Political Parties and Movements in Post-Revolutionary Egypt

Andrea Teti

Abstract

The post-revolutionary period Egyptian political scene is still extremely volatile, but some trends appear increasingly clear.

First, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) appears reluctant to cede power to a democratic process. Secondly, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) confirms its willingness to compromise with the regime by guaranteeing the latter’s privileges. Thirdly, the broad coalition of Left-Liberal forces which called for and drove the revolution during its early stages have been badly wrong-footed and marked by internal divisions.

Overall, the picture presents a gradual re-emergence and even reinforcement of executive power despite the uprising.

Andrea Teti is Lecturer in Strategic Studies, University of Aberdeen and Senior Fellow, European Centre for International Affairs.

(*) The opinions expressed herein are strictly personal and do not necessarily reflect the position of ISPI.
1. **Background and Key Issues**

1.1 **Roots of the Uprising**

The post-revolutionary period Egyptian political scene remains highly volatile, due to the intrinsically fluid nature of post-revolutionary periods and also as a direct result of the new military rulers’ failure to agree and announce a well-planned timetable for transition. Despite this, certain trends have been emerging clearly since February.

First, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF)\(^1\) appears reluctant to cede power to a democratic process. Although it has repeatedly and publicly proclaimed its intention to ‘defend the revolution’ and made occasional more specific commitments such as to revoke the emergency law before elections or halt trials of civilians under military courts, very little has come of these pronouncements.

Second, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) leadership has repeatedly confirmed its willingness to compromise with the regime by guaranteeing the latter’s privileges, precisely as it had under Mubarak.

Third, the broad coalition of Left-Liberal forces which called for and drove the revolution during its early stages appear to have been weakened partly by their organizational disadvantage compared to better-established groups – notably the MB – as well as by internal divisions.

1.2 **Key Issues**

**Elections**

Elections provided the regime under Mubarak with a claim to democracy which, however limited, was crucial internally and also in legitimizing massive Western financial support for the regime\(^2\). Electoral rules are therefore crucial for both domestic and international reasons.

Egypt’s first electoral poll after Mubarak’s departure was a referendum held on March 19 on 7 articles\(^3\) of the Constitution\(^4\). While it was the freest election (with the largest turnout) in over a generation, with decisions about key elements of the constitution

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\(^1\) http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2011/10/05/supreme-council-of-the-armed-forces. All internet sources last accessed 07/10/2011 unless otherwise specified.


\(^3\) Articles 76 (multi-candidate presidential elections), 77 (shorten presidential term from 6 to 4 years), 88 (judicial supervision of elections), 93 (Supreme Constitutional Council authority over validity of PA and SC members), 139 (obligatory to appoint VP within two months), 148 (limit presidency’s power to invoke emergency law), 179 (void presidential power to suspend civil and political rights), 189 (CoC appointment timeline). http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=42923.

yielded to the population for the first time, the vote was polarized, particularly by Islamists (Muslim Brotherhood, Salafis), and in the event, SCAF passed 63 articles, on a much wider range of topics than the articles which were put to the vote.

As for parliamentary elections, although SCAF vowed to organize parliamentary elections quickly after Mubarak’s departure, only in late September were dates set for the Parliamentary Assembly (PA, Majlis ash-Sha'b) for a three-stage election process in November, December and January. The first duty for the new PA will be to appoint a 100-strong Constitutional Council (CoC) from within its own ranks within six months. The CoC’s task will be to write a new constitution for Egypt, including rules for Presidential elections currently expected for August 2012. Elections for the upper house of parliament, the Consultative Council (CC, Majlis ash-Shura) will be held in two rounds, on January 29 and March 4.

Overall, SCAF seems in no hurry to organize elections, and has carefully retained control over electoral process and outcome. With its constitutional amendments, it has given itself the right to veto both parliament-appointed CoC members and the post-election government. Moreover, the staggered nature of voting – supposedly to allow independent judicial supervision – also provides SCAF with plentiful opportunities to stall the transition, for example by using frequent violent (mostly regime-sponsored) incidents as have occurred in the past to further delay electoral results.

SCAF actions concerning the electoral law for upcoming parliamentary polls – which remain unclear to date, despite elections being planned on November 28 – confirm this pattern of manipulation. Currently, the law allows for 2/3 of MPs to be elected via party lists, and 1/3 in direct elections. There are few guarantees against the re-emergence of extensive clientelistic relations which the NDP-based regime relied upon under Mubarak. The so-called “treachery law”, for example, which would allow barring former NDP members from running for office, has instead been applied very selectively to target former regime members being purged, and difficult-to-control pro-democracy activists. Indeed, several ex-NDP apparatchiks have been allowed to form parties.

5 Over 45 million citizens were eligible to vote, turnout was 18,537,000 (41.19%), valid votes were 18,366,000; annulled votes were 171,000; yes votes were 14,192,000 (77.2%) while the no vote was 4,174,000 (21.8%). Full results (in Arabic) available at http://www.estefta2.eg/84-slideshow/160-2011-03-20-20-19-29.html.
6 www.cabinet.gov.eg/AboutEgypt/ConstitutionalDeclaration_e.pdf.
7 November 28 (re-run Dec. 5; governorates: Cairo, Fayoum, Port Said, Damietta, Alexandria, Kafr El-Sheikh, Assiut, Luxor, and the Red Sean); December 14 (re-run Dec. 21; governorates: Giza, Bani Suef, Menoufiya, Sharqiya, Ismailia, Suez, Behaira, Sohag and Aswan); January 3 (re-run: Jan. 10; governorates: Minya, Qalyoubia, Gharbiya, Daqahlia, South and North Sinai, Matrouh, Qena and El-Wadi El-Gadid). Candidate applications open Oct. 12 and the assembly convenes on March 17, 2012.
8 The 64-strong women’s quota, introduced in 2010 elections, has been abolished and MPs reduced from 504 to 498 (previously 454), while the SC has been reduced from 390 to 270.
9 SCAF has issued some formal guarantees in the shape of amendments to the election law which could provide for checks on corruption: http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/23651/Egypt/Politics-/SCAF-amends-Egypt-political-participation-law,-can.aspx; there is, however, considerable skepticism on whether these provisions can guarantee fair elections http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/503345. Both accessed 9/10/2011.
10 In July, Egypt’s Administrative Court decided to reactivate the Treachery Act, a passed in the wake of the 1952 “revolution”, which criminalized former regime officials in cases of political corruption. In August
Legislation and the Judiciary

