



America's Plan B in Egypt: Bring Back the Old Regime

by

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on

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The road that has been taken in Egypt is a dangerous one. A military coup has taken place in Egypt while millions of Egyptians have cheered it on with little thought about what is replacing the Muslim Brotherhood and the ramifications it will have for their society. Many people in cheering crowds have treated the Egyptian military's coup like it was some sort of democratic act. Little do many of them remember who the generals of the Egyptian military work for. Those who are ideologically opposed to the Muslim Brotherhood have also cheered the military takeover without realizing that the military takeover ultimately serves imperialist behaviour. The cheering crowds have not considered



the negative precedent that has been set.

Egypt was never cleansed of corrupt figures by the Muslim Brotherhood, which instead joined them. Key figures in Egypt, like Al-Azhar's Grand Mufti Ahmed Al-Tayeb (who was appointed by Mubarak), criticized the Muslim Brotherhood when Mubarak was in power, then denounced Mubarak and supported the Muslim Brotherhood when it gained power, and then denounced the Muslim Brotherhood when the military removed it from power. The disgraced Muslim Brotherhood has actually been replaced by a far worse assembly. These figures, whatever they call themselves, have only served power and never democracy. The military's replacements for the Muslim Brotherhood - be it the new interim president or the leaders of the military junta—were either working with or serving the Muslim Brotherhood and, even before them, Hosni Mubarak's regime.

The Undemocratic Egyptian Full Circle

Unlike the protests, the military takeover in Egypt is a blow to democracy. Despite the incompetence and hypocrisy of the Egyptian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood's leadership, it was democratically elected into power. While the rights of all citizens to demonstrate and protest should be protected and structured mechanisms should securely be put into place in all state systems for removing any unpopular government, democratically-elected governments should not be toppled by military coups. Unless a democratically-elected government is killing its own people arbitrarily and acting outside the law, there is no legitimate excuse for removing it from power by means of military force. There is nothing wrong with the act of protesting, but there is something wrong when a military coup is initiated by a corrupt military force that works in the services of Washington and Tel Aviv.

Things have come full circle in Cairo. The military oversight over the government in Cairo is exactly the position that Egypt's corrupt military leaders wanted to have since the Egyptian elections in 2012 that brought the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party into power. Since then there has been a power struggle between the Egyptian military and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Expecting to win the 2012 elections, at first the Egyptian military fielded one of its generals and a former Mubarak cabinet minister (and the last prime minister to serve under Mubarak), Ahmed Shafik, for the position of Egyptian president. If not a Mubarak loyalist per se, Shafik was a supporter of the old regime's political establishment that gave him and the military privileged powers. When Ahmed Shafik lost there was a delay in recognizing Morsi as the president-elect, because the military was considering rejecting the election results and instead announcing a military coup.

The High Council of the Armed Forces, which led Egypt's military, realized that a military coup after the 2012 elections would not fare too well with the Egyptian people and could lead to an all-out rebellion against the Egyptian military's leadership. It was unlikely that many of the lower ranking soldiers and commissioned officers would have continued to follow the orders of the Egyptian military's corrupt upper echelons if such a coup took place. Thus, plans for a coup were aborted. Egyptian military leaders instead decided to try subordinating Egypt's civilian government by dissolving the Egyptian Parliament and imposing a constitution that they themselves wrote to guarantee military control. Their military constitution subordinated the president's office and Egypt's civilian government to military management. Morsi would wait and then reinstate the Egyptian Parliament in July 2012 and then nullify the military's constitution that limited the powers of the presidency and civilian government after he worked with the US and Qatar to pacify Hamas. Next, Morsi would order Marshall Tantawi, the head of the Egyptian military, and General Anan, the second most powerful general in the Egyptian military, into resigning- neither one was a friend of democracy or justice.

Was Morsi's Administration Really a Muslim Brotherhood Government?

Before it was ousted, the Muslim Brotherhood faced serious structural constraints in Egypt and it made many wrong decisions. Since its electoral victory there was an ongoing power struggle in Egypt and its Freedom and Justice Party clumsily attempted to consolidate its political control over Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood's attempts to consolidate power meant that it has had to live with and work with a vast array of state institutions and bodies filled with its opponents, corrupt figures,



and old regime loyalists. The Freedom and Justice Party tried to slowly purge the Egyptian state of Mubarak loyalists and old regime figures, but Morsi was forced to also work with them simultaneously. This made the foundations of his government even weaker.

The situation for the Muslim Brotherhood in 2012 was actually similar to the one Hamas faced in 2006 after its electoral victories in the Palestinian elections. Just as Hamas was forced by the US and its allies to accept Fatah ministers in key positions in the Palestinian government that it formed, the Muslim Brotherhood was forced to do the same unless it wanted the state to collapse and to be internationally isolated. The main difference between the two situations is that the Muslim Brotherhood seemed all too eager to comply with the US and work with segments of the old regime that would not challenge it. Perhaps this happened because the Muslim Brotherhood feared a military takeover. Regardless of what the reasons were, the Muslim Brotherhood knowingly shared the table of governance with counter-revolutionaries and criminals.

