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“Kefaya” – An Egyptian Movement for Change

Bahaa Ezzelarab

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Abstract: KEFAYA is a word Egyptians might get accustomed to in the coming period. Everyone agrees that Reform is desirable and necessary, yet almost everyone disagrees about what should be reformed and how reform should occur. This paper deals more with domestic calls for reform, focusing on Gamal Mubarak as the bet of the Egyptian government and the Egyptian Movement for Change – a.k.a. KEFAYA - as the representative of other reform-seekers. Through comparing them both, the paper will assess which party intends or has better chances of achieving desired levels of reform.

Introduction

In late January 2005, President Mubarak headed to Abuja in Nigeria to attend a summit. Upon his arrival, Mubarak was asked by journalists on Egypt's regional role, its relations with the US and most importantly its internal reform process. The President stated clearly that although reform has been underway in Egypt for a long time, the calls for reforming the constitution or amending it were null and void. This statement was published in al-Ahram's front page just a few weeks before the same newspaper hailed and celebrated Mubarak's "unilateral" decision to amend article 76 of the constitution which changes Egypt's referendum-based to a multi-candidate elections. A couple of months later, Egypt's opposition parties, which are generally viewed as "tame" or "loyal", decided to boycott the referendum on the amendment due to several flaws in it. It is visible through such an event that although several parties may agree on the necessity of reform as a concept, they might see it through different lenses. Diverse understandings of the concept of reform lead clearly to the adoption of different strategies. It is therefore necessary to differentiate between different types of visions when one deals with the issue of reform.

Egyptians are accustomed to the word "reform", which used to mainly imply economic changes and restructuring. This, it can be stated, has not led to the general development of the Egyptian society. It is clear through various international reports that Egypt has not advanced both on the economic and the political or socio-political spheres. In fact, internationally-recognized measures of progress, such as the Human Development Index published by the United Nations Development Program, put Egypt near the bottom of its scale, giving it the 120th place out of a total of 177 countries studied.¹

In fact, one need not look at international reports to realize the necessity of true reform. A monopoly of the ruling elite and their National Democratic Party (NDP) has been enforced on all aspects of Egypt's political life. In the 1995 parliamentary elections, the ruling National Democratic Party exercised near monopoly with 94 % of the seats. As Alfred Stepan, Professor of Government at Columbia University, and Graeme B. Robertson, from the Center for the Study of Democratic Politics at Princeton University put it, elections such as this were "marked by fraud, coercion, and bans on many potentially competitive parties"². Egyptian limitation on freedom, however, was clearly not limited to the 90s. As late as 2005, the "Freedom in the World 2005" index published annually by Freedom House, showed that Egypt did not experience sufficient changes to improve its status on the freedom scale and thus remained "not free".³

It is an exaggeration, however, to say that the Egyptian regime has not experienced reform in any way. Although several analysts see reform as a reaction to the 9/11 attacks and the consequent foreign pressures, the process of internal reform had actually started before that. An analysis of reform from inside the system can start from the 2000 parliamentary elections, in which the NDP suffered a severe blow, which shook the ruling party and initiated a process of internal debate.⁴ One of the clear consequences of the elections was that it gave a sense that the NDP needed "new blood". The most prominent figure representing the new generation, Gamal Mubarak, publicly declared the need for internal party reform and consolidated his front against that of the old guard, represented by figures such as Kamal El-Shazli, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs. The change of government in 2004 and the inception of a young cabinet of the reform-oriented Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif provide further proof of the rising power of the young Mubarak.

Although Nazif and Gamal Mubarak represented a significant change from the old guard and succeeded in introducing liberal economic reforms that have been hailed by most observers, neither the Egyptian politically-aware public nor the Americans were satisfied. The "bread-first-strategy", which focuses on economic aspects and neglects necessary political reforms, was clearly not sufficient. In the few recent months, Egyptian streets have witnessed extraordinary events, such as public demonstrations organized by the Muslim Brotherhood and by a newly formed coalition that became to be known as the "Kefaya" (ENOUGH) movement. For them, reform meant something completely different.

