new rulers to convey a sense of normalcy.

III. From Crisis to Conflict

A. *The Road to Violence*

However, normalcy seems a distant prospect. The military, aided by the police and some elements of the judiciary, not only detained scores of Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist leaders and confronted protesters near military installations and the presidential palace, but shut down pro-Islamist media channels. The goal of this comprehensive clampdown appears to be to crush the Brotherhood. A retired senior security official said:

They [the Islamists] have not given the army a choice. Morsi's stubborn refusal to step down means that Sisi had to go all the way to neutralise them. The country cannot afford more instability. But the Brothers have brought this upon themselves. Every few decades they make some grave mistakes that set them a few decades back. It is not different this time. The organisation will need a few decades to recover from this [crackdown].²⁴

¹⁹ The SCAF reportedly sought to circumvent Morsi and reach out to other Brotherhood figures for talks about a new roadmap that would exclude the former president. "We invited Saad El-Katatni [head of the FJP] to participate in final discussions regarding the new roadmap, but the Brothers refused any engagement in negotiations that would entail early termination of Morsi's term in office. We had no choice but to proceed without them and suspend the constitution". Crisis Group interview, member of the interim president's national reconciliation team, Cairo, 16 July 2013.

²⁰ See Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°121, *Lost in Transition: The World According to Egypt's SCAF*, 24 April 2012.

²¹ The 8 July constitutional declaration calls for ten constitutional "experts" (from academia and the judiciary) to propose amendments to the 2012 constitution. Its suggestions will then be debated by a 50-member Constituent Assembly and put to a popular referendum by late November. Parliamentary and presidential elections would follow, starting no later than February 2013.

²² The full text of the constitutional declaration is available at egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2013/07/15/full-text-of-the-july-2013-egyptian-constitutional-declaration.

²³ Biblawi reportedly was Mansour's third choice; his name emerged during consultations between the army, protest movement, NSF and Al-Nour. The Salafi party is said to have vetoed both Destour party leader Mohamed ElBaradei and Ziad Bahaa Eddin, a senior Social Democratic Party member and veteran economic technocrat, on grounds that they were overly hostile to the Islamists.

²⁴ Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 23 July 2013.

Yet, daily Brotherhood rallies and sit-ins are a constant reminder that nothing has been settled; hundreds of Muslim Brothers have been arrested, including many key leaders;²⁵ the death toll is rising, as demonstrations in favour of the ousted president face attacks by authorities and anti-Morsi forces. On 27 July, security forces reportedly opened fire on a pro-Morsi rally as it ventured near military installations, leading to the deaths of at least 72 protesters. There have been at least an additional 180 deaths (mostly Morsi sympathisers) due to the unrest, not including roughly 30 resulting from militant attacks in the Sinai Peninsula. Moreover, thousands have been wounded.²⁶ Risks of further bloodshed aside, the detention and repression of Brotherhood leaders – now expanding to include moderate Islamist politicians like Al-Wasat Party President Aboul Ela Madi²⁷ – make any negotiation all the more elusive, as they deprive one of the two sides of the ability to consult, consider possible compromises and negotiate effectively.

²⁵ These include Deputy General Guide Khairat el-Shater, former General Guide Mohamed Mahdi Akef and FJP President Saad el-Katatni. For a more comprehensive list of arrests and detentions, see, "Egypt: Halt Arbitrary Action Against Muslim Brotherhood", Human Rights Watch, 8 July 2013. Morsi has not been seen in public since 3 July, when he was detained by the military at Cairo's al-Qobba Palace and allegedly moved to a secure location. On 26 July, he was formally charged with espionage-related crimes. Catherine Ashton, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, became the first foreign official to see the deposed president; she met with him at an undisclosed location outside Cairo. See Bawabet Al Ahram, 27 July 2013. The Muslim Brothers had initially thought he was being held in the Republican Guards' social club, prompting a sit-in there. Crisis Group interview, Muslim Brotherhood member and adviser to senior leadership, Cairo, 19 July 2013. Authorities also have brought charges against senior Muslim Brotherhood leaders, including General Guide Mohamed Badie (a move not taken by any government in decades) and his deputy, Khairat el-Shater. They stand accused of giving instructions to murder individuals trying to storm and burn down the Muslim Brotherhood headquarters in Cairo on 30 June. See *Egypt Independent*, 31 July 2013. The exact number of arrests is unknown, as authorities have not released a list of all those detained on political grounds since 3 July; Muslim Brotherhood sources say it has reached at least 600. The zeal with which protesters have been arrested is in stark contrast to the leeway accorded anti-Morsi protesters over the past six months, when police and army often refused to intervene. Pro-Morsi supporters have had many of their marches intercepted by military vehicles and/or Central Security Forces (riot control police) using tear gas and, sometimes, birdshot. Crisis Group observations, Cairo, January-July 2013.

²⁶ See Amnesty International, 25 July 2013; *Daily News Egypt*, 31 July 2013. In an address to high-ranking military officers, Defence Minister al-Sisi argued that the army's actions were motivated by concern regarding potential strife and signalled out the Morsi administration for alienating most segments of society: "We warned [President Morsi] back in November 2012 that the differences among the [political] leaders would descend into differences among the Egyptian people themselves. There is a profound schism among Egyptians, and we urged them [in vain] to reconcile". See www.youtube.com/watch?v=swYEPsT7fcc. Still, events since then have contributed to a marked uptick in violence. The most deadly incidents were on 8 July and 27 July. The first, at the Republican Guards Club, occurred when the army, claiming assailants sought to storm the premises, started shooting; footage and eyewitnesses described a coordinated assault by security forces that took the lives of more than 50 protesters. See *The Guardian*, "Killing in Cairo: the full story of the Republican Guards' club shootings", 18 July 2013. The second took place when a pro-Morsi march was confronted by security forces who accused it of trying to set up camp for another sit-in near vital military premises on Al-Nasr Road, in the Cairo district of Nasr City. The interior minister denied his forces had used anything other than tear gas, even though most of the dead appeared to have died from live-ammunition bullets to the head and chest. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=2k3GB0EocoE; www.youtube.com/watch?v=GR-Jcn3BxI4.

