



The Egyptian Presidential Elections: The Limits of Reform

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The recent battle for presidential elections in Egypt reflects the importance of public demand for political reform. The amendment of article 76 of the Egyptian Constitution allowed for the first time several candidates to run for the election, each on his political platform, thus opening the door to a genuine electoral process. Many different forces were present in the political arena. This opened the prospect - albeit a theoretical and remote one for now - for the establishment of a new republic in Egypt based on democracy and respect for human rights. Yet this change revealed the realities of the Egyptian political scene. The old inert parties were opposed to new, more dynamic ones, whose composition and action is driven by the issue of reform. It also revealed that the amendment of article 76 is only one step on the road to more far reaching changes needed in Egypt.

Introduction

From a theoretical perspective, one can consider the reform of Article 76 of the Egyptian Constitution as the beginning of the establishment of a Second Republic, since it has permitted, for the first time since the July Revolution of 1952, the participation of more than one candidate for the presidential elections of the Republic. This constitutes a break from what amounted to a referendum on the incumbent president – “yes” or “no” – which had been the norm for more than half of a century.

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The last amendment has given political parties the legal right to advance candidates to run in the presidential elections, and more than that, it has afforded theoretical horizons for the construction of a new republic founded on the principles of democracy and the respect of human rights. In practical terms, however, reforms still have a long way to go.

Amendment of Article 76: From Referendum to Binding Election

The Egyptian Government permitted the current leaders of 19 political parties to put forward candidates for the upcoming presidential elections irrespective of obstructive proportional conditions previously in place, which required that candidates obtain, from outside of their parties, the support of 250

members from the Parliament, the Consultative Council, and municipal councils. Among these, 65 members had to be from the Parliament, 25 from the Consultative Council, and ten members from every municipal council in fourteen governorates (administrative provinces) at the very least. Rounding out the required number of supporters were twenty other members of the three Councils.

The number of 250 represents a threshold of five percent of the total number of members of all elected councils, the sum of whose members is 3,850. This is twice the number required by the French electoral system, for example, which specifies that a candidate for the presidency must obtain the support of 500 members of all the members of elected councils, the sum of which is 45,000 members, i.e., a proportional percentage of approximately one percent.

These obstacles were accompanied by other bureaucratic criteria based on the logic of governmental rankings and seniority in employment. Therefore, according to these conditions, no political party had the right to advance a candidate for the presidential elections until five years had passed since its establishment. It is difficult to find similar electoral systems anywhere else in the world.

Reform of the Reform: Old and New

It is clear that the most prominent indices of political movement that preceded or resulted from the presidential elections constituted a division of Egypt's political space into two forces: The old traditional powers represented by the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP, al-Hizb al-Watani ad-Dimoqrati) intermingled with the state apparatus, and the three opposition parties, which suffered from internal democratic deficiencies and an immobile political discourse, especially evident among the generation of the 1940s.

Among the new forces that appeared on the political scene before the presidential elections,

and which were represented in the Hizb al-Ghad (Tomorrow Party) and the projects of al-Wassat (the Center) and al-Karaama (Dignity) parties, were those who represent the generation of the renewed centre in the Islamic and Nasserist movements, alongside the new reform movements, chief among which was Kefaaya ("Enough!"), in addition to the Muslim Brotherhood, which is officially banned. Despite the difficulties inherent in the relationship between the Kefaaya movement and the Muslim Brotherhood, the prevailing relationship between these new party forces and the Islamists was considered better than the former relationship with the three older parties.

The Old Forces

1- The Ruling State Party: al-Hizb al-Watani ad-Dimoqrati. (the National Democratic Party NDP)

Despite the monopoly that the NDP has long enjoyed in the Egyptian political system, it is distinguished by its complete dependence on the state apparatus such that it is difficult to distinguish between this party and the state's security and administrative apparatuses.

The ruling party (NDP) was established in July of 1978, building upon the desire of the late President Anwar Sadat, who chose a temporary committee of 200 members so as to found the Party, automatically transferring to it 275 members from the People's Assembly, nearly all of them from the Egyptian Arab Socialist Party, which was the ruling party at that time.

Since that period, the NDP became a model of a party grown through the state and its apparatuses, a situation that has remained constant ever since. No conceptions of political participation or struggle were known outside of the embrace of the state's rule.