Thesis and Format

This paper will deal with visions for reform from the inside and from the outside. Usually Egyptians refer to "reform from the inside" when describing attempts by the government to resist foreign reform initiatives by initiating programs of its own. However, this paper will take the Egyptian governing system and governing elite as its point of departure. Therefore, reform from inside actually refers to initiatives from within the governing system, while reform from the outside

designates Egyptian attempts from groups outside the system for reform. It is clear that the NDP Vanguard Gamal Mubarak is the best case-study for reforms from inside the system. It is expected that a study of reforms from outside the system would deal with the Muslim Brotherhood, who are widely acknowledged as the main rival of the Egyptian government. Recently, however, another movement which came to be known as “Kefaya” has gained the attention of both domestic and international media. This movement, comprised of individuals coming from different political backgrounds has been opposing, through demonstrations, the current regime and has been calling for more fundamental reforms.

It is this paper’s view that Gamal Mubarak’s vision of reform is – contrary to the general image - not significantly different from his father’s. Gamal, like the older Mubarak, emphasizes the need for economic and social reforms, while maintaining the same discourse of the old NDP guard when it comes to fundamental political reforms. It must be recognized, however, that the young Mubarak has offered a relatively clear vision and has been able to boost his public image, making use of his position as a member of the ruling family. In this sense, Gamal Mubarak offers stability, but his vision for reform from inside the system does not offer a significantly different alternative. On the other hand, Kefaya leaders have a vision for a fundamental political reform, but lack both the cohesion and the capabilities of developing clear programs and strategies. Nonetheless, a precedent was set through Kefaya that might make other Egyptian figures and groups more capable of offering alternative visions. In that sense, reform from outside the system might be bumpier, but would probably produce significant changes in the future.

In order to clarify the disparities between different visions for reform, this paper will first compare Hosni Mubarak’s limited vision for reform with the more comprehensive one put by intellectuals and political activists. This will be used as a framework for the second part of the paper, which deals with Gamal Mubarak, in order to clarify the similarities between his and his father’s reform visions. Next, the paper will construct an analysis of the phenomenon termed ‘Kefaya’, raising questions about its nature, its vision and its ability to carry out reforms. The paper will conclude with a comparison between both Gamal Mubarak and Kefaya, assessing the potential impact of both on Egypt’s road to reform.

The Alexandria Gap

The roots of the difference between Gamal Mubarak’s and Kefaya’s visions can be traced back to another event. In early 2004, the Bibliotheca Alexandria organized a meeting that hosted a number of Arab intellectuals as well as civil society and political activists. The gap between the vision of the rulers and the intellectuals/activists was made clear in that meeting. In the opening address to the meeting, Mubarak highlighted “the traditional case of stability as the touchstone of any reform”.⁵ The president made it clear that his understanding of

reform prioritizes reforms in the education system and in the economy. Even on the issue of Human Rights, which both the government and the opposition agree upon, the President reminded the audience to bear in mind “the cultural, religious, and demographic specificities of each Arab society.”⁶

It was clear that on the whole, Mubarak saw that the political reform should strengthen, rather than change the fundamentals and the institutions upon which the current system of governance relies. This clearly did not match the vision of reform presented by Arab civil society leaders and intellectuals. In the same meeting, the conferees issued a declaration that came to be known as “The Alexandria Declaration”, in which they highlighted different demands, among which was the need for political reform. The Alexandria Declaration included specific demands that were not mentioned in Mubarak’s address, such as the abolition of emergency laws, the “peaceful rotation of power and the regular holding of elections; term limits in office.”⁷ It was clear that while Mubarak understood reform as those policies that would strengthen and improve the current system; the conferees gave importance to strengthening the fundamentals of the country, even if it included essential changes in the system. It can be said that the declaration highlighted that the desire to maintain stability would no longer undermine the need for change.

