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No Friends Left to Lose: Reassessing the United States' Strategy in Egypt

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Abstract:

Egypt's interim government now contends with an unhinged and disgruntled Muslim Brotherhood protesting throughout the country, an increasingly violent Jihadist insurgency from the Sinai Peninsula, a US-backed military that carries out fierce crackdowns on dissent, a disorganized and fractured assortment of secular parties who share a mutual distrust of the Islamist opposition, and a severely crippled economy. The Islamists, disillusioned with democracy after the July 2013 coup, are a strong and uncooperative constituency which will nonetheless be necessary for any future government to be considered inclusive and pluralistic. Meanwhile, the Obama administration is financially assisting an unruly Egyptian military, attempting to court an Islamist population that has turned their backs on the US, and failing to broker political negotiations towards peaceful reconciliation. This paper examines the conflict in Egypt and offers a strategic shift for the United States in the pivotal coming years.

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[Security scholars and analysts often refer to Al Qaeda as a nimble and adaptive actor—attributes cited to point out Al Qaeda's survivability and the extraordinarily high level of harm it can periodically inflict on its enemies using innovation as a tool to ensure success. While Al Qaeda's ability to adapt and innovate is often assumed, it is rarely the subject of intense academic scrutiny on the part of international security scholars—a lacuna that applies to the study of terrorist innovation at large. This article seeks to deepen our understanding of terrorist innovation by adopting an influential framework from military innovation studies—the distinction between "top-down" and "bottom-up" processes. The framework is applied to the attacks of September 11, 2001—a case of terrorist innovation that, it is argued, exhibits signs of a synergistic interplay of both top-down and bottom-up innovation processes. The article contributes to our understanding of the nature of Al Qaeda, military innovation, and terrorist innovation alike, and concludes with suggestions to further the research agenda of military and terrorist innovation studies.]

"Smart power is neither hard nor soft. It is both."[1]

Introduction

On January 25, 2011, the Egyptian people began protests that culminated in the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak only eighteen days later. Though international onlookers hoped for a quick transition to functioning democracy, Egypt has struggled to stabilize and adapt in this important new chapter of the nation's history. With Mohamed Morsi's recent removal from power, the Jihadist insurgency in the Sinai Peninsula has reached new levels of violence and there is no end in sight to the social unrest and political stalemate between the Islamists and Seculars. Furthermore, acting President Adly Mansour announced on August 10, 2013 that international efforts at reconciliation, headed by the US and EU, had failed.[2]

Since the revolution began, the Obama administration's Egypt policy has been marked by a reluctance to interfere with the status quo: his hesitation to support the peaceful protests in Tahrir Square that called for Mubarak to cede power; his unwillingness to convincingly condemn the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) for its brutal crackdowns on dissent during both of its interim rules; his disinclination to denounce then-President Mohamed Morsi and his Freedom and Justice Party for their illiberal policies and exclusion; and his continuation of military assistance even after the July 2013 coup of a democratically elected leader. This 'light footprint' strategy in the Middle East was intended to assuage America's reputation for sovereignty-encroaching intervention, thus improving its image in the Arab world. The strategy has failed. By overcompensating for his predecessor's overactive and unpopular policies, President Obama has further alienated the Arab world with his inaction.

Opinion polls among Egyptians show that confidence in Obama, perception of America's consideration of Egyptian interests, and opinion of the United States has decreased every year since the revolutions in 2011.[3] In 2013, Egyptian opinion of the United States (16% favorable) is roughly half of what it was in 2006 (30% favorable), when Washington was still propping up Mubarak, and the hugely unpopular Iraq war was at its climax. As stated in his May 19, 2011 speech in the wake of the Arab revolutions, "it will be the policy of the United States to promote reform across the region and to support transitions to democracy."[4] However, reform was not promoted during Morsi's presidency and Egypt is now more divided than ever, and the recent transition *away* from democracy has been tacitly supported by the United States through continued military financing.

Now is an appropriate moment to reassess the conflict and America's strategy in Egypt. This article offers that assessment through a tested United States Government (USG) Framework. The Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework (ICAF) is designed for policymakers and practitioners as a tool to assess the stability of, or conflict in, a given country. As an interagency framework, the ICAF calls for broad whole-of-government cooperation, an ideal that has been recognized as necessary to achieving American interests by the 2010 National Security Strategy,[5] as well as the US Counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine. In fact, the COIN Manual explicitly recommends the ICAF as an integral tool for 'assessing the situation'- the critical first step preceding any policy formulation.[6] By using the USG framework to examine the conflict in Egypt it is possible to bridge the gap between practitioners and academics which has been recognized as a key cause of the current poor understanding of external democracy promotion.[7]

The diagnosis makes clear that the US should a) immediately begin incremental cuts to the $1.3 billion in Foreign Military Financing to Egypt for the conflict-driving tactics being used by Egyptian security forces, b) concentrate efforts at the local level by supporting the accommodating voices in society who feel trapped between two opposing instigators, and c) form broader coalitions with fellow influential international actors to push for institutional reform at the national level now, during the interim rule of Adly Mansour.

The first section of this paper will unpack the two analytical tasks of the framework, diagnosis and response, in detail. The second section will apply the framework to diagnose the Egyptian conflict in the wake of the military coup that unseated Mohamed Morsi from power in July 2013. The diagnosis consists of first establishing the context within which the conflict has arisen, then identifying the major grievances and resiliencies of the three identity groups: The Salafists, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), and the Seculars. Key mobilizers will then be recognized as being either drivers of conflict or mitigating factors that seek to subdue tensions. Finally, the conflict is placed on a trajectory based on societal trends, and potential 'triggers' are identified that could suddenly and drastically alter the situation.

The third section will apply the response process of the ICAF to Egypt by analyzing what US policy interests and considerations should be based on pragmatic prioritization, and offer realistic strategies for the USG to pursue based on their technical merits. The conclusion will summarize what has been shown and envision a positive way forward for US-Egypt relations.

