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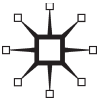

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Introduction: Egypt in Revolution

Bernard Rougier and
Stéphane Lacroix

Over the past two years, Egypt has been neglected by the "Sublime Planetary Historic News Event," to use Milan Kundera's expression.[1] Tahrir Square in Cairo, once celebrated as the emblematic site of an "Arab revolution" propagated through the Internet and social media, has been vacated by its globalized youth. We no longer understand what is going on in the biggest Arab country in the Muslim world—with a population of over 90 million—as if everyone had the vague feeling that they had been misled by the spinning wheels of image and commentary.

Yet, now is the time to figure out where Egypt is headed. What is at stake in the heart of the Arab-Muslim world always has an effect—immediate or deferred—on the Mediterranean's northern shore. The weight of history in collective memories, geographical proximity, the acceleration of migration, the speed at which images circulate, and the exploitation of religious symbols bring this relationship closer than it ever has been. This intimate situation, with all the risks and all the promises it carries, urges us to comprehend and anticipate the evolutions of a country that, through emulation, has played a considerable role in the upheavals shaking the Arab world.

For it is indeed Egypt's duplication of the precedent set by Tunisia that has lent a localized protest seismic proportions on the regional scale. The mass demonstrations on Tahrir Square inspired the throngs in Benghazi as well as in Syria's cities and Pearl Roundabout in Bahrain. Cairo was the epicenter of a revolutionary phenomenon that sent shockwaves through the entire Maghreb, the Mashriq, and the Arabian Peninsula.

It all seemed simple at first. Following a decades-long dictatorship, Mubarak's resignation in February 2011, under pressure from the streets that was as irrepressible as unexpected, ushered in a new era. Finally rid of the specter of Bin Laden, the Arabs fell in sync with the global pace of democracy. The lyrical enthusiasm of Western observers and actors in the uprising did not last, as we know. The two main strands of political Islam in the region—Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and Salafis—triumphed in the first free parliamentary elections in more than 60 years, even in modern Egypt's very existence. Dreams of emancipation with sights on the universal collided with the return of religious identity politics. Tahrir is not Egypt. The slums of Cairo and the Nile Valley countryside did not think like the whizzes of Facebook.

Once reduced to semi-secrecy, the MB organization was called upon to govern Egypt. It seemed assured of lasting grassroots support through its command of a well-organized and effective mass mobilization apparatus, conceived as a Muslim version of the democratic centralism characteristic of European communist parties in the 1950s. A bureaucrat from its governing body, Mohammed Morsi was moreover the first civilian to be elected president of the republic by universal suffrage in June 2012.

In the year of the Morsi presidency, the Brotherhood would face a wall of opposition from an Egyptian state whose structures as well as its staff were handed down from the Mubarak era. In its ambition to take control of state institutions, the MB made a series of errors, uniting against it a large segment of the political spectrum, including its former allies, the Salafis in the Nour party. Mobilization came to a head when millions of Egyptians occupied Cairo's streets on June 30, 2013. The following July 3, army commander-in-chief General al-Sisi, claiming to heed the people's will, removed the elected president from office.

A new regime dominated by the military came together under the charismatic direction of General al-Sisi. Liberals hailed him as "Egypt's de Gaulle," the only man capable of saving the country from disaster, while the majority of Egyptians, weary of a revolution that had not kept its social promises, applauded the perspective that law and order would be restored. Opposite them, the MB and its remaining allies mobilized to defend Morsi's "legitimacy." The August 2013 attack on Rabi'a al-Adawiya Square, where Morsi supporters had tried to establish an alternative to Tahrir Square, set off a nationwide crackdown against Islamists. The repressive machine soon extended its reach to young revolutionaries who had risen up to denounce the return of past authoritarian policies. Since then, Egypt's life has been paced by

demonstrations of support for the ousted president and jihadi attacks against those who represent the regime: the police and the army.