Repealing authoritarian legislation is a core demand of pro-democracy activists, but signals from SCAF and the government are at best mixed in this regard. Most notoriously, the hated emergency law which was first invoked upon President Sadat’s assassination in 1981 and renewed every two years ever since, has not yet been repealed, despite SCAF commitment to do so in time for elections11. On the contrary, its scope, previously limited to narcotics and terrorism, was recently broadened to include strikes, spreading “false information” and even traffic disruption. Officially a response to the “storming” of the Israeli embassy in Cairo (in reality permitted by nearby security forces), emergency legislation is being used frequently to target opposition activists, for whom trials in military courts have massively increased compared even to the late Mubarak period.

A related issue is the use of military and State Security courts to try civilians. Under Mubarak, this had rallied opposition to the regime, and its abolition was one of the key demands of the January uprising. Contrary to expectations, the number of prosecutions – more often than not against pro-democracy and anti-regime protesters – ballooned reaching an estimated 12,000 civilians by September. SCAF has repeated its commitment to end military trials for civilians, except for «those who attack army soldiers», at a meeting with representatives of 47 political parties on September 18. On the contrary, its scope, previously limited to narcotics and terrorism, was recently broadened to include strikes, spreading “false information” and even traffic disruption. Officially a response to the “storming” of the Israeli embassy in Cairo (in reality permitted by nearby security forces), emergency legislation is being used frequently to target opposition activists, for whom trials in military courts have massively increased compared even to the late Mubarak period.

Another litmus test of the military junta’s disposition has been the prosecution of former regime members, most notably Hosni Mubarak, his sons, and reviled former Interior Minister Habib al-Adly. The record on these prosecutions is mixed. Some high-ranking former members of the regime have been tried and fairly swiftly convicted (e.g. former Information Minister Anas al-Fiqqi, former Egyptian Radio and TV Union chief Osama al-Sheikh and businessman and former Tourism Minister Zoheir Garanah were sentenced to 7, 5 and 3 years respectively for corruption; Gamal Mubarak’s closest ally, Ahmad Ezz, was sentenced to 10 years for misuse of public funds).

The trial of Hosni Mubarak, of his two sons Gamal and Alaa, and of former Interior Minister Habib Al-Adly for causing the death of nearly 900 protesters during the January-February uprising represents a microcosm of the limbo in which Egypt’s judicial system – some would argue the revolution itself – find itself. On the one hand, the very fact of the trial represents a momentous change in Egyptian politics and a

2011, the Cabinet released an amended Act, allowing for officials proven guilty of political corruption to be stripped of their right to practice politics for five years. However, around eight political parties established by members of the former regime have been granted legal status thus far. 12 Field Marshal Tantawi himself repeated this statement on October 9, but was criticized for the emptiness of the commitment, since the crimes under which referral to military tribunals was still possible was so broad an hazily defined. 13 Also, the body responsible for prosecuting violations of electoral procedure is the Interior Ministry, which was responsible for those violations under Mubarak; http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/503345. Both accessed 9/10/2011.

continued reminder of the power of mass rebellion. On the other hand, some fear the trial is being constantly undermined – not least by SCAF itself which were an integral part of the old order – making a conviction less likely.\(^\text{14}\)

A broader issue is the question of judicial independence, which had constantly been eroded under Mubarak. The widely criticized Judicial Authority Law 142/2006, for example, subjected the judiciary to considerable influence from the Interior Ministry, by allowing the Ministry to appoint “judicial councils” to supervise elections among other things.\(^\text{15}\) Despite being instinctively conservative and increasingly influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood, the independent judiciary has been one of the core elements of opposition to the regime under Mubarak.

**Freedom of Expression**

After considerable initial optimism about the future of the media in Egypt, the last few weeks have brought worrying signals of a SCAF clampdown. Over the past month, several independent television stations and newspapers have come under direct pressure from the military. Most notably, Al-Jazeera’s Mubasher Misr (Egypt Live) channel was closed;\(^\text{16}\) the Sawt al-Umma newspaper was raided by security forces at the end of September and 3,000 copies were destroyed; and on October 9, the military attacked the offices of US-funded Al-Hurra TV and of TV25 while both were broadcasting news of the sectarian clashes in Cairo which left 24 people dead.\(^\text{17}\) Since then, several media figures have spoken out about increasing censorship pressures.

This takes place in the worrying context of the broadening of the emergency law (outlined above) with the pretext of a “raid” on the Israeli embassy which the military did nothing to prevent despite being at the scene, and a generalized clampdown on freedom of expression,\(^\text{18}\) including the arrest and mistreatment of bloggers such as Maikel Nabil or youth activists like Asamaa Mahfouz for “insulting the military.”\(^\text{19}\)

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\(^\text{14}\) Procedure has at times been arbitrary, the presiding judge seems to have favoured the defence on several occasions, witnesses for the prosecution suddenly changed their statements, and most notably live broadcasts of the proceedings were halted for “security reasons”, and the testimonies of high-ranking SCAF members such as General Sami Anan and Tantawi himself on Sep. 24 were given in secret. Tantawi insinuated armed forces refused orders to fire at protesters during a speech to graduates of the Police Academy on 15 May. The only person who could have given then-Minister of Defence Tattawi such an order was then-Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Mubarak.