The USG Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework

The USG Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework (ICAF) was developed by the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The updated CAF Version 2.0 was released in 2012, significantly, after the Arab revolutions erupted. The assessment can be requested by certain senior State Department officials such as Ambassadors or Special Envoys, whether during peace time or in response to a crisis, and it will not necessarily call for American intervention. For example, a 2009 ICA of Cambodia was undertaken, concluding that conflict and instability is unlikely in the short term so USG intervention in Cambodia was not recommended.[8] However, the ICA did provide a deeper understanding of the Cambodian situation so that, moving forward, the United States could engage in an informed way that supports Cambodia while addressing United States interests. A contemporary ICA of Egypt will also provide this interagency understanding of a vital strategic ally at a critical moment in history, and will allow the USG to reassess American interests and plan an appropriate strategy for future engagement.

The diagnosis section seeks to analyze the political, economic, social, and security factors that make up the *context*, the core *grievances* and *resiliencies* within society and institutions, and the key *mobilizers* that either *mitigate* or *drive* conflict and instability by acting on the existing grievances and resiliencies. Together, these variables make up the 'conflict dynamics'. Then the diagnosis will identify key *trends* and *triggers* in what is termed the 'trajectory'. Once the conflict is diagnosed, an informed response can be recommended.

In the ICAF, the *context* "refers to facts about the country that cannot be changed in the short term"[9] and whose factors influence, and are influenced by, the conflict dynamics. It is neither

practical nor necessary to gain a complete knowledge of Egypt; instead, only the factors that are most relevant to causing or mitigating conflict and instability need to be mentioned. Understanding each of these factors, along with a brief background of Egyptian-American relations, will help to provide the context within which the current conflict dynamics interact.

Grievances are people's dissatisfactions with the perceptions of unmet needs or threatened values/interests, while *resiliencies* are people's perceptions that institutional and/or social structures or processes are in place to alleviate grievances, and resolve disputes non-violently.[10] For example, in functioning democracies, free, fair and frequent elections provide a resiliency for groups that are dissatisfied with the existing administration. An ICA must examine patterns of grievances and systems of resilience in order to detect the most relevant conflict dynamics and probable future trajectory for violence or stability. In order to do so, both grievances and resiliencies are observed through the lens of three interconnected components: identity groups, institutional performance, and societal patterns.

Identity groups are the groupings of people in society that share grievances as well as hopes for the future,[11] and *institutions* are the formal or informal rules, practices and mechanisms that govern human interactions and shape human behavior.[12] In an ICA, institutional performance is first measured objectively, and then judged subjectively through the lens of its interactions with each identity group as positive (resilient) or negative (a grievance) based on the perceived effectiveness and legitimacy of its actions. These positive or negative perceptions emerge as recognizable *societal patterns*. Because the actual outcomes of institutions can be measured objectively, divergent perceptions between identity groups can be very helpful in diagnosing the conflict. In January 2011, some Egyptian secular elites perceived the government as a resilient

institution that adequately addressed their needs and interests, but various other identity groups had long held social and institutional grievances which ultimately led to the uprising.

Five key societal patterns have been recognized by the USG as traditionally creating grievances in fragile or at-risk states: Elitism, Exclusion, Lack of capacity, Corruption, and Transitional moments. Egypt has experienced all of these societal patterns to some degree in its recent history. Most notably, Egypt's current dilemma is the epitome of a 'transitional moment'. This dangerous societal pattern commonly creates an 'expectations gap' between what the people desire and what the new state delivers and often feeds the pattern of exclusion. Expectations for change proved too high for Morsi to reach, and the same could happen again to the next government. Positive societal patterns, such as tolerance and accommodation, lead to perceptions of resilience from beneficial interactions between institutions and identity groups. Unfortunately, these patterns are rare outside of highly developed and institutionalized states.[13]

After each identity group's grievances and perceived resiliencies are examined, key actors who mobilize the masses must be identified, along with their motivations, means and methods of mobilization. These *mobilizers* may assist as *mitigating factors*, working across identity groups to build trust, or they may be *drivers of conflict*, who pour fuel on the fire. Leadership, operational capacity, financing, and support networks allow key mobilizers to affect thousands, or even millions, of followers to act and ultimately shape the conflict accordingly. The Coptic Pope Tawadros II, whose followers make up over ten percent of Egypt, the Bedouin leaders who plan and carry out insurgent activity, and several others could also be assessed, but their influence to drive or mitigate the conflict is much less than the three mobilizers that will be mentioned here.

These terms make up the 'conflict dynamics', a snapshot of the current conflict including the major players involved, their grievances and sources of resilience. The second part of the ICA diagnosis involves mapping possible 'trajectories'; taking the snapshot and turning it into a movie by describing "possible alternative futures".[14] After identifying the existing and emerging *trends* from the previous sections, it is necessary to identify potential future *triggers* that could suddenly alter the conflict. In examining Egypt's recent history, past triggers are easily identified: The Tamarod Protests and subsequent military coup, Morsi's one-sided gubernatorial appointments, his rushed pushing through of a controversial constitution, etc. Although some triggers are impossible to predict, by anticipating future triggers the analyst can anticipate future escalation or de-escalation of the conflict.

Once the diagnosis is complete, response recommendations can be generated. The objective of the ICAF response is to minimize the effectiveness of the main drivers of conflict, while maximizing the conflict's mitigating factors, and they can be used at either the strategic or operational/tactical levels.[15] Because this Egypt ICA was implemented with the idea of reassessing America's strategy of engagement in Egypt, the recommended responses will focus on underlying strategies more than tactical implementation. Besides basing recommendations on the ICA diagnosis, the response will identify relevant *theories of change* and judge their likely effectiveness. A theory of change provides a bridge between diagnosis and policy formulation. It offers a rational hypothesis (if x, then y) that can guide a strategy that seeks to help manage or mitigate the conflict. By targeting either key mobilizers or the general population, or both, a theory of change will attempt to positively change attitudes, behaviors, or institutions. The theories become formulated as strategies, which will then be prioritized based on time considerations, availability of resources, partnerships and relevant international actors.[16]

This summarizes the process of the ICAF. By applying the framework to Egypt at this critical moment in the nation's history, the analyst can hope to gain a deeper understanding of the conflict and the different perceptions of the major players involved, as well as make informed decisions about an appropriate course of action for the US to adopt in their relations with Egypt.

