Egypt's Challenge of Stateness After the Arab Spring

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The revolution of January 25, 2011 in Egypt, which constituted one of the many upheavals of the Arab Spring, resulted in a regime change but also challenged Egypt's stateness; that is, the state's monopoly on the use of force, the administrative effectiveness of its bureaucracy, and civil consensus in defining both its collective and state identity. This challenge led to another regime change in the summer of 2013 and the restoration of an authoritarian regime after a year of trying to transition to democracy, dealing Egypt's stateness yet another blow. Egypt's challenge of stateness has affected it economically, socially, and politically, and it has had ramifications for both internal and regional stability and security as well as for Israel's strategic interests.

Keywords: Egypt, Arab Spring, stateness, the monopoly on the use of force, administrative effectiveness, citizenship agreement, stability, regime change

Introduction

The events of the Arab Spring, especially the removal from power of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, brought hope to the masses in the Arab world as well as to academics, leaders, and communities all over the globe for a great wave of democratization. Many were convinced that the citizens of the Arab states would soon be liberated from the yoke of authoritarian rulers and regimes that had controlled and oppressed them (and most continue to do so) since these states had gained independence.

Al-Tahrir Square, April 8, 2011. Photograph by Jonathan Rashad / Flickr, CC by 3.0., https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=14896354

But, within a short period of time, the expectations for democracy, which would, in turn, lead to progress as well as social and economic welfare, were dashed.[1]

The Arab Spring magnified one of the most conspicuous problems in the Arab world since the Arab nations won independence from the colonial powers after World War II: the problem of stateness.[2] *Stateness* refers to "the state's capacity to impose law and order within its territory, to construct and implement policies, and to claim legitimacy as a political unit."[3]

The prominence and impact of the problem of stateness in the Arab world are evident in many ways. Among the states that experienced the Arab Spring, only Tunisia has become a stable state with democratic characteristics, and it is now facing more than a few challenges in its endeavor to become an established, stable democracy.[4] The other states have deteriorated to various degrees of state weakness and failure. Egypt, which underwent regime change and began a process of democratization, found itself internally divided; this led to a military coup in July 2013 and a return to authoritarian rule. Libya and Yemen have collapsed into civil war, leading to their dissolution, while their previous strongmen—Muammar Gaddafi and Ali Abdullah Salah—have

been executed by their opponents. Syria, too, has been riven by a bloody civil war, leading to the greatest humanitarian disaster of the twenty-first century. President Bashar Assad has survived only in part to external intervention (especially Russian, but also Iranian), although he lost sovereignty over large parts of Syrian territory to various rebel groups—armed, non-state players.

Egypt—the largest of the Arab nations sharing a border with Israel—had been the leader of the Arab world and its most powerful nation until the Arab Spring. It was considered a strong, stable state with a cohesive and coherent identity and a very high level of stateness. Fouad Ajami once described Egypt as a state with a central authority, a uniform population, and an independent nationality.[5] This is no longer true. The claim at the core of this article is that the stateness challenge, which skirted Egypt for many decades, finally emerged; it stopped the transition toward a democratic regime and resulted in a return to authoritarianism, undermining Egypt's political stability and social coherence, and damaging Egypt's status in the regional system. This article deals with the changes in Egypt's stateness, their ramifications for Egypt's national security and political stability as well as the regional ramifications of these changes, some of which also affect Israel and its national security.

To understand the Egyptian stateness challenge, the first part of this article presents the theoretical framework of the concept, the phenomenon of stateness and its three aspects, and Egypt's stateness before the 2011 revolution. The second part of the article provides an analysis of the changes in all three aspects of Egypt's stateness, their ramifications on Egypt's stability and its national security, and the strategical regional ramifications. The conclusion offers a response to the changes of stateness and their ramifications while relating to the strategic interests of the State of Israel.

Stateness: A Conceptual Framework

While the idea of the state is ancient and the notion of the modern state, the nation-state, and the concept of sovereignty developed in the seventeenth century (the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648), the concept of "stateness" was introduced by John P. Nettl only at the end of the 1960s.[6] The concept was meant to make it easier to assess the extent of the existence of the modern state, and enabling a comparative political analysis of states. After a slow

start, the stateness concept became extremely influential, and today it is considered the most notable concept in state-centered empirical studies.

For about four decades, research that focused on stateness concentrated on three aspects. Most scholars use at least one of these as their foundation for defining the concept and the phenomenon. The oldest of the three aspects directly relates to the Weberian approach of the state phenomenon; that is, the monopoly on the use of force. The second aspect also relates to Weber's conceptualization, especially of the state's establishmentarian, bureaucratic aspect, reflecting its administrative effectiveness, also known as bureaucratic effectiveness. The third and last aspect in the theoretical development of stateness is that of citizenship agreement.[7]