Old Friends

One can see that even the government and Mubarak have started to learn this lesson. Although this is often denied by Egyptian officials, it can be expected that the American emphasis that stability would no longer justify lack of reform strengthened the impetus of this learning process. Fouad Ajami, the renowned Arab-American political analyst, explains that President Bush’s speech before the National Endowment for Democracy in November 2003 “signaled the birth of a new ‘diplomacy of freedom’ in the Arab world”. This diplomacy has at its core the prioritization of liberty over stability, signaling a shift in the American policy which used to tolerate authoritarianism in return for stability.⁸ President Bush’s latest State of the Union address, in which he supported reforms in Afghanistan, Morocco, Jordan and even the Palestinian Authority while completely disregarding Egyptian initiatives, makes the American message clear.⁹ It is not the scope of the paper to delve into U.S. foreign policies and influence on reform, but it must be said that American pressures for change had a significant impact on Egyptian domestic scene. Bush’s call for an international observatory body to monitor the coming presidential elections in Egypt only shows that the Egyptian regime will have to deal with increasing pressure that would definitely affect its domestic policies. In that sense, Hosni Mubarak has not been successful in implementing the reforms that fulfill the desires of reform-seeking Egyptians, nor has he been able to handle the American pressure for reform.

Gamal Mubarak

Despite Mubarak Sr.'s failure, several voices have expressed their desires to search for the solution in other rooms of the Mubarak House. Clearly, Gamal Mubarak stood out as the most qualified candidate in the house. The primary problem facing this solution was that both Mubaraks have publicly denounced any claims that Gamal might inherit his father's post. In his own words, Gamal has stated that this issue "is not on the table, it never occurred to me, and is not an issue on my father's mind".¹⁰ This paper, however, assumes that Gamal Mubarak is indeed a potential candidate for presidency. This assumption stems from the fact that all statements denied the possibility of a transfer of power from father to son, yet no statement really rejected the coming of Gamal Mubarak as a President through a legal and popular process. In fact, the Arab newspaper Al-Hayat reported that Hosni Mubarak has expressed Gamal's freedom to run for the coming presidential elections after it has become a direct election instead of a referendum.¹¹ The second element that this assumption is based upon is a realist understanding of politics, considering power as one of the fundamentals of political life. It would therefore only be natural if an individual aspires to gain more power in order to be able to implement a certain vision or achieve specific goals. The paper will not discuss the ethical question of whether the son of the president, even if qualified, should ever become president. The main focus will actually be on whether Gamal Mubarak is in fact qualified to become president.

Does He Have What it Takes?

It can be said that the enormous debate around the role of Gamal Mubarak is not merely a result of his relation to the president, but is rather influenced by the fact that Gamal does have a significant base of support.

Gamal Mubarak has been heralded as the hero of reforms ever since his entrance into politics in 2000 as the chairman of the NDP's Policy Secretariat and member of the politburo of the party. Young Mubarak actually recognizes this and makes full use of it, describing reform as part of his vision for his country. Following his election as head of the Policy Secretariat in the NDP, Safwat al-Sharif, the Egyptian ex-Minister of Information and the Secretary General of the NDP, described the young Mubarak as "the beating heart of the party and the instrument for a new thinking."¹² In fact, Mubarak Jr. was able to capitalize on his reputation as a reformist and strengthen it through several initiatives. Gamal's Policy Secretariat was able to draft several legislations that restructured the economy, enhanced privatization, created a new nationality law as well as a semi-official National Council on Human Rights.

The Hero of Reforms?

While it is clear that Gamal Mubarak is not a replica of his father, one can see that his main contributions lie in the fields of trade and finance, the exact fields that the President sees fit for reforms. Opposite to the image of a general reformer, young Gamal seems to possess views similar to the old NDP guard on several crucial political issues. The clearest example for this is Gamal's stance regarding the "draconian Emergency Law."¹³ Although Egyptian Parliament has witnessed voices calling for its annulment, and although this law is severely criticized by all international human rights organizations, the NDP's reformer declared the Emergency Law not to be " 'extraordinary' or outside the laws of the land".¹⁴ This in itself is a clear oxymoron, since Emergency Laws should be enforced only when an extraordinary situation prevails.