The Diagnosis

Context

On March 26, 1979, in Washington, D.C and with US President Jimmy Carter as witness, the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty was signed by Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar El Sadat. Establishing peace with Israel ensured that Egypt, being both the largest Arab state and the first Arab state to recognize Israel, would be an important ally of the United States, who has a vested interest in brokering lasting peace between the Jewish State and its Arab neighbors.[17] After Sadat's 1981 assassination, Hosni Mubarak, his successor, reaped the rewards of honoring the treaty with Israel by receiving extensive military and economic aid from the United States. In fact, since the signing of the peace treaty in 1979, Egypt has been the second largest recipient, behind Israel, of bilateral assistance from the United States, receiving $1.3 billion per year in military aid alone since 1987.[18] For over thirty years, the United States preferred to ensure regional stability by keeping Egypt as a reliable partner in maintaining peace with Israel, as well as to assure prime shipping rights for the United States in the Suez Canal and use of Egyptian airspace, in exchange for the aforementioned aid and an assurance of non-intervention in Egyptian domestic politics, which became widely known for severe human rights abuses. This strategic partnership has helped to foster a perception of neocolonialism among some Egyptians, claiming that the United States cannot be trusted to consider Egyptian interests

in their own foreign policies. Furthermore, United States' policy in Egypt has been criticized as contradictory to its declared policy of promoting the global spread of democracy.[19]

Mubarak, a career military commander in the Egyptian Air Force, headed a secular and autocratic regime that operated under a 'state of emergency' from his inauguration until his overthrow. Egyptian emergency law grants the government the right to imprison whomever it deems a threat indefinitely and without trial. Several tens of thousands of political opponents were arrested during the thirty-year rule, especially among Islamists from such organizations as the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). While the Mubarak government became globally recognized for political corruption, Egyptian prisons also gained worldwide notoriety for torture. The decades of exclusion and fraud created a deep distrust within society, mostly between Islamists and Seculars, that is profoundly felt until today, and a necessary factor in the current context.[20]

After the January 2011 revolution, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) took power for a sixteen-month period while political groups were given a chance to mobilize in preparation for June 2012 elections. The politically awakened Egyptians' newfound power of protest was amplified with the internet and mass media around the world, and they frequently took to the streets to express disapproval of government or opposition tactics. In October 2011, security personnel initiated clashes with peacefully protesting Coptic Christians, another group that has a long history of mistreatment in the predominantly Muslim society.[21] This, along with other harsh military crackdowns, is indicative of the enduring environment of violence and suppression that has permeated Egyptian society for decades.

The field of secular and moderate parties was unable to organize themselves politically and form a strong bloc. The Islamists, on the other hand, were very successful in the 2012 elections, with

Mohamed Morsi, a formerly imprisoned member of the MB, winning a slight majority of 51.7% of the votes, and his Freedom and Justice Party winning over 47% of the seats in the parliamentary elections earlier that year.[22] Morsi ruled for just one year, though, when the deteriorating economic situation and his perceived illiberalism led his opponents, named the Tamarod Movement, to produce huge protests in order to oust Morsi and supposedly restore the democratic nature of the January 25, 2011 revolution. The Salafist parties, who had been allied with Morsi until early 2013, joined the Seculars and Christians in demanding his removal from power. After a few days of tense standoff, the military came in on the side of the liberals and physically removed Morsi from office. However, the ensuing crackdowns, which saw over 200 Islamists killed by military and police forces in the first month,[23] pushed the Salafists to rejoin the MB in their counter-protests. These political alignments, deepened after the military's August 14, 2013 crackdown of two large sit-ins in Cairo which saw hundreds massacred, established the current stalemate between the powerful military and the influential Islamist factions.

Analysts lament that Egypt is stuck between 'illiberal democrats' and 'undemocratic liberals'.[24] Distrust between Islamists and Seculars is at its highest point in decades, and it is more visible than ever due to mass communications and the absence of an authoritarian regime to crack down on political dissent. On top of all this, Egypt suffers from a severely crippled economy. Indeed, US Secretary of State John Kerry concluded in January 2013, "Their biggest problem is a collapsing economy."[25]

Egypt possesses several contextual factors that are recognized by the Political Instability Task Force (PITF), a USG-funded research project, as typically contributing to a nation's likelihood for instability:[26] anocratic regime (neither fully democratic nor autocratic), such as Morsi and

now Mansour; recent history of conflict, such as the January 25 Revolution and subsequent turmoil; low levels of social, human, or economic development; state discrimination; and bad neighborhood.[*] In 2010, *Foreign Policy Magazine's* ranked Egypt as the 49th most fragile state in the world; by June 2013, *before* Morsi's removal, Egypt had already moved to 34th.[27]

Identity Groups' Perceived Social and Institutional Grievances and Resiliencies

For this Egypt ICA, the identity groups will be defined along religious lines (Salafist, Muslim Brotherhood, and Secular), although it would also be possible to separate groups based on age, political affiliation, or socio-economic status. However, at present, the nation is most notably divided along religious lines, with Islamists and Seculars in a dangerous stalemate. It should be acknowledged that the lines that divide the groups may be hazy, and there is considerable overlap between them. For example, a 70-year-old illiterate MB member from a rural village will certainly have some different perceptions of societal and institutional grievances and resiliencies then a 20-year-old MB member at Cairo University. Similarly, the Secular identity group may consist of old school Mubarak supporters as well as more liberal and generally younger supporters of true democracy. Even though Coptic Christians make up roughly 10% of the population, they lack the power and influence to affect the conflict and will not be examined separately. For analytical purposes, they should be envisioned as part of the Seculars.

Governance is the first institution to be examined. Most of Egypt is technically under the control of the central government, although the military has been battling Jihadi insurgents in the Sinai Peninsula who consolidated control of the area after the 2011 revolution. Besides the Sinai, government control is being contested in cities and rural areas throughout the country by Islamists who denounce the military coup of Mohamed Morsi in July 2013. Adly Mansour was

the Chairman of the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) before his appointment to be acting President. With the SCC chairman heading the Executive Branch, and both the upper and lower houses of parliament disbanded, the judicial branch is effectively the only remaining branch of government, with insufficient oversight exercised over its rulings.