What sense can be made of the three years that have gone by? What keys for interpretation can serve to analyze the driving forces of Egyptian society since the fall of Mubarak? Will Egypt revert to long-lasting political authoritarianism, as if nothing had happened in 2011? Is political Islam bound to vanish from the country from whence it emerged in the early 1920s? What political effects do the ever more pressing social issues have as the country falls prey to economic ruin?

Contradictory Dynamics

To understand Egypt's political instability, it helps to remember that the "revolution" of 2011 was brought about by the junction of at least five different dynamics— revolutionary, liberal, Islamist, trade unionist, and military. Subsequently, these various interests have continually clashed or struck alliances depending on the urgency of their respective priorities and the shifting identity of the adversary to combat. Converging in an exceptional manner at a physical point of intersection—Tahrir Square—these dynamics brought about a "moment of enthusiasm" that gave rise to the rallies in January/February 2011 and brought about the fall of Mubarak. But following this, the difficulty of accommodating them explains the institutional stability that prevailed until summer 2013—at which time the military dynamic gained ascendency (permanently?) over all the others.

The revolutionary dynamics were at first driven through the social media by youth, determined to combat all manner of repressive structures. Resourceful and generous, it constructed the Tahrir Square imaginary with its revolutionary iconography, its "martyr" figures, its omnipresence in the international media almost masking the other components of the protest movement. Backed by a segment of the upper middle classes exasperated with the economic nepotism characteristic of the final years of the Mubarak era, the liberal wing identified with the respected figure of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mohammed al-Baradei. As of January 28, 2011, Islamists in the semi-secret MB movement stepped into the protest arena. MB activists fraternized with young revolutionaries, denouncing despotism, praying with the Copts, and refraining from pronouncing potentially divisive religious slogans. Tahrir Square, the terminal for all forms of protest, was also occupied by workers in state companies threatened with privatization. For the

independent labor unions, protesting at Tahrir Square was an extension of the strikes staged in 2008 in the Nile Delta industrial city of Mahalla al-Kubra. The social dimension was, moreover, key to the movement's success: to attract the impoverished masses in Cairo and the rest of Egypt, the January 2011 slogans combined the twofold of "freedom" and "bread," suggesting that government corruption and monopolization of resources by the presidential clan was responsible for all the country's ills. Last, military dynamics were at work to exploit the event and alter balances within the regime to its benefit. The military institution facilitated Mubarak's eviction, thus preventing the anticipated devolution of power to the president's son, Gamal Mubarak.

On this occasion the Egyptian military revived a Mameluke tradition of eliminating male heirs to ward off the risk of dynastic succession. They also took historical revenge on the centers of power—the presidency and the Ministry of the Interior—that had caused their relative eviction from the political decision-making process since the early 1970s, in exchange for their economic gentrification.[2] At the same time they maintained control over a military economy that was potentially threatened by the neoliberal reforms advocated by Gamal Mubarak.

The army used the protest to put an end to an omnipotent, hypertrophied police force—over one million state employees in the 2000s—and to reassert its political authority within a regime whose basic nature it did not challenge. Unlike the revolutionary and liberal components behind the movement, which favored "regime change," the military more humbly aspired to a "change in the regime," the collapse of the Mubarak system leaving both interpretations open. As for the Muslim Brotherhood, it doggedly pursued its power conquest, alternately counting on one force or another to achieve its ends. It is this inherent ambiguity that explains the incompleteness of the Egyptian revolution, started by a fairly small number of activists and then exploited politically by two basically conservative institutions—the army and the MB. Due to defection on the part of the MB, at the time involved in secret negotiations with the military, the revolutionary camp was too weak to manage to put together a presidential council in the immediate aftermath of Mubarak's demise, thus leaving the institutional initiative to the generals.