²⁷ Aboul Ela Madi, a former Muslim Brother and current president of Al-Wasat Party, has been, with his party, among Morsi's and the FJP's closest supporters over the past year. Other, more radical, Islamists who support the Brotherhood also have been arrested, most notably the populist politician and preacher Hazem Abu Ismail, head of the recently-founded Salafi Al-Raya Party.

B. *Deepening Polarisation*

As violence rises, positions on all sides become more deeply entrenched. The Brotherhood, convinced it has legitimacy and time on its side, sees no interest in backing down; instead, it appears determined to show it will not go away; expose the new civilian leaders as puppets of the military and the military as a carbon copy of Mubarak's repressive regime; and, ultimately, turn domestic and international opinion against current rulers. To acquiesce in the present reality, in the Brotherhood's view, would be tantamount to a humiliating surrender; better to sustain mass mobilisation in Cairo and the provinces so as to deny the new government the veneer of stability and legitimacy it seeks.²⁸

In a sense, the Brotherhood is stealing a page from its opponents' pre-3 July strategy. The longer protests continue, the more likely – and frequent – will be acts of violence against them; the greater the chance of fractures among liberals and between liberals and the army; and the stronger international pressure will become on the military to shift course.²⁹ Likewise, Islamists wager continued political instability, coupled with inevitable socio-economic hardships, will drive many citizens to turn against the new order.³⁰

Any internal debate within the Brotherhood regarding what went wrong and any lessons learned – about the need for a more inclusive, conciliatory approach, for example – is highly unlikely to take place when it is under siege. Instead, rank and file as well as leadership can be expected to band together and hold firm. For an organisation whose traditional motto has been patience, this will come naturally. A member and adviser to the leadership said:

We are back to the decades of persecution and plight. We had only a two-year reprieve. We know that we have a long, peaceful struggle ahead of us, and so we are in no hurry to legitimise the coup. They [the army and new authorities] are desperate to restore normalcy, and their only option is repression. Well, we are ready to die.³¹

²⁸ According to a former Brotherhood member, significant restlessness and demonstrations in rural and countryside provinces have the military worried. Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 31 July 2013.

²⁹ Crisis Group interview, Muslim Brotherhood member and adviser to senior Muslim Brotherhood leadership, Cairo, 15 July 2013.

³⁰ Crisis Group interview, former Muslim Brotherhood member, Cairo, 21 July 2013. Egypt's hard currency reserves are roughly \$14.9 billion, about half of which is liquid, barely enough for three months of imports. See CNBC Arabia, 7 July 2013, www.cnbc.com/97252. Its stock of imported wheat covers less than two months' needs, see Al Jazeera, 11 July 2013; in May, inflation reached over 10 per cent annually, and youth unemployment topped 40 per cent. Crisis Group interview, economic researcher and analyst at *Al-Shorouk* newspaper, Cairo, 14 July 2013. The \$12 billion promised by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, \$3 billion of which already has been delivered, is an important stop-gap measure that, according to a senior official at the International Monetary Fund, will keep Cairo from defaulting for roughly a year. Crisis Group interview, Washington DC, July 2013. But it will not address root causes of the nation's socio-economic turmoil, namely pervasive unemployment, particularly among the youth, lack of investments and rising inflation.

³¹ Crisis Group interview, Muslim Brotherhood member and adviser to senior leadership, Cairo, 14 July 2013. The Brothers and many other Islamists believe they can sustain mass protests and that, over time, their opponents will find it hard to maintain the same level of mobilisation. "The army's enmity toward the Brotherhood will persist, but it will be exhausting for the military to deal with constant political instability for the foreseeable future. Time is on our side. We can continue to camp out in the squares for months". Ibid.

In this sense, the crackdown has solidified the Islamists' determination and propelled their shift toward an ever more defensive mindset.³² As they see it, the "deep state" – remnants of the Mubarak regime in the security, judicial and business sectors – first prevented them from governing, despite their electoral mandate, and now is robbing them of all gains registered since the 2011 uprising. They blame a military intent on restoring the old order,³³ and an elite dismissive of their right to participate in politics.³⁴ Hence their relatively uncompromising position on issues such as Morsi's reinstatement (though they apparently might contemplate a possible resignation as part of an overall package) and the validity of the 2012 constitution they consider their crowning achievement and basic guarantor of their political freedoms. A Brotherhood member and ex-Morsi adviser said, "we theoretically could agree on dropping the demand that Morsi complete his term, but without the constitution, what guarantees will we have to practise politics and operate normally without crackdowns and repression?"³⁵

For its part, the military, persuaded of massive public backing and fearful of re-empowering the Brotherhood were it to show any signs of weakness, is unwilling to give in or compromise;³⁶ instead, it seems set on simultaneously subduing the Brotherhood³⁷ and establishing political facts on the ground: a new government; a constitutional revision committee; and a referendum followed by parliamentary and presidential elections. It also counts on substantial financial assistance from the Gulf – namely

³² In the predominantly Islamist town of Kirdasa, Giza, a State Security office, closed since 2011, was reopened on 4 July as many Islamist leaders were rounded up. When Islamist youth tried to attack the office, army vehicles intervened. According to a witness, "the youth went home that day, but they promised that if they start getting summoned for interrogation and torture again, they will get into an armed confrontation". Crisis Group interview, expert and researcher on Islamist movements in Egypt, Cairo, 21 July 2013. More broadly, Islamists increasingly view the 3 July events as a conspiracy by secularists and Copts against Islam and its role in government in Egypt. Their predominant discourse is of the need for sacrifice for the sake of religion. Crisis Group observations, Cairo, 3 July-22 July 2013.