\(^\text{15}\) There are currently two proposals for reform. The first has been drawn up by Judge Mekki, a longtime advocate for judicial reform, who was appointed by Hossam al-Gheriany, a leading figure in the independent judiciary movement and recently named head of both the Court of Cassation and the Supreme Judicial Council. A second draft was drawn up by Judge Zend, and is favoured by Ezat Agwa, who became head of Judges Club of Alexandria under the Mubarak regime last year. Both would transfer judicial oversight away from the Interior Ministry, but while Zend’s proposal bases membership of the Supreme Judicial Council on seniority alone, Mekki’s proposal would have members elected from amongst Egypt’s senior judiciary. Mekki would also make the public prosecutor a judicial appointment, independent from the executive.

\(^\text{16}\) After a decision to stop issuing licenses for new satellite channels, when AJMM had been transmitting for months and promised a license by the Minister himself.

\(^\text{17}\) http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/23721/Egypt/Politics-/Egyptian-Military-attacks-Alhurra-TV.aspx.


Instead of negotiating with opposition groups, SCAF has repeatedly condemned protesters as both thugs and members of foreign-funded organizations which threaten “public order”.

**Police and Security Sector Reform**

The police and civilian security forces constituted the principal instrument of repression of dissent under Mubarak, and as well as being institutionally corrupt, they used torture as a basic investigative tool. Abuses were rarely investigated, much less prosecuted. The reform of the police and of the security sector more generally is, therefore, unsurprisingly a touchstone issue\(^\text{20}\), particularly for the leftist and Islamist oppositions.

The State Security Agency (SSA), an arm of the police that operated at the political level, was effectively part of the regime’s repertoire of repression, involved in election-rigging, running of universities, trade unions, the media, spying on and repressing the opposition, and even influenced ministerial appointments. Central Security Forces (CSF) has also been the target of repeated calls by rights groups such as Human Rights Watch have repeatedly stressed the need to reform the security sector in general, and the CSF in particular\(^\text{21}\).

Interior Minister Mansour el-Issawi, who heads the police, dissolved the SSA and replaced it with a new body called the National Security Authority (NSA). Prosecutors have put 140 police officers on trial for killing protesters during the uprising, and in July, el-Issawi sacked 700 senior officers from the various police branches, including the SSA and the notorious Criminal Investigation Department. However, most of those removed were near retirement, and it appears that particularly at more senior levels, corrupt officers were not so much removed and prosecuted as shifted around to different posts. More worryingly still, one of the basic tactics used by regime during the protests was to withdraw policing, in the hope that the anarchy which would follow would delegitimize pro-democracy protesters. This tactic seems to have been applied in the post-Mubarak period also\(^\text{22}\).

**Labour Activism**

The independent labour movement is probably the most important but also the most neglected force within the Egyptian opposition. The Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF) – the board of which was recently dissolved due to allegations of corruption – was essentially another instrument through which the regime attempted to control independent mobilisation. One result of the wave of labour activism which began in 2006 was the establishment of independent trade unions – technically illegal, as ETUF recognition was compulsory – such as the Real Estate Tax Collectors’ union (RETA) and the Centre for Trade Union Workers’ Services (CTUWS).

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\(^\text{21}\) http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/15880.aspx. CSF’s only – and very limited – oversight is provided Article 102 of Egypt’s 1971 Police Law 109, for the enforcement of which there are no specific mechanisms.

\(^\text{22}\) According to Interior Ministry figures, there were 36 armed robberies in January before the uprising, rising sharply to 420 by July, murders increased from 44 to 166, kidnappings from 3 to 42.
The labour movement was central to the building opposition movement between 2006-10, in calling for and giving early support for the January uprising\textsuperscript{23}, with several groups’ memberships overlapping with “liberal” civil society groups such as April 6 Youth Movement and the Facebook-organised group We Are All Khaled Said\textsuperscript{24}. In the post-revolutionary period, while the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood has frequently appeared to want to cut deals with the new junta, the independent labour movement has been the most consistent source of opposition pressure on the new regime. The movement’s claims are partly about pay and conditions – calling for such things as a generalised improvement in working conditions, the implementation of the minimum wage – but also about broader political reform.

Mubarak’s departure led to a flourishing of independent unions, and constant pressure on the government in the form of strikes, not just in Cairo, but crucially throughout the country’s industrial heartlands, in clear defiance to SCAF’s calls to end “class-based” protests in the aftermath of the uprising\textsuperscript{25}. Strikes have also swept the country’s governorates over the summer and into the autumn, and have not been limited to industrial workers, but included teachers and doctors. The presence of middle class groups is significant: their increasing activism after 2006 reflected the economic polarisation which liberal reforms had led to, and contributed to isolating the old regime.

Faced with these demands, some concessions have been made – Health Minister Amr Helmy promised nearly LE1bn (€100m ca.) for salary increases in the sector, although none have been delivered yet – but mostly strikes have been met with increasing repression by SCAF and attempts at delegitimization\textsuperscript{26}. This is justified by SCAF in terms of the impact on Egypt’s economy: while this is no doubt not trivial, the primary motivation for SCAF appears to be to prevent the movement from building strength, and in particular preventing them from expanding from their historical heartlands in the public sector, into the private sector and protected areas, where the military has sizeable economic interests.