On the issue of constitutional amendments, Gamal seems to have followed the lead of most government officials. Thus, in 2003, Gamal Mubarak did "not feel that now is the right time" for constitutional amendments.¹⁵ In fact, Raphaeli argued in 2003 that the "only change [Gamal] Mubarak is not prepared to consider is the way the president is elected - by plebiscite, with no opponents, rather than by free elections,"¹⁶ which reflects his belief that the NDP is "the only party qualified to lead Egypt at the present time."¹⁷ Here, it becomes clear once more that Gamal does not see a necessary correlation between political reforms on the one hand, and economic and social development on the other.

Another vital issue on which Mubarak's opinion does not differ significantly from that of his father is the issue of demonstrations. During the 2003 demonstrations against the war on Iraq, protestors were beaten and arbitrarily detained. In a talk show at the American University in Cairo, Gamal Mubarak offered his view on the demonstration, claiming that while problems existed, Egypt does enjoy a wide margin of freedom, which was proven by the millions of anti-War demonstrators who did take on to the streets and were even given permits by the security apparatus.¹⁸ This, in fact, was a misinterpretation of events, since the only anti-war demonstrations that were permitted, was led by Gamal Mubarak himself.

Through Gamal's stance on the demonstrations, one could note a general attitude towards the issue of self-expression that is not very different from Hosni Mubarak's. While young Mubarak acknowledges that Egyptians do not express themselves freely, he claims that this is a result of self-censorship, not of government censorship. Thus, the main challenge towards self-expression is a "cultural" issue, which blames the problem on the people, not the government.¹⁹

A Matter of Discourse

Clearly, Gamal's views on political reforms do not significantly differ from his father's. The main difference lies actually in the discourse adopted by both. The uniqueness of Gamla's discourse lies in its balance, admitting some shortages and not projecting a rosy – inexistent - reality. In this sense, the gap between the

ruler and the ruled is a bit narrower. Gamal Mubarak fully admits that “much still needs to be done” and that he cannot claim to be “nearing the conclusion of the reform process”.²⁰

Although Gamal talks about “reform” in the abstract sense of the word, in terms of programs and policies, his reform plans are summarized as “bringing Egypt into the global economy; [...] expanding trade, including support for the recent American initiative for a Middle Eastern free trade zone”²¹ to reduce unemployment; developing the public sector; as well as social changes that would necessitate the empowerment of women and youth.²² This is clearly not an alternative to the existing vision for reform which completely excludes significant political changes.

Old Friends, Part II

It is apparent, through the above, that Gamal might not drastically differ from his father. Thus, one has to ask whether Gamal will be subjected to the same pressures his father has to deal with. These pressures clearly involve internal, as well as the more felt and more significant external pressure from the United States. Gamal Mubarak has actually received wide attention in the U.S. ever since his election as Policy Secretariat. Other than occupying the cover page of several key American publications, Gamal has been received in Washington in 2003 as a key government official, although he is still not one. Egyptian media was keen on highlighting this visit, pointing to the positive impression he left on the Americans who were quoted saying that they had “never seen an Arab personality visiting America at this level who is so advanced, alert, and cultured, or who has such an open and radiating mind.”²³

It is to be noted here that American officials find themselves probably in a dilemma regarding this issue. On the one hand, the promotion of democracy and freedom in the Arab world and the hostile U.S. stance towards Bashar al-Assad’s inheritance of power makes it necessary for them to condemn any hereditary succession in Egypt. On the other hand, Gamal Mubarak has been able, through private and official visits, to present himself to the Americans as a leader of both reform and stability, a combination that Americans seek in any potential ruler.

Internal Supporters

On the internal scene, Gamal Mubarak has managed to secure the support of some interest groups. Surprisingly, several authors claim that young Mubarak might be actually favored by opposition parties. This does not only relate to Gamal’s reputation as the hero of reforms, but is also connected with the opposition’s desire to reduce the influence of the military on civilian life by having a civilian president for the first time in Egypt’s history. Nonetheless, in the atmosphere of “limited political freedoms, a rubber-stamp parliament, and a

divided and ineffective opposition,"²⁴ the main support needed remains that of the security apparatus and the military establishment.