³³ Former presidential spokesman and Brotherhood leader Yasser Ali explained: "What happened was a coup against the legitimacy of [the 25] January [revolt]; a will for the legitimacy of [the] July 1952 [coup] to return once again and stay put. The legitimacy of 1952 was that of the armed forces that was supported by the people. The legitimacy of January is that of the people who have chosen a civil state". See www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LiIm8GuJvk.

³⁴ FJP Vice President Essam el-Erian joked about the lack of Islamists in the new cabinet saying: "the cabinet's first meeting would be held in a bar". See www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMkj2rPx9RM.

³⁵ Crisis Group interview, Muslim Brotherhood member and former presidential aide, Cairo, 21 July 2013. Reinstatement of the constitution would mean making the head of the Shura Council, a Muslim Brother, interim president. Such suggestions bring shrugs from the other side: "It is inconceivable that the army would agree to handing power to [Shura Council President] Ahmad Fahmy. What do you think he will do, even if he is there for a second? His first executive order would be to fire Sisi and other generals who helped oust Morsi. The army will never allow such a scenario to materialise". Crisis Group interview, member of the interim president's national reconciliation team and former adviser to Morsi who resigned, Cairo, 16 July 2013.

³⁶ "The people have chanted 'the people and the army are one hand' again on 30 June, after they used to chant 'down with military rule'. They also showed up in the hundreds of thousands to [General] Sisi's invitation [to rally] on 26 July. The Brothers need to understand that the game is over and that Egyptians are back in unison with their armed forces. The sooner they accept this new reality, the less painful it will be for them". Crisis Group interview, retired military general, Cairo, 28 July 2013.

³⁷ Crisis Group interview, member of the interim president's national reconciliation team, Cairo, 16 July 2013. Several officials said that the various security agencies, notably the police and military, were closely coordinating their activities. "Despite their historical differences, these agencies are unified by their desire to get rid of the Muslim Brotherhood". Crisis Group interview, senior retired state security general, Cairo, 3 July 2013.

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates – to improve the lives of ordinary Egyptians.³⁸

Short of a political agreement, the most likely outcome is a prolonged stalemate, repeated clashes and a transitional process in many ways fundamentally detached from reality, rejected by a significant portion of the population and unable to provide either normalcy or legitimacy. Nor should one underestimate the risk that some Islamists, convinced that the democratic process will never make room for them, drift toward violence. A Brotherhood member said:

We are sick and tired of our leaders telling us to remain peaceful while we are being shot at and thrown into prison. Where was that peacefulness when secularists attacked our buildings and set them on fire, or when thugs killed our women? We need our leaders to just stop asking us to remain peaceful and let the group's youth lead the charge.³⁹

All of this has been accompanied by dizzying rhetorical escalation on both sides. Non-Islamist media denounce the Brotherhood as an extremist – even, at times, terrorist – organisation backed by foreign interests (notably Hamas members and Syrian refugees).⁴⁰ On 26 July, Sisi urged “honourable, faithful Egyptians” to take to the streets and provide him with a “mandate to confront violence and potential terrorism”.⁴¹ The Muslim Brotherhood has dismissed opposition to its rule, denouncing a broad conspiracy hatched by remnants of the old regime, foreign interests, the Coptic Church and apostates.⁴²

Neither camp is monolithic. As seen, the Salafi Al-Nour Party at key moments sided with non-Islamists against the Muslim Brothers;⁴³ the sheikh of Al-Azhar – the nation's pre-eminent Islamic institution – likewise endorsed the military's move against Morsi.⁴⁴ There are divisions among those latter forces as well; anecdotal reports suggest that Al-Nour members have joined pro-Morsi protests,⁴⁵ and many

³⁸ The three Gulf states offered Egypt a financial assistance package comprising grants, cash deposits, soft loans and energy products. See Associated Press, 11 July 2013; news.yahoo.com/12-billion-aid-egypt-only-temporary-boost-061426913.html.

³⁹ Crisis Group interview, al-Mansoura, July 2013.

⁴⁰ A retired general appearing on an anti-Islamist private satellite channel went as far as to suggest that Morsi himself is of Palestinian origin. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=epAS4qSnJpw

⁴¹ See www.youtube.com/watch?v=02QZNEOUE4o.

⁴² One of the most popular chants in Rabaa al-Adawaya Square, where the main pro-Morsi sit-in is held, is “[the state is] Islamic, Islamic ... in spite of all secularists”. www.youtube.com/watch?v=KakzUOdeAJ0. On 5 July, Mohamed Badie, the Brotherhood's General Guide, called on the Coptic Pope to stay out of politics, clearly suggesting the church was unwelcome. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=hyyGK6TUMkY.

⁴³ As early as February 2013, Al-Nour began to shift its position in the direction of the opposition NSF, calling for a new, coalition government. Later, it urged Morsi to hold early presidential elections and endorsed the army-led roadmap for the post-Morsi phase. See Reuters, 2 July 2013.

⁴⁴ On 3 July, Ahmed el-Tayyeb, the Al-Azhar sheikh, urged the nation, in a televised statement, to accept the new roadmap. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7NwcHc1IgQ.