The practices of the state party, in its first incarnation as Misr al-`Arabi al-Ishtiraaki (Socialist Arab Egypt party), and then as the

NDP, demonstrated the dangers and drawbacks of founding a party by means of its own rule. Contention over membership in the party was a mark of its dominance and excesses, since the party was the president. The intermingling of the bureaucratic apparatuses of the state and the ruling party (the NDP), were such that it often appeared that the two were one and the same thing.

Finally, the criteria of mobilization governing the party were usually not related to any political expertise, but rather, were mostly doled out to those in high academic or bureaucratic positions. This, not expertise, constituted the decisive role in forming the government and its leadership. The cadres of the party were virtually absent from playing a role in any of the most important leadership or ministerial positions.

Perhaps this is what made the NDP resemble, over the last years the apparatus of the state, which includes the formation of various bureaucratic groups as well as an alarming number of members desiring to offer services to themselves, their relatives, and members of their constituencies in the absence of a general legal system that can structure and empower social, professional, or political dynamics in Egyptian society.

This situation has made flaccidity and inefficiency the primary characteristics of the NDP, in addition to the presence of clear contradictions between the party's members. First and foremost is the lack of political vision among the majority, including disagreements between the technocrats and the functionaries, and differences between the religious and the secular, between those espousing relatively progressive tendencies and reactionaries having strong right-wing opinions, between those who are Arab nationalists and those who believe that Egypt should have only formal relationships with the Arab world; and finally, between those who are inclined towards Abdel

Nasser and those who preferred President Sadat.

Clearly, the absence of a defined frame of ideological thought within the NDP indicates its hesitancy to deal with key issues, which in turn fosters the spread of internal chaos and the absence of political abilities or skills among many of the party's members, as well as the absence of team work and the rational framework in which to effectively accomplish goals.

The reform of the NDP depends primarily upon separating the state apparatus from the party, and secondly upon serious consideration of the idea of dividing the ruling party into two distinct parties, the first expressing centre-right currents, and the second centre-left currents. This separation, should it take place, would clarify the process of democratic development in the country, and would lead to an amelioration of the chaotic mixture within the party by building two big intellectual organizations based upon the formation of firm political visions and commitments. Such a course of action would constitute a winnowing mechanism to separate new members between the two envisioned parties, without affecting the other remaining political groupings or parties.

2- The Egyptian Opposition between the Three Main Parties and the Parties of Administrative Decision.

Indubitably, one of the most prominent deficiencies of amended article 76 is its failure to include additional reforms concerning the way parties are founded. Currently, new parties are authorized based on biased administrative and bureaucratic decisions. Parties should instead be founded on the basis of initiatives, innovations, and talents; otherwise, political life remains artificial and immobile. Perhaps the proliferation of parties will be limited, as they have now reached 21 parties that have been legally certified by

rulings of the president or by judicial decree, and only once by means of an administrative decision by the Council of Parties in the case of al-Wifaaq al-Watani (the National Consensus).

With the exception of the three main opposition parties, i.e. al-Wafd, the at-Taggamu` at-Taquadumi (Progressive Gathering) and the Nasserite, the remaining parties do not represent the political currents on the Egyptian street, nor do they include social or union movements, but rather, have emerged from administrative decisions that lend them legal legitimacy, thus they are not genuine parties grounded in everyday social realities.

The birth of a number of these elite parties has substituted for the birth of popular parties, but the overwhelming majority lack any popular, political, or social experience in the Egyptian street. A new stratum of politicians has appeared: those who are more interested in convincing the court, rather than the street, of the seriousness of their ideas and programmes, and who obtain certification without the intention to struggle and compete politically among the citizenry. Their activities frequently take the place of trade union, political, and social forces and currents. Thus, they replace parties that have a genuine social and political base, but which do not have the wherewithal or savvy to enter the bureaucratic fray in the corridors of the Egyptian state in order to obtain a legal permit to form a party.

Perhaps the experience of the Green Party in Egypt illustrates the “administrative co-optation” that befell politicking concerning environmental issues. Those who plunged into the bureaucratic “run-around” obtained the legal permit, rather than the hundreds of NGO activists who had worked in earnest on environmental issues, but who did not know how to deal with the complicated bureaucratic machinations required to obtain certification to form an effective party.