This article uses a definition that relies on all three aspects of the concept; that is, stateness is the ability of a state to impose law and order on its territory in order to conceive and implement policy and claim legitimacy as a political unit.[8] This definition, which incorporates essential and cultural aspects, is congruent with much of the literature's conceptualization that includes all three aspects. The significance of stateness is that the state, within its territory, can enforce the laws that it passed regardless of the nature of the regime or the content of that law (liberal or otherwise). Moreover, stateness specifically refers to a state's internal dimensions rather than to its external (or legal) dimensions and to its sovereignty, which focuses respectively on the understanding of the concept of "the state" within international law and the official recognition of a state's sovereignty by other states.[9] The monopoly on the use of force is considered the most fundamental component of the definition of the state and the cornerstone of stateness. It is defined as the state's de facto ability in practice to use physical force to make people comply.[10] Administrative effectiveness means the existence of a bureaucracy that functions efficiently according to the government, has the ability to execute the policy that the government articulates, generates the trust of the citizens, and provides the state with an image of legitimacy. Administrative effectiveness is the capacity of a bureaucracy to construct and implement public service policies and regulations throughout the state's territory.[11] The literature distinguishes between effective and autonomous bureaucracy. According to Fukuyama, a fully autonomous bureaucracy has a negative effect on administrative effectiveness because it is disconnected from the state and not under the state's political control.[12] By contrast, an

effective bureaucracy implements government policy accurately and quickly and is more loyal to the government than it is autonomous.[13] Fundamentally, administrative effectiveness "hinges on the professional competence of the bureaucrats, ensured by meritocratic recruitment procedures."[14]

Citizenship agreement is "the absence of profound differences about the territorial boundaries of the political community's state and profound differences as to who has the right of citizenship in that state . . . It is thus a minimalist condition that entails that the people within the territory accept the supremacy of the state and communion with fellow citizens."[15] If the citizens are divided over who constitutes a citizen, then by virtue they are also divided over the definition of the state's borders, and thus, the state's identity is less pronounced or coherent and/or the state is socially weaker.[16] According to Benjamin Miller, congruence between the state's identity and the national identity of the majority group (coherent identity)—what he calls a high "state-to-nation balance"—is a key factor in both domestic and regional stability and peace, because the state is not threatened by different nations or ethnic groups within that state who seek independence or see themselves as belonging to a neighboring state. A state that has a high congruence between its national and territorial identities (a high state-to-nation balance) is stable to begin with. Moreover, it is even more stable if its borders are not disputed, its governing institutions are stable, and it retains its monopoly on the use of force.[17]

According to the literature, stateness refers to the basic means of authority and social control in a state—the factors underlying the most successful attempts to stabilize political regimes. A low level of stateness means that the state is unable to maintain control and stability, whether because of domestic reasons (e.g., loss of monopoly on the use of force and/or lack of citizenship agreement, either which is liable to lead to civil war) or because of external reasons (e.g., external intervention, invasion of foreign forces, war, occupation). This is closely related to concepts prevalent in political science and international relations: state failure, failing state, failed state, weak state, and fragile state. A low level of state functioning renders a weak state. A more serious situation—the lack of a functioning state system—usually leads to a failed state, which means a low level of state functioning, the lack of a strong central government (if it has a central government to begin with), the irrelevance of governing institutions, a poorly functioning economy,

a divided society, and anarchy due to the collapse of the mechanisms for enforcing law and order.[18]

Thus, stateness is a necessary pre-condition for the existence and stability of any state and political regime.[19] The international system in the post-World War II era was notable for the multiplicity of the territorial nation-states; this phenomenon helped raise the level of stateness in those states and assisted in creating internal and regional political stability in large parts of the world. The concepts of nationality and territorial nation-states were developed in Western Europe from the seventeenth century onward and were linked to central ideas, trends, and developments in European history, such as sovereignty, modernization, and secularization. These ideas then spread to the rest of the world, leading to parallel developments to those that occurred in Europe.[20] In the Middle East, Egypt was one of the only states in the region where these ideas were cultivated in a similar manner.[21]

Egypt's Stateness until the 2011 Revolution

State-building in most of the Arab region generally served as a response to domestic and external challenges to the very idea of the state's existence, due to a lack of correlation between the power structure and the social structure following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I and the division of the spoils among the victorious great powers—Great Britain and France—on the basis of the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916). The treaty organized the Middle East differently from the order that had prevailed for the preceding four hundred years.[22]

Following Sykes-Picot, most Arab states suffered from having a weak national identity. The modern state and national ideas were new to the tribal Arab societies and totally alien to their way of thinking. The peoples within Arab society, having lived together for so long, were unified around a shared culture, folklore, customs, or religion and not around a common national history. They also lacked experience in running state and state institutions. Moreover, those tribes and ethnic groups, who, without being asked, were suddenly subjects of newly established states were not convinced of the justifications for establishing nation-states.[23] This meant that loyalty to the state and identification with it were not a given. In this sense, Egypt was the outlier among the Arab states: It had a long history of a separate existence,

defined borders, a central and consensual capital city, and already had a tradition of compliance with a ruling central government.[24]

Following its defeat in the Six-Day War (June 1967), Egypt abandoned Pan-Arabism, which had called for the political, social, and economic unity of the Arab peoples and states in the Middle East.[25] Instead, President Anwar Sadat adopted an "Egypt first" policy, which gave precedence to an Egyptian national identity and Egyptian interests over any other,[26] a policy later continued by Hosni Mubarak. The Egyptian population's basic loyalty to the state indeed is much greater than that in any other Arab country. In the Arab world, Egypt is unusual for its thousands of years of independent existence—to varying degrees—within defined borders, with a homogeneous population consisting of a strong Sunni Muslim majority and a Coptic minority of only 10 percent, and with very few ethnic or national reservations about the state's fundamental national identity.[27]