⁴⁵ Relations between Al-Nour and the Brotherhood have been complex. Despite – or because of – their shared Islamist tendencies, each views the other as its most serious electoral rival. Al-Nour ran against the FJP in the parliamentary elections, endorsed a candidate other than Morsi for president and backed NSF demands for a coalition government before endorsing Morsi's overthrow. Crisis Group interview, former member of Al-Nour, Cairo, 20 May 2013. Given the crackdown against the Brothers, the Salafi party could well emerge as the largest Islamist party in future elections. Still, it must temper its support for the non-Islamist coalition that helped bring Morsi down, as its base is very sympathetic to the plight of their fellow Islamists and at this time tends to view politics

Azhar scholars have voiced support for the deposed president.⁴⁶ Non-Islamists have been far from homogeneous themselves; the episodic outbreaks of violence in which pro-Morsi protesters were killed have driven some to condemn the brutality of the security forces.⁴⁷ Staunch opponents of the Brotherhood have disagreed over the right of Islamists to have their own parties, or compete in the political process.⁴⁸

An increasing number of non-Islamists, despite paying lip-service to the notion of reconciliation, believe, however, that there is no place for their foes in the emerging political system.⁴⁹ A National Salvation Front member said:

The Muslim Brotherhood will be crushed by the army. There is no room for them in the new phase. The sooner they realise this, the better. The idea is for their leaders to give up now in order to allow their youth and followers an outlet to express their political views via Al-Nour or some other Islamist party. Perhaps years from now, once they have separated *daawa* [religious proselytising] from politics, they would be allowed back in.⁵⁰

An adviser to the interim president who works on national reconciliation added:

The Brothers' ethos is not one of integration or cooperation. They want to reign supreme. Some [in the non-Islamist camp] want to dismantle the Brotherhood completely; others to abolish their organisation without suppressing individual members. In any case, religion should be categorically separated from politics. We will need to remove the tumour that is the Muslim Brotherhood.⁵¹

in binary terms, (Islamist vs. non-Islamist). "Al-Nour wants to participate in the new roadmap to maintain their gains – being included in politics, and securing their legal status, which is a guarantee against persecution. Their base thinks they have sold out, and many of them are in solidarity with the Brothers. Al-Nour's bet is that it can oscillate between both camps, thus securing its legal standing in the short-term and presenting itself as the only Islamist political option in the long-term; they are positioning themselves to inherit the Brotherhood without overly alienating the Islamist base". Crisis Group interview, Dr Ashraf El-Sherif, expert on Islamist movements, Cairo, 29 July 2013.

⁴⁶ Crisis Group interview, pro-Morsi Salafi activist, Cairo, 9 July 2013. Also see video of prominent Al-Azhar scholar and adviser to El-Tayyib, Hassan el-Shafei, announcing his support for Morsi. www.youtube.com/watch?v=oEG45y6I6rA.

⁴⁷ Famous liberal media personalities and outspoken critics of Morsi, such as Bilal Fadl and Yousri Fouda, strongly chastised the new interim authority for its violent crackdowns on Morsi's supporters. See *Al-Shorouk*, 28 July 2013. Another example is Amr Hamzawy, head of the Egypt Freedom Party, who has had public disagreements with many of his NSF colleagues over his demand for a transparent investigation into the killing of the protesters since 3 July. See *Masrawy* 8 July 2013.

⁴⁸ "We [liberals] have had many disagreements over whether the Muslim Brotherhood and the FJP should be dissolved or just the former. The Mubarak-era elements among us are inclined to issue an outright ban on both. We think it would be a mistake to ban the FJP, as it would award them [the Brothers] popular sympathy and may make things less stable. Also, from a liberal perspective, we should not exclude anyone, as long as they are not implicated in crimes". Crisis Group interview, senior NSF member, 25 December 2013.

⁴⁹ An NSF member described how senior anti-Brotherhood figures walked away on the eve of 30 June when he reminded them of the need to integrate Islamists in post-Morsi arrangements. "They see this (military-supported popular protests) as the moment in which all Islamists have been defeated and should be cast aside". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 7 July 2013. Other senior opposition leaders acknowledge that bringing in the Brotherhood in principle could help stabilise the situation but argue the Islamists have little incentive to play along and so will have to be left out for now. Crisis Group interview, senior National Salvation Front leader, Cairo, 8 July 2013.

⁵⁰ Crisis Group interview, July 2013.

⁵¹ Crisis Group interview, member of the president's national reconciliation team, Cairo, 16 July 2013.

Some members of the NSF express a startling degree of nonchalance about the risks inherent in excluding Islamists:

The new mindset is that “yes”, Islamists may get radicalised, but we are ready to confront that and pay the cost for it. Things won't be worse, violence-wise, than they were in the 1990s, and the security forces were able to contain that. The state apparatus is willing to deal with a cycle of violence rather than surrender its control over the state.⁵²

Conversely, many Islamists – non-Brothers included – have come to conclude that this is a defining, existential moment in which any sign of weakness could lead to long-term suppression. A former Brotherhood member said, “almost all Islamists, and not just the Muslim Brotherhood, have reverted back to the discourse of plight and victimisation. They see this as an existential fight in which they could win all or lose all”.⁵³

C. *Zero-sum Politics*

Most political actors other than the Brotherhood and its allies have accepted – albeit with reservations – the new roadmap defined in the constitutional declaration issued by Mansour on 8 July: a nine-month transition plan that includes amendments to the 2012 constitution, followed by parliamentary and presidential elections. Mansour has also pledged a national reconciliation effort but has said little about it.

Although it purports to correct the flaws of the first transition, in many ways this hastily crafted plan repeats its mistakes – only this time under far more polarised and dangerous conditions. Aside from the unrealistically short timeframe, the proposed plan (like its predecessor) is being rushed through and focuses on a purely electoral outcome at the expense of a political consensus. This is all the more questionable given the likely boycott by an important constituency.⁵⁴ Even assuming elections take place more or less on schedule, and even if a boycott proves ineffective, an outcome in which one side triumphs is a recipe for future crisis in the absence of basic agreement on both rules of the game and the ultimate political order. The Muslim Brotherhood failed in large part due to its blind belief in majoritarian politics;⁵⁵ its putative successors hardly can succeed if they do the same.

⁵² Crisis Group interview, senior member of Social Democratic Party, Cairo, 17 July 2013.

⁵³ Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 30 June 2013. A Salafi from a Cairo suburb mirrored this sentiment: “These secularists and the army want to take us back to the dark days of imprisonment and torture. They just cannot accept us among them. But we will not give in this time”. Crisis Group interview, Cairo, July 2013.