In part, Morsi's cabinet would offer a means of continuation to the old regime. Foreign Minister Mohammed Kamel Amr, Morsi's top diplomat, was a cabinet minister under Marshal Tantawi and served in key positions as Mubarak's ambassador to the United States and Saudi Arabia. Morsi's cabinet would only have a few members of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party whereas the ministerial portfolios for the key positions of the Interior Ministry, Defence Ministry, and the Suez Canal Authority would be given to Mubarak appointees from Egypt's military and police apparatus. Abdul Fatah Al-Sisi, Mubarak's head of Military Intelligence who has worked closely with the US and Israel, would be promoted as the head of the Egyptian military and as Egypt's new defence minister by Morsi. It would ironically, but not surprisingly, be Al-Sisi that would order Morsi's arrest and ouster after extensive consultations with his American counterpart, Charles Hagel, on July 3, 2013.

The Muslim Brotherhood and the Obama Administration: An Alliance of Convenience?

As a result of the Muslim Brotherhood's collaboration with the US and Israel, large components of the protests in Egypt against Morsi were resoundingly anti-American and anti-Israeli. This has to do with the role that the Obama Administration has played in Egypt and the regional alliance it has formed with the Muslim Brotherhood. In part, it also has to do with the fact that Morsi's opponents - even the ones that are collaborating with the US and Israel themselves - have capitalized on anti-American and anti-Israeli sentiments by portraying Morsi as a US and Israeli puppet. In reality, both the United States and Muslim Brotherhood have tried to manipulate one another for their own gains.

The Muslim Brotherhood has tried to use the Obama Administration to ascend to power whereas the Obama Administration has used the Muslim Brotherhood in America's war against Syria and to slowly nudge the Hamas government in Gaza away from the orbit of Iran and its allies in the Resistance Bloc. Both wittingly and unwittingly, the Muslim Brotherhood in broader terms has, as an organization, helped the US, Israel, and the Arab petro-sheikhdoms try to regionally align the chessboard in a sectarian project that seeks to get Sunnis and Shias to fight one another.

Because of the Freedom and Justice Party's power struggle against the Egyptian military and the remnants of the old regime, the Muslim Brotherhood turned to the United States for support and broke all its promises. Some can describe this as making a deal with the "Devil." At the level of foreign policy, the Muslim Brotherhood did not do the things it said it would. It did not end the Israeli siege on the people of Gaza, it did not cut ties with Israel, and it did not restore ties with the Iranians. Its cooperation with the US allowed Washington to play the different sides inside Egypt against one another and to hedge the Obama Administration's bets.

The Muslim Brotherhood miscalculated in its political calculus. Morsi himself proved not only to be untrustworthy, but also foolish. Washington has always favoured the Egyptian military over the Muslim Brotherhood. Like most Arab militaries, the Egyptian military has been used as an internal police force that has oppressed and suppressed its own people. Unlike the Muslim Brotherhood, the Egyptian military gives far greater guarantees about the protection of US interests in Egypt, Israel's security, and US sway over the strategically and commercially important Suez Canal. Furthermore, the Muslim Brotherhood had its own agenda and it seemed unlikely that it would continue to play a subordinate role to the United States and Washington was aware of this.



Revolution or Counter-Revolution?

Indeed a dangerous precedent has been set. The events in Egypt can be used in line with the same type of standard that allowed the Turkish military to subordinate democracy in Turkey for decades whenever it did not like a civilian government. The Egyptian military has taken the opportunity to suspend the constitution. It can now oversee the entire political process in Egypt, essentially with de facto veto powers. The military coup not only runs counter to the principles of democracy and is an undemocratic act, but it also marks a return to power by the old regime. Egypt's old regime, it should be pointed out, has fundamentally always been a military regime controlled by a circle of generals and admirals that operate in collaboration with a few civilian figures in key sectors.

Things have really gone full circle in Egypt. The judiciary in Egypt is being aligned with the military or old regime again. Mubarak's attorney-general, Abdel Meguid Mahmoud, who was removed from power in November 2012 has been reinstated. The Egyptian Parliament has been dissolved again by the leaders of the High Council of the Armed Forces. President Morsi and many members of the Muslim Brotherhood have been rounded up and arrested by the military and police as enemies of the peace.

Adli (Adly) Al-Mansour, the Mubarak appointed judge that President Morsi was legally forced to appoint as the head of the Egyptian Supreme Constitutional Court, has now been appointed interim president by the High Council of the Armed Forces. Al-Mansour is merely a civilian figure head for a military junta. It is also worth noting that the Egyptian Supreme Constitutional Court, like much of the Mubarak appointees in the Egyptian judiciary, has collaborated with the Egyptian military against the Muslim Brotherhood and tried to dissolve the Egyptian Parliament.