Exclusion has been the key societal pattern in Egypt since the rule of Mubarak, and the recent political changes have not sufficiently addressed the deep sense of distrust, particularly between Islamists and Seculars/Christians. Morsi's attempt to annul the restrictions on presidential powers- including effectively immunizing his actions from legal challenge- as well as his Sharia-guided constitution, contributed to his opponents' perception that he was simply "an Islamist version of Mubarak."[28] Since his ouster, the MB and their newfound Salafist allies fear a return to the days before the 2011 Revolution, when secularism was in favor and the Brotherhood was suppressed. Indeed, the imminent release from prison of Mubarak, the arch rival of the Islamists, is sure to further enrage the suppressed MB.[29] This cycle of exclusion, and the distrust it feeds and feeds on, is perhaps the main grievance that must be reconciled in order for Egypt to stabilize.

Another institution that must be considered is Egyptian civil society. Morsi extended a Mubarak-era law which requires NGOs to register with, and report all foreign donations to, the Egyptian Ministry of Social Affairs. Many observers noted the hypocrisy, because the MB had previously been an organization that was similarly suppressed for decades. The fear of foreign governments, particularly the United States, using NGOs to foment unrest and cause regime change has been an obstacle to democracy promotion and reform and has weakened Egyptian civil society.

On June 4, 2013, 43 Egyptian and international NGO workers were convicted of establishing NGOs without proper license, and several reputable NGOs were shut down, including the International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), and Freedom House. Egyptians across identity groups have expressed grievances with the government's harsh stance on civil society. Although protecting Egyptian sovereignty is an important ideal, many Egyptians recognize that NGOs can be crucial institutions in conducting government oversight, ensuring transparency against state corruption and human rights abuses. The unwillingness of Morsi to allow this oversight contributed to his declining legitimacy.[30]

Perhaps the most powerful institution in Egypt is the military, which played a decisive role in the overthrow of Morsi as well as Mubarak. The military has been battling a radical Islamist insurgency in the Sinai since July 2011, with the heaviest fighting of the campaign occurring after the 2013 coup. General el-Sisi has been criticized for escalating violence with the MB and their supporters who are protesting throughout the country. In a July 24, 2013 speech, he called on the Egyptian people to take to the streets in order to grant the military a mandate to use force against the Islamist protesters.[31] While el-Sisi and the Egyptian military are popular among the ruling elites and most seculars in the Tamarod Movement, many Egyptians, especially Islamists and human rights activists, have denounced the brutal and divisive tactics used during this delicate transitional moment, hindering the military's legitimacy. Furthermore, many Egyptians who seek a peaceful way forward perceive themselves to be "stuck between militarists and fundamentalists",[32] calling into question the effectiveness of the military's tactics. After one particularly brutal crackdown on Muslim Brothers, the USG announced that it was suspending further deliveries of F-16 Falcons which had already been allocated to Egypt.[33] However, President Obama has refused to call the July 3 overthrow a coup, which has allowed his

administration to continue the annual $1.3 billion in Foreign Military Financing, enraging Islamists and provoking questions about where United States' interests lie in Egypt, and who are its real partners. American aid coupled with an imbalance of power among Egyptian institutions risks giving the military an appearance of elitism and unaccountability for their actions, a dangerous combination that facilitates exclusion and contributes to a perceived helplessness within society.

Finally, Egypt's struggling economic institutions have exacerbated the conflict. Since 2011, Egypt has been experiencing *stagflation,* a combination of high inflation and lack of growth. Foreign reserves have dropped from $36 billion in December 2010 to $15 billion in July 2013. Real GDP barely outgrew population at only 2.2% in 2012, down from 5.1% in 2010.[34] Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait have pledged a combined $12 billion of support into the Egyptian economic system, but, largely due to political instability, Egypt has been unable to enter into international markets and turn short term boosts into long term growth. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been seeking an arrangement to offer $4.8 billion, but the plan has been repeatedly pushed back due to Egypt's inability to limit spending and reduce their budget deficit.[35] Public unrest is likely to continue until the Egyptian people can see their economy stabilized and moving in the right direction. Perhaps *the* main reason that tens of millions of Egyptians took to the streets in July 2013, even more than Morsi's exclusionary policies, was his mishandling of the already dire economic situation that he inherited. Economic troubles are a grievance shared across identity groups, particularly among the youth who are able to work, but unable to find jobs.

Chronic capacity deficits, a fear of corruption and distrust of the ruling elite and the uncertainty of the transition negatively affect all identity groups and will feed instability in Egypt. The core grievances of the Islamists, including both the Salafists and the MB, result from the exclusionary methods and rhetoric of the military and largely secular ruling elites, both of which they consider illegitimate for their overthrowing of a democratically elected leader. The core grievances of the Seculars are the ongoing protests of the MB and deadly attacks of the Jihadist insurgents, which are perceived as prohibiting the country from moving forward. However, resiliencies also exist for each group, though they are easiest to observe in the international context. For example, each identity group has extensive supporters in the international community, and the foreign aid, especially from the oil-rich gulf countries, should help the economy in the short term. Also, Egyptians can look around the region and seek to avoid escalations that would lead to civil war such as those in Algeria and Syria, while learning important lessons from neighboring Tunisia who seems to be on a relatively peaceful path towards democracy. As for internal resiliencies, a constitution is being drafted *before* the elections, with some Islamists participating, which many perceive as a better plan than Morsi's Constitution process which excluded the opposition. Also, the last elections were considered free and fair by international standards, and another round of elections are being scheduled for 2014.[36] Moreover, while the perceived resilience of institutions may be low, the common citizen has learned the power of peaceful protest, which opens a window of opportunity for bottom-up reform. Finally, the absence of a vibrant civil society is being filled by an increasing use of the internet and social media to organize peaceful protest and share common ideas. If the NGO law stands, these media outlets will be a major source of resilience, particularly among the youth.