⁵⁴ This almost certainly will be the case for the Muslim Brotherhood. However, even the Salafi Al-Nour Party, which initially endorsed the military's intervention, has since rejected its own involvement in what it considers a divisive political process. It refused to nominate party members for ministerial portfolios in the Biblawi cabinet, objected to two prime minister candidates and boycotted a national reconciliation session on 24 July (also boycotted by the FJP and other Islamist parties). Al-Nour's zig-zag approach reflects its complicated relationship with the Brotherhood. A former Brother described the group's attitude towards Salafis in general and Al-Nour in particular: “Current leaders of the Brotherhood regard the Salafis at their contingency supporters: when matters deteriorate, they can rely on them”. Crisis Group interview, Dr Amr Abu Khalil, Alexandria, 27 August 2012.

⁵⁵ During the first transition, the Muslim Brotherhood pushed for an approach it dubbed “elections first” (as opposed to “constitution first”, the preference of much of the non-Islamist camp). It banked on its organisational prowess to perform well in the elections, dominate the political process and

Indeed, debate about the nature of Egypt's polity does not merely separate Islamists from non-Islamists, however important their differences.⁵⁶ The anti-Morsi front has been held together by common hostility to the former president and his party but, underneath, deep divides persist, notably about the need for and pace of institutional reform, as well as the role and prerogatives of security agencies. As the military and police have come to play an ever greater role in recent events, those differences are likely to sharpen with time. Some young revolutionary groups, such as 6 April and the Revolutionary Socialists,⁵⁷ have come to condemn the security forces' use of force when confronting Morsi's supporters and called for the dismissal of Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim.⁵⁸

IV. Perils Ahead

At the present rate, use of violence as a means of achieving political ends is being routinised to a degree unprecedented in recent Egyptian history. Already, the non-Islamist media has taken to branding attacks against Muslim Brotherhood offices and members as "revolutionary" acts.⁵⁹ The deaths on 8 July of dozens of pro-Morsi protesters in front of the Republican Guard's social club and at their sit-in at Cairo University as well as those of over 80 on 27 July garnered only scant sympathy from opponents –

thus be in a position to impose its vision. See Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°121, *Lost in Transition: The World According to Egypt's SCAF*, 24 April 2012.

⁵⁶ The Islamist/non-Islamist divide over the 2012 constitution chiefly focused on whether Sharia (Islamic law), or alternatively "the principles of Sharia", should be *a* or *the* source of legislation; whether religious scholars should have a role in determining compliance of legislation with Sharia (or whether this should be left to judicial discretion); and women's rights. Politically, difference between the two camps focused on the sequencing of elections and constitution-writing; non-Islamists denounced the notion that electoral victors should decide the new constitution. More broadly, critics of the Islamist organisation often accuse it of betraying national interests in favour of a transnational agenda. "The Muslim Brotherhood does not have a problem with Hamas operating in Sinai, for example, because, to them, the notion of the territorial nation-state is absent. They believe in the Muslim *umma* [nation], which is the crux of their problem with us and the army. These concerns are what drove the minister of defence to issue a decree banning land ownership in the Sinai Peninsula to non-Egyptians". Crisis Group interview, senior National Salvation Front member, Cairo, 9 June 2013. General Sisi himself argued that, for the Brotherhood, "the idea that gathers them together is not nationalism, it's not patriotism, it is not a sense of a country". See *The Washington Post*, 3 August 2013.

⁵⁷ 6 April is a youth group founded on 23 March 2008, when it set up a Facebook page supporting a planned labour strike among textile workers in the Delta city of al-Mahalla al-Kobra on 6 April 2008. Thousands of workers rioted on that day. The Revolutionary Socialists, established in 1989, have focused on labour activism, organising and advocating strikes in sectors where workers are seen to be underpaid or otherwise exploited. They participated in establishing the Kifaya movement, which campaigned from 2005 until the outbreak of the 25 January 2011 uprising against the prospect of Hosni Mubarak being succeeded by his son, Gamal.

⁵⁸ See Akhbarak.net, 28 July 2013. Many Islamists take heart in these developments, believing that with time the tide of public opinion will turn their way, the Islamist/non-Islamist divide being supplanted by polarisation between the military and a large array of civilian political forces. "Everyone is noting that non-Brotherhood members and even non-Islamists are beginning to join in, not because they like Morsi or the Brotherhood, but because they loathe military rule and the crackdown on freedoms. For example, the Ultras soccer fans [who led many anti-police and anti-army protests during the first transition] joined some protests after the most recent massacre". Crisis Group interview, former Muslim Brotherhood member, Cairo, 31 July 2013.

⁵⁹ Crisis Group observations, Cairo, December 2012–July 2013. This also is common among critics of the Brotherhood on social media sites.

even among many known for their longstanding struggle for civil and political rights.⁶⁰ Airwaves and newspapers commonly refer to the protesters as terrorists.⁶¹ The wider public, impatient for a return to stability, could well turn a blind eye to an even more repressive crackdown.

Rhetoric from the Islamist side also at times has been chilling. Members speak willingly of the blood of martyrs should their demands remain unmet.⁶² Too, there are reports of Brotherhood-led violence in several Cairo neighbourhoods, notably Manial, following Morsi's ouster.⁶³ Intermittent attacks by more radical Islamists against soldiers and police in the Sinai Peninsula – although presumably not orchestrated by the Brotherhood – are equally ominous signs of possible deterioration toward low-scale insurgency as disenfranchised citizens lose any remaining trust in the political process.⁶⁴

All this further contributes to a dangerous erosion of the credibility and legitimacy of core state institutions. This already happened to the domestic judicial and security sectors after the 2011 uprising; since then, Islamists routinely have complained of the courts' alleged bias and of police refusal to obey Morsi's presidential orders.⁶⁵ Now comes the additional charge against a military long respected as a national institution, including by Islamists, yet currently denounced for picking sides among competing political camps.⁶⁶ A 23 July statement by the Brotherhood referred to "blood-lusting coup conspirators ... still engaged in the murder of peaceful protesters every day, until blood-shedding has become a routine indicative of the fascist nature of military re-

⁶⁰ Many human rights organisations, known for their liberal orientation, refrained from explicitly condemning the violence against Morsi's supporters. Some offered advice to the authorities on how to break up the Islamists' sit-ins in a more legal and humane manner. See *Al-Shorouk*, 29 July 2013.