\textit{Independent Civil Society, national security, and the “Foreign Funding” debate}

Closely connected to labour-based opposition is the so-called “foreign funding debate”, which affects not just the independent unions, but civil society more generally. Relatively small but significant amounts of funding reached independent opposition groups during the Mubarak period, helping them sustain their activities. Over 2006-2010, the regime made concerted efforts to constrain foreign funding\textsuperscript{27}, particularly

\textsuperscript{23} For a background, see M. EL-GHOBASHY, \textit{The Praxis of the Egyptian Revolution}, in «Middle East Reports\textsuperscript{25}, 258, 2011.
\textsuperscript{24} Khaled Said was a blogger who was tortured to death by security forces for trying to expose corruption in police ranks. His kidnap and assassination, and the state attempt to cover it up, helped spark the wave of dissent which resulted in the January uprising.
\textsuperscript{26} http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/1914/striking-back-at-egyptian-workers.
\textsuperscript{27} Background: http://www.icnl.org/knowledge/ngolawmonitor/egypt.htm; http://www.ngoregnet.org/country_information_by_region/Middle_East_and_North_Africa/Egypt.asp; also P. GUBSER, \textit{The Impact of NGOs on the State & Non-State Relations in the Middle East}, in «Middle East Policy\textsuperscript{9}, 1, 2002.
putting pressure on European counterparts to channel funds through the state\textsuperscript{28}, and systematically disparaging groups in receipt of democracy assistance funding in particular as foreign stooges\textsuperscript{29}.

In the months before the January uprising, Mubarak’s government had announced its intention to pass a bill on NGO funding which would channel all funds through the Central Bank, effectively giving the regime the ability to choke off funding to independent groups. It is a matter of considerable concern that both the current government and SCAF announced similar intentions, including rendering all unregistered NGOs illegal, while ignoring the fact that such NGOs are often unregistered because of the state interference which registration brings. Speaking during a recent joint meeting by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) in Washington, Minister of Planning and International Organization Fayza Abouel Naga said a fact-finding government panel established in July recently submitted its report on the illegal funding of unregistered civil organizations, and described organizations that had obtained foreign financing without the government’s knowledge as a danger to Egypt’s national security. US ambassador Anne Patterson said in June the US was earmarking $40m for USAID democracy and governance spending: Qatar’s al-Thani Foundation gave the ultra-conservative Ansar al-Sunna association LE181m ($30m) in a single payment. Non-Islamist opposition groups also point out that the government and SCAF focus on independent NGOs receiving funding for democracy assistance, but not on the large amounts of funds reportedly pouring into Egypt from Saudi Arabia totalling around $4bn\textsuperscript{30} – much less in the roughly $3bn the Egyptian state itself receives annually from the US alone\textsuperscript{31}. The US government has since released a list of all Egyptian NGOs receiving US funding.

\textit{Sectarian Tensions}

The issue of sectarian divisions, particularly the tension between Salafi groups and Coptic Christians, remains unresolved. The fear of runaway sectarian conflict was an important source of both domestic and international leverage which the Mubarak regime used to justify its continued crackdown on pluralism – indeed, one leaked US diplomatic cable warns Washington of as much\textsuperscript{32}. The new junta has been slow to move on the slow but steady trickle of, and on October 9 a march protesting violence against Copts descended into mutual recrimination and violence, with state TV improbably claiming that Copts had initiated clashes by attacking the military and killing several soldiers. As things stand, sources say between 24 and 36 people were killed,


\textsuperscript{32} http://213.251.145.96/cable/2006/01/06CAIRO493.html; accessed 4/10/2011.
with as many as 270 injured\textsuperscript{33}, and most local papers, including the party paper Al-Wafd and state-owned Al-Akhbar, blame the clashes on Copts\textsuperscript{34}

The Coptic leadership, like the Azhar, Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood, had initially opposed the January uprising, underestimating both the extent of support for it and the strength of the common ground across religious divides amongst protesters. Since those extraordinary scenes of solidarity, however, there has been a steady trickle of tension, punctuated by several episodes of violence.

Whether SCAF is consciously manipulating these tensions, underestimating them, or simply mishandling them, the net effect is to increase the sense of instability and division in Egyptian society, to which many are responding by demanding stability and order. Other things being equal, this tends politically to play into the hands of SCAF and hard-line religious groups, and against pro-democracy opposition groups.

2. \textit{Parties, Movements & Coalitions}

The Egyptian political scene remains highly fluid, with a swathe of new groups being established in the wake of the January uprising. Their alliances in particular remain changeable. Their ideological commitments can broadly be divided into Islamist, Leftist, and Liberal. In addition to parties, a key role both before and after the uprising was played by civil society groups, professional associations and independent trade unions, all key agents of political opposition under Mubarak, and all still actively engaged in politics.

2.1 Movements

Under Mubarak, movements and professional syndicates were the primary locus of resistance, along with independent labour unions. The Muslim Brotherhood in particular became increasingly dominant within syndicates, and continues this drive today\textsuperscript{35}.

There are several groups which give themselves an ‘ecumenical’ remit, attempting to draw support from across the political spectrum. Most important among these are the \textit{Kefaya! (Enough!)} movement in 2004, established in 2005 and playing an important role in galvanising protests both in 2005 and in the run-up to the January uprising\textsuperscript{36}; the \textit{National Association For Change} (NAC), a broad opposition coalition pushing for pro-democracy, constitutional reforms that was founded by El-Baradei in 2010 and also active in the build-up to the January uprising, e.g with a campaign to collect 1 million signatures for a petition to guarantee free elections; The \textit{April 6 Youth Movement} began as a Facebook group in support of workers protesting in industrial city of


\textsuperscript{34} \url{http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/503539}; \url{http://english.ahram.org.eg/~/NewsContent/1/64/23491/Egypt/Politics/-AJamaa-AllIslamia-condemns-Copts%E2%80%99-protests,-hints.aspx}; \url{http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/503748}.