As for the three main opposition parties, they are far from stagnant. Among their leadership ranks are leaders from the pre-revolutionary generation who have now passed 70 years of age. Two of these three parties, al-Wafd party and the Nasserite, have witnessed generational cleavages, resulting in the founding of new parties, the Karama (Dignity Party), which split off from the Nasserite, and al-Ghad (the Tomorrow Party), which split off from al Wafd, and al-Wassat (the Center) which as is well known, represents a smaller but similar cleavage from the Muslim Brotherhood.

It was amazing that the number of Nasserite parliamentarians who won in the 2006 parliamentary elections reached seven, yet none among them belonged to the Nasserite Party, although they formed the biggest opposition bloc after the Muslim Brotherhood. The Wafd won six seats and at-Taggamu` obtained only two.

The state constructed the legal basis of its strategy before article 76 was amended, as evidenced by the state’s undertaking a dialogue with the official opposition parties and by acknowledging that Hizb al-Umma (the Nation Party), al-Hizb ad-Dustouri al-Hurr (the Free Constitutional Party), and Hizb at-Tadaamon (The Solidarity Party) would have the right to hold talks with the NDP and the government since they had met the bureaucratic conditions and had received the “governmental Seal of Approval,” and were thus acceptable partners for the Ruling NDP, even if they had received only one vote in a thousand in any election.

At the same time, however, the Ruling Party refused to undertake any dialogue with other popular forces and currents – not even in relative terms – such as the Nasserites in the Karama (Dignity) movement or the Islamists in the neutralized Wafd party, nor the group of banned Muslim Brothers, because none of these parties had a legal permit, even though this permit is supposed to be automatically obtainable as the result of the party’s presence

on the political “street,” rather than through politicking among governmental corridors and the bureaucratic apparatus.

Dynamics of the New Forces

The amending of Article 76 of the constitution, which permitted more than one candidate to run for the presidency of the republic, has given rise to a new political reality, despite all the obstacles and limitations that were imposed upon Article 76, as well as the crisis of the political parties which confronted one another for the presidency.

The amending of Article 76 has created, for the first time since the Revolution of July 1952, a new political and legal reality allowing for competition between candidates for high office while also opening the door to free and open debate -- and not just concerning the platforms of each candidate. The amendment also sparked public discussions about transforming the president’s position from one that is above public debate and censure to that of a candidate who is amenable to criticism as part of the rules of the political game, irrespective of the actual strength of the forces who challenged the president in the 2005 elections.

The amending of Article 76 opened a space for “codified criticism” of the president of the republic and his political platform and priorities. The inability to criticize publicly had been the political reality in Egypt for decades; thus rendering the political system limited and overly cautious. The climate that accompanied the recent debate on political reform has emboldened opponents to advance critiques of many stagnant political and administrative issues in the country.

The debates over reform have suddenly stirred the still waters of Egyptian society, decisively pushing new forces into Egypt’s political arena, the most prominent among them being the Kefaaya (“Enough!”) movement. Kefaaya adopted an unabashedly oppositional stance towards the rule of President Mubarak by raising the famous slogan of “No to extension! No to inheritance!”

Some viewed this slogan negatively as it refused the status quo without offering a clear alternative. Others doubted the ability of the movement to endure since it included so many different political groupings and tendencies, as well as diverse professionals, prominent intellectuals, and some writers and artists, among whom one did not find any ideological link other than rejection of the status quo.

At the next stage of presidential elections, this political movement may well transform itself into a political party, founded for the first time on a popular basis --in relative terms—with an expertise in political struggle, thus setting it apart from the purely bureaucratic expertise of most of the current parties. This might open new space for a fresh approach to effective political action, but it will require that the Kefaaya movement formulates a coherent political discourse that will be closer, in the final analysis, to a democratic socialist discourse, and one that is not dependent upon refusal of the status quo alone, but rather, one that addresses the future in a way conducive to the renewal of Egypt’s political life.