⁶¹ Since 3 July, several prominent private satellite channels have posted taglines to their broadcast simply saying "Against Terrorism", an unsubtle reference to Islamists. Crisis Group observations, Cairo, 3 July-20 July 2013.

⁶² Crisis Group observations, Cairo, 1 July-15 July, 2013. A senior FJP member reportedly said that this was "not a time for reconciliation". Crisis Group interview, U.S. analyst, Washington DC, July 2013.

⁶³ According to an eyewitness, "they came to our neighbourhood armed with machetes and bird-shots. They were being chased by people from Tahrir Square, and many in the neighbourhood tried to stop them from bringing the battle here. So they turned against us and kept fighting for hours, causing many deaths and injuries". Crisis Group interview, Manial resident, Cairo, 6 July 2013.

⁶⁴ Security officials readily dismiss prospects of a broad insurgency similar to the one that occurred in Algeria after the military halted parliamentary elections the Islamic Salvation Front were poised to win in 1992. "Militant Islamists belonging to Gamaa Islamiya [a former militant organisation that denounced violence in the mid-2000s and established the Construction and Development Party after the 2011 uprising] have no young followers, while the Brothers lack militant background or capabilities. If they go down the route of violence both the army and police will deal with them decisively". Crisis Group interview, retired State Security general, Cairo, 3 July 2013.

⁶⁵ Crisis Group interviews, Muslim Brotherhood members and leaders, Alexandria, Cairo and Dammanhour, September 2012-March 2013.

⁶⁶ Their General Guide openly criticised the army for "siding with one group of Egyptians over another". www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dFarBOCGRo. A researcher working in the upper Egyptian province of Qena claimed that some families were now refusing to let their sons join the army as conscripts, even though that "used to be an element of pride". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 21 July 2013. A retired senior State Security general acknowledged that the military had "encouraged people to heavily go out to the streets on 30 June, stating its intention to protect the protesters and giving all parties a week-long ultimatum on 23 May to resolve the political standoff. The ultimatum led people to stay on the streets until their demands were met. All state institutions are collaborating harmoniously and consistently against Morsi and his group at this stage". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 3 July 2013.

gimes".⁶⁷ Speakers at the pro-Morsi Rabaa el-Adawiya Square sit-in in Cairo increasingly single out generals as "traitors" worthy of trial and call for a mutiny against senior officers.⁶⁸

V. A Way Out?

Morsi's administration and the Muslim Brotherhood treated a fragile, emerging political order as if it were long established, and electoral results as dispositive in a country where public sentiment is fickle and trust in the ballot box scant. This approach, they thought, would allow them to impose their agenda without need for cross-partisan support – particularly insofar as they felt secure in the military's backing. This turned out to be a monumental misreading.

As they revel in the Brothers' demise, their opponents court the same mistake. Just as they spoiled the Brotherhood's ambitions, so too will they encounter those willing and able to derail their endeavour. And just as the Brotherhood wrongly felt secure in their alliance with the military, so too might the non-Islamists be entering a doomed marriage. Recent events – resilient opposition by the Brotherhood; violent crackdown by the security forces; the embarrassed silence of those civilians in power – are a taste of things to come.

To break this cycle, procedural solutions – whether regarding the precise electoral sequencing or the naming of experts to amend the constitution – wholly miss the point. The best laid-out plan will be of little utility in the absence of broad agreement on an inclusive way forward. Instead, what are needed are simultaneous measures to end the violence, reintegrate the Brotherhood in the political arena and define a more consensual roadmap.

As a first step, Mohamed Morsi and other Brotherhood figures detained for political reasons since 3 July should be released. Their continued imprisonment is not only a rallying cry for demonstrators; it also deprives any putative dialogue of key representative interlocutors. Now that charges have been filed against the ousted president, this could prove more difficult; still, a way should be found if, as the interim authorities themselves never tire of repeating, the goal is reconciliation and inclusiveness.

Any credible reconciliation process may well have to upset the post-3 July arrangements. Mohamed Selim el-Awa, an Islamist with good ties to the army and who competed in the 2012 presidential elections, has suggested that both the 2012 constitution and Morsi briefly be reinstated; the latter would then resign in favour of a consensual prime minister. Presidential and parliamentary elections would soon follow.⁶⁹ The

⁶⁷ Ikhwan Online, 23 July 2013, www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.aspx?ArtID=157791&SecID=101.

⁶⁸ One of those speakers, Safwat Hegazy, an Islamist preacher, went so far as to pray for Sisi's death. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfHkMJNQEOo.

⁶⁹ See *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, 27 July 2013. Hisham Qandil, who served as prime minister under Morsi, launched his own initiative, suggesting that a referendum be conducted on the post-3 July arrangements while maintaining the 2012 constitutional framework. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=-yd1MC0gkjc. The Muslim Brothers, insisting on Morsi's legitimacy as president, reportedly have turned down several invitations for dialogue by the defence ministry and interim president. Crisis Group interview, member of Mansour's national reconciliation team, Cairo, 16 July 2013. Some members have floated the idea that Morsi could be reinstated and then resign in a dignified manner – though even then it is unclear what would follow. According to the 2012 constitution, upon whose authority the Brothers still insist, the head of the Shura Council (a Brotherhood member) would assume the presidency. A number of initiatives launched by non-partisan Islamist-leaning figures, including former Prime Minister Hisham Qandil and former presidential candidate Mohamed

proposal has merit: the military and its allies would ensure the ouster of Morsi, but this time presented in a more legitimate, respectful fashion, as well as an end to pro-Morsi protests and sit-ins; the Brothers would obtain guarantees via the 2012 constitution that they have a place in the new system. That said, though this proposal meets some of the Brotherhood's requirements, it almost certainly is unacceptable to the military at this stage. Other compromise solutions may yet surface – but none is likely to lead to a breakthrough unless there are open channels of communications.