\textsuperscript{35} \url{http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/496146}.

\textsuperscript{36} N. AZIMI, \textit{Egypt's youth have had enough}, in «OpenDemocracy», September 1, 2005; M. EL-GHOBASHY, \textit{Egypt looks ahead to a portentous year}, in «Middle East Report», February 2, 2005.
Mahalla el-Kubra, and grew into one of the primary organising forces behind the January uprising; and the *Revolution Youth Coalition*, established during the uprising by activists from different political traditions. It has played a pivotal role in organising protests. Unlike most counterparts, *April 6* will field 200 candidates country-wide in upcoming elections.

The primary aims of these groups are therefore political reform to guarantee genuine representativeness, and economic reform to achieve a greater measure of social justice. Their primary support base comes from socialists, nationalists and Nasserists as much as from the liberal middle class. This cross-party support, driven partly by disenchantment with the parliamentary parties' ineffectiveness under Mubarak, is built around a core range of issues, primarily: ending the state of emergency and the use of military tribunals to try civilians; ensuring independent judicial oversight over elections; cancelling laws restricting freedom of speech, and allowing equal access to media for all candidates; limiting presidential powers and terms of office; a civilian state (especially curbing growing SCAF power; separation of powers, strengthening the legislative to balance the executive; good governance and democracy; and giving diaspora Egyptians the right to vote.

The *Muslim Brotherhood* (MB) is one of the oldest, largest, best-organised and best-funded Islamist groups worldwide. It has been a mostly non-violent, conservative but not extremist organisation, focusing on “Islamization from below” rather than revolution or direct political involvement, at least until recently. It accepted a *modus vivendi* with Mubarak in which the regime refrained from eliminating it entirely (albeit regularly attacking it), partly because it provided welfare services the state could no longer afford, and partly because it served as a useful “scarecrow” when Western governments pressed for greater political pluralism. This also helps explain why both before the January uprising, during and after it, the MB was keen to negotiate with Mubarak and now with many of the same figures of his regime in the SCAF. It is important to emphasize that the MB was wrong-footed by the January uprising, with senior members calling for its boycott up until the eve of the massive demonstrations of January 28, and that regime repression pressed into unity a fairly diverse range of Islamist political positions, which are now coming to light. Younger and more progressive members disobeyed orders not to participate in the uprising, and have since manifested dissent, with some splitting away to form independent groups.

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37 http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFJOE78L0LW20110922.
39 e.g. http://213.251.145.96/cable/2006/01/06CAIRO493.html.
parallel, however, hawkish ultra-conservatives have gained ground, as moderates leave or are sidelined.\(^{42}\)

2.2 **Political Parties**

*Liberal Parties*

Political parties have flourished in the post-uprising period, and their internal composition, electoral programmes, and particularly their alliances have been undergoing sometimes rapid change.

Amongst Liberal groups, the most prominent parties include some which maintained their reputation broadly untarnished despite having been active during the pre-Mubarak era, and others which are attempting to make a comeback despite being tainted with corruption and/or collaboration during the Mubarak era. Best example of the former is the *Al-Ghad* (Tomorrow) party, lead by Ayman Nour\(^ {43}\), who presented the most serious challenge to Mubarak’s presidential bid in 2005. Nour was later arrested, tried and convicted on what many believed were trumped-up charges of falsifying signatures for his presidential bid. Al-Ghad is running on a platform of a “social market economy”, the protection of civil and political rights, equality regardless of faith or gender, eliminating the state’s media monopoly, and strong anti-corruption legislation and controls over the private sector. Al-Ghad was established after Nour split away from the liberal-nationalist *New Wafd* (Delegation) party in 2004, after disputes about internal corruption and compromising with the Mubarak regime. These issues remain unresolved to date, and the party leadership faced internal revolt during last year’s parliamentary elections, when it prevented younger and more radical members from running for party leadership. Like the MB, it negotiated with Mubarak during the January uprising\(^ {44}\), and has repeatedly appeared to cut deals with both junta and Brotherhood.

In addition, there are several newer parties, the appeal and influence of which is harder to assess. Amongst the most prominent are the *Egyptian Democratic Social Party* (EDSP), the ‘*Adl* (Justice) Party, and the *Al-Masriyeen al-Ahrar* (Free Egyptians) Party (FEP).

Broadly, these parties present political agendas displaying considerable overlap with centre-left (and some Islamist) groups, advocating a civil (i.e. non-military) state, separation of and balance between powers, the abolition of the emergency law, building state institutions, and encouraging investment in the public sector, equality among all citizens (including holding public office), rule of law, and anti-corruption measures\(^ {45}\), as well as more recognisably liberal policies such as a free-market economy\(^ {46}\), as well as anti-monopoly legislation, sustainable development, and a

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\(^{44}\) Secretary-general Mounir Fakhry Abdel Nour became Tourism Minister in the short-lived cabinet formed by Ahmed Shafiq.


\(^{46}\) The high committee includes Tarek Abdel-Rahman, a partner at investment banking boutique Akanar Partners.
commitment to social justice, generating jobs and improving education. Some also advocate the application of the modified “treachery act”\(^{47}\) to prevent former NDP members from running for office.

The EDSP is headed by Mohamed Abul-Ghar, a prominent Kifaya! activist, presents a liberal-leftist platform, and was one of the first parties set up after the uprising from the merger of the Egyptian Democratic Party and the Liberal Egyptian Party\(^{48}\). The ‘Adl (Justice) Party\(^{49}\) is seeking to position itself between the left and the liberal centre on one hand and the Islamist right on the other, challenging the MB’s Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) for the centre ground\(^{50}\). ‘Adl is also supported by businessmen including Hisham al-Khazindar, managing director and co-founder of Citadel Capital, the region’s leading private equity firm.