The Struggle for Constituent Power

The alliance of convenience between the army and the Islamists was formed on the pretext of restoring order. Meeting within the Supreme

Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), in a communiqué dated February 13, 2011, the generals announced the suspension of the Constitution and the organization of parliamentary and presidential elections within the space of six months. The military institution then began to seek popular legitimacy to establish its control over the state. The Islamists handed it to them by calling for a yes vote in the March 19, 2011 constitutional referendum amending certain articles of a Constitution that had theoretically been suspended and engaging the country in an election process. For the MB, there were many advantages in resorting to the army: it provided assurance that the ousted president's partisans would be excluded; it neutralized the revolutionary dynamics at a time when these threatened to affect its own ranks; it guaranteed an institutional calendar that placed parliamentary elections ahead of the drafting of a new Constitution. The Brotherhood now simply needed to win the parliamentary elections in order to control the constitutional process.

From then on, the constitution issue would take on increasing importance in the public debate. The Islamists thus managed to turn the March 19, 2011 referendum into a consultation of the people for or against sharia (Islamic law). This proved to be the beginning of a polarization of Egyptian public opinion on the role of Islam in state institutions. Islamist sheikhs accused revolutionaries and liberals of plotting the destruction of Islam by establishing a secular state. For the revolutionaries and the liberals, the Islamists wanted to implement a religious program that was totalitarian in nature, likely to jeopardize civil liberties. The liberalization of the broadcast media fostered the spread of a "rationality of fear," in which each group strove to lower the "vulnerability threshold" beyond which it could consider that its existential interests were at risk.[3] The mechanisms of radicalization were thus in place, gradually undermining the bases of the social consensus. Egypt was no longer a country "so integrated into itself" (Jacques Berque), but a society plagued by increasingly fierce verbal conflicts. This was the great paradox of the moment: the newly acquired climate of freedom made it permissible to transgress all ideological, religious, and denominational taboos, even as such wholesale transgression shattered the possibility of a constitutional consensus, each party believing that the revolution gave it the right to act—by institutional deadlock, street demonstrations, or recourse to judicial proceedings—to prevent the ideas of their adversaries from prevailing.

Less than two weeks after the referendum, the army published another "constitutional declaration" (March 30, 2011), article 60 of

which stipulated that the members of the two legislative chambers would "elect a provisional assembly composed of 100 members which will prepare a new draft constitution for the country to be completed within 6 months of the formation of this assembly." Convinced that this article guaranteed their control over the power to draft the constitution with a constituent committee directly chosen from among members of the legislative assemblies, the Islamists did not criticize this "declaration" that included no less than 63 articles that were as least as far-reaching as the nine constitutional amendments passed in the March 19 referendum.

In a climate of everyday uncertainty, Egyptian society then looked like a "constituent society." Islamist organizations emerging from semi-secrecy, Salafi sheikhs, political parties, soccer clubs, tribal groups in Upper Egypt, revolutionary youth, labor unions, editorialists or mere citizen-bloggers on Facebook all defined their own conceptions of life in society side by side. This juxtaposition of competing projects echoes Nazih Ayubi's definition of the conditions for Arab authoritarianism. According to him, the secret of the longevity of Arab regimes resides in deliberately sustaining the contradictions within society—as long as they pose no direct threat to the figure of the leader—to prevent the emergence of a civil society heralding a common policy framework. In this regard, the foundations of these regimes, strong in terms of their repressive apparatus but weak in terms of symbolic authority, are fundamentally unstable despite the longevity in power of their ruling figures.[4]

Institutional Warfare between the State and the Muslim Brotherhood

Published in November 2011, the "al-Silmi document," named for the vice prime minister at the time, outlined the formation of a constituent body to be selected by the SCAF, over half the members of which would come from outside the parliament. Deeming that it represented a departure from the constitutional declaration of March 30, 2011, the MB mobilized against the al-Silmi document, to avoid losing control over constituent power from the start. The revolutionary youth exploited this opportunity to dispute the army's prerogatives within the state and more fundamentally revive the revolutionary dynamics. The violence of the clashes between young revolutionaries and the police in Mohammed Mahmoud Street (November 19–25, 2011), not a

hundred feet away from the Ministry of the Interior, and then in front of the Cabinet Office building (December 16) illustrated the revolutionaries' inability to influence an institutional calendar that seemed to remain the preserve of older or better-established state forces. The al-Silmi document was withdrawn, but the power issues it brought into focus remained.