According to Miller[28] and other scholars,[29] for many decades, Egypt was notable for its high level of stateness. Under Sadat and Mubarak, Egypt enjoyed a high state-nationality ratio; that is, the state identity and national identity of the majority group (coherent identity) were congruent, which helped make it highly stable and safe compared to most Arab states. Its coherence kept it from getting embroiled in conflicts with its Arab neighbors over minorities and territorial and border issues. In the decades prior to the Arab Spring, Egypt's high level of stateness was an important factor in legitimizing its leadership of the Arab world. However, based on various indexes, such as the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI)[30] or the Fragile States Index (FSI),[31] Egypt's level of stateness has been trending downward since Mubarak's removal from power. According to the BTI, both the aspect of the monopoly on the use of force and that of civic consent have dropped considerably.[32] These changes in stateness in Egypt have ramifications for its political stability, economy, social relations within the state, and domestic security as well as regional implications.

Egypt Since 2011: A Challenged Stateness

In January 2011, inspired by the revolution that began in Tunisia against the tyrannical rule of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, and especially after his overthrow, Egypt witnessed mass protests against President Mubarak and his regime for their social, political, and economic failures. Dozens of civilians were killed

by the security forces during the demonstrations. As a result of the riots, Mubarak dismissed the government and formulated a new one, appointing Omar Suleiman as vice president. On February 1, Mubarak announced he would conclude his term in office in September 2011 and would not seek reelection. On February 10, as the demonstrations had only intensified, Mubarak announced he was transferring presidential authority to Suleiman. The next morning, Vice President Suleiman announced that Mubarak had transferred all his authority to the army and had thus effectively resigned as Egypt's president. On February 11, 2011, Egypt was liberated from the rule of Hosni Mubarak who had assumed the presidency almost thirty years earlier, in October 1981.[33]

While Mubarak had represented the continuation of the regime of the so-called "Free Officers" who had seized power in the military coup of July 1952, the demonstrations of millions of Egyptians, especially in Cairo's Tahrir Square at the height of the Arab Spring, gave many hope for a civil democratic revolution that would liberate Egypt from dictatorship, poverty, and oppression, and result in democracy, freedom, and prosperity. With Mubarak's resignation, governance shifted to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces; the constitution was suspended, and both houses of parliament were dismissed. Within less than a month, a new government had been established, and in March 2011 a "constitutional declaration" was issued, which included a timetable for shifting power from the Supreme Council to an elected parliament and president. It seemed as if Egypt was beginning a process of democratization that would lead to the establishment of a stable democratic regime. The transition included a process of writing a new constitution, the holding of parliamentary elections at the end of 2011, and a presidential election in 2012 won by the Muslim Brotherhood—largely due to its already having a solid organizational infrastructure in place—much to the disadvantage of the architects of the revolution, who were mostly young, secular, and liberal.[34]

Muhammad Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood candidate, was sworn in as Egypt's first democratically elected president in the summer of 2012. But Morsi was removed in a military coup after only one year into his term when the army exploited a popular civil protest staged by the Coalition of the Youth of the Revolution against the Muslim Brotherhood, which was perceived as having hijacked the January 2011 revolution. Once again, Egypt

came under authoritarian rule, this time led by Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who had been defense minister and commander of the armed forces during Morsi's term in office and who had led the revolt against the new president. In May 2014, after another presidential election, al-Sisi became Egypt's official ruler and, in March 2018, he was elected to the second term in office. Both elections were far from being democratic.[35]

In the Mubarak era, Egypt was the leader of the Arab world, one of the strongest states in the Middle East, and, in terms of identity, it was one of the most cohesive states, notable for its high level of stateness. Data from BTI reports from 2008–2018 reveal a significant drop in the level of stateness, from a grade of 7.8 in 2008 to one of 6.3 in 2018.[36] This decrease is the result of changes in two of the three aspects of stateness: the state's monopoly on the use of force within the state and citizenship agreement. The changes in each of the three aspects of stateness and their effect on Egypt's national security and stability as well as the strategic ramifications of these changes for regional security are discussed below, beginning with the fall of the Mubarak regime in early 2011 until the middle of 2018.

Monopoly on the Use of Force

The Egyptian state's monopoly on the use of force largely stabilized toward the end of 2012 and in early 2013 after having experienced a serious regression in the previous two years. The domestic security apparatus collapsed in January 2011, the police did not function, and the security apparatus was preoccupied with managing the process of the state's transition instead of maintaining security. This process of state transition was marked by ongoing mass demonstrations against the different governments, which were deemed inefficient and opposed to the revolution's goals. The challenges to the governing authority often escalated into violent confrontations, such as the clashes around Tahrir Square (known as the events of Mohammed Mahmoud Street) in November 2011[37] and the protests against President Morsi's attempt in November 2012 to make a constitutional change that would expand the president's power and constrain the power of the Constitutional Court to dismiss the constitutional committee and the Shura Council.[38] Throughout Egypt, especially in the large cities of Cairo and Alexandria, crime increased, as did sectarian violence. In terms of sectarian violence, hate crimes by

extreme Islamists against Copts and their homes, businesses, and institutions were especially notable.[39]

