

**MEMORANDUM**

**From: Hani Sélim, Chairman**

**To: President and Vice President of the United States**

**Re: Egypt In Crisis**

**Date: April 18, 2011**

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**Issues:** In light of the highly volatile situation in Egypt, how could the United States help shape a stable, orderly democratic transition to the next leadership by converting its leverage into progress on the ground.

**Interests:**

*Vital:*

- ✓ Prevent Egypt from becoming a failed state (threat: high; likelihood: 70%).
- ✓ Create a successful pluralistic democratic model (threat: medium; likelihood: 50%).
- ✓ Ensure that Egypt stay the linchpin for US policy in the Middle East (threat: medium; likelihood: 40%).
- ✓ Prevent the rise of radical Islamic movements in Egypt (threat: high; likelihood: 60%).

*Extremely Important:*

- ✓ Prevent the disintegration of the Egyptian Army (threat: high).
- ✓ Prevent the rise of Iranian Influence (threat: high).
- ✓ Prevent any change of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty (threat: medium).
- ✓ Ensure the continuing cooperation on counterterrorism issues (threat: medium).
- ✓ Prevent the Muslim Brotherhood to pick the next president (threat: medium).

*Important:*

- ✓ Encourage the spread of democratic institutions/values (threat: medium).

**Operational Objectives:** The US success to steer a course toward the outcome that will allow its relations with Egypt to continue will be measured by the ability to:

- Maintain its extensive ties with the Egyptian military and ensure its cohesion.
- Ensure that the military act as impartial guardians of an orderly transition.
- Avoid the temptation of a speedy, premature election that could bring the Muslim Brotherhood to power.
- Prevent the hijacking of the revolution by some marginalized extremists that could lead to a radical Islamic State.
- Prevent Iran's mullahs from using chaos and violence to enhance their chances that Egypt's new regime is more radical and more amenable to Iranian interests.

**Discussion:** There are two possible scenarios for Egypt: The disintegration of the Egyptian military that would lead to the collapse of the entire system, or more moderate change that leaves the army in control. If the entire system collapses, it would definitely pave the way for the Muslim Brotherhood to rise to prominence and transform the country to an Islamist State. The second more likely scenario is a mildly reformist government that operates within somewhat flexible parameters established by the military. The key to the success of this second, desirable scenario is the continuing coherence of the SMC leadership.

Key questions: (1) Will the collapse of the Mubarak regime lead to a potential change in the balance of power that will tip the balance in favor of the radical camp? (2) To what extent could this change lead to the weakening of the moderate US allies Sunni regimes, giving a nuclear-armed Iran the strategic edge to increase its Shia hegemony? (3) If a radical government takes over in Egypt, what are the chances that this Government use anti-Americanism or/and anti-Israeli rhetoric as a potential rallying point to restore its

credentials with the population? (4) With such radical government in place, should we have Egypt getting into the war fighting business? (5) If Peace agreement between Egypt and Israel unravel, what will be the future of the Israeli-Jordanian peace agreement? (6) Will the PA be able to retain power and reduce violence in the West Bank?

### **Strategic Options:**

#### ***Option1: Quiet, behind-the-scenes communications***

This option consists of keeping an extensive channel of communications open between the Secretary of defence Robert Gates, and his Egyptian counterpart, Field-Marshal Muhammad Tantawi; The chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, Admiral Mike Mullen and Lieutenant General Sami Enan. The ultimate goal of those communications should be to reach an understanding on a transition plan that precludes the resumption of violence against the opposition and civil society.

#### *Pros:*

- Strengthen the cornerstone of America's "mil-mil" relationship with Egypt.
- Ensure that any liberalization proceeds cautiously so that events do not spiral out of control.
- Give time to repair and rebuild trust between the two countries.

#### *Cons:*

- Risk depicting the US as dictating its terms for reforms.
- Risk tarnishing the image of the Egyptian military with the population.
- The Muslim Brotherhood could gain more ground.

#### ***Option2: Carrots- and -Sticks Engagement***

Under the auspices of the Egyptian military and with the coordination of the US Embassy in Cairo, the US should reach out to the leaders of various opposition groups, trade unionists, civil society. This level of engagement should be made public, and based on a robust economic package as a carrot to encourage these new forces to constructively negotiate a transitional government. Groups that refuse to adopt bridging formulas to resolve differences with the military should be cast aside.

#### *Pros:*

- Ensure a strategic timing for the elections.
- Enable democratic forces to organize and coalesce around a set of leaders.
- Burnish the US credentials and image with the population.

#### *Cons:*

- Radical forces could depict US as intervening in Egypt's internal affairs.
- The youth bulge could accuse the US of hijacking the principles of the revolution.
- Iran could depict the revolution as a US-Zionist conspiracy.

#### ***Option3: Shuttle Diplomacy***

This option should borrow from the Kissinger's model during the 1973 war. Secretary Clinton should start extensive high-level consultations with European leaders to ensure a high level of consensus regarding the desired outcome in Egypt. In parallel, Assistant Secretary Jeffrey D. Feltman should be sent in a coordination mission to key allies in the region to allay their concerns and ensure the unanimity of their positions.

#### *Pros:*

- Consolidate the West position.
- Send a clear signal to key actors/players in Egypt.
- Increase the chance of an orderly, democratic transition
- Cement the US relationship with key regional allies.

#### *Cons:*

- Divergent views could damage relations with some EU leaders.

- Could send the wrong signal to key players in Egypt.
- Could delay the process of transition and give prominence to the radical camp.

**Recommendation: Option 1 with muted elements from option2**

Throughout the transition period, the US should keep a low public profile for now. At the same time, in appropriately, behind-the-scene fashion, the US military should continue to nudge the Egyptian military to support a measured transition to a fully civilian, democratic government. This means avoiding premature elections and/ or hasty constitutional changes, nor an overly protracted or truncated handover. And along with a robust package of emergency economic assistance, the United States should rapidly begin offer quiet advice and technical support -- preferably through nongovernmental organizations dedicated to this purpose -- in order to support the consolidation of a truly pluralistic, democratic Egyptian political life.

**Implementation:**

- Send a delegation of senior US military officers to Cairo to hold face-to-face conversations with their Egyptian counterparts and assess the reality on the ground.
- Under the auspices of the Egyptian military, allow ranking members of US Armed Services committee to visit Egypt and hold talks with leaders of opposition groups, youth groups, and NGOs.
- Send a delegation of US Aid agencies and development experts to assess the pressing economic needs during and beyond the transition period.
- Dispatch high level envoy to Israel, and the GCC countries to coordinate their positions and ensure that they are on board.