Key Mobilizers: Drivers of Conflict and Mitigating Factors

General El-Sisi is a key actor that mobilizes not only the armed forces by command, but who has considerable influence in the non-Islamic and Islamic groups, through suggestion and coercion, respectively. Some analysts speculate that El-Sisi has political aspirations and that he will become the next President of Egypt in 2014, but his more concrete motivations are to rid Egypt of the Jihadist insurgents through arrests and military strikes and break up the social unrest of the MB supporters, all while ensuring a continued flow of military aid from the United States. El-Sisi has the means and authority to actively pursue these objectives, including the largest military in Africa and the Middle East, and a central government that is too weak to control him. As head of the military, the methods he has used to do so have been mostly violent. Besides calling for attacks on Sinai Jihadists, human rights groups have reported that soldiers and police have used live ammunition to disperse protesters in Cairo, particularly on August 14, 2013.[37] His desire for a popular mandate to carry out attacks on 'terrorists' may suggest an unwillingness to negotiate with the Islamists- even those who are protesting peacefully. Because the Islamists will need to eventually come to the table for negotiations towards an inclusive and pluralistic government, el-Sisi's current strategy has been a driver of conflict, even though military strikes in the Sinai are a mitigating factor for national security. Still, in order for him to be a reformer he will need to tone down his anti-Islamist rhetoric and reach vital compromises with the protesters.

The leadership of the MB, most of whom were arrested and imprisoned following Morsi's ouster, make up a key mobilizing unit for their massive following. Key figures such as Mohammed Badie, the spiritual leader of the organization, Khairat el-Shater, the Deputy Head, and Morsi himself, have been able to maintain impressive influence even though they are being

held almost completely incommunicado. Badie publicly concluded that what el-Sisi did to Morsi is worse than destroying the Kaaba in Mecca, a remark that was sure to increase the emotional outrage of his Muslim followers.[38] Baroness Catherine Ashton, the EU Foreign Policy Chief, was allowed a visit with Morsi on July 29, and US Undersecretary of State William Burns met with el-Shater in prison on August 5, showing that the international community would not allow el-Sisi to completely disregard the disempowered organization.[39] The Brotherhood's motivations are largely political, although a current of ideological values and interests run below the surface. They have demanded the reinstatement of Morsi as President, and have promised to continue social unrest until their demands are met. The Brotherhood enjoys a vast network of support, and millions of willing volunteers from inside Egypt and throughout the region. By invoking deeply held religious values and recent memories of repression under Mubarak the leadership can incite further protests. The status quo is untenable, but if the government and military continue to overreact to the protests they will delegitimize themselves to peace-seeking observers. Since the coup, the MB leadership's inability to accept the reality on the ground and the clear path forward has driven the conflict. However, they have proven to be politically savvy, particularly when not in power, and could potentially change from being a spoiler to a reformer if they perceive it to be in their larger political interest to change strategy. While sit-ins and marches have been mostly non-violent, stone-throwing, sexual assault of women and incitement to attack Coptic Christians have also been documented.[40]

The Al-Nour Party is the strongest of the Salafist parties in Egypt, winning almost 28% of the votes in the 2012 Parliamentary elections.[**] The leadership possesses an ability to mobilize the Salafist and ultra-conservative constituency and thus affect change at the political level. Though Al-Nour is driven by a strict religious ideology that accepts nothing less than sharia as legitimate,

they are willing to enter into the 'westernized' democratic system to try to work towards their objectives. Contrarily, the Salafi-Jihadists that consolidated power among the Bedouin tribes in the Sinai after the 2011 Revolution believe that sharia and the Islamic caliphate can only be established through violent struggle, and not from within the existing 'inferior' system. As such, the two groups have the same ideological motivations, but different means and methods to achieve those ends. Al-Nour has been an ally to the MB at times, while a rival at other times. After a harsh military crackdown on Morsi supporters that Al-Nour leaders deemed a 'massacre' in early July 2013, Al-Nour once again joined their more moderate Islamist brethren in the joint opposition of the military and the creeping secular incumbents. In contrast, the Jihadi insurgents have consistently held a deep abhorrence of the MB, who they label apostates of the true Islam. As an Al-Qaeda affiliate, their main support is necessarily clandestine, and their methods have been terrorist attacks targeting civilians, police and military officials, key infrastructure such as the natural gas pipeline that runs from the Sinai to Jordan, and launching rockets over the Israeli border.[41] While the Salafi-Jihadists in the Sinai are clearly drivers of conflict, the conflict driving/mitigating status of the Al-Nour Party requires a deeper analysis.

After jumping off the sinking MB ship, Al-Nour showed that a) they have an ear to the popular demands of the people, and b) they are willing to oppose fellow Islamists. They refuse to work with the current 'military regime', but they recognize that Morsi's poor performance left the people unfulfilled, claiming that they hope to "facilitate future democratic political participation."[42] Although it is likely a political maneuver, such rhetoric is appeasing to liberals and international onlookers, and appealing to many Islamists who are disillusioned by the Brotherhood's incompetence in power but who nonetheless desire an Islamist Egypt. The Al-Nour Party has acted as an unlikely reformer, offering to mediate reconciliations between the

MB and its opponents. As such, the political Salafists should not be lumped together with Sinai Jihadists nor the MB, although they all have similar motivations and are currently seen protesting with the latter against the military. Al-Nour may be a mitigating factor in the Egyptian conflict in the coming months, possibly consolidating greater authority among Islamists in the process, and working to build bridges between the Islamist camp and their opponents. However, this may not remain true in the long term, as they ultimately seek an Egypt ruled under strict sharia. Their excessive religious zeal is also capable of forming a more violent resistance than the MB has thus far, especially if more Islamist blood is shed by the military.[43]

Trajectories: Trends, Triggers, and Windows of Uncertainty

There are several underlying contextual trends that can be identified in Egypt. Since 1979, Egypt has depended on the United States for military support, which necessitates Egypt to maintain peace with Israel. For decades, the trend had been a string of undemocratic Presidents, dating back to Muhammad Naguib's military takeover in 1952. Morsi's election shows an emerging trend of democratic legitimacy (though the 2013 coup is a setback) which is very likely to continue with another round of elections in 2014. Also, beginning in January 2011, Egyptians found their collective voice and discovered an ability to affect change through peaceful social unrest and popular revolutions, a trend that continues today by the MB and other Islamists. The introduction of internet and social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter have helped immensely to harness this newfound power. Furthermore, the entrance of previously outlawed religious groups and Salafist Islamists into mainstream politics is an emerging trend that cannot be stopped now, in a country where almost 90% of the population is Sunni Muslim.[44] However, a more discouraging trend that has carried over from the pre-revolution era is the brutal police and

military crackdowns on dissent and arbitrary arrests of political activists. Finally, the radical Islamist insurgency in the Sinai is an emerging and growing threat, though military strikes and cooperation with Israel has also shown itself in recent months. Nonetheless, a lesson can be drawn from Iraq and other theaters of Jihad, namely, that the blowback of military assault can be disastrous, as Mujahedeen mobilize and recruit best when facing a perceived infidel/apostate enemy in Muslim lands.