With the overwhelming Islamist victory in the fall 2011 parliamentary elections, instability was written into the heart of the state's institutions. The legislative branch, now dominated by the MB and the Salafis, began to clash with the most powerful sectors of the Egyptian state—the judges and the military. As for the instigators of the 2011 revolution, they wound up excluded from the political equation or at best were relegated to being a backup force for one camp or the other.

Elected by the two houses in late March 2012, the first constituent assembly (*jam'iyya ta'sisiyya*), largely dominated by the Islamists, was dissolved by a Cairo Administrative Court ruling on April 10 on the disputable grounds that the March 30, 2011 constitutional declaration "did not allow members of the two houses to personally participate in the constituent committee." The following June 12, a new constituent body made up of 100 delegates from among 1,308 candidates was selected by the two houses in a joint meeting. Among these 100 individuals were 25 elected officials—among them 21 Islamists—and 75 unelected members (a significant portion of which showed Islamist sympathies). Since it was no longer possible, according to the Administrative Court ruling, to rely on parliamentary representativeness, the Islamists thus opted for ideological representativeness.

Against the backdrop of a presidential election, the judiciary thus resorted to institutional guerrilla warfare in the spring of 2012 to limit the consequences of a possible election of a president from the ranks of the MB. By invalidating the electoral system that had produced the People's Assembly (ruling of June 14) on the grounds that it did not abide by the principle of equality between party-backed and independent candidates, the Supreme Constitutional Court denied the legal existence of the first freely elected parliament since the revolution. Three days later, the SCAF generals published a "supplementary constitutional declaration" taking over the legislative branch, reasserting its control over matters of national security and reserving for itself the capacity to form a constituent body "representing all segments of Egyptian society."[5]

It was thus a Mohammed Morsi with reduced powers who was elected president of the republic on June 24, 2012. His election raised

some hopes, first of all of getting beyond the polarization between Islamists and liberals. Having won only 24 percent of the vote in the first round—which roughly corresponds to the MB's true sociological base—Morsi had made gestures toward his ideological adversaries in the name of a united front of "revolutionaries." The aim was to head off a return of the former regime, embodied almost to the point of caricature by his opponent, Ahmed Shafiq, Mubarak's last prime minister. In exchange for the open support of political figures of non-Islamist persuasion, Morsi vowed to govern in a consensual and collegial manner.

This promise was soon forgotten. Hardly had he taken office that he appointed a cabinet made up of Brotherhood members and technocrats, many of them fellow travelers of the organization. Overtures were limited to a few civil society personalities and a representative of the Salafi Nour party, appointed to minor posts. As of late summer 2012, liberals and revolutionaries began criticizing the Brotherhood's "hegemonic" tendencies.[6] The MB paid little heed to this criticism. For them, the true combat lay in fighting resistance within the state apparatus.

Wherever it could, the Brotherhood sought to co-opt those who were prepared to change sides and work with them. During the summer of 2012, it thus replaced the heads of the security apparatus, the state media, and the army by other members of these institutions. The Brotherhood's wager was simple: since those promoted owed their promotion to Morsi, they would be loyal to him. Thus, on August 12, General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, little known to the public, was chosen to replace Field Marshal Tantawi at the head of the army and assume the post of defense minister. In exchange, al-Sisi had to agree to repeal the June 17 supplementary constitutional declaration. For the first time since 1952, at least on the face of it, a civilian exercised full executive authority in Egypt.

