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514-486-5544

Tuesday August 27, 2013

Volume XI, No. 3,132

Yom Shlishi 21 Elul, 5773

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## EGYPT, WHERE TIME STANDS STILL, IS A ZERO SUM GAME — AND OBAMA'S PRO-M.B. STANCE WORKED AGAINST "DEMOCRACY"

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## THE CHOICE IN EGYPT

*Charles Krauthammer*

[Washington Post, August 22, 2013](#)

Egypt today is a zero-sum game. We'd have preferred there be a democratic alternative. Unfortunately, there is none. The choice is binary: the country will be ruled by the Muslim Brotherhood or by the military. Perhaps it didn't have to be this way. Perhaps the military should have waited three years for the intensely unpopular Mohamed Morsi to be voted out of office. But Gen. Abdel Fatah al-Sissi seems to have calculated that he didn't have three years, that by then there would be no elections — as in Gaza, where the Palestinian wing of the Brotherhood, Hamas, elected in 2006, established a one-man-one-vote-one-time dictatorship.

What's the United States to do? Any response demands two considerations: (a) moral, i.e., which outcome offers the better future for Egypt, and (b) strategic, i.e., which outcome offers the better future for U.S. interests and those of the free world.

As for Egypt's future, the Brotherhood offered nothing but incompetent, intolerant, increasingly dictatorial rule. In one year, Morsi managed to squander 85 years of Brotherhood prestige garnered in opposition — a place from which one can promise the moon — by persecuting journalists and activists, granting himself the unchallenged power to rule by decree, enshrining a sectarian Islamist constitution and systematically trying

to seize the instruments of state power. As if that wasn't enough, after its overthrow the Brotherhood showed itself to be the party that, when angry, burns churches.

The military, brutal and bloody, is not a very appealing alternative. But it does matter what the Egyptian people think. The anti-Morsi demonstrations were the largest in recorded Egyptian history. Revolted by Morsi's betrayal of a revolution intended as a new opening for individual dignity and democracy, the protesters explicitly demanded Morsi's overthrow. And the vast majority seem to welcome the military repression aimed at abolishing the Islamist threat. It's their only hope, however problematic, for an eventual democratic transition.

And which alternative better helps secure U.S. strategic interests? The list of those interests is long: (1) a secure Suez Canal, (2) friendly relations with the United States, (3) continued alliance with the pro-American Gulf Arabs and Jordanians, (4) retention of the Israel-Egypt peace treaty, (5) cooperation with the U.S. on terrorism, which in part involves (6) isolating Brotherhood-run Gaza. Every one of which is jeopardized by Brotherhood rule.

What, then, should be our policy? The administration is right to deplore excessive violence and urge reconciliation. But let's not fool ourselves into believing this is possible in any near future. Sissi crossed his Rubicon with the coup. It will either succeed or not. To advocate a middle way is to invite endless civil strife. The best outcome would be a victorious military magnanimously offering, at some later date, to reintegrate the more moderate elements of what's left of the Brotherhood.

But for now, we should not be cutting off aid, civilian or military, as many in Congress are demanding. It will have no effect, buy no influence and win no friends on either side of the Egyptian divide. We should instead be urging the quick establishment of a new cabinet of technocrats, rapidly increasing its authority as the soldiers gradually return to their barracks.

Generals are very bad at governance. Give the reins to people who actually know something. And charge them with reviving the economy and preparing the foundations for a democratic transition — most importantly, drafting a secular constitution that protects the rights of women and minorities.

The final step on that long democratic path should be elections. First municipal, then provincial, then national. As was shown in the post-World War II democratizations, the later the better. After all, we've been here. Through a half-century of cold war, we repeatedly faced precisely the same dilemma: choosing the lesser evil between totalitarian (in that case, communist) and authoritarian (usually military) rule.

We generally supported the various militaries in suppressing the communists. That was routinely pilloried as a hypocritical and immoral betrayal of our alleged allegiance to liberty. But in the end, it proved the prudent, if troubled, path to liberty.

The authoritarian regimes we supported — in South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Chile, Brazil, even Spain and Portugal (ruled by fascists until the mid-1970s!) — in time yielded democratic outcomes. Gen. Augusto Pinochet, after 16 years of iron rule, yielded to U.S. pressure and allowed a free election — which he lost, ushering in Chile's current era of democratic flourishing. How many times have communists or Islamists allowed that to happen?