In the Sinai Peninsula, the authority of the central government—both politically and socially—was undermined, especially in the northeast area of Rafah, where Egyptian security forces, as well as the multinational force stationed there, were attacked numerous times; on occasion, the fire was also directed at nearby Israeli border troops. In some of the northern Sinai attacks, dozens of Egyptian soldiers were killed. Thus, the ongoing challenge facing the Egyptian government in Sinai reopened the argument about the ongoing demilitarization of the Sinai, an article in the 1979 peace agreement with Israel. The Egyptian public praised then-Prime Minister Hesham Qandil's declaration that his government's overarching goal was to impose order and security in most parts of the country. Toward the end of 2012, the Egyptian government had succeeded in restoring the country's security control and the state's monopoly on the use of force had stabilized, especially in outlying areas. 2012 also had the lowest number of fatalities due to terrorism over the past decade, with twenty casualties in 2012, compared to hundreds of dead per year between 2013 and 2016.[40]

At the end of 2012 and in the first half of 2013, the security establishment and Egyptian society began to pose a challenge to the state's monopoly on the use of force. The growing polarization between the supporters of Morsi (that is, the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood) and his opponents and the public's dissatisfaction with the lack of real progress in realizing the goals of the revolution—especially social justice and better socioeconomic conditions—returned people to the streets. The struggle between the supporters of Morsi and his opponents escalated and turned violent. Many protestors were killed or wounded during the rounds of violence that continued through most of 2013.[41] The violence peaked after Morsi's removal, with riots erupting throughout the country as Morsi supporters confronted the security forces, leading to the deaths of more than 1,150 demonstrators.[42]

At the same time, the challenge facing the governing forces in Sinai intensified, especially after Morsi was deposed in July 2013. Starting that summer, attacks on security forces in the peninsula multiplied. Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis expanded its military activities, declared its allegiance to the Islamic State (ISIS) on November 14, 2014, and changed its name to Wilayat Sinai (the Sinai Province) of the Islamic State. Along the Egyptian-Libyan

border, security increasingly deteriorated and a rising number of attacks took a heavy human toll on both sides of the border.[43]

The number of deadly terrorist attacks in Egypt, including in the capital of Cairo, rose significantly. Following Morsi's removal, the number of casualties also increased sharply (179 in 2013; 184 in 2014; 663 in 2015; and 293 in 2016).[44] At the end of Morsi's year in office, the public's sense of security had waned, and the trend continued after the coup in July 2013. At the end of 2014, a community police force was established to deal with the phenomenon. Despite the efforts of the Egyptian regime to confront terrorism and face other security challenges throughout the nation, 2015 was a significant failure for the al-Sisi regime: 582 terrorist attacks leaving hundreds of dead and more than 1,300 wounded.[45] Terrorist attacks were aimed at the security establishment and its members (such as the assassination of Egypt's Prosecutor General Hisham Barakat on June 29, 2015),[46] government, economic, and diplomatic institutions (for example, the bombing of the Italian consulate in Cairo on July 11, 2015), transportation and communications infrastructures, tourist sites (such as the bombing of Metrojet flight 9268, a chartered Russian passenger plane, on October 31, 2015),[47] and holy sites, especially Christian ones.[48] During an attack on one of the Christian holy sites, Pope Tawadros II of Alexandria had been present; in addition to being the leader of Egypt's Coptic minority, he has been considered a symbol of unity between Muslims and Christians in Egypt and among the prominent leaders supporting the 2013 coup.[49]

According to media reports and intelligence assessments in Egypt and elsewhere, these attacks were carried out by militant Islamists factions, some identified with the Muslim Brotherhood, which was outlawed after the coup, some with Wilayat Sinai, and some with ISIS members operating in Egypt at the organization's behest to expand the battle against Egypt's security forces from the Sinai Peninsula into Egypt proper. The security challenges that the various organizations posed to al-Sisi's regime embarrassed the president, the regime, and the security services, as they repeatedly highlighted the regime's weakness and its inability to ensure security and stability. In other words, al-Sisi's regime was failing in its attempt to subordinate the nation's territory to its authority, evident of the regime's failure to preserve its monopoly on the use of force in all parts of its sovereign territory (true as of 2018). During 2016, and even more so in 2017, terrorism turned downward,

largely consequent to consistent suppression and more intelligence activity. In the Sinai Peninsula, however, the regime has been less successful against Wilayat Sinai of the Islamic State.[50]

As of 2018, it seems that Egypt has succeeded in expanding its control of Sinai. In practice, however, Egypt had to take two steps in which it conceded its monopoly on the use of force: the first involved recruiting the Bedouin tribes in Sinai to fight Wilayat Sinai in exchange for military aid (weapons and fighting methods) and economic aid earmarked for the tribes. The second step was military cooperation with Israel. It was obvious that the regime was uncomfortable doing this and viewed it as a necessary evil given the circumstances and its own inability to independently regain its monopoly on the use of force in Sinai.[51] Egypt has tried to maintain a low profile on its military cooperation with Israel lest the legitimacy of the regime be called into question. In an investigative piece on the topic published by the *New York Times* in February 2018, Israel revealed it had carried out more than 100 attacks in northern Sinai in 2016 and 2017. Israel's missions, using fighter jets, helicopters, and UAVs bearing no Israeli insignia, were carried out with President al-Sisi's authorization.[52] Although the publication included detailed descriptions of the Israeli raids shared by American and British sources, Egypt denied that anything like that had ever happened.[53] Presumably, Egypt's denial stemmed from its concern that this cooperation might cause additional damage to the regime's legitimacy and to al-Sisi, who was preparing for the new presidential election, which took place in March 2018. As noted, the regime's legitimacy was already in doubt and the election highlighted this further.[54] One of the causes of the destabilization of a regime's legitimacy is the failure of the state to impose its monopoly over all of its territory and of the security forces to provide security and stability.