The Brotherhood's strategy nevertheless reached its limits with the Supreme Constitutional Court, whose members, appointed for life, were one of the main obstacles to Morsi's power. In June, it had dissolved the People's Assembly, and in a ruling scheduled for issue in early December 2012, it was preparing to dissolve the Constituent Assembly. Watching the judges erase their electoral achievements one by one, the Muslim Brotherhood decided to go on the offensive. On November 21, 2012, Morsi issued a constitutional declaration granting executive decisions legal immunity, replacing the public prosecutor and safeguarding the Constituent Assembly.

The Twilight of a Presidency

This was the beginning of the end for the MB. The judiciary denounced an iniquitous and illegal decision and was soon backed by thousands of protestors, a motley combination of former regime nostalgics, liberals, and revolutionaries, come together to protest against Morsi's "authoritarian drift." The Brotherhood, which had not made any gestures toward their second-ballot revolutionary and liberal allies following the election of its candidate, had to confront the entire non-Islamist camp. The police did not use excessive zeal to protect the presidential palace from the attacks of angry protestors, and the army displayed its neutrality by calling for a national dialogue to resolve the crisis. Morsi finally backed down regarding the first part of his declaration, but refused to compromise on the Constituent Assembly, simply stating that the constitutional document would be put to a referendum. The Constituent completed its work two weeks later, in the absence of nearly the entire non-Islamist camp, which decided to boycott the process. The MB then struck an alliance with the Salafi Nour party to push through the most Islamized constitution in the history of Egypt, with articles that opened up the possibility of parliamentary activity being overseen by a body of ulama (Muslim law scholars) from al-Azhar University.[7]

The non-Islamist opposition, henceforth represented by the National Salvation Front, embodied by the Mohammed al-Baradei—Hamdin Sabbahi—Amr Moussa triumvirate, boycotted the constitutional referendum held on December 15 and 22, 2012. Islamist backing was nevertheless enough to pass the document with 64 percent of the vote but with a turnout of 33 percent of registered voters. The National Salvation Front did not recognize the new constitution and declared that Morsi had lost all legitimacy. Without agreement on the fundamental principles of its social contract, Egypt sank even deeper into a political crisis. The Brotherhood became further isolated after it was deserted by the Salafi Nour party, the Brotherhood's organic competitor in preaching, which feared that its control of the mosques was threatened by an inevitable "Brotherhoodization" of the Ministry of Religious Endowment.

On April 30, 2013, a handful of young sympathizers of Hamdin Sabbahi's neo-Nasserist "Popular Current" kicked off their Tamarod ("rebellion") campaign, which aimed to collect 15 million signatures to force Morsi to hold early elections. Tamarod then called for the organization of major protests on June 30 to put pressure on the president. In the ensuing weeks, Tamarod won the support of the whole range

of Brotherhood opponents, and Egyptian private television stations gave the campaign extensive coverage. According to various witnesses, contact was soon made between Tamarod and state institutions hostile to the Brotherhood—particularly the army and the police, which ensured the campaign organizers of their backing. Without officially supporting Tamarod, the Nour Salafis made it plain that if the number of demonstrators were large enough, they would not hesitate in turn to demand Morsi's resignation. What at first was one more initiative among others started by a group of youths unknown to the revolutionary ranks became the aggregator of all the anti-Brotherhood forces and groups. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates joined in, privately declaring their wish to see Morsi removed.

Buoyed by widespread discontent provoked by the deterioration of the economic and security situation, the Tamarod movement met with unhoped-for popular success. On June 30, millions of Egyptians marched against Morsi. The army had merely to give a repeat performance of early February 2011, announcing that it was on the side of the "people" and gave Morsi 48 hours to answer the protestors' demands, which he refused to do. On July 3, in a televised statement, General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi announced Morsi's dismissal and the adoption of a road map including the appointment of a new constituent assembly and early parliamentary and presidential elections.