Regarding Egypt, rather than emoting, we should be thinking: what's best for Egypt, for us and for the possibility of some eventual democratic future. Under the Brotherhood, such a possibility is zero. Under the generals, slim. Slim trumps zero.

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## **HOW CLOSE IS THE U.S. TO THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD?**

*Magdi Khalil*

*Front Page Magazine, Aug. 23, 2013*

There is no question that the US and the Muslim Brotherhood have been engaged in a dialogue during the course of the so-called Arab Spring, in regards to the form and structure of government in Egypt and

perhaps in the Middle East as a whole. But the real question, which is frequently asked, is what kind of a role did the US exactly play in the Muslim Brotherhood's arrival to power in Egypt? Is the US actually working alongside the Muslim Brotherhood to shape the future of the Middle East?...

First, it must be said that the US is not unacquainted with the Muslim Brotherhood, since the movement has had US-based activities, organizations and financial investments for more than five decades, particularly through its relationship with and presence in Saudi Arabia, which became its refuge after it fled from Egypt during Nasser's rule. The Muslim Brotherhood sought to establish its presence in the American continent, starting with "The Muslim Students' Association," which was a small organization established in 1963. Later, they went on to establish bigger organizations such as the North American Islamic Trust in 1971; the International Institute of Islamic Thought in 1980; the Shura Council of the Muslim Brotherhood in America in 1980; the Islamic Society of North America in 1981; the Islamic Association of Palestine in 1981, which in turn established the Occupied Land Fund that later became the Holy Land Foundation; the American Islamic Council in 1990, and the American Islamic Society in 1992. Furthermore, the international Muslim Brotherhood movement held its meetings several times in the US, specifically in the years 1977, 1978 and 1979. The Muslim Brotherhood had well known leaders in the US, such as Zaid Noman, Ahmed El Kady, Mohammed Ikram Elwani, as well as senior investors such as Youssef Nada.

Looking back, we can see that the starting point for the attempts to contain Islamist movements around the world, including the Muslim Brotherhood, was right after the events of September 11 [2001]. As the first shot was fired in Afghanistan, the US began also to formulate a plan to deal with the Islamist dilemma from a political angle. An endless war was not a viable solution, and a political alternative was required in order to control the emerging phenomenon. The Bush Administration primarily thought that the lack of democratic political participation was behind the phenomenon of international terrorism, believing that these individuals were hunted in their countries, and after being forced to flee, they had directed their excessive hatred and violence at the Western World. The solution seemed clear enough then: to find a way to redirect and assimilate that excessive energy through a local political process that would both embrace and contain said individuals. Bush chose Iraq as a starting point for the democratization of the region and the creation of a new Middle East, where he had expected democracy to spread in a domino-like effect.

However, democracy failed in Iraq. On one side, it was thwarted by the unleashed sectarian strife monster, and on the other it met with stubborn and unanimous resistance from neighbouring countries, including Iran, which worked together to defeat Bush's plan and stop the tide of American democracy from reaching its shores.

This plan's failure was promptly followed by a hunt for a second alternative, and the idea to assimilate Islamists into their own countries through an Islamist rule of the region was born. In 2005, Ms. Condoleezza Rice, then the Secretary of State, made a speech in Cairo which suggested that the US did not mind if Islamists assumed power. This notion soon gained popularity, and dozens of seminars, conferences and meetings that took place in Washington, London, Madrid and Brussels started to promote in earnest the participation of Islamists in government. Many of these gatherings were funded through Qatar, with evident "green light" from the US.

With the support of Qatari funds, Al-Jazeera Channel started to back the Islamist project, i.e., an Islamist rule via elections, until the Channel became the official media platform of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamic movements in the region. The role played by both Qatar and Al-Jazeera expanded throughout the Arab Spring uprisings, seeking to speed up a "brotherhoodization" process that would reshape the entire region to reflect Muslim Brotherhood beliefs and practices. Later, they worked to engage the US in extensive dialogues about government requirements and structure, the conditions of Western cooperation, and particularly US-Muslim Brotherhood cooperation.

Since the collapse of Mubarak's regime, Washington and Cairo had maintained contact as attested by frequent Washington-Cairo trips and intense phone consultations between the White House and the Muslim Brotherhood's Guidance office in Al-Mokattam. It had reached a point where the almost nonstop contact became the subject of a widespread political joke among foreign diplomats in Egypt, who said that you can

measure the time that passes between President Mursi issuing a decision and reversing it by the time difference existing between the Office of Guidance and the White House—the joke clearly speaks for itself.