At the same time, political actors and security forces should agree on immediate de-escalation by restricting (not banning) protests; ending politicised arrests and security crackdowns; and curbing incendiary rhetoric. For example, the Brotherhood and their opponents might agree to limit rallies and sit-ins to specified and distinct areas, thereby reducing potential for clashes. In the same spirit, the Brotherhood would unequivocally condemn any militant violence in the Sinai Peninsula, reaffirm its commitment to peaceful political expression and actively take steps to prevent supporters from bringing weapons to protests. Security forces should commit not to forcibly break up peaceful sit-ins, and the government ought to launch credible, independent investigations into cases of deadly violence since 3 July.

Finally, if a national dialogue is to have any chance of restoring a more normal climate it will have to be broadly inclusive and empowered; optimally, it should be facilitated by a credible third party. The purpose would be to agree both on a process for rewriting the constitution and on a political pact guaranteeing civilian, majority rule while protecting minority rights.

In this respect in particular, the international community should play an important role, despite the wave of xenophobia currently gripping the nation. The European Union (EU) already has established contacts with various factions (including the first visit by an outside party to Morsi, on 29 July), and benefits from a relatively neutral image; it also enjoys some influence as Egypt's principal trading partner. The U.S. faces greater limitations, being vilified by both sides, each suspecting Washington of doing the other's bidding.⁷⁰ As a result, Brussels, via Ashton's visits to Cairo, has assumed an unusually active role, as the EU positions itself to "engage with people from different political parties and with those who have the responsibility to move things forward".⁷¹

By refusing to label Morsi's overthrow a coup, the U.S. and EU in effect have backed the military – however reluctantly – in hopes of maintaining or gaining leverage over how it proceeds.⁷² The general feeling in the West and in Washington in particular

Selim el-Awwa, suggested Morsi could transfer his authorities to a "consensus prime minister", while presidential elections would be held within 90 days; the constitution would be reinstated until consensually amended. Crisis Group interview, EU official, July 2013. See also www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZ2Wf7vmCEO.

⁷⁰ Tamarrod issued a statement on the eve of 5 July anti-Morsi protests accusing the U.S. of "aiding the Brothers, and encouraging them to attack the people and the armed forces". *Akhbar al-Youm*, 5 July 2013. General Sisi also blasted the U.S., claiming it had abandoned Egyptians and mistreated the nation's "patriotic military" by suspending the delivery of fighter jets. *The Washington Post*, 3 August 2013. On the other hand, Essam el-Erian, vice president of the FJP, suggested that Washington had supported the "failing military coup" and went so far as to urge the U.S. embassy staff to leave the country. *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, 21 July 2013.

⁷¹ In a 30 July press conference, Ashton emphasised that the EU was not here to "help" and not to "impose" a particular formula. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=YLoN-cMTyGM.

⁷² U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry provided the strongest endorsement of the military's actions, seeing them as a way to "restore democracy", *The Wall Street Journal*, 1 August 2013, although this almost certainly contradicted the official U.S. stance.

appears to be that they cannot afford to alienate the Egyptian military – an institution of central strategic importance (on issues such as relations with Israel; counter-terrorism; passage through the Suez Canal; and overflight rights) and, indeed, the sole one with which the U.S. enjoys both influence and sustained relations.⁷³ This, coupled with the administration's belief that it has only limited leverage; that condemning the military would displease key Gulf Arab allies as well as Israel; and that much of the Egyptian public backs the army's intervention has tempered any appetite for punitive measures, such as the suspension of aid.⁷⁴

That is not to say that the U.S. or Europe necessarily welcomed the military's action. Officials in both places – acutely aware of the potential for radicalisation among Islamists should the crackdown persist – concede that it is fraught with risk. The end result has been a relatively zig-zag, muddled response – not really criticising the military's actions, but condemning the violence that ensued;⁷⁵ not backing the Islamists' claim to legitimacy, while advocating their quick reintegration into the political process.⁷⁶

As a way out of the conundrum, international actors appear to be looking to quick elections.⁷⁷ That is understandable, yet short-sighted. New elections need to take place, but a rushed schedule in a fraught context could add to the problems rather than mitigate them. In 2011 and 2012, poorly-planned elections, recognised as free and fair by most Egyptians and the international community, nonetheless were undone by court decisions and, ultimately, mass protests and the military's overthrow of Morsi. Elections are neither a substitute for, nor indeed a step that ought to precede, a negotiated political settlement and minimal consensus on core issues.⁷⁸

Instead, the fundamental question for the West – in the absence of their formal condemnation of Morsi's overthrow or support for his right to remain president – is how best to persuade both the current authorities and the Muslim Brotherhood to

⁷³ Crisis Group interview, U.S. official, July 2013.

⁷⁴ Laurent Fabius, the French foreign minister, issued a mild statement on 4 July, in which he avoided the term "coup" and expressed faith in the military's promise for new elections, "so that the Egyptian people can freely choose their leaders and their future". See Spiegel Online, 4 July 2013. Washington took an equally cautious approach, asserting it would not make a decision on whether the political change amounted to a military coup – a finding that would have triggered an automatic suspension of aid. On 26 July, State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said, it is not in the "national interest to make such a determination [C]ontinued provision of assistance to Egypt, consistent with our law, is important to our goal of advancing a responsible transition to democratic governance, and is consistent with our national security interests Egypt serves as a stabilising pillar of regional peace and security". See www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIUZZZQNjxU. However, the administration, citing inopportune circumstances, took the modest step of suspending delivery of four F-16 fighter jets to Egypt. See The Associated Press, 24 July 2013.