Where Is Egypt Headed?

Despite these promises of democratization, the evolutions under way since July 3, 2013 indicate a return to the fundamentals of the former regime, albeit under a different configuration. The army, which Morsi had wanted to send back to its barracks on August 12, 2012, has once again become a central political player. Along with it, Egypt's state institutions, threatened under Morsi, have regained ascendency over society. This was reflected in the makeup of the constituent body charged with drafting the Constitution adopted by referendum in January 2014: only 15 percent of its members were from political parties (most of them non-Islamist), while the remaining 85 percent belonged to official trade unions and state apparatuses. While the text of the present Constitution may appear, in certain respects, more respectful of basic freedoms than the previous versions, it above all caters to the corporate interests of the state bureaucracies, more than ever shielded from civil society's interference in their dealings. Put to referendum in

a climate of strong media pressure in favor of the text, the Constitution was massively approved by 98.1 percent of the voters with a turnout of 38.6 percent of registered voters, in a vote that was meant to be an additional step in legitimizing the offensive against the MB.

The post-Morsi period has also been characterized by a return of security force involvement in politics to an even greater degree than in the Mubarak era. The crackdown has primarily targeted the Muslim Brotherhood, officially declared a "terrorist organization" in December 2013. In the spring of 2014, the death toll had exceeded 2,000 and some 20,000 Islamists were in jail. Since September 2013, non-Islamist activists critical of the new regime have also been targeted. Alaa Abdel Fattah, Ahmed Maher, and a handful of other prominent figures of the revolutionary moment in 2011 have been thrown in prison. As for the state and private media, they are subject today to sometimes more drastic censorship than under Mubarak. The security apparatus, humiliated during the "eighteen-day epic" that brought about Mubarak's downfall, takes advantage of the independence it now enjoys to exact revenge.

In this new configuration, networks once loyal to the former regime that had remained dormant without ever losing their influence since 2011 have resurfaced and are among the main supporters of those currently in power. The players now dominating the political playing field are thus mainly heirs to the Mubarak state. A majority from the liberal camp nevertheless remains part of this team (although cut off from a portion of its troops since Mohammed al-Baradei's resounding resignation from the vice presidency in mid-August 2013). It also includes a segment of the revolutionary camp, mostly Nasserists, taken in by the new regime's nationalist rhetoric. Just as the anti-Mubarak "moment of enthusiasm" in January–February 2011 had brought together antagonistic forces—revolutionaries, liberals, MB—the anti-Brotherhood "moment of enthusiasm" since July 2013 has united forces that are no less so. This reinforces the importance of General al-Sisi's charismatic role, in that he has succeeded—at least temporarily—in maintaining cohesion.

The general aims to symbolize the restoration of what French constitutionalist Georges Burdeau called "state power" in his constitutional theory.[8] This notion is the exact antonym of what Morsi had come to represent for his critics—the power of a political faction, party interests placed above the national interest, loyalty standing in for competence, and so on. It offers a means of restoring the seriously tarnished image of the presidency as an institution after one president (Mubarak) was overthrown (*makhlu'*) and another (Morsi) was put into solitary

confinement (*ma'zul*). It also made al-Sisi a potential president even before the election in May 2014, which explains the lack of any real election campaign prior to the single-ballot presidential poll.

Of course, state power is measured in terms of issues that jeopardize the country's national security and its sovereignty: Hamas in Gaza, jihadi groups in the Sinai, the relationship with Qatar. On all these issues, the transnational dimension of the MB put the movement's leadership in a position of structural betrayal of the patriotic ideal. How could Morsi—his critics would say—defend Egypt's national interest in Gaza when Hamas is a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood organization? How could he reassert state authority over the Sinai in the face of jihadi groups that identify with the intellectual figure of Sayyid Qutb, whose ideas inspire the Brotherhood leadership as well? How could he declare jihad in Syria against the Bashar al-Assad regime and engage the country in a regional crisis without first consulting with army and security agency officials?