It can be said that Egypt under al-Sisi acted against the classic notion of state logic in which the state preserves its monopoly on force within its borders. The willingness to arm the Bedouin tribes in Sinai (and taking the risk that the weapons they now possess might one day be turned against state forces, as critics have pointed out) and, to some extent, to allow Israel to operate on Egyptian sovereign territory indicates that the regime recognizes its own weakness. Conceding its monopoly on force within its borders signifies weakness in one of the fundamental components of Egyptian stateness and has negative ramifications for the nation's security and stability.

Administrative Effectiveness

According to the BTI and FSI, Egypt's bureaucratic administrative system has always been characterized by its low to moderate performance. This was true both before and after the 2011 revolution. While the BTI refers to Egypt's stability of basic public administration and services over the last decade (a score of 6 on a rising scale from 1 to 10), the FSI score revealed a slight improvement in the level of public services during the same period (scoring 6.4 in 2009 to 4.6 in 2018, on an inverse scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the worst score). In any case, both indexes indicate that the country's administrative system is performing at a low level.

Both before and after the revolution, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces played a dominant role in Egypt's public administration. In addition to being the command staff of the Egyptian army, the Supreme Council is also a central player in the public sector. In the decades preceding 2011, former senior figures of the Supreme Council, their relatives, and cronies occupied key positions in organizations and companies—including civilian ones—subordinate to the army. Many provincial governors, mayors, and boards of directors of public sector companies were members of the Supreme Council, formerly military men, or their relatives and friends. The Egyptian army controlled one-third of the Egyptian economy, so that the Egyptian military, and especially the Supreme Council, enjoyed the privilege and wielded a great deal of influence in Egypt.[55]

The demonstrations of the youth in Egypt were instrumental in Hosni Mubarak's resignation on February 11, 2011. But no less instrumental—and perhaps even more—was the Supreme Council's decision to avoid a confrontation with the protestors and not defend the president, which many think was the factor that led to his resignation. Immediately thereafter, the Supreme Council issued a constitutional declaration to the effect that it was assuming governing authority until the election of a new parliament and president. Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, then the chair of the Supreme Council, became Egypt's de facto president while retaining his position on the Supreme Council. This remained the case until Morsi was sworn in as president on June 30, 2012.[56]

During the rule of the Supreme Council, it made decisions and took actions to preserve its status and authority at the expense of the yet-to-be-elected president. For examples, two days before the second round of voting, the

Constitutional Court dismissed the House of Representatives (the lower of the two houses of Egypt's parliament) and assumed its powers. On the day of the election, the Supreme Council issued a document with constitutional validity ("a complementary constitutional decree") that provided it with great authority while significantly reducing that of the intended president. The decree, issued on June 17, 2012, stated that the Supreme Council had the right to appeal sections of the planned constitution if they failed to please the council and the right to dismiss the constitutional committee. Furthermore, the decree forced the incoming president to receive the approval of the Supreme Council before declaring a state of war or responding to violations of public order. In other words, the Supreme Council sought to shore up its spheres of influence prior to Morsi's election as president.[57]

This pattern of conduct of the Supreme Council, a remnant of Mubarak's regime, made many Egyptians suspicious that the members of the Supreme Council really sought to seize control of the state and its governing institutions. The Supreme Council continued to be a dominant player in Egyptian politics even after the establishment of the first democratic regime of its type in Egypt and it ultimately succeeded in leading the military coup in the summer of 2013, bringing an end to the budding democratization process, which had had no opportunity to flourish.[58]

Morsi's single year as president was marked by power struggles against the bureaucracy, led by the Supreme Council and the security apparatus, all of which remained loyal to the previous regime, although not to Mubarak personally as he was viewed as someone who had tried to relieve them of their power and shift control of Egypt into the hands of his son, Jamal.[59] Morsi tried to replace the vestiges of the old regime: Early in his term in office, in August 2012, he dismissed Supreme Council Chairman Tantawi and Chief of Staff Sami Anan and appointed al-Sisi, who was then head of intelligence to the position of defense minister and chief of staff. Ten months later it was al-Sisi who led a military coup to depose Morsi and return Egypt to authoritarian rule under his helm.[60]