⁷⁵ On 27 July, after dozens of pro-Morsi protesters were killed in confrontations with security forces, the White House condemned the "bloodshed and violence", urging interim authorities to respect rights of demonstrators to peacefully protest and urging Cairo to undertake a "prompt return to democratic governance through an inclusive process". Reuters, 27 July 2013.

⁷⁶ Crisis Group interview, senior EU official, Cairo, 10 July 2013.

⁷⁷ Catherine Ashton, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, made this point, urging the interim authorities to quickly hold elections. See *The Wall Street Journal*, 17 July 2013. Domestic actors have made the same argument. Former presidential candidate Amr Moussa suggested on 8 July that the country should have "as short a transition as possible" and that all elections should be held within a maximum period of six months, because Egypt "cannot afford a prolonged period of transition, where there are accusations of illegitimacy, military rule and such". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 8 July 2013.

⁷⁸ These include, inter alia, who can compete and under what rules; whether and how to conduct elections in areas of intense social or sectarian polarisation, notably in Upper Egypt; and how to guarantee that courts will not roll back the results.

de-escalate the crisis and provide some face-saving mechanism to all parties. U.S. and EU influence might well be limited, but it is far from non-existent; for all the ferocious attacks on the West by Islamists and non-Islamists alike, both camps share a desire for formal support of their cause and endorsement of their actions.⁷⁹

At a minimum, Washington and Brussels should seek to make full use of their diplomatic clout to rally regional allies behind what is the international community's recurrently stated goal: ending the violence on Egypt's streets and restoring an inclusive political process as soon as possible. This will not come easily. Countries like Qatar, whose new leadership took a surprisingly open stance toward the military's action but remains close to the Brotherhood, and Turkey, which has been far more vocal in backing Morsi, should act as channels to the Islamists, walking them down from their more maximalist demands. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and most fellow Gulf Cooperation Council states – in many ways Egypt's short-term economic lifeline – have sided with the military and rejoiced at its actions. The U.S. and others should at least seek to convince them that Egypt's stability is in their interest, and that such stability cannot be achieved without a more inclusive political process. The joint mission by senior U.S., EU, UAE and Qatari envoys is a promising sign in this regard.⁸⁰

The temptation to score a decisive victory – yesterday contemplated by the Islamists, today by their foes – is understandable. But it also is destined to fail, and to fail badly. No political actor is powerful or popular enough to unilaterally dominate the post-2011 system, and the military's current leadership is unlikely to succeed where others, including the former SCAF, have failed. The most likely path today, alas, is heightened confrontation amid political paralysis. It will take a herculean effort to break out of this cycle; most of all, it will require all parties to go against type and act against their natural instincts.

Cairo/Brussels, 7 August 2013

⁷⁹ Tellingly, media on both sides are quick to highlight any seemingly supportive statement or gesture from the international community, particularly the U.S. and EU. Crisis Group observations, Cairo, 4 July-4 August 2013.

⁸⁰ On 5 August, the officials met with Khairat el-Shater, the jailed Brotherhood deputy leader; they also reportedly have been urging the authorities to refrain from a potentially deadly assault on the Brotherhood sit-in. However, speaking after the meeting, a Brotherhood spokesman, Gehadd al-Haddad, said the envoys "still carry the position that we should swallow the reality and accept that the military coup has happened and try to recover with minimum damage. We refuse to do so". Reuters, 5 August 2013.

Appendix A: About the International Crisis Group

The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 150 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a twelve-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers are distributed widely by email and made available simultaneously on the website, www.crisisgroup.org. Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The Crisis Group Board – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring the reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. Crisis Group is chaired by former U.S. Undersecretary of State and Ambassador Thomas Pickering. Its President and Chief Executive since July 2009 has been Louise Arbour, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Chief Prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda.

Crisis Group's international headquarters is in Brussels, and the organisation has offices or representation in 34 locations: Abuja, Bangkok, Beijing, Beirut, Bishkek, Bogotá, Bujumbura, Cairo, Dakar, Damascus, Dubai, Gaza, Guatemala City, Islamabad, Istanbul, Jakarta, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Kabul, Kathmandu, London, Moscow, Nairobi, New York, Pristina, Rabat, Sanaa, Sarajevo, Seoul, Tbilisi, Tripoli, Tunis and Washington DC. Crisis Group currently covers some 70 areas of actual or potential conflict across four continents. In Africa, this includes, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe; in Asia, Afghanistan, Burma/Myanmar, Indonesia, Kashmir, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan Strait, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; in Europe, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, North Caucasus, Serbia and Turkey; in the Middle East and North Africa, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel-Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Western Sahara and Yemen; and in Latin America and the Caribbean, Colombia, Guatemala and Venezuela.

Crisis Group receives financial support from a wide range of governments, institutional foundations, and private sources. The following governmental departments and agencies have provided funding in 2013: Australian Agency for International Development, Austrian Development Agency, Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Canadian International Development Agency, Canadian International Development Research Centre, Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union Instrument for Stability, Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Irish Aid, Principality of Liechtenstein, Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs, New Zealand Agency for International Development, Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, United Kingdom Department for International Development, U.S. Agency for International Development.

The following institutional and private foundations have provided funding in recent years: Adessium Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Charitable Foundation, The Elders, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Humanity United, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Oak Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Open Society Initiative for West Africa, Ploughshares Fund, Radcliffe Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Stanley Foundation, Tearfund, and Tinker Foundation.

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Crisis Group also operates out of over 30 different locations in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Latin America.

See www.crisisgroup.org for details