Mohammed Al-Baradei (El-Baradei / ElBaradei), a former Egyptian diplomat and the former director-general of the politically manipulated International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), has been offered the post of interim prime minister of Egypt by the military. He had returned to Egypt during the start of the so-called Arab Spring to run for office with the support of the International Crisis Group, which is an organization that is linked to US foreign policy interests and tied to the Carnegie Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and George Soros' Open Society Institute. Al-Baradei himself has been delighted every time that the Egyptian military has announced a coup; he supported a military takeover in 2011 and, to his benefit, he has supported it in 2013. Where he could not secure a position for himself through the ballot box, he has been offered a government position undemocratically through the military in 2013.

Many of the Muslim Brotherhood's supporters are emphasizing that an unfair media war was waged against them. The Qatari-owned Al Jazeera Mubasher Misr, Al Jazeera's Egyptian branch which has worked as a mouth piece for the Muslim Brotherhood, has been taken off the air by the Egyptian military. This, along with the ouster of Morsi, is a sign that Qatar's regional interests are being rolled back too. It seems Saudi Arabia, which quickly congratulated Adli Al-Mansour, is delighted, which explains why the Saudi-supported Nour Party in Egypt betray the Muslim Brotherhood. Other media linked to the Muslim Brotherhood or supportive of it have also been censored and attacked. Much of the privately owned media in Egypt was already anti-Muslim Brotherhood. Like Gran Mufti Ahmed Al-Tayeb, many of these media outlets were supportive of Mubarak's dictatorship when he was in power, but only changed their tune when he was out of power. The point, however, should not be lost that media censorship against pro-Muslim Brotherhood media outlets does not equate to democratic practice whatsoever.

The figures that have supported the military coup, in the name of democracy, are themselves no friends of democracy either. Many of these opportunists were Mubarak lackeys. For example, the so-called Egyptian opposition leader Amr Moussa was highly favoured by Hosni Mubarak and served as his foreign minister for many years. Not once did Moussa ever bother or dare to question Mubarak or his dictatorship, even when Moussa became the secretary-general of the morally bankrupt and useless Arab League.

The Egyptian Coma Will Backfire on the US Empire



Despite the media reports and commentaries, the Muslim Brotherhood was never fully in charge of Egypt or its government. It always had to share power with segments of the old regime or "Washington's and Tel Aviv's men." Key players in different branches of government and state bodies from the old regime stayed in their places. Even President Morsi's cabinet had members of the old regime. The discussions on Sharia law were predominately manipulated by the Muslim Brotherhood's opponents primarily for outside consumption by predominantly non-Muslim countries and to rally Egypt's Christians and socialist currents against Morsi. As for the economic problems that Egypt faced, they were the mixed result of the legacy of the old regime, the greed of Egypt's elites and military leaders, the global economic crisis, and the predatory capitalism that the United States and European Union have impaired Egypt with. Those that blamed Morsi for Egypt's economic problems and unemployment did so wrongly or opportunistically. His administration's incompetence did not help the situation, but they did not create them either. Morsi was manning a sinking ship that had been economically ravaged in 2011 by foreign states and local and foreign lenders, speculators, investors, and corporations.

There was an undeniable constant effort to sabotage the Muslim Brotherhood's rule, but this does not excuse the incompetence and corruption of the Muslim Brotherhood. Their attempts at gaining international respectability by going to events such as the Clinton Global Initiative hosted by the Clinton Foundation have only helped their decline. Their hesitation at restoring ties with Iran and their antagonism towards Syria, Hezbollah, and their Palestinian allies only managed to reduce their list of friends and supporters. All too willingly the Muslim Brotherhood seemed to let itself be used by the US, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar to pacify Hamas in an attempt to de-link the Palestinians in Gaza from the Resistance Bloc. It continued the siege against Gaza and continued to destroy the tunnels used to smuggle daily supplies by the Palestinians. Perhaps it was afraid or had very little say in the matter, but it allowed Egypt's military, security, and intelligence apparatuses to continue collaborating with Israel. Under the Muslim Brotherhood's watch Palestinians were disappearing in Egypt and reappearing in Israeli prisons. Morsi's government also abandoned the amnesty it had given to the Jamahiriya supporters from Libya that took refuge in Egypt.

The United States and Israel have always wanted Egypt to look inward in a pathetic state of paralysis. Washington has always tried to keep Egypt as a dependent state that would fall apart politically and economy without US assistance. It has allowed the situation in Egypt to degenerate as a means of neutralizing the Egyptians by keeping them divided and exhausted. The US, however, will be haunted by the coup against Morsi. Washington will dearly feel the repercussions of what has happened in Egypt. Morsi's fall sends a negative message to all of America's allies. Everyone in the Arab World, corrupt and just alike, is more aware than ever that an alliance with Washington or Tel Aviv will not protect them. Instead they are noticing that those that are aligned with the Iranians and the Russians are the ones that are standing.

An empire that cannot guarantee the security of its satraps is one that will eventually find many of its minions turning their backs on it or betraying it. Just as America's regime change project in Syria is failing, its time in the Middle East is drawing to an end. Those who gambled on Washington's success, like the Saudi royals, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Erdogan, will find themselves on the losing side of the Middle East's regional equation...