In the beginning, the US terms were as follows: 1) to take into consideration American interests in the region; 2) to stay away from Iran; 3) to maintain the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty; 4) to resort to the ballots in political issues; 5) to take into consideration the rights of women and minorities. The Muslim Brotherhood agreed to all conditions, even if it was merely a form of dissimulation.

The outcome of the Gaza crisis [Operation Pillar of Defense] increased the trust between Obama's Administration and the Muslim Brotherhood, with Obama praising Mursi at length after the crisis was averted. In fact, the Muslim Brotherhood had offered what no other Egyptian president has ever offered to the US, pledging the following to Obama: 1) Hamas will not launch a single rocket, fire a single shot or conduct a single operation against Israel in the next four years, which represented Obama's second term; 2) Egypt will monitor crossings and tunnels to ensure that no weapons are being smuggled to Hamas; 3) The US will be allowed to set up advanced equipment at the borders to conduct its own surveillance of the crossings; 4) In case the violence originating from Sinai gets out of control, American troops will be allowed to guard the Egyptian-Gaza borders.

In a nutshell: To restrain Hamas and keep Israel from harm while the Muslim Brotherhood is let loose in Egypt to do as it wishes. Even worse, there are serious noises about Qatari/Egyptian/American discussions aiming to bypass the Palestinian Authority and open a dialogue with Hamas directly, followed by political talks which may lead to an individual peace treaty between Hamas and Israel....

The bottom line is that while Mubarak had delivered the government into the hands of the military represented in the Military Council, the Military Council, in cooperation with the US, has handed the government over to the Muslim Brotherhood. Mubarak showed more intelligence in that regard, and had previous knowledge of the US intentions, as indicated by his statement to Dr. Hossam Badrawi that the US has been planning since 2005 for the Muslim Brotherhood to assume power in Egypt. The Military Council failed the people, perhaps because it made some sort of deal with the Muslim Brotherhood, or due to increased US pressure, or even because of poor political skills; what matters is that these factors combined to place Egypt under the thumb of the Muslim Brotherhood.

It is up to Egyptians now to reshape history once more for the sake of the people, the homeland and the future, rather than the past. There is hope yet for their voice to be heard and for their will to prevail.

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## **EGYPT IS WHERE HISTORY GOES TO DIE**

*Daniel Greenfield*

*[Jewish Press](#), August 27th, 2013*

One of the biggest differences between conservatives and liberals is that while conservatives believe that history is an expression of human nature, liberals don't believe in history, they believe in historical processes. The shortage of conservatives explains why so many politicians and pundits glowingly endorsed the Arab Spring as the "end of history" because the historical processes had been achieved, the check boxes were ticked and Egypt, Tunisia and the rest of the Arab Spring countries would shortly reach the same historical terminus that Sweden, France and the United Kingdom had achieved. It also explains why so many politicians are frantically trying to "fix" Egypt by putting it on the right historical track.

The liberal understanding of history is so hopelessly dominant that it never occurs to most of them that countries can't be fixed. They aren't leaky sinks, but systems emerging from a national culture. Egypt can't be fixed by calling the plumbers of democracy to tighten a few valves and bully the natives into holding another election. The last election didn't fix Egypt. There's no reason to believe that another one will. Elections did not fix a single Arab Spring country. They didn't fix Russia. They won't fix China....

To the liberal misreading of history, a failed state is like an overweight fellow. Map out a diet and exercise regimen for him based on historical processes, things that he must do and mustn't do and he'll get better. If

he isn't following orders, make him run through the right historical processes. If the whole thing backfires, refuse to admit it, because progressive policies never fail. Push that logic forward and there is no reason to think that the past is relevant to a nation at all. Not when historical processes break away the present from the past and the future from the present.

There is no real need to understand Egypt or the Muslim Brotherhood in any great depth. Not when they are about to be transformed by the magic of democracy. The Muslim Brotherhood may have been a terrorist organization in the past, its branches may still engage in terrorism, but that stops mattering once the Brotherhood bows to the historical process of democracy. Egypt's history also vanishes once it is transmuted through the magic of elections. Democracy didn't actually change Egypt. Egypt is still the same country it was before Obama's Cairo speech. It's poorer, more unstable and more dangerous. But it hasn't really changed....