What links and holds the members of Kefaaya together is the goal and ideal of political reform, despite the aforementioned political differences among them. Furthermore, that which unites the new opposition parties -- officially certified as well as uncertified, such as the Tomorrow Party, the Dignity Movement, and the Wafd Party -- is also the issue of political reform. Even the Muslim Brotherhood has raised the banner of “Reform is the Solution,” throughout the campaign for the

presidential as well as the parliamentary elections, before reverting back to its traditional slogan of "Islam is the solution!" Reformist discourses even extend to the inside of the NDP, augmenting discussions about the prerequisites of "implementing of the process of reform."

The role of politicians in placing reform at the top of the Egyptian political agenda is also evident in sectors of society unaffiliated with any political parties, among whom are judges, students, and university professors. The issue of democratic political reform has become the first reference and the highest value in the discourse of all political and non-political movements and groupings. The judiciary began pressing for the amendment of the law of judicial authority, and requested reforms to support their independence from the executive branch of power. They even warned that they might refuse to supervise the presidential elections if the Executive Authority ignores their demands.

The "climate of reform" influenced university professors, who convened a crowded conference on May 20, 2005 calling for the boycott of the referendum on the amendments to Article 76, and announcing their opposition to any imposed obstructions upon it, just as they advanced a set of professional demands for the independence of universities, and refusal of the intervention of the security forces in the universities' affairs. As a result of this conference, professors formed a committee that advocated the creation of mechanisms for university elections. Another committee defended academic freedoms, and a third addressed the need to raise the standards of academic research.

Clearly, we are witnessing a new reform dynamic, one that has moved from the new political groupings to the heart of Egyptian society. The coming challenge will remain changing the means through which the state has dealt with social and political realities

facilitating shift from a "yes" or "no" referendum on the incumbent president of the Republic, to a new reality of competition for the post of the president according to the rules of legitimate political action, as defined by the regime itself.

Presidential Elections: Who Won other than the President?

The completion of the first plural presidential elections in Egypt's political history may well herald the beginning of a new era founded on legitimizing the president of the republic through free and direct elections.

Despite all the mistakes and excesses that accompanied the 2005 electoral process, as well as the constraints imposed upon the amendments to Article 76 that emptied them of much of their significance, the balloting nonetheless represented a step towards permitting, for the first time, a semblance of competition in the Egyptian presidential elections.

The first plural Egyptian presidential elections indicate that:

- 1- The participation rates in these elections, which comprised only 23 percent of all potential voters, reflects the crisis of political participation in Egypt. But they also signal a degree of confidence on the part of the regime given its announcement of the actual results, thanks to the judiciary's supervision of the election process. The real results throw a dark shadow over the integrity of the four referenda that were administered during the last two sessions, in which the percentage of "participation" was said to have reached something between 80 and 85 percent.

- 2- The sweeping vote in favour of the NDP is a result of the ruling party's capacity to combine a mix of voters who feel that Mubarak is the best of the candidates, as well as appealing to those who fear the unknown and the millions of simple governmental employees and induced or coerced to vote for the candidate of the state and the government.
- 3- The escalation of protest, as exemplified by Ayman Nour and the Tomorrow Party, indicates the weakening and perhaps the collapse of the "accommodationists" within the system, as represented by the leader of the Wafd Party, Na'maan Gum'a. It is obvious that the results obtained by Ayman Nour stemmed from his strong campaigning and his appearance as a harbinger of external opposition to governmental arrangements. He also displayed pronounced belligerence in his criticism of the status quo, and thereby succeeded in fashioning an image of himself as a victim of what he called "governmental conspiracies." The poor results that the Wafd party obtained stemmed from its appearance as the "dull opposition" maintaining links with the prevailing system, and thus not exceeding official "red lines."

This situation is very interesting, because the forces of protest that radically opposed the prevailing system were the ones that had the loudest voice before the elections, such as the Kefaaya movement, for example, just as they had the overwhelming weight among opposition elements participating in the elections, best represented by Ayman Nour. This reflects a profound crisis in the structure of Egypt's political system, in which the real competitors are those who stand outside the existing arrangements, or outside the frame of what is legal and legitimate (as evidenced by the legislative election results, which increased

the role of the Muslim Brotherhood, even though they are a legally banned group).

The Main Forces in the Electoral Battle

1. The Reformists in the National Party:

Those with reformist orientations inside the NDP orchestrated the presidential battle in a new manner. They launched new electoral advertisements highlighting a dazzling motto: "The leadership is the pathway to the future!" Also new were the high profile election campaign tours of villages and provinces, in which the president conversed with citizens and beseeched them to vote for him. As a result of these tours, Mubarak formulated, for the first time, a coherent electoral campaign that demonstrated mastery and dexterity of style and political rhetoric.