Egypt under al-Sisi's rule continued to face administrative challenges and an inefficient bureaucracy, but in contrast to Morsi's presidency, the challenges did not involve the Supreme Council, which was fully under al-Sisi's control; rather, they were the result of problems with the army as well as fundamental struggles that had characterized Egypt for decades. Egypt's

economy has suffered from unemployment, rising prices, and decline in the value of the Egyptian lira compared to the dollar (from 6 Egyptian liras to the US dollar at the end of Morsi's term to 18 Egyptian liras in June 2018). Since 2013, the public sector debt has doubled, reaching $80 billion by 2017, while the local debt tallied $176 billion.[61]

To confront its economic challenges, Egypt sought help from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The IMF's financial aid program was approved in November 2016 and led to some important successes, but it also posed complex economic and political challenges to the state. In September 2017, the IMF issued its first critical report on the pace of the program's implementation. Although the report praised the professionalism and political courage marking the economic reforms, the economic and political incidents that occurred in 2017 and a close reading of the report indicate that the program's achievements were fragile and that Egypt was still facing a long, arduous journey toward economic and political stability.[62] The economic reforms that al-Sisi has implemented have yet to curb the steep rise in the cost of fuel, electricity, gas, and public transportation. A new value-added tax has been imposed and subsidies on basic goods have been cut. Consequently, the rate of inflation has hit record highs: in 2017 alone, inflation rose by 30.7 percent.[63]

The economic decrees imposed over the last two years, in addition to the political repression and violations of human and civil rights, have undermined the legitimacy of al-Sisi's regime. This crisis was evident during the presidential election in March 2018, even though al-Sisi won the race by a wide margin as expected. The worsening decrees since the election—including a rise in the metro fare—resulted in a wave of protests and demonstrations, some of which deteriorated into confrontations between young people and the police.[64]

In mid 2018, it seemed that the public system in Egypt had still not managed to resolve the public's day-to-day challenges, see to its wellbeing, or provide an adequate response to unemployment, inflation, and the cost of living. The ongoing failure and lack of administrative effectiveness pose a challenge to the stability of the Egyptian regime as well as to the regional and international systems. This will make it difficult for the regime to implement the next steps in the IMF's program of economic reforms, which can be expected to include painful new decrees, including further cuts to

subsidies and price hikes of goods and services; this will also impede the regime's efforts to enlist local civilian cooperation in the war on terrorism in northern Sinai.[65]

Citizenship Agreement

Among scholars and in many other circles, the common conception of Egypt has been of a state with a uniform population, a coherent and collective identity, and a high degree of consent regarding its identity, unlike most of the other Arab states and peoples. The toppling of the Mubarak regime in early 2011 only reinforced this view at a time when it seemed that the Egyptian people were unifying to oust a dictator, while Syria, for example, had split into two—between supporters and opponents of President Assad—and had disintegrated into a civil war.

The Muslim Brotherhood's success in the parliamentary election in late 2011 and later in the election of the movement's candidate, Morsi, to the presidency revealed an unexpected and distressing truth of discord over Egypt's identity as a state and as a people. Two camps quickly emerged: the Islamist, led by the Muslim Brotherhood, and a camp consisting of an unnatural coalition in the Egyptian sociopolitical landscape, which included the military-security sector, the al-Azhar religious establishment, the Coptic church, together with movements and political parties representing the secular left, the civil society organizations, and associations of the youth of the revolution.

The successes that the Muslim Brotherhood reaped in the parliamentary and presidential elections polarized Egypt's political system and led to profound discord over shaping the state's identity in the post-revolutionary era. This divergence was prominently manifested in the establishment of a new Egyptian constitution. Soon after Mubarak's ouster, during the debates over changing the old 1971 constitution before the referendum scheduled for March 2011, the entire Islamist stream, with all its constituents, demanded that parliamentary elections be held before establishing a new constitution and prior to holding the referendum required for its ratification, while the secular, national, liberal, left, and the coalitions of the young people demanded to establish a new constitution prior to parliamentary elections. Due to this disagreement, the rift between the two blocs over essential issues—chiefly, the new Egyptian constitution—deepened. One of the chief sources of tension

and instability was the extreme polarization over the relationship between religion and state, creating a dangerous situation in which religion had been politicized, with the religious discourse entering into the political one and the combing of the two.[66]

In January 2012, the three rounds of voting for the lower house of the Egyptian parliament ended with the bloc of Islamic political parties winning about three-quarters of the seats: The Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice party won 237 of the 498 seats and the Salafist party al-Nur secured 120. At the end of spring 2012, there were two rounds of the presidential election, which Mohamed Morsi, the Freedom and Justice party candidate, won with a majority of 51.7 percent. As a result, many Egyptians began to express growing concern about Egypt's identity shifting toward Islamization, religious law, and of being a state of the Muslim Brothers. Morsi's own decisions and actions did nothing to dispel these concerns; on the contrary, they provided proof that this was the direction that the state was taking.