It is clear that recent shifts in the region have also strengthened the influence of the business sector, whose support Gamal enjoys. One could even argue that Gamal's support is to be found within other segments of the society, including reform-seeking politicians, and a large percentage of women and youth. As far as the Egyptian masses are concerned, young Mubarak seems to appeal, projecting an image of the educated, elitist businessman. It is also evident that Gamal has done his homework with the Americans, who must decide on the dilemma they are facing.

The mysterious part regarding the interest groups is actually that of the military. Due to the fragility of most political institutions, the military remains "the only institution with sufficient power and ability to influence the succession process."²⁵ Thus, it is clear that if he seeks a stable base of support, Gamal Mubarak will probably need to cut a deal with the military explaining its role in his reformed Egypt, as well as use his father's support and connections with the establishment that has governed Egypt since the 1952 revolution.

Due to the limited space of this paper, no calculations will be made further relating to the level of support Gamal Mubarak enjoys within different sectors of the society. However, it may be concluded that if Gamal Mubarak succeeds in making the masses see that it is him who is behind current reforms, he will have a much larger support group. Although Egyptians have been accustomed to hearing promises of reform, yet "when the cost of an imported car falls by \$5,000 and their take-home pay goes up by a fifth, they will notice."²⁶ It can be actually assumed that if clean and free elections are currently held in Egypt, Gamal Mubarak might succeed in securing a majority.

Kefaya

One of the main advantages of Gamal Mubarak or any other person from the ruling elite is that they represent the only alternative, apart from the Muslim Brotherhood, for governing Egypt. Almost all opposition parties were unsuccessful in rallying any significant support behind them and failed to convince the Egyptians that they represent an alternative. In fact, opposition parties were rarely involved in any action that would make them visible to the Egyptians. It is precisely because of this that a phenomenon such as the Kefaya movement, which managed to gain attention and to make it, unlike the opposition, to the foreign press and to the front pages of main Egyptian newspapers, such as Al-Ahram, must be carefully analyzed. Although the number of direct supporters for the movement is still in the few hundreds range, they have been successful in making their demands for "true reform" clear. However, since (Kefaya) is an extremely young movement, questions regarding

its composition, its exact demands, but more importantly, its ability to present an alternative still surround it.

Relative Success

When studying (Kefaya), the first question to be asked is related to reasons why the movement achieved relative success – in terms of publicity at least - in such a short period. One can deduce from the statements made by its leaders that the main reasons are related both to the composition and the action of the movement. The movement has been able to stage several demonstrations that received public attention under the slogan of “Kefaya”, ever since their first “rare anti-Mubarak demo”²⁷ in front of the Supreme Judiciary building. Although this is a classic strategy for publicity, opposition movements have rarely been able to organize any protests that were mainly directed against the Mubarak regime. Thus, the strategy of Kefaya in itself played a significant role in providing publicity. The other relevant point is concerned with the composition and the nature of Kefaya. In a personal interview, George Ishaq, General Coordinator of the Egyptian Movement for Change and one of its two leading figures, expressed his belief that the success of the movement was a direct result of its nature. According to him, Kefaya started in November 2003 through a declaration calling for specific political reforms, which was signed by 300 Egyptian intellectuals, journalists, political activists and people from other professions. The signatories came from different political backgrounds representing Liberal, Islamist, Marxist and Nasserist trends. Although they had their disagreements, all signatories agreed that the Mubarak regime was responsible for the decaying status that Egypt finds itself in and decided to oppose Mubarak through a new movement that would take “Kefaya” as a slogan.

According to Ishaq, the Egyptian Movement for Change was the entity responsible for organizing the new “Kefaya” demonstrations, thus becoming the Kefaya movement. Though the movement has no clear hierarchical structure, the main figures of the movement are comprised of 7 individuals who represent 7 different political backgrounds. Ishaq was quick in stating, however, that there is an agreement between all members that they would “take off the clothes” of their parties or original trends, and work in Kefaya as an individual, not as representatives of certain parties or interest groups.²⁸ In this sense, Kefaya represented the first Egyptian movement that would represent the interests of different groups, which makes it a national movement, not a political party like other legal or illegal ones.

