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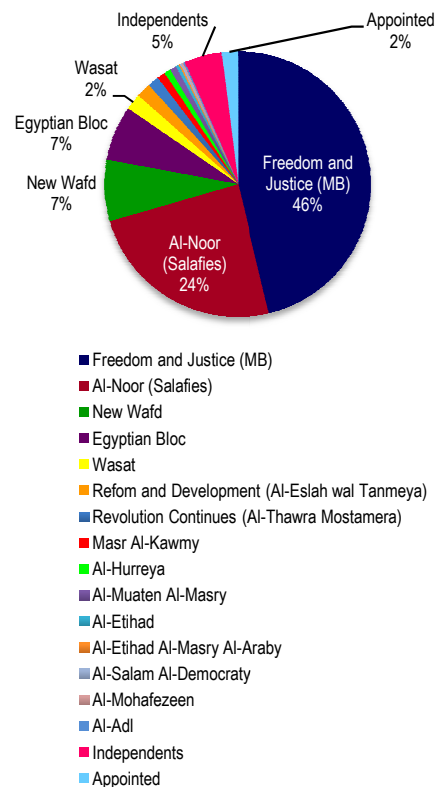
Where Is Egypt Heading? Reasons Why No One Really Knows

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«Where is Egypt heading?», a question that until today circulates in the Egyptian street and even widely among intellectuals and experts. After one year of its commencement, one would be flawed to think that the Egyptian revolution is now easy to understand or that it is becoming clearer with time where Egypt is heading to.

Some argue that the now democratically elected People's Council, with full legislative authorities, represents the first legitimate step in the process of transferring power from the military institution to civilian authorities. Hence - while not necessarily advocating that Egypt is on the right track leading to a true democracy – this group of people assumes that further steps in the transitional period should be smoothly following. However, many argue that the new People's Council, with an outstanding 70% of Islamists, just signs the start of new troubles and, perhaps, confrontation with other key forces: the military, blossoming secular parties, and the still mostly un-politicized youth movements. Accordingly, future dynamics among these four key actors, which are subject to distinctive scenarios, are to determine where Egypt is heading to.

The proceedings of the second session of the People's Council, held on February 24, could be interpreted in different ways. In this session many parliament members criticized fake trials of ex-regime officials and requested the initiation of serious ones. They requested to end the Emergency Status, under which civilians are tried in Military courts, and they also raised the issue of the revolution victims and requested to undertake an unselective investigation in all the incidents where thousands of peaceful protestors have been killed or injured. They explicitly indicated the need to include the October massacre (*Maspiro*) and the November incidents (*Mohammed Mahmoud Street and Magles al-Wozara*) where the ruling Military Council is entangled in. The session ended with the People's Council President, Saad Al-Katatny, requesting the presence of the Prime Minister and the Ministers of Interior, Health, and Justice to clarify the proceedings of trials. How to interpret this powerful performance, and to a certain degree confrontational attitude, of the new parliament? Does it mean that a clash with the Military institution is to be expected? Or Al-Katatny's request of presence of Cabinet head and members is just an attempt to contain the enthusiasm of fresh MPs and to send a



Final Results of the People's Council Elections

The opinions expressed herein are strictly personal and do not necessarily reflect the position of ISPI.

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calming message to the Egyptian street at the eve of planned demonstrations? It could be nicely interpreted in different ways. However, the Military immediate announcement after the end of the second parliamentary session that the Emergency Status is to be abolished starting of the day after, January 25, with the exception of dealing with thugs, affirmed that the main goal was containing planned public protests.

On another front, youth movements are still playing an important role. Their strong presence, despite not in formal political shapes, indicates that they are one of these key powers that are and will be shaping the way where Egypt is heading. Youth coalitions have been campaigning for weeks for renewed demonstrations on January 25, the first anniversary of the Egyptian revolution. Their campaigns have even been more empowered by the unexpected withdrawal of Mohammed Al-Baradei from the presidency candidacy. Correctly, they indicate, nothing has changed and the revolution until the moment has not yield aspired gains. Moreover, youth coalitions made it explicit that they distrust the intentions of the Military in planned subsequent steps of the transitional period. Mainly, they are suspicious of the Military intentions in the process of setting the new constitution and in compromising with the Muslim Brothers on who will be the future president of the country. These skepticisms are rooted in facts rather than speculations. Last November, the military attempted to release a supra-constitutional principles document, in which articles 9 and 10 indicated clearly the independent status of the Military away of any civilian oversight as well as its powerful say in Egypt's future foreign policy. This has been viewed by almost all political forces as an attempt of the military institution to protect its own interests and construct itself as the de facto ruler of the country even after handing over power to a civilian authority. Indeed, the interests of the military are numerous and it is expected to strive for their protection. The military interests do not only materialize in its long privileged position in the state economy but also in its interest to maintain the strategic relationship with the United States and peace with Israel, for which it has been receiving 1.3 \$ billion annually in military aid from the United States since 1979. Enjoying a special/autonomous status in the future constitution would protect the Military from possible future accusations of corruption or from holding them responsible for the many massacres against peaceful protestors after February 2011. For these interests, the process of redefining the status of the military in any future order is largely expected to be subjected to bargaining and compromises with influential political forces. Because of this logic, many were and still quasi affirmative in referring to a deal in place between the military and the brotherhood.

But now that Islamists are in control, would they satisfy the military in the future constitution or would they feel enough dominant to clash with the generals?; Who is going to fill the top-leadership vacuum? and would the future president accept playing a preset role according to the Military-Brotherhood *best laid plans*?

In this context, youth forces are the only existing power that is capable of challenging, rather than ceding to, these *best laid plans*. Their persistence and willingness to massively campaign, demonstrate, and their readiness to get severely injured or even killed in demonstrations could change all equations. This was clear in their massive demonstrations last November. Although their renewed protests in el-Tahrir did not actually yield tangible outcomes, they were indeed considered pleasant news. After several months of frustration, pessimism and uncertainty of whether Egypt is on the right track to real democracy or not, youth demonstrated that they were intervening to save the revolution, trying to put it again on a right course. This reassurance of presence is immensely needed, even if youth share of parliamentary seats did not come to reflect their actual political and demographic weight.

Now again, today, on the first anniversary of the revolution, youth - mainly - are leading public demonstrations, shouting: «Down Down with the Military Rule». A rapid transfer of power to a civilian authority, a non-special status to the Military, and serious fair trials are the main demands. Ironically, the same demands of that day last year are also raised today: «Dignity, Freedom and Social Justice».

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