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The Importance of Choice: Political Intermediaries and Democratization in Egypt After the Arab Spring

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EGYPT:

**The
Importance of
Choice**

Political intermediaries and democratization in Egypt after the Arab Spring

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**The
Importance of
Choice**

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Political intermediaries and democratization in Egypt after the Arab Spring

Research Question:

How have Egypt's institutions been affected by the fall of Hosni Mubarak?

Are they largely in tact?

Have they changed?

What are the implications?

Thesis:

In Egypt, the lack of a *“clear, plausible, and critical governing alternative that threatens the governing coalition with replacement”** – i.e. ‘robust’ party competition – is causing the transition from authoritarianism to flounder.

- Dominance of the FJP -

- Incoherent political opposition -

- Disillusioned, weak civil society -

*Anna Grzymala-Busse (2007)

Role of Political Parties:

- ◇ Candidate selection, interest aggregation, policy formulation
- ◇ Connect people to the regime
- ◇ Facilitate accountability

Political Parties and Dem Transitions

- ◇ "...elite continuity, party continuity, and elite and party discontinuity" (Morlino, 2002)
- ◇ Egypt: elite and party discontinuity

Egypt 1952-2011: 'Pillars' of the State*

- >The Military
- >The Authoritarian System
- >"The religious world of *al-Azhar*"
- >Civil Society

*Albrecht & Wegner (2006)

Competition in Egypt (Albrecht and Wegner, 2006):

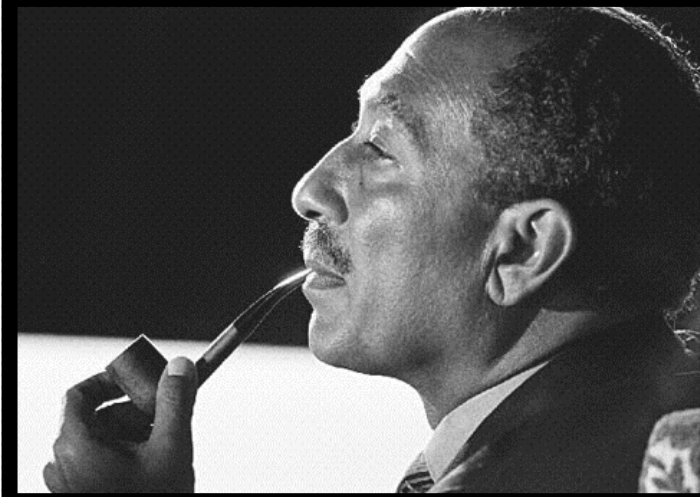
The Egyptian President faces a “tangible legitimacy Problem”

- Lacks an inherent legitimacy
- Revolutionary ‘luster’ has worn off post-Nasserism
- Legitimacy derived from elections and parliament

Required dominance of parliament:

- Political parties are only allowed when they do not represent “strong social forces”

Consequently, competition in Egypt takes place *between* the four pillars and not *within* parliament



Civil Society: Sources

Main sources of political opposition:

- <> The Muslim Brotherhood (banned as a political party)
- <> Popular Protests

The political party system in Egypt:

“...until 2011 consisted of a domineering, corrupt, and creaky machine and a host of desiccated and forgotten organizations” (Brown, 2012)

The “refusal” of the regime to allow for the development of political parties and many civil-society associations, explains why **Islamism** was able to become such a **dominant political force** (Berman, 2013)

Thus, the rise of...

The Muslim Brotherhood

1970s:

- Leftist and secular national forces playing a larger role in opposition
- MB in a period of rebuilding, supportive of Sadat's *intifah*
- Nasser's legacy criticized as 'communist', blamed for 1967 'setback'

1980s:

- Rise of *Gama'at Islamiyya*, assassination of Sadat
- Mubarak: 'permissive repression', toleration of 'informal activities'
- MB take over social welfare

1990s:

- 'Violent elimination', 'indiscriminate state repression'
- Why?
- *Gama'at Islamiyya* severely weakened
- MB left as 'only significant trend' of political Islam

2000s:

- 'Practically hegemonic' control of student unions, professional syndicates
- Widespread support within urban poor, labor

Civil Society: other sources?

Trade unions: Mubarak Era, ETUF

- Since 1957 has functioned as an “arm of the state”
- Elections rigged
- Oppositional elements banned
- No direct elections for executive committees
- Historically – limited to no right to strike

Now:

*“Professional associations and labor unions are **operating at cross-purposes**, with some against the Morsi government, and others in support”*

(Brown, 2012)

الإسلاميون

The Islamist 'head start'

Elections

Elections in Egypt 2011-12

First lower-house elections:

November-January 2011/12

Carter Center: "a broadly accurate expression of the will of the voters"

(Results later rendered void by SCC)

****Turnout: 54% overall

First upper-house elections:

January-March 2012

"...characterized by a general lack of interest"

****Turnout: 14% (first-round), 7%
(runoff)



Elections: Party differentiation
– Non-Islamic opposition

DEDI study (2012):

Respondent
Descriptions

“...**weak**... in a
disarray... [and]
poorly
organized...”

Vague slogans

'democracy',
'**human rights**,'
'people's
empowerment,'
'**social justice**,'
and 'national
unity'...

Consequences

Many new parties,
“...**virtually unknown**
throughout the
campaign process...”

“...*started too*
late in the
process”

Lack of
'**concrete**'
economic
and political
platforms

OVERALL: Failure to
resonate with voters

Elections: **campaign tactics**

Low substantive differentiation



*Vague, revolutionary
campaign platforms*

Clientelistic, particularistic and
locally-oriented behavior



*FJP cooptation of tribes
Particularistic benefits*

High candidacy costs



*Major disparities in level of
organization and resources*

Elections: Party differentiation

Tessler,
Jamal, Robbins, 2012

"...which party
best represent[s]...
personal political,
economic, and
social views"

*Muslim
Brotherhood/FJP:*
3%

Benstead,
Lust, et al., 2013

"...recognize the
leader of the
FJP..."

34%:
*"nearly twice
as many as
for... al-Wafd"*

Benstead,
Lust, et al., 2013

"...clarity of
political
platforms"

FJP: **15%**
Non-Islamist: **5-10%**

The constitution →

Presidential empowerment,
coopt military, disempowers
courts

The court →

Pushes against the
executive/legislature

The military →

Strikes a 'neutral' stance

Back to the 'pillars'

Back to the streets...

CONCLUSIONS

Finding Choice – the ‘silent majority’

38% of Egyptians* feel as though “their country is worse off than before the revolution”

The ‘silent majority’

- High voter apathy
- FJP vote bloc – 10 million people
- Incoherent opposition – party of ‘no’

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