Another aspect of Kefaya’s uniqueness relates to its demands. Contrary to both legal parties and the Muslim Brotherhood, Kefaya made it clear that it is calling for complete reform including fundamental political reforms. For instance, Kefaya leaders, such as Abd al-Halim Qandil, editor in chief of the Nasserist Party’s newspaper Al-Arabi and spokesman for Kefaya, stressed that Mubarak’s amendment of article 76 of the constitution regarding presidential elections is null

and void, because it will follow the example of Tunisia, in which the President attains 91 % of the votes even in multi-candidate elections.²⁹ Kefaya leaders thus stressed that the main obstacle behind reform was actually the Egyptian President himself. In that sense, Kefaya represented the first peaceful, yet extremely blatant opposition against the head of the regime.

A final crucial factor that indirectly led to the increase in Kefaya's publicity is the relatively relaxed attitude of the regime towards it that allowed it to stage several demonstrations. Amira Howeidly of Al-Ahram Weekly noted at Kefaya's demonstration in front of Cairo University in February 2005 that the police was "relaxed, if not covertly friendly."³⁰ One can note that this new attitude can be partially attributed to reform pressures exerted by the Bush administration. Kefaya leaders are not in denial about this issue. George Ishaq stated clearly that anyone who denies that the current global political agenda has an influence on the Egyptian domestic scene would be blind. A member in Kefaya, who asked to remain anonymous actually stated in one of the demonstrations that if it were not for the United States, he would have been probably dragged to prison. This, Kefaya leaders reiterate, does not keep the movement from having a clear policy that rejects all US-funded opposition groups or any foreign intervention in Egyptian affairs.³¹ Although this may remain a contradiction if one is evaluating it in ethical terms, it is explainable from a pragmatic point of view that allows Kefaya to make use of US pressures without letting it have any influence on its agenda.

Is Kefaya Kefaya?

Kefaya was relatively successful in securing good publicity in a short time. However, is this enough? Is it enough for people to know about Kefaya through demonstrations? In a way, it is. When asked about the benefits of demonstrations that only attract a few hundreds, Abd al-Halim Qandil, stated that the demonstrations were a sort of "gradual training, so to speak, for first-movers in Egypt, [which] is important as a first step towards realizing more freedoms."³² However, other activists in the movement have different views. Abul-Ela Madi, founder of the illegal Centre Party (Al-Wasat) and one of leading figures in Kefaya, views demonstration as the only available option, although he did not know where this will take the movement or what exact goal it will accomplish.³³ It is necessary to say that although Kefaya has become relatively well-known, a large percentage still views it as a futile force since it has no clear vision. Ahmed Menesi of Al-Jazeera notes that Kefaya is but an umbrella for several factions that are united by nothing other than their discontent and opposition to the regime.³⁴

This now leads to the most important question that Kefaya leaders have to answer. Is Kefaya supposed to become a political force that would represent an alternative to this regime, or will it be a national movement whose sole purpose is to unite different powers in their opposition to the regime? In that aspect, Kefaya

faces an issue that has probably faced all national movements that were primarily established to oppose a certain regime. Should a national movement only be concerned with uniting the opposition *against* an existing reality, or should it evolve into a political power that would work *for* realizing certain objectives, thus offering an alternative to the people? Some of Kefaya's leaders, like George Ishaq, believe that they are not "just demonstrating" but are actually on the road to offering an alternative. Kefaya, or the Egyptian Movement for Change's strategy has developed, according to Ishaq, recently into expanding the movement by creating different branches, such as "Students for Change", "Doctors for Change", etc., which will all be responsible to represent the interests of their groups and their vision for reform. Charged by many as having no clear vision, Kefaya is planning to organize a conference in mid-June, in which they will allegedly present a comprehensive program that addresses their political and economic goals.³⁵ Abd al-Halim Qandil went as far as saying that the movement will actually nominate both a President and his Vice, in addition to presenting a list for the members in the People's Assembly.³⁶