The new political elite in the party mounted a modern presidential campaign in which a president announces his candidacy himself from his home town, with young people surrounding him from all sides, under the watchful gaze of security men, while carefully chosen personages received the president in their homes. These scenes are still unusual for the Egyptian public, which is accustomed to a president who perennially responds that he does not need an electoral platform, since "his achievements are his platform."

The paradox however, is that this epic production of a modern presidential election campaign is not what determined the president's "sweeping" of this election. (He obtained approximately 87 percent of the electorate's votes.) Rather, his success was the fruit of the same negative factors that have handicapped the development of democracy

and allowed the pre-emptory success of NDP candidates in presidential as well as in parliamentary and in municipal elections. Foremost among these negative factors is the role of the administrative apparatus.

The new “reformist elite” in the Policies Secretariat (lajnat as-siyassa, the NDP’s think tank) have continued to depend upon the administrative state apparatus – even if they say otherwise – to pre-empt any electoral battle in which the ruling party engages, a party born of and governed by republican decree since the time of President Sadat in 1978.

It has become very difficult for any observer of Egyptian political affairs to understand the reasons behind the request of 2700 candidates to be placed on the NDP’s lists in the 2005 legislative elections, other than the enduring attraction of a state party that offers services to its members, guarantees them greater opportunities for success, and facilitates financial and commercial deals, while providing candidates privileged access to influential circles in Egypt.

The new generation in the Policies Secretariat did not try to break the close relationship between the state and the party, just as they did not make any great effort to transform the NDP from an institution that contains everyone and anyone – politicians and non-politicians, noble and corrupt, ignorant and intelligent, secular and Islamist -- into a true political party that includes a modern liberal current, and which may attain the political majority in presidential or legislative elections, while losing it in other elections.

The real challenge confronting the new elite in the Policies Secretariat is to work, first and foremost, on transforming the NDP into a genuine party separate from the state and its different apparatuses and capable of changing the manner of political competition within society. This elite has been accused of hindering their new counterparts in the

opposition parties of the al-Ghad Party, the Wafd Party, and the Karama Party. The Policies Secretariat will remain outside of the framework of true reform currents as long as its vision is limited to conflicts within the NDP fortress and confronting the old guard. This new NDP elite should not be surprised and befuddled by the intensity of the political campaign that young journalists and the new forces and parties have launched, because most people do not feel that the NDP’s reform vision is directed towards society or political reform, but rather, towards the inheritance of power and authority.

2. The al-Ghad Party:

The experiment of the Tomorrow party constitutes one of the most controversial developments in the political arena. It is also an experiment that has left a noticeable mark on Egypt’s political map in a short period of time. But the party remained centred on the person of the leader, Ayman Nour, without establishing – like the remaining parties – a broad institutional base for a new party.

During the presidential elections, the Ghad Party’s campaign took a sharp and strong stance in confronting the president of the republic and the ruling NDP, and Ayman Nour appeared on the political scene as someone with strong ambitions who adopted radical viewpoints in confronting the prevailing order. Although the “radical campaign” of the Tomorrow Party and its leader during the elections earned the party 540,000 votes, placing Nour second after President Mubarak, However, this type of radical conduct did not please some in the party, who had quieter and more moderate inclinations towards the state and the existing regime. The state eventually succeeded in utilizing this disagreement to fragment the party’s leadership.

The state and government’s resort to such aggressive tactics arises from a narrow

accounting devoid of awareness that politics are not just about shouting, or conspiracies or accusations fabricated against political forces, but rather a “civilized” way of solving differences and the conflicts within society. Thus, when young people are dissatisfied and disillusioned with the establishment, it is preferable that this disillusionment be expressed in votes for a party adopting a bold course like the Tomorrow party’s, instead of going to groups who advocate violence and destruction, or to non-party forces.

The Tomorrow party was hampered considerably after the presidential elections, given the indictment of its leader for allegedly forging signatures for the party, which it did not need to obtain legitimacy. (Nour collected approximately 5000 signatures, although the former parties’ law required only 50 signatures.) The Tomorrow Party’s role in political life has subsided, at least for now.