After July 3, 2013, the intellectual and political deconstruction of the MB thus involved excluding the organization from a national identity of which the army means to be the main, if not exclusive, guardian. The Islamist president's inability to prevent Ethiopia from building a dam upstream on the River Nile added a new national security issue to this long list of grievances, one that potentially affects the country's economic survival in the event of a reduction in the downstream water flow for irrigation. More prosaically, hostility toward the Muslim Brotherhood's "sectarianism" also reflected the fear of seeing the dwindling—and thus increasingly coveted—public funds flow toward the MB organization alone to the detriment of their previous beneficiaries in Egyptian society. Defending the universality of the state thus amounts to defending threatened access to the resources of a state, which, with or without the MB, already can no longer ensure its redistributive function.

Up until his election, al-Sisi's strength lay above all in his silences. Beyond his conventional nationalist discourse, the man remained discreet about his intentions, leaving the various groups—liberals, the military, business circles in Mubarak's sphere—at liberty to view him as a champion of their interests. Those who praised him to the skies in the wake of Morsi's ouster represent political visions and interests that are hardly compatible. This will automatically weaken the regime that the new president is striving to build. The only viable option in the medium term for al-Sisi would be to rely on the popular support he enjoys to undertake deep reform of both the state and the nature of its

relations with the economic sphere. But in the short run, the political alliance that came together around his person is in danger of crumbling fairly quickly.

The challenge will be all the greater as opposition remains fierce. Over a year since Morsi's downfall, his supporters continue to demonstrate almost daily, and this despite the ferocity of repression. A broader protest movement even seems to have gelled around a new generation of activists. University campuses have become one of the bastions of this movement to the point of prompting the authorities to discuss closing universities. At the same time, a portion of the Islamist base is radicalizing. Whereas the spate of attacks and targeted killings perpetrated since summer 2013 was initially claimed by a jihadi movement in the Sinai, Ansar Beit al-Maqdis (ABM—"Supporters of Jerusalem"), once affiliated with al-Qaeda and now gone over to the "Islamic State," new groups advocating the use of violence as a modus operandi keep cropping up. Some of these, such as Molotov or Walla' ("set it on fire"), were started by young Brotherhood activists at odds with the strategy of the MB—or some may say, lack thereof—which continues to insist on the peaceful nature of its protest. Other groups, such as Ajnad Misr ("Soldiers of Egypt"), responsible for bloody attacks at Cairo University in 2014, are more difficult to situate.

The sphere of religious protest has been in total upheaval since the failure of Morsi's presidency. It is easy for those who had insisted, in the name of a rigid conception of religious law, that election procedures were illegitimate to claim in retrospect, *mezza voce* or on the Internet, that they were right. There can be no doubt that the lesson is being bitterly pondered in the industrial suburbs of Cairo, in the villages of Upper Egypt, or in the mountains of Sinai, as the Islamic State organization continues to sow violence in Iraq and Syria. New prophets will supply the ranks of the Pharaoh's enemies, to borrow terms from Gilles Kepel's pioneering work on the birth and evolution of Islamism in Egypt.[9]

While it would seem that the majority of the population continues to back the new authorities today in the hopes of a return to law and order and a semblance of economic prosperity, public opinion could easily turn against al-Sisi in the event of failure. The events of the 2011–2013 period have instilled in Egyptians a stubborn belief that street protests can overthrow a president. Therein lies the whole ambiguity of the movement of June 30, 2013: by asserting continuity with the movement started in January 2011, it has perpetuated a revolutionary process that could eventually turn against those currently in power.