This, however, might not suffice. Due to the existence of a system that has allowed no alternatives to emerge for the past decades, Egyptians have grown accustomed to the presence of Mubarak. One should also not ignore the influence of the state-owned media in improving Mubarak's image. It might be argued, in fact, that even if Egypt has free presidential elections, Hosni Mubarak would win, even if with a smaller margin. When confronted with this view, Ishaq surprisingly conceded to the possibility of Mubarak's victory in free elections. He stated, however, that Kefaya is trying to defy exactly this system which allows for no alternatives.³⁷ This strategy of defying the system to gain a certain right and not negotiating with the regime and wait for them to give them rights also distinguishes Kefaya from the general strategy adopted by Egyptian opposition.

New Movement, New Challenges

This, however, might also be insufficient. Several analysts believe that no force outside the current regime would be able to maintain control over the country. This point is valid since successive regimes have maintained a tight grip over most institutions and establishments since the 1952 revolution through a high process of centralization. These establishments include the military and security, which are both crucial to the maintenance of stability. In this sense, the success of Kefaya might actually lead to chaos since it represents a force working from outside the system. Confronted with this, George Ishaq stated that members of these establishments are starting to be fed up with the regime and that they might thus be more tolerant towards change. Ishaq referred to the decision of the Council of Judges to boycott supervision over presidential elections if they were not given absolute supervision powers.³⁸ Although the decision of the judges is indeed a step, it is unrealistic to expect that the military and security establishments would really oppose the current regime, especially since all opposition movements actually oppose their high influence on the Egyptian

society. A mere calculation of their interests would thus lead to the conclusion that these establishments would most likely defend the current system. Thus, the threat of chaos is still an existing obstacle.

What is even a more challenging issue is whether true democracy is a desirable goal for Egyptians. Better said, is democracy the appropriate system for governing Egypt? Even among people who oppose the current regime, several voices have doubted whether Egyptians are ready for democracy or whether they need to be trained first. Even among independent scholars, voices such as that of Dr. Tarek Selim, professor of Economics at the American University in Cairo, have argued that an educational reform which would teach students the concepts relevant to political participation is a prerequisite for any political reform. Although Kefaya leaders are aware of such a concern, they believe that Egyptians should not be viewed as children who have to be taught. Instead, people like Ishaq believe that Egyptians should go through the process of democracy, even if it experiences some flaws at start. According to this view, Egyptians will be able to experience democracy only through a process of trial-and-error and through paying a certain price.³⁹ This idea of paying the price for democracy, as one can note, bears a lot of resemblance with classic Western ideas.

All of the above, if true, indicate that the movement has decided to offer a relatively comprehensive alternative to replace the existing system. Nonetheless, several obstacles make it doubtful whether Kefaya will actually develop itself as an alternative. The main drawback, one can say, is the lack of clear structure and hierarchy in Kefaya which led to confusion about its nature, its goals and its future vision. Although this might be accepted in a national movement working against a certain system, it is a clear drawback if the movement will attempt to offer an alternative.

Problems resulting from the lack of leadership and hierarchy are already visible. This is only aggravated by the fact that Kefaya includes activists from different backgrounds. In fact, George Ishaq confessed that Kefaya's first statement was prepared in eight months due to conflicts within the movement.⁴⁰ It can be expected that the conflicting views of Kefaya members would probably influence the movement's ability to present an alternative. For instance, one can wonder how Liberalists, Islamists and Marxists would agree on a certain definition of Human Rights. Mustafa Kamel El-Sayyed, Professor of Political Science at the American University in Cairo and a Kefaya member, stresses that all trends within the movement have agreed on accepting the definitions of internationally-recognized declarations, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.⁴¹ While this might be sufficient in a field such as human rights, it is still clear that ideological conflicts might resurface when discussing specific issues, such as the role of the state in the economy, the distribution of income, or, more importantly, who to nominate as president. George Ishaq, however, stresses that these conflicts can be solved within the movement. For instance, Ishaq stated that the movement has actually