The Free Egyptians Party (FEP) is trying to become a major player. With 100,000 registered members, it is second only to the MB’s Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) in organizational capability. Launched in April by telecommunications mogul Naguib Sawiris, the party can draw on large financial resources. Sawiris, a Copt, has made it clear that the party is for all Egyptians, not just Copts, although the party has been dubbed by some as the ‘Christians’ Party’\(^{51}\). The party nods towards social justice but is strongly pro-business, and focuses on market-driven economic development, strong state institutions, and the rule of law.

Other parties include the Egypt Freedom Party, lead by academic and activist Amr Hamzawy, and the Democratic Front. The party nods towards social justice but is strongly pro-business, and focuses on market-driven economic development, strong state institutions, and the rule of law.

Left-Wing Parties

Left-wing parties, which tend to represent working class Egyptians, have lagged behind much better-funded liberal and Islamist parties, and have difficulties in attracting support particularly beyond their core constituencies. Consequently, despite belonging to the “old order”, Tagammu (PNUP) remains the largest Leftist party.

Left-wing party platforms contain several elements common to most post-uprising Egyptian parties such as the abolition of the emergency law and military trials for civilians, separation and balance between powers, a civilian (non-military-run) state,

\(^{47}\) Egypt’s Administrative Court decided to reactivate the treachery act, a post 1952 revolution law, to criminalize former regime officials in cases of political corruption. In August, Cabinet amended treachery act, stripping officials proven guilty of political corruption of their right to practice politics for five years.

\(^{48}\) Founding members include Finance Minister Hazem el-Beblawi, activist Mohamed Abou El-Ghar, filmmaker Daoud Abdel Sayed and former U.N. diplomat Mervat Tallawy.


\(^{50}\) Its most prominent leader is former MB member and Mohammad El-Baradei’s presidential campaign coordinator Mustapha al-Naggar, and was founded by members of Baradei’s National Association for Change, as well as some members of Kefaya and the April 6 Youth Movement. http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2011/10/07/mostafa-al-naggar.

\(^{51}\) The party platform advocates recognizing Islam as state religion, but also recognizing freedom of religion.

freedom of expression and association, and repealing restrictive NGO legislation, but also focus on a number of traditionally leftist elements: stopping privatisation; workers’ rights, particularly to political expression and organisation through independent trade unions; setting minimum and (in some cases) maximum wages, nationalising industry, redistributing wealth, and the use of strikes to keep pressure on SCAF. Most also favour excluding formed NDP members from upcoming elections.

Established in 1976 by leftists including Khaled Moheiddin, one of the Free Officers who carried out the coup of 1952, the Progressive Nationalist Unionist Party (PNUP, or Tagammu) attracted Nasserists, Marxists and Arab nationalists. It once had strong support from the working class, unions, universities and intellectuals, but its influence waned as critics accused it of selling out to Mubarak’s regime. Nonetheless, it was the first group to withdraw from dialogue with Vice President Omar Suleiman during the anti-Mubarak uprising, and has since become an outspoken critic of the Brotherhood. Controversially, Tagammu rejects banning candidates running as independents and then joining parties, which is one way former NDP members could return to parliament.

The most serious challenge to Tagammu’s position as most important left-wing party comes from the Socialist Popular Alliance (SPA), which aims to become a framework for a broad range of leftist views to provide a counterweight to the emerging Islamist and Liberal blocs. The party includes former Tagammu members, members of the Trotskyite Socialist Renewal Current (SRC), Revolutionary Socialists (RS), the democratic left, and other independents. The party is the only leftist party after the revolution that has managed to obtain the required members’ number for registration, although official approval remains pending.

Other left-wing parties include the Workers’ Democratic Party (WDP), whose founding members include former Revolutionary Socialists (RS) and independent activists involved in the January Uprising, but WDP has not yet achieved the required number of members to officially establish a party (5,000 with at least 300 members from 10 governorates). Aside from the possible legal challenge against a workers’ party (Egyptian law bans parties based on religion or class), WDP faces the challenge of setting up an organisation ex novo, with very little funding to do so. The leadership appears to be focusing on the longer-term goal of establishing a solid nation-wide base. The Egyptian Socialist Party (ESP) includes several leading figures from the 1970s (e.g. Ahmed Bahaa Shaaban, Karima El-Hefnawy). Ideologically committed to socialist democracy, they work for political and economic freedom with social justice. Party membership comprises both Marxists and non-Marxists, and claims to have a youth base.

54 http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/22776/Egypt/Politics-/Egyptian-Left-rising-first-postrevolution-leftist.aspx.
Religious Parties

Far from forming a unified bloc, religious parties are flourishing and expressing diverse views on key issues such as whether to back the junta, relations with other opposition groups, and whether to take conservative, moderate or progressive stances on social and moral issues, on the economy and on foreign policy. Broadly, these parties can be divided between moderate groups (such as the Wasat Party), conservative groups (such as the MB-backed Freedom and Justice Party) and more radical Salafi groups (e.g. Nour, Fadila, Building and Development). The primary divisions amongst these groups rest on whether to call for Egypt to become an Islamic state (which Salafis generally back), the implementation of Islamic law as opposed to using shari’a as inspiration for jurisprudence, and economic programmes (all favour ‘Islamic’ economics, although most groups remain very vague on what this might be, and for some like the Brotherhood, the economic agenda resembles that of its liberal and Mubarak-era counterparts quite closely).56

The Freedom and Justice Party (Al-Hurriyya wa al-‘Adala, FJP) was founded by the Muslim Brotherhood, and could become the dominant Islamist party after parliamentary elections. Although its platform is generally considered conservative rather than radical, there have been evolving controversies around its agenda. FJP is committed to a “civil state”, i.e. not run by the military or ruled as a theocracy, not least because Egyptian law bans parties with even “a religious point of reference”. However, FJP also aims for the “implementation of Shari’a”, and wishes to see the Supreme Constitutional Court vet legislation for compatibility with Islam as religion of state. Notably, MB moderates and reformists, largely ousted from its Shura Council, have also been excluded from the FJP leadership, signalling a right-wing lurch in the group’s ideological ‘centre of gravity’. Further concern derives from its continuously revised avowals to not run for a majority in parliament, which it has recently finally overturned. The FJP leads the Democratic Alliance, a front which includes the Wafd Party for the upcoming elections. The Wafd-FJP relationship is rocky, however: some allege a deal between them to carve up government58, the Wafd is currently distancing itself from its FJP-MB allies59, but has for the time being confirmed its membership in the Alliance60.