3. The Wafd Party:

The results of the presidential election cast dark clouds over the Wafd Party, signalling a profound crisis within this venerable party. The election outcome affected the Wad’s political image and future, not only because of the weak showing that it obtained, but rather, because of the path it chose in dealing with the results of the presidential election.

The Wafd Party obtained only 208,000 votes, i.e., half the number of votes obtained by the Tomorrow Party. The discourse of the head of the party during the election campaign was characterized by exaggerations about the capacity of the party, especially claims that it was capable of obtaining half of the electorate’s votes.

The Wafd party, and likewise the Taggamu` Party, failed to renew the successful strategies that both adopted in the 1970s and 1980s,

namely, the mobilization of supporters and sympathizers outside of the party’s frame and structure. In that era, they had successfully communicating with wide sectors of the leftist and liberal elites in Egyptian society whether or not they belong organizationally to either party. The Wafd used to have acute political antennae sensitive to the concerns of the Egyptian people as well any defects inside the parties. They were open to criticism of all kinds, even excessive at times, and did view confrontation an attempt at “destruction” or as a conspiracy on the part of agents or hired thugs, as Wafd spokespersons are now complaining.

The Wafd Party had announced prior to the elections its complete refusal to participate in the “mockery of the presidential elections,” then surprisingly turned around and decided to participate in the elections. It then adopted a discourse of national liberation fiercer than that of the 1960s, although it was amenable to foreign monitoring of the legislative elections.

A key reason for the poor showing of the Wafd in the presidential elections was its image as a party representing all that is old and traditional in Egyptian political life. Its discourse was closer to a political sermon; it did not welcome dealing with detractors, or those who disagreed with its stances; the older generation largely controlled the party leadership.

The Wafd Party needs a new political awakening and a true renewal of its discourse, leadership, and organizational structure, as well as its governance structure. Egypt needs a truly liberal party rooted in a venerable political tradition like that of the Wafd, a party whose members are cognizant of the fact that self-criticism is not an attempt at the ruination of a vibrant or a democratic system, as the leadership of the party and its press organs are claiming, but rather, an attempt at setting the party on a new path, after many missteps and political bankruptcy.

Conclusion and Future Scenarios

It will remain difficult to separate the future of the reform process from the problems that currently hinder Egypt's political system, particularly the discrepancy between the official party structures and the political reality on the ground. Many elements of the opposition forces have moved outside of the framework of legal certification. The opposition parties suffer from considerable weaknesses as a result of the constraints imposed upon their activities, as well as the undemocratic nature of their internal structures.

The weight of the political opposition has shifted outside the "legal" realm, mainly to the Kefaaya movement and the Muslim Brotherhood, in addition to civil society organizations and some of the trade unions that have practiced direct political action in compensation for the absence of parties.

The following future scenarios of the reform process are extrapolated from the results of the 2005 presidential election battle and all that it revealed about current political realities and challenges in Egypt.

1-Egypt's presidential elections clarified the inextricable ties linking the administrative state apparatuses to the ruling NDP, to the point that we can speak with confidence about the pervasive social, political, and cultural influence of the bureaucracy more than we can speak of a clear dictatorial or coercive system.

The Egyptian political system has relied, for more than a quarter of a century, upon a bureaucratic elite chosen on the basis of loyalty to the system, and occasionally on the basis of professional skills, rather than on the basis of actual political experience. Social, trade unionist and political parties suffer from a number of problems that stem, ultimately, from the absence of a democratic culture within

society on one hand, and from a lack of desire on the part of the state to foster such a culture on the other. We therefore observe individualist orientations and the absence of democracy within political parties, as well as within professional, trade, and civil society organizations.

Political action in Egypt appears to be the source of many dangers, partly due to the absence of clear legal principles that the state should implement to coordinate the activities of the various elements in the political and trade union field. The lack of such principles encourages many people to resort to crooked and non-transparent practices in order to remain in positions of power and authority. These institutions were left to their own internal devices; the predators among them were not punished, nor were traditional leaders responsible for the collapse of their parties held to account.