The government, upon which the independent Hesham Qandeel had been entrusted with the job of putting it together, sidelined the Salafist party al-Nour, the second-largest party, which held a quarter of the seats in parliament and was the Muslim Brotherhood's chief ally. This sparked a crisis in relations between the two parties and led to protests against Morsi from al-Nour's leaders and supporters. In response, Morsi ordered that newspaper editors be replaced with ones that supported him, but this failed to garner the support of the other journalists who were unsparing in their criticism of the president. Reports on the replacement of thousands of civil servants with members of the Muslim Brotherhood strengthened the public feeling that Morsi was closely following a script written for him by the supreme leader of the Muslim Brothers to Islamicize Egypt, despite his pre-election promises to the contrary.[67]

The debate over the character of the new constitution was a key factor that contributed to Egypt's instability and lack of citizenship agreement. In March 2012, before the presidential election, the "100-Committee"—consisting of fifty parliament members and fifty others—was established to formulate a proposed constitution.[68] The committee proposed to reduce the president's power and expand the sections on freedoms and liberties. Nonetheless, some claimed that the draft of the new constitution left the president with too much power; did not include a commitment to international human

rights conventions; allowed for the closing of civil society organizations and newspapers; provided broad authority to the army; and enabled the possibility of trying civilians in military courts. In addition, the predominance of Islamists on the committee resulted in a draft that was more Islamic than before, giving credence to worries that the new Morsi-led regime would work to Islamize the state.[69]

Morsi paid no attention to public criticism of the draft constitution and, on November 21, 2012, just before the Constitutional Court was to rule on a claim filed to dismiss the constitutional committee, Morsi issued a complementary constitutional decree that provided immunity to the constitutional committee and the Shura Council, in effect denying the court the ability to dismiss them, i.e., coopting the court's authority. Morsi also provided immunity to all of his own decisions and made it impossible to appeal them until a new constitution was approved and parliament was elected.[70] These decisions and actions drove hundreds of thousands to stage demonstrations across from the presidential palace. This, in turn, led to counter-protests and eventually to violence between the two sides. In response, Morsi issued a new constitutional decree on December 8, 2012, revoking the immunity he had provided for his own decisions, although he continued to engage in efforts to accelerate the referendum over the draft constitution,[71] which was held during December 15–22, 2012. While a majority of 63.8 percent approved the new constitution, only 33 percent of the public had participated in the referendum. The low voter turnout indicated that the public was skeptical over the process of approving the constitution and that there was no broad consensus over the new document, which reduced freedom of religion and limited the activities of civil organizations and the press.[72]

In addition, Morsi also curtailed the authority of the security establishment. Following an attack on Egyptian military forces in Sinai on August 5, 2012, Morsi deposed the head of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, Muhammad Hussein Tantawi, and Chief of Staff Sami Anan. He abolished sections of the constitution that granted extensive authority to the army while curtailing that of the presidency and appointed a vice president who was not a member of the security establishment.[73] These actions—interpreted as changes to institutionalize and establish the first democratic regime of its kind in Egypt[74]—resulted in a direct confrontation between Morsi and the security elite, especially the Supreme Council. The Security Council was

considered the heir to the Free Officers' Council, which in the second half of the twentieth century had formulated Egypt's image and identity as a state where Islam was part of the daily lives of individuals but did not have any part of its collective or national identity.

Moreover, Morsi strengthened Egypt's ties with the Shiite Muslim regime in Iran; the Turkish regime, whose ideology is close to that of the Muslim Brotherhood; and Qatar, whose leaders have supported the Palestinian Hamas movement, which identifies ideologically with the Muslim Brotherhood; in addition to giving direct support to Hamas. The army's leadership and security elite perceived these ties as being harmful to Egypt's economy and security as well as to its relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia.[75]

During Morsi's year as president, the government failed to confront Egypt's post-revolutionary problems. This failure, coupled with fears of Islamization, helped the Supreme Council, the remnants of the previous regime (led by figures such as Mohamed El-Baradei and Amr Moussa), and the old establishment institutions (most prominently al-Azhar) to recruit the Salafist al-Nour political party and the secular, liberal, and left-leaning political parties, as well as the "Youth of the Revolution" and some civil society organizations. An ad hoc coalition called Tamarrud (Arabic for rebellion) was formed with the aim of collecting fifteen million signatures by June 30, 2013—the first anniversary of Morsi's presidency—in order to force him to declare a new election and by that day, it had already collected more than 22 million signatures.[76]

The mass gathering of a broad spectrum of institutions, organizations, and political parties against Morsi's rule, calls for his resignation, and a new presidential election were significant markers of a lack of citizenship agreement. Morsi, however, continued to defend his regime's legitimacy based on the broad public support for the Freedom and Justice party. Morsi's refusal to resign led throngs of people to take to the streets throughout Egypt at the end of June 2013. Soon thereafter, on July 3, Egypt underwent a military coup, which installed a new authoritarian regime, led by al-Sisi.[77] Morsi's deposal generated clashes between his supporters, on the one hand, and military and police forces, on the other, in which hundreds were killed. The violence climaxed with the massacre at al-Nahda Square and the Raba'a al-Adawiya Mosque on August 14, 2013, in which the security forces shot dead at least 815 civilians.[78] The political polarization and lack of citizenship

agreement about Egypt's identity and the clashes between the Muslim Brotherhood and their opponents created a conflict in which the opponents were successful, mostly because of the concern over Egypt's Islamization; this fear bound together many different groups despite their diversity.