The Wasat (Centre) Party was founded in 1996 by several young, well-respected MB dissidents. Its religious ideology is drawn from the Wasatiyya (Centrist) school of thought, a liberal Islamic interpretive tradition that gained popularity in the 1980s-90s. Wasat interprets shari’a principles in line with liberal democratic values. Although it advocates a political system anchored in Islamic law, it also views shari’a principles as flexible and compatible with the principles of pluralism and equal citizenship rights. It advocates equal rights for all citizens, abolishing emergency legislation and special courts, imposing presidential term limits, reducing executive power, and at an

58 http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/500165; one source for this allegation is Montasser al-Zayyat, close to Jamaa al-Islamiyya and running against an MB member in Lawyers’ Syndicate elections.
economic level focuses on poverty alleviation and universal health care, but also backs private enterprise.

To the right of both Wasat and FJP are Salafi groups such as the Al-Nour (Light) Party, the Al-Gamaa Al-Islamiya-backed Building and Development Party (BDP)\(^{62}\), and smaller Salafi parties such as Al-Asala (Authencity), Al-Fadila (Virtue), and Al-Islah (Reformation) parties, and marginal groups such as the Shi’a Unity and Freedom Party (UFP) and the Sufi (mystic) Egyptian Liberation Party (Hizb Al-Tahrir al-Masry).

Salafi groups take a harder stance on religious issues, advocating a closer connection between the religious and the political, such as declaring Islam as the religion of the state, religious jurisprudence as the main source of law (e.g. Al-Asala)\(^{63}\), and in some cases (e.g. the BDP) the implementation of *hudud* (Qur’anic) punishments in the penal code (this is opposed by al-Fadila) and calls for subjecting freedom of expression to (their interpretation of) Islamic Law (Nour, Asalah).

Economically, the Nour Party’s policies are the best-developed, and include offering a minimum wage, universal healthcare and education, increase trade with Arab countries, regulating markets, enhancing infrastructure, but ignores taxes\(^{64}\). Nour also advocates concentrating investment in strategic industries such as utilities, mining, petroleum and nuclear power remaining under government control, with public-private partnerships driving development. Nour also calls for the abolition of interest, which it sees as usury, and calls for implementing Islamic law. There is also a debate on the role of women, with many arguing that the gains in this area were the product of Mubarak’s bowing to Western influence and/or to the influence of his wife Suzanne.

Finally, the Shi’a Unity and Freedom Party (UFP) and the Sufi Egyptian Liberation Party (Hizb Al-Tahrir al-Masry) have been established in response to the fears within these small and historically marginalised communities that the right-ward lurch in the Islamist spectrum towards increasingly conservative positions will increase intolerance towards them (already, several Sufi shrines have been reportedly attacked by Salafis).

**Former NDP independents**

The National Democratic Party (NDP)\(^{65}\) functioned essentially as a vehicle for the administration of patronage from the local to the national level. It was disbanded on April 16\(^{th}\) for corruption and fraud, but former party members have developed or are establishing several new parties. Amongst the most prominent is the Ittihad (Union) party. Ittihad’s leader, Hossam Badrawi, became NDP secretary-general in the dying days Mubarak’s rule in a last attempt to quell protests. Badrawi, seen as a reformer

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\(^{63}\) In mid-September, the secretary general of the party in Beni Suef, Sayyed al-Affamy, called for the application of Islamic law and for the cancellation of the so called “man-made law” in Egypt.


opposed by the old guard, resigned barely hours before Mubarak departed, arguing new parties were needed. Ittihad was approved on 26/9, and calls for a separation of powers (whose boundaries were blurred under Mubarak), free market policies, and stronger regulations to ensure social justice. Other parties led by former NDP officials include al-Horreya (Freedom, approval pending), Masr al-Tanmiya (Egypt Development), Renaissance Party, Egyptian National Party, Masr al-Haditha (Modern Egypt), and al-Mawatan al-Masry (Egyptian Citizen). An electoral alliance between these parties is being discussed.

The NDP secured sweeping election victories under Mubarak through ballot stuffing, intimidation and other abuses. Some members still command local influence through business interests or tribal connections. Many opposition members have demanded that former NDP members be barred from the election.

2.3 Party Blocs
The instability of the political scene in post-uprising Egypt, rules on electoral competition, and insecurity concerning voting outcomes, and the difficulty of setting up nation-wide organisations in time to register for and compete effectively in upcoming elections, have all driven Egyptian parties to form coalitions. The largest amongst these are the Democratic Alliance for Egypt, headlined by the Muslim Brotherhood-backed FJP but containing several liberal and leftist parties (notably the Ghad, Wafd and Nasserist parties), and the liberal-leaning Egypt Bloc, which includes the NAC, Tagammu, Free Egypt, but also the Sufi Egyptian Freedom Party. The alliances are likely to prove highly unstable throughout the electoral period starting with the lower house elections in November 2011 and ending with the Presidential elections scheduled for summer 2012. Smaller coalitions include the Adl-lead Third Way group, and the leftist Revolutionary Forces Alliance. Under discussion but potentially more important is also a coalition of parties built around former NDP members.