2-It appears that a gradual and responsible political opening-up - if real - is the preferred approach for realizing political reform. But this cannot be completed unless the restrictions in Article 76 are amended, e.g., the condition that parties cannot advance candidates for the presidential elections until five years after their establishment. This constraint will paralyze Egypt's political life for the next six years. In addition, reformists must work to rescind the ruling that parties must obtain five percent of governmental representatives' support in order to field candidates for the presidential elections, a condition that none of the parties in the last legislative elections could meet.

3- It is also crucial to change Article 77 of the Constitution to state that the president of the republic cannot remain in office for more than two consecutive terms. In view of the social, political and professional difficulties afflicting the country, especially the weak performance of the public sector as a result of the lack of any change among the leadership's elite in

many years, the president cannot remain in office for life, particularly in stages of democratic transformation.

4- A scenario of gradual liberalization would mean first and foremost a restructuring of the NDP, its separation from the states' apparatuses, and its reconstruction on democratic bases. This would render the party more effective on the Egyptian street. Secondly, liberalization would require the presence of real competitors to the ruling party from among the new movements and the rising generation. Accepting the legitimacy of the Karama movement and the Wafd party would be a beginning on this path, along with lifting the constraints placed upon the Tomorrow Party, so as to allow the emergence of a new triad that would include democratic Islamist currents, the liberal currents, and the Nasserite leftist currents. This would effect the renewal of political party life in a gradual manner and would open the way for the integration of the bigger opposition movements, such as those represented by the Islamic Brotherhood, by allowing them to found a civil political party grounded in the principles of the Constitution and the republican system.

5-The scenario of non-constructive chaos corresponds in essence to the continuation of the government's policy of refusing to undertake any real political reform, while being forced to loosen its security grip as a result of external pressures. The political climate that the Kefaaya movement created by targeting its criticism, for the first time in contemporary Egyptian history, at the president of the republic through a series of declarations and protests, has pushed open the door of protest by social rather than political forces.

The deterioration of Egypt's public institutions is unprecedented, leading to stagnation, corruption, and a decline of performance as a

result of the absence of any system of accountability. This deadlocked situation, combined with the endurance of most of the leadership in their positions as "immortals," can lead to a wide movement of social unrest, resulting in chaos with potentially dangerous consequences.

6-We cannot speak a process of constructing a democratic order without resolving the problem posed by the Muslim Brotherhood, and this solution cannot be the continued refusal to grant legitimacy to this grouping because they are religious and charitable. Since the early 1980s it has been clear that the Brotherhood's political discourse has tended towards a political vision characterized by a strong universality, indicating that the Brotherhood wishes to build a civil party with an "Islamic reference."

The Government' takes issue with the Muslim Brotherhood not over its evangelizing or religiosity, but rather, over its growing political activism. The solution is not to arrest and imprison or constrain the members of the Brotherhood, as was the norm for 77 years, without any conclusive results.

Accepting the Muslim Brotherhood as a political party is in accord with the Civil Constitution and the republican system, which do not discriminate among citizens based on criteria of religion, race or colour. Integrating the Brotherhood into the legitimate political arena would be a key indication of the completion of democratic reforms. It would push other parties, particularly the ruling NDP as well as the liberal and leftist forces, to choose their best possible candidates to compete against the energetic cadre of the Brotherhood, without any reliance on the security or administrative apparatus, as is now the case with the NDP.

7-What is the future of the new reformist forces, at the head of which is the Kefaaya

movement? It is realistic to assume that the movement will moderate its radical slogans and limit its street protests? Can the movement successfully communicate and coordinate with Egypt's "enlightened Elite," i.e., those who are sensitive to and concerned with social interests, and who also possess the professional and political skills to administrate the state? This elite has thus far remained outside the framework of the traditional parties and has not succumbed to the petty jealousies and seductions of the NDP. This is the silent majority that usually do not protest in the streets with the Kefaaya movement, rarely exhibit themselves at political gatherings, do not cast aspersions on the system and its symbols, and do not have a tendency to enthrone radical and dazzling mottos that are irrelevant to the concerns of the Egyptian people.

If the new opposition forces can attract some sectors from the state elite, university professors, young businesspeople and judges to their discourse and movement, then they will succeed in putting into place the bases of change in Egypt, which can only result from a combination of pressures from above and below, rather than springing from a popular revolution, daily street demonstrations, or civil disobedience.

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