The main grievances and resiliencies noted above also describe trends in societal perceptions among different groups. The exclusion that is felt by a large percentage of the population against the ruling elites has been a common trend in Egypt for decades. Historically, Islamists held this grievance against mostly secular, authoritarian, and military appointed rulers. For one year following June 30, 2012, the Seculars felt excluded by the MB and the overpowering Islamist shift in governance. Since July 3, 2013, the Islamists feel much like they did before the 2011 Revolution. Hand in hand with this grievance is the trend of a very weak and incapable central government since the collapse of the Mubarak regime. The MB felt the need, as their opponents do now, to reinforce the interests of their base to the exclusion of the rest, as well as more moderate voices within their constituency. Declining economic trends have aggravated the deteriorating political climate, and prohibited subsequent governments from winning the approval of the Egyptian people, as well as potential investors and lenders around the world, especially the IMF, who has been unable to reach a deal with Egypt on a proposed loan of $4.8 billion.[45] Another trend that can be noticed is the fragility and fluidity of political coalitions. Besides the complicated relationship of the MB and the Al-Nour Party, the secular parties have been unable to cooperate enough to produce a satisfactory opposition to the Islamist parties. The Islamist parties have been much more homogeneous and organized, and, though the secular

coalition, called the National Salvation Front (NSF), has attempted to strengthen their bloc, it remains a fragmented and fragile coalition of uncompromising and divergent parties. Finally, a weak civil society and a distrust of external interference in domestic affairs by the ruling elite has strained Egypt's international relations and lost legitimacy at home for fear of corruption.

The last level of trend analysis is that of the key mobilizers. With General el-Sisi, one observes a trend of stoking the flames of the conflict while remaining unwilling to budge towards compromise. The MB leadership, and that of Al-Nour after the crackdowns, has shown an equal unwillingness to negotiate and grant any amount of legitimacy to the new government. This trend of disengagement, also utilized by the NSF during Morsi's rule, facilitates the deepening exclusion between the opposing sides. Nonetheless, it is crucial for the future of Egypt that the MB does not give up on democracy. Finally, the Brotherhood's display of incompetence and loss of credibility among Seculars and Islamists allows for the emerging trend of Al-Nour and the Salafists to capitalize and attempt becoming the new face of Egyptian Islamism.[46]

There are several key triggers that can be anticipated in the near future that will determine the ongoing trajectory of the conflict, such as the new constitution that is being drafted and the outcome of parliamentary and presidential elections tentatively scheduled for 2014, both of which are capable of either calming tensions or escalating the conflict. The August 14, 2013 violent dispersal of two Islamist sit-ins in Cairo is a trigger that has prompted unanimous international condemnations, and is likely to be met with greater resistance from the Islamists. If Islamists' grievances swell to the point where sit-ins and peaceful marches evolve into riots, looting, bombing, or other violent forms of unrest, this will also trigger an escalation of the conflict. As of this writing, this seems increasingly probable. A final trigger which could have

disastrous consequences for Egypt is a massive terrorist attack that causes casualties on a scale that has yet to be seen in Egypt. Government clashes with the Jihadists is unlikely to remain a low-intensity conflict indefinitely, and recent airstrikes throughout the Sinai risk increasing the insurgents motivations for counter-attacks, as well as increasing their recruitment and operational capabilities from their sympathetic support network.

Existing and emerging trends currently show Egypt to be on a trajectory heading towards more violent conflicts in the short to medium term, with various potential triggers that could light the spark that ignites the whole country into greater conflict and destabilization. Grievances are not being properly addressed due to a lack of institutional and social resilience and capability, which exacerbates the underlying economic troubles and sectarian tensions running through the country.

The Response

Theories of Change

With the diagnosis complete, it is now necessary to take this deeper understanding of the Egypt crisis and assess what US policy interests and considerations should be. Three relevant theories will be examined as potentially able to manage or mitigate Egypt's conflict.[***] The first theory (T1) targets the attitudes and behavior of key mobilizers and suggests that, if their perceived costs of conflict or benefits of peace are altered, then they will change their calculus and cease inducing conflict.[47] This theory is attractive because, attitudinally, Egypt can learn important lessons from around the region in recent years and decades, particularly from the civil wars in Syria and Algeria and the catastrophic consequences for those countries. Drawing parallels to the

current conflict at home may dissuade both parties from further escalation. Behaviorally, this theory would call for the US to exert greater leverage on el-Sisi and the Mansour government by incrementally decreasing the \$1.3 billion in annual military financing, which the Egyptian military depends on, each time that their tactics in opposing the Islamists are perceived as conflict-driving. Critics of this strategy argue that it goes against US interests to cut military aid to Egypt. Surely, there are conflicting interests, but improving America's credibility and reputation, especially in the Arab world, should take precedence. While America's policy has not changed over the past 34 years, the situation has been completely transformed. Most importantly, America's steady military financing has become a 'blank check' for a conflict-driving military, which Obama explicitly warned against in 2007,[48] while giving the Islamists 1.3 billion reasons to consider the US an enemy after each military crackdown on peaceful protests.