2.4 Independent Unions
Independent trade unions were a crucial though much-neglected bastion of opposition to the Mubarak regime. They were amongst the first to call for the January 25 demonstration, and among the few groups to continue to apply pressure on the military junta, with few signs of real change after Mubarak's departure. Strikes are a fairly common occurrence in post-uprising Egypt: while pre-uprising strikes were often limited to pay-and-conditions demands, today there are frequently political demands attached. Although strikes have come mostly from the industrial heartlands of the public sector, more recently, teachers and academics have also gone on strike, which helps explain the broad solidarity amongst protesters during the uprising.

Perhaps the two most prominent workers' movements are the Real-Estate Tax Collectors' Union (RETAU) headed by Kamal Abu Eita, and the Centre for Trade Union

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66 See A. TETI - G. GERVASIO, Egypt's Post-democratic Elections..., cit.
Workers’ Services (CTUWS) lead by Kamal Abbas. Amongst other groups, on January 31\textsuperscript{st} they established the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU) as a counterpart to the regime-dominated Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF)\textsuperscript{69}. The independent union is ideologically close to the party political Left, but distinct from it (unlike FJP’s relation with the MB, for example). The climate within the movement, however, has been heavily affected by the ‘foreign funding debate’ (see above).

Moreover, the MB appears to be attempting to “move into” the labour movement\textsuperscript{70}, after movement’s obvious successes of 2006, 2008, and the January Uprising. The MB are apparently preparing to contest Union elections, and have been appointed by the government (along with representatives from independent unions) to a body governing ETUF after its old leadership was dismissed on August 4 for fraud in the 2010 elections. The MB focus appears to be the quieter public sector areas, eschewing the private sector, where conditions are worse and unionisation harder.

Other organisations, such as the Hisham Mubarak Law Centre (HMLC) and the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights (ECESR), must also be mentioned: although like CTUWS they are not technically unions, they have been amongst the most prominent organisations in defence of workers’ rights, and played important parts in the January uprising (ECESR’s Khaled Ali, for example, was also a prominent member of April 6\textsuperscript{th}). Broadly, these organisations share a focus on revoking SCAF’s re-activation of emergency law, stopping military trials, abolishing the Ministry of Information and guarantee freedom of expression, ending hostility towards CSOs, strict proportional representation in electoral law, and a time-bound agenda for transition.

Since Mubarak’s departure, the independent labour movement has been the target of attacks aiming to delegitimise its claims not just from SCAF (which also uses protest legislation selectively to put down farmers’ and workers’ protests), but also from Islamist groups, particularly the MB. Echoing the military’s own rhetoric, this is done by accusing strikes of being merely self-interested, of being “special interest strikes” which attack national wealth, and paradoxically of being NDP-sponsored attempts to reverse the revolution. This stance by the MB is partly the result of its attempt to compromise with the military, and partly due to its own political disadvantage: while the unions backed the uprising, the MB waited for four days before and during the protests before endorsing them, when it was clear how strongly public opinion backed them.

**Conclusion**

The overall picture of Egyptian politics is likely to remain highly charged, legally unclear, and politically fluid throughout the 2011-2012 election season. Nonetheless, there are certain core features of the post-uprising period which appear to be slowly emerging. First and foremost of these is the reassertion of executive power after the uprising. SCAF has been attempting – successfully – to claw back powers and political

\textsuperscript{69} CTUWS recently withdrew from EFITU because of disagreements over the federation’s direction, but also after a smear campaign accusing him of collaborating with Israeli union federation Histadrut.

initiative, imposing increasing restrictions on freedom of expression (e.g. in the media) and organisation (e.g. outlawing strikes, confirming the emergency law, and increasing the use of military tribunals to prosecute opposition activists). The use of torture has also reportedly worsened. Despite some concessions to the requests made by pro-democratic groups, SCAF seems to have been keener to cut deals with groups tainted by association with the regime under Mubarak such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Wafd, effectively recruiting them to the SCAF cause, contributing to divide the opposition and in particular to isolate those liberal and leftist groups most closely associated to the January uprising. It seems likely that the SCAF’s intentions are to forge an alliance with the MB in particular, either with the short-term goal of marginalising liberal and leftists groups, or with the longer-term goal of re-establishing the informal links which the Brotherhood benefited from under Mubarak. Particularly worrying is the effectiveness of the convergence of SCAF and Islamist campaigns portraying liberal and leftist groups as at best naive, and at worst stooges of “foreign hands”.

The Left, and the independent trade union movement in particular, despite the fissures exhibited in recent months, is likely to retain its stronghold within the industrial heartlands of Egypt. Along with liberal groups, and specifically in the form of cross-party, “ideologically ecumenical” groups ranging from Kefaya to April 6, they have an opportunity to continue to exert a progressive influence on Egyptian politics.

However, whether it manages to reach beyond its core constituencies and gain support for its social justice agenda, remains to be seen: insofar as this requires wresting this support from the popular Muslim Brotherhood, this remains a very challenging task indeed. It should be emphasized that the Left’s isolation in Egypt has certainly not been helped by its concerns (particularly with the deleterious effects of privatization) being neglected by Western democracy promotion efforts and policy concerns.

A shared and doubtlessly serious limit for both Leftists and smaller Liberal groups is the lack of financial backing and organisational reach comparable to the Muslim Brotherhood’s.

In sum, there are few causes for optimism about a progressive turn in Egyptian politics resulting from the upcoming electoral season, but opportunities still remain for those progressive, pro-democratic groups which were at the heart of the January uprising to influence the course of post-Mubarak politics in Egypt.