decided on a presidential nominee, whose name will be kept temporarily anonymous. Although one can wonder how different ideologies might agree on one figure, Ishaq stresses that their agreement on the concepts of limiting presidential power and the more important notion of rotation of power increases the possibility of maintaining the cohesion of the movement.⁴² Nonetheless, it is clear that the disparity between different members is a clear challenge. In fact, it is possible that this disparity had kept the movement from discussing “[p]recious few steps” in their first conference in mid-March, in which speakers merely listed “countless reasons why the current regime has to go.”⁴³

Finally, the apparent result of the lack of structure or leadership for anyone researching the movement is the wide confusion in the press about the nature of Kefaya. Examining different material, one notes how Kefaya is sometimes described as being led by the Popular Campaign for Change, other times by the Egyptian Movement for Change, by George Ishaq himself⁴⁴, and even by Ayman Nour, the leader of the controversial Al-Ghadd Party.⁴⁵ This confusion intensified through an interview with Dr. Aida Seif Al-Dawla, who is thought to be an activist of the Kefaya movement, when she stated that the Popular Front for Change, another movement opposed to the current regime, was not allowed to join forces with the Egyptian Movement for Change. Not only this, but Dr. Seif Al-Dawla insisted that there was nothing such as a “Kefaya movement”, that the word “Kefaya” is only a slogan, and that it was invented a long time ago by someone from outside the Egyptian Movement for Change.⁴⁶

It is clear from the above that the Kefaya movement, believed by most to be a national movement led by the Egyptian Movement for Change, is still suffering from several obstacles due to its composition. This must not be seen as a drastic problem due to two factors. First, Kefaya is still a very young phenomenon. It can only be expected that such a phenomenon, like any other, would take time in order to develop a clear structure. The second, probably more important factor relates more to the expectations people have from such a movement. If Kefaya is seen as an umbrella that unites different forces just in order to oppose the current regime and not to present an additional alternative, the current confusion and the lack of structure would be acceptable. In that case, Egyptians must continue their search for an alternative.

Conclusion

The main issue that has been visible throughout this study is the lack of an alternative that would present a comprehensive vision for reform. Although Gamal Mubarak has given signs of being reform-oriented, it was made clear that his conception of reform is not very different from his father’s, which highlights economic and social reforms and emphasizes stability over reform or change. In that sense, one can observe that reforms from inside the system do have certain limits, since they are greatly influenced by the regime’s understanding, which sees reform as attempts to qualify and strengthen the existing system.

This vision of reform is accepted throughout many segments of the Egyptian society, who see that true reform can only be built in a country that enjoys a strong economy and a high level of education. In this sense, economic and social reforms – the Mubaraks' reforms - take precedence over political ones. This can be challenged, however, due to the fact that it is the responsibility of the political power structure to set the agenda for reforms. It is quite natural for any political structure to be interested in maintaining its power. If this can be done by keeping a low level of education and income, then it cannot be expected that the situation would change. In addition, if a system has been unable to perform any significant economic or social reforms for the last 24 years, then it is only natural for it to be held accountable, even if it starts to promise future reforms. In that sense, the reform-vision presented by new NDP Vanguard, such as Gamal Mubarak, might be both incomprehensive, and a bit too late.

On the other hand, new movements such as Kefaya do possess a more comprehensive view of reform, highlighting the necessity of strengthening the fundamentals of the country, even if it causes changes to the existing system. While opposition parties are greatly discredited, new opposition movements may have better chances of success. Currently, these movements do not present a clear alternative. Thus, one might argue that reform from outside the system has also failed. The novelty of this experience and the different conceptions of its goals, however, speak against this argument. Kefaya might fail in presenting a clear alternative. Nonetheless, this movement has forced open the gates of self-expression through staging several demonstrations and organizing conferences that gained wide attention. In that sense, Kefaya has defied the system which allowed for no alternatives to be present. Even if Kefaya itself offers no alternative, it might give others the chance and the courage to do so.

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