A second theory (T2) targets changing attitudes in society from the bottom-up by claiming that, if groups of Islamists and Seculars cooperate on mutual interests at the track II and III levels, then increased understanding of the other and healthy dialogue will be developed.[49] There exists a substantial overlap between the identity groups that must be tapped to facilitate, spread and sustain positive societal patterns such as tolerance and accommodation. This was seen in the promising early days of the January 25 Revolution, when chants of "Muslims, Christians, we are one!" were heard in Tahrir Square.[50] Similarly, many of the 'Seculars' are practicing and traditional Muslims, though not strict Islamists, as was shown by the sentiment of being "stuck between militarists and fundamentalists."[51] This commonality of religion offers a window of opportunity for both groups to unite at the grassroots level, even if elites are rejecting dialogue at the political level. Besides religion, professionals and business leaders who are being negatively affected by the economic trends could begin cooperation outside the influence of the political

elites, and the US can incentivize these cross-group efforts by offering increased investment and grants to Egyptian startups as well as American executives who are willing to integrate with Egypt. Voices of moderation and mitigation in the mass public must be harnessed to eventually rise above those driving the conflict at the national/political level. As US influence wanes and negotiation attempts are rejected at the government-to-government level, America should display resilience and an ability to affect positive change at other levels.

The final theory to be examined here (T3) targets changing institutions through key actors. The diagnosis and Egypt's recent history has clearly shown that institutional change will be necessary before the nation can fully stabilize, as institutional resilience is not sufficiently perceived. T3 asserts that if temporary or ad-hoc institutions support a positively perceived transition, then the permanent government that eventually assumes power will be stronger and more effective.[52] With the constitutional drafting already underway, the interim government of Adly Mansour has a great opportunity (and responsibility) to ensure that Morsi's mistakes are not repeated. The US can assist this process with more than rhetoric- the Obama administration can regain lost credibility by forming coalitions with other influential international partners to offer tangible incentives to Mansour for making conflict-mitigating compromises with the MB and Islamists, such as releasing prisoners that are being held without charge. America must be realistic about its decline in global power and influence, but must make the best of the emergence of a multipolar world by being a leading builder of coalitions that wield more influence. The US and EU are not sufficient, as was shown in Egypt in early August,[53] but Turkey, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, all of whom share close relations with the US, would likely help. The interim government must be made to see that, although some of the MB's terms for national reconciliation are outlandish, the more sensible and affordable terms should not also be snubbed. Mansour and el-Sisi should view

the Islamists' list of demands much like overpriced fruit in the *shuk-* as a starting point for negotiating towards an acceptable compromise.

Following these theories, the American strategy moving forward should involve (T1) using greater leverage on key Egyptian mobilizers, especially the military; (T2) increasing support and capabilities to grassroots organizations that preach tolerance and incentivizing Egyptian business leaders to work across identity groups; and (T3) forming broad coalitions to influence Mansour's actions in the interim period. These recommendations are largely in line with those of a group of Middle Eastern policy experts in January 2013.[54]

The effectiveness of each theory of change depends on its ability to connect change from the mass public level (more people) to the level of the key actors (key people), as well as from the individual level (attitudes, behaviors) to the socio-political level (institutions, social norms), or vice versa. A strategy that incorporates T1, T2 and T3 will provide a comprehensive network of connections between these four broad levels of change. T1 and T2 target the attitudes and behaviors of key actors and the mass public, respectively, while T3 targets institutional reform at the elite level. Because of skepticism about American encroachment on Egyptian sovereignty (see the NGO case), it may be wise for the US to not attempt to directly affect institutional change at the mass public level. Indeed, when affected communities develop their own initiatives for peace, the outcome is more effective.[55] In any case, the Egyptian mass public has already been calling for institutional reform since January 2011, in Tahrir Square and in cyberspace, and they have proven to be adept at peaceful social unrest without any external help.

Time Horizon, Resources, Partners and International Actors

Subsequent American presidents have been criticized vis-à-vis Egypt for attaining only short term objectives, such as security and trade, at the expense of longer term interests, such as democratization and legitimate stability, and Obama has not been an exception.[56] One aspect of short term strategizing focuses on ensuring, to the greatest degree possible, that the 'triggers' mentioned above are prevented. Thus, while funding the Egyptian military helps decrease the threat of a major terrorist attack emanating from the Sinai, it does not address other short term objectives, while clearly undermining long term interests. Obama spent substantial political capital supporting the Islamists during their turbulent year in power to show that the US has no religious preference for the ruling party in Egypt, but the Islamists were not willing to negotiate reconciliation through American diplomats in the wake of Morsi's ouster. Moreover, continuing military financing after a military coup is prohibited by US law, thus damaging America's credibility and moral leadership.[57] T1 calls for a more proactive utilization of American leverage, and it can help mitigate the conflict by influencing the Egyptian military's actions in the short term, while improving America's image in the long term. Similarly, T3 has the advantage of addressing short term and long term objectives simultaneously by working intimately with the Mansour government in order to establish healthy institutions that can be maintained after civilian government is elected. T2 can assist in easing tensions in the present, while building trust at the mass public level, which will be necessary for a stable future Egypt. These theories will work to inform a strategy that balances long term and short term US interests.

The availability of financial and human resources must also be considered as potential obstacles to developing an adequate response, and as America's economy gradually recovers from the

2008 global recession foreign expenditures remain in the spotlight. That is why it is more important than ever that the US spend its money wisely, and not subsidize projects that will likely undermine vital interests in the short or long term. T2 calls for investment of American resources in worthwhile ventures on the ground and among the general public, where US influence has been conspicuously lacking. The financial and human resources necessitated to adequately implement this strategy will be decided at the tactical/operational level, but, in a country as geopolitically important as Egypt, the benefits of such a strategy will surely outweigh the costs, especially after American Track I diplomatic efforts have been rejected by the elites. Obviously, suspending aid under T1 will be less financially costly for the US, but the money that is not spent on the military should be funneled to the mass public in accordance with T2, sending a tangible message of support for the Egyptian people, and not just the Egyptian military. Finally, implementing T3 is less costly in American resources now, during the fragile interim presidency of Adly Mansour, then it will be to try to influence a democratically legitimate president who may be more resistant to outside assistance. Hesitation will be costly for America's reputation, as well as its finances.