Under al-Sisi's rule, a new constitution was established in 2014. It stresses the cultural pluralism of the nation to a far greater extent than the 2012 constitution, which was abrogated after the military coup. The question of Egypt's national identity came to the fore in 2016 in the context of debates and arguments over a new citizenship law, which includes a clause that seeks to abrogate the registration of religious identity in Egyptian citizens' identification cards. While the legislative process is not yet complete, Cairo University has already deleted the religious identity line from all staff and student forms after complaints were leveled that it was unconstitutional.[79]

Consequent to the 2013 coup, the Egyptian political system sustained a severe blow reflecting the rift and ideological disagreements in Egyptian society. The parliament now numbers 596 members, and most are independents. The rest are splintered into nineteen political parties, most of which have fewer than five seats.[80] The Muslim Brotherhood, whose electoral power is assessed at about one-fourth of the voters, has been outlawed under al-Sisi's rule. The remaining Islamic party, the Salafist al-Nour party, is careful to maintain a tight alliance with the regime to ensure its continued existence and scope of activity. The old-time religious establishment of al-Azhar and the Coptic church have also honored the alliance with al-Sisi and have provided unconditional legitimacy to his rule. Al-Sisi plays his part by promoting policies that are opposed to atheism, thus placating the conservative majority in the country. Egypt has retreated to the citizenship agreement over religion and state that had prevailed before the 2011 revolution, by which the Egyptian people continue to be religious mostly at the individual level, while the collective and state identity corresponds to the "Egypt first" approach.[81]

The social rift created in Egypt between 2011 and 2013 and its lasting ramifications have damaged the state's internal security and public security, led to confrontations between governing systems that were supposed to be working together, and quickly ended what seemed like the beginning of democratization or, at least, the democratization process, which tens of millions of Egyptian citizens had awaited.

Conclusion

The Egyptian revolution of 2011, which was part of the wave of protests during the Arab Spring, placed the challenge of stateness before modern Egypt, successfully having addressed this question decades earlier. Consequent to the January 25 revolution, which ended a dictatorship dating to the revolution on July 23, 1952 by the Free Officers, Egypt's level of stateness dropped steadily. In terms of the aspect of the monopoly on the use of force, Egypt lost control of Sinai and its ability to ensure public order and security. As for the aspect of administrative effectiveness, Egypt continues to suffer from problems of a dysfunctional bureaucracy, an economic crisis and an inability to resolve it successfully, and the dominance of the public sector by the military, which has continued to benefit from full bureaucratic autonomy without any political control during Morsi's term in office, to the point that it led the military coup that toppled him. In terms of the aspect of citizenship agreement, especially during Morsi's year as president, Egyptian society clearly was deeply divided between the Muslim Brotherhood and its many supporters on one side and its opponents from various sectors and segments of the Egyptian public on the other. This rift brought about the military coup that put an end to Egypt's transition to democracy, instead preserving the division in society and the weakness of Egypt's political system.

The decline in all three aspects of stateness signifies the weakening of the state and its institutions since Mubarak's deposal in early 2011. Internally, Egypt faces challenges of domestic security, a profound economic crisis, social rifts, a political crisis (with the parliament composed of splintered parties), the failure to transition to a democracy, and the return to a dictatorship, as well as a crisis of legitimacy of the new authoritarian regime, lending further cause for internal destabilization.

Egypt's domestic weakness has damaged its regional standing as well. It lost its status as the leader of the Arab world, a position now occupied by Saudi Arabia. This was especially conspicuous in April 2016, when Saudi Arabia's King Salman was given an ostentatious reception during his visit to Egypt.[82] On that occasion, Egypt and Saudi Arabia signed economic agreements that cost Saudi Arabia about $2 billion, in exchange for which the kingdom received the islands of Tiran and Sanafir,[83] despite the opposition within Egypt's political system and by the public. Egypt's postponing of the transfer of the islands led Saudi Arabia to threaten to turn to the International

Court, especially after the Egyptian Supreme Court ruled that the islands were Egyptian sovereign territory.[84] Saudi Arabia punished Egypt for the delay in the transfer by stopping its oil supply[85] and further threatened Egypt that it would withdraw its investments in Egypt and deport the million Egyptian workers employed in Saudi Arabia if it did not comply with the agreement.[86] In response to President al-Sisi's uncompromising stand to honor the agreement with Saudi Arabia, the kingdom provided its reward,[87] and in July 2017, Saudi Arabia finally took possession of the islands, symbolizing Egypt's relinquishment of its status as the leader of the Arab world.

The decline in Egypt's stateness, especially in its monopoly on the use of force, has affected both domestic and regional security. The Sinai Peninsula has become a no man's land where a terrorist organization with sworn allegiance to ISIS operates with impunity, thus turning Egypt into one of the states hosting—albeit unwillingly—an extension of the organization that has fought the very idea of the nation-state and nationality and has undermined the national security and stability of several states in the region.

The decline in Egypt's stateness is not in Israel's best interest. In the last few decades, Egypt has been a major strategic ally of Israel, especially in the Middle East; Egypt helped advance the political process between Israel and the PLO and later the Palestinian Authority; Egypt has mediated between Israel and the Palestinians during crises and has helped to resolve them; and Egypt has also assisted in settling internal Palestinian crises, with their assistance being critical for maintaining tranquility in areas under the Palestinian Authority and consequently also in Israel. The decline in stateness has dealt Egypt a profound blow to its ability to fulfill these functions and take similar actions, thus harming Israel's interests as well.

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