This volume brings together contributions from some of the finest specialists of contemporary Egypt in Europe and the United States as well as in the Arab world, both seasoned researchers and young enthusiastic and promising talents. Over half the authors in this edited volume are affiliated with the *Centre d'Etudes et de Documentation Economique, Juridique et Social* (CEDEJ) in Cairo, as director, researcher, or associate researcher. Others, through their participation, have demonstrated the desire to pay tribute to a research center whose endeavors they have contributed to in the past. Thanks to the impetus of a new generation of Egyptian and French researchers, the CEDEJ today is seeking to understand from within the effects the shockwave of an Arab revolution still in its infancy has had on Egyptian society. This introduction would not be complete without our warmest thanks to Cynthia Schoch who has brilliantly translated most of the contributions of this volume and whose availability and fantastic skills have allowed us to bring this edited volume to an English-speaking readership. Thanks also to Miriam Périer from CERI Sciences Po, for her outstanding editing work on the manuscript.

Notes

1. Milan Kundera, *Slowness* (trans. Linda Asher) (New York: Harper Collins, 1996).
2. See Hazem Kandil, *Soldiers, Spies and Statesmen: Egypt's Road to Revolt* (New York: Verso, 2012).
3. In a context of high institutional uncertainty, an issue is said to be existential when values and beliefs held to be fundamental for a given group are threatened with destruction. Perception of this type of issue increases the probability of a common and concerted action with respect to the mortal consequences of a lack of reaction on behalf of the group in question. On the rationality of fear, see Rui de Figueiredo and Barry Weingast, "Rationality of Fear: Political Opportunism and Ethnic Conflict," in J. Snyder and B. Walter, *Military Intervention in Civil Wars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999). Jean Leca also discussed the relationship between vulnerability and violence in "La rationalité de la violence politique," in *Le phénomène de la violence politique: perspectives comparatistes et paradigme égyptien* (Cairo: Dossiers du CEDEJ, 1994).
4. Nazih Ayubi, *Overstating the Arab State* (London: IB Tauris, 1993). Regarding the constant quest for legitimacy that characterizes Arab politics, see Michael C. Hudson's classic, *Arab Politics. The Search for Legitimacy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977).
5. Article 60 of the June 17, 2012 Amended Constitutional Declaration stipulated, "If the constituent assembly encounters an obstacle that would prevent it from completing its work, the SCAF within a week will form a new constituent assembly to author a new constitution within three months from the day of the new assembly's formation."
6. On October 12, 2012, Tahrir Square was the theater of violent clashes between young revolutionaries and Islamist activists. Organized on the initiative of young activists, the slogan for the demonstration was "let's see results" (*kashf al-hisab*) and intended to denounce "the continuation of the gasoline and bread shortage, the Islamist hegemony over the constituent assembly, immunity for the killers of revolutionaries."

7. Article 4 in its last paragraph stipulated, "The Council of Al-Azhar's Senior Scholars (*hay'at kibar al-'ulama' bi-l-azhar*) shall be consulted on issues related to Islamic Sharia. The State shall ensure all the sufficient financial allocations for the achievement of its objectives." Article 219 gave a positive definition of "sharia": "The principles of the Islamic Sharia include its general sources, the principles and maxims of its theoretical and practical jurisprudence, and its reliable and authoritative sources in Sunni legal and theological reasoning." Thus defined, the sharia necessarily referred to a body of specialized clerics able to examine the body of *fiqh* to give it normative status. It would thus no longer correspond to a more or less clear ideal horizon, the scope of which was left to the legislator's discretion. See http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/egyptsource/unofficial-english-translation-of-egypts-draft-constitution (accessed August 29, 2014).
8. In their rhetoric, al-Sisi and his partisans use and abuse an Arab notion that is similar in meaning, "state prestige" (*haybat al-dawla*). See, for instance, the statements made by Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Mubarak's former minister of foreign affairs, in April 2014: "Al-Sisi is the man we need to restore the state's prestige." See http://www.alnaharegypt.com/t~196070 (accessed August 29, 2014).
9. Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and the Pharaoh*, 2nd edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

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