Finally, US partnerships and the role of other international actors cannot be overstated. There is no denying that America's global influence has decreased, especially in the Middle East and North Africa. However, President Obama has learned from his predecessor's regrettable unilateral invasion and occupation of Iraq, as was shown in the 2011 NATO operation in Libya that enjoyed UN and broad international support.[****] As the neoconservative's unipolar idealism fades into the multipolar reality of the 21st century, it will become increasingly important for the US to maintain power and influence by forming and leading well-received coalitions in both military and diplomatic efforts. T3 explicitly calls for coalition forming to allow the wider world

to have a stake in influencing Egypt's political future. T1 and T2 will also be that much more credible and likely to succeed with broad international support, and it costs the US nothing to encourage partners to similarly incentivize their bilateral dealings with Egypt. By drawing in other countries, the US has the opportunity to once again play a leading role without necessarily having to 'foot the bill' for conflict management and mitigation. Besides working through NATO, the EU, the UN, and other international organizations, the oil-rich Arab Gulf States should be brought into the coalition, as Egypt's ongoing conflict threatens to destabilize the region. This is especially attractive because a) These countries are now keeping Egypt economically alive through grants and loans, and b) America maintains great influence over the Gulf States as a main trading partner, and a crucial ally in the ongoing standoff with Iran over its ongoing nuclear program. In fact, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar did take part in the failed US-EU reconciliation attempts, but perseverance and insistence on a peaceful resolution must prevail. The coalition should be widened to include Saudi Arabia, who may be crucial to getting the Islamists to come to the table, and as many other partners as possible in order to convince both parties that reconciliation is necessary. Successfully implementing the principles of T1, T2, and T3 can help Egypt along the relatively smooth path of Libya or Tunisia, and avoid the rocky path of Syria.

Conclusion

This report has attempted to diagnose the dynamics of Egypt's current conflict and the trajectory that it is on, and identify what and who will likely be major game changers in the short term. Drawing from the conclusions of the conflict assessment, strategic recommendations were made

that should be implemented in creative and effective ways by relevant actors and stakeholders at the tactical/operational level.

Acknowledging that the world has yet to find a truly effective way to promote democracy in the Arab world, Obama assured a Cairo audience in 2009 that "no system of government can or should be imposed upon one nation by any other."[58] When revolutions shattered the superficial peace of the Arab world in 2011, Obama's 2009 declaration became irrelevant. The question was no longer one of 'imposing' democracy on a nation, but rather one of helping an American ally in its internal struggle for transparent democratic rule. In Egypt, Obama's humble and reactive approach has not won him any friends; if he has not appeared indifferent, he has at least been late. In the globalized world of endless news cycles, immediate transnational communications, and a lively social network and blogosphere that have literally made the entire world a critic, the reaction of a moral leader must be swift, confident, and consistent. This is precisely why conducting ICAs often and honestly should become a common practice of interagency coordination in the USG moving forward.

Actions speak louder than words, and American actions have consistently aided the alienation of whichever group is not in power. With power changing hands so often, Egyptians across identity groups now perceive Obama as a fair-weather friend, at best, and largely irrelevant, at worst. Still, American political capital in Egypt and the Arab world has not been completely spent, but the remaining balance must not be wasted on empty rhetoric that is perceived as inconsistent with actions, nor on either military might or sovereignty-encroaching intervention. Fortunately, a substantial middle ground exists, in which principled rhetoric is backed by firm action centered on the common ground between the two conflicting sides. The benefits of leveraging military aid

now vastly outweigh the costs of continuing aid unquestioningly, with the costs to America's reputation as a moral leader growing with each passing day of bloodshed. History will look more favorably on America for offering principled assistance to the nation rather than a blank check to a reckless military during this critical transitional moment.

With likely decreases to foreign military assistance, America should focus its greatest resources on engaging at the local level through supporting programs that harness the integration of Islamists and Seculars. While diplomats struggle towards political reconciliation in Cairo, 85 million Egyptians are left waiting in the wings. It is crucial that Egyptians don't forget the key lesson of the 2011 Revolution: that the power to affect change ultimately lies with them. The Obama administration expresses this fact often, adding that US interests lie not with any political party but rather with the 'Egyptian people' and the principles of democracy.[59] Here, more than anywhere else, it is necessary for America to act on its lofty rhetoric and begin its own reconciliation process with the Egyptian people before they look elsewhere for moral leadership.

Finally, persisting in calls for national reconciliation at the national level is not only wise, but necessary. If Egypt's political elite cannot reach an agreement on their own, and the US no longer possesses the ability to influence them to do so, then the best course of action will be for America to take a leading role in forming a broad coalition of countries and international organizations that seek a peaceful end to the conflict. This worked in military operations for President George H.W. Bush in Kuwait, President Clinton in Bosnia, and President Obama in Libya, and the opposite failed President George W. Bush in Iraq. The same strategy should be adopted for diplomatic efforts now. Egypt, the largest Arab country and at the nexus of the Middle East and North Africa, is too important to the region and the world to do anything less.

NOTES

* The 'bad neighborhood' criteria can be said of any country in the MENA region, but Egypt's border with Sudan, human flight from that country, and their ongoing disputes over water resources from the Nile River, along with the uncontrollable and volatile Sinai bordering a crucial strategic ally (Israel), contribute to greater regional pressure on Egypt.

** They also receive contributions and financing from various sources in Saudi Arabia, who would prefer to have a strong Salafist neighbor to work with their closely linked Wahhabi ideology. Bayoumi, Alaa, (20130. 'Egypt's Salafi Kingmakers Suffer Backlash', *AlJazeera,* 21 July, [online] Available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/07/201372191920631195.html> [Accessed 14 August 2013]

*** These three theories are based on theories suggested as helpful in the Theories and Indicators of Change (THINC) Briefing Paper, and should not be seen as an exhaustive listing. Rather, the reader can build on, improve, or choose other theories that they perceive to be potentially helpful. Whichever theories chosen should offer recommendations that relate to the diagnosis portion of the assessment.

**** The US was able to play a leading role in the planning of the intervention without having to singlehandedly supply the vast majority of the force. Although the recommendations of this ICA do not call for military intervention in Egypt, the same principles of multilateralism should be applied.

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