The assumption that historical processes align with a forward motion, that the liberalization of a society moves it forward, are so innate that it goes unquestioned. It is why democracy is held to be a good, entirely apart from its outcome. Even if democratic elections lead to a takeover by a junta of fanatical cannibals, the very act of holding an election moves a society forward through one hoop in the great circus of historical processes. The immediate result may be cannibalism, but in the long run, as Arab Spring advocates remind us from the editorial pages, the society moves forward.

The liberal understanding of history made it impossible to see the Muslim Brotherhood for what it was because its victory did not fit the march of progress. The victory of the Muslim Brotherhood in a democratic election meant that it was progressive. Because that is how the forward motion of history is meant to work. And its overthrow had to be considered reactionary, regardless of the issues.

This blinkered view discarded the issues and nature of the participants. It traded the contents of the system, for the addiction of process. It made the same mistakes as in Iraq and Afghanistan, drifting on a democracy high without paying attention to who was actually winning the elections and what their plans for the future were. The conviction that Afghanistan or Iraq or Egypt were moving forward was not borne out by anything except the spectacle of process and the conviction that everything was bound to keep moving forward, especially if we gave it a push or two.

The conservative understanding of Iraq, Afghanistan and Egypt was that these places were backward because the culture of the people, their occupations, the way that they chose to live, kept it that way. But in the liberal understanding of history, they were backward because they had been denied access to modern processes for upgrading their societies. Give them democracy and they'll be Europe in no time at all.

It did not occur to them that the reason Egypt wasn't England had nothing to do with elections and everything to do with the culture of a broken country that hasn't gotten all that far past feudalism, and whose "modern" face was slapped together by European colonialism and local dictators borrowing European ideas and applying thin layers of them across the surface of a much older culture. Processes don't move a society forward. The striving to learn and grow, to push beyond the next horizon and find out what is over the next hill. That innate organic expansionism, that creative dissatisfaction, cannot be transplanted or imposed externally. It either grows out of the soul of a culture or it does not. The historical processes that matter are a by product of such strivings....

We are not bound to move forward. It is quite possible that we are moving back. And even that sense of direction is a matter of opinion. To the Islamists of the Muslim Brotherhood, backward is forward, as they push on toward the 7th century. The sense of historical direction in Cairo or New York is not an abstract, but a function of culture, a product of the things we value and strive toward. It is possible to distinguish the healthy and unhealthy cultures through the outcome of these products, but it is not possible to make a culture want not only the things we want, but to want them in the same way and through the same means.

Egypt is where history goes to die. Beneath its sands, there are ages and ages of lost time, lost civilizations and lost pasts that might have been. They lie there untouched by the mantra of historical processes. They

simple were and are no more. The Arab Spring is nothing but another one of those many sedimentary layers of history that fall into the sands and crunch under the sandals of the cultures that take each other's place....

Islam has cloaked [Egypt] in its characteristic darkness that teaches its followers to strive for nothing except the subjugation of others to its will.... There is no future here. There is no history here. Egypt is where history goes to die, buried in its tombs with its ancient kings, lying in wait for another time when the sands will shift, the stones will fall and time will begin moving again.

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## **ON TOPIC**

**[Mubarak's Muslim Brotherhood Prophecy](#)**: Raymond Ibrahim, *Gatestone Institute*, Aug. 15, 2013—In a video of Hosni Mubarak when he was still Egypt's president, the strategies of which he accuses the Muslim Brotherhood have come to pass. What follows are Mubarak's words from a conference in Egypt (date unknown; author's translation).

**[The Evolution of the Revolution](#)**: Dr. Michael Evans, *Jerusalem Report*, Aug. 21, 2013—The streets of Cairo are caught in the midst of a murderous frenzy — the Egyptian military on one side and Muslim Brotherhood supporters of recently-deposed president Mohamed Morsi on the other. The death toll now hovers at over 1,000 including twenty-five off-duty policemen murdered execution-style in northern Sinai.

**[The Realist Prism: Indecision on Egypt Leaves U.S. Interests at Risk](#)**: Nikolas Gvosdev, *World Politics Review*, Aug. 23 2013—As the Obama administration grapples with what to do next in Egypt, it may be instructive to review the U.S. efforts of the past decade to bring about fundamental political and economic change in Egypt and the other countries of the greater Middle East.

**[Is Egypt the next Algeria? Unlikely](#)**: Tawfik Hamid, *Jerusalem Post*, Aug 26, 2013—Many fear that banning the Muslim Brotherhood group will result in the use of violence, similar to what happened in Algeria during the 1990s. When the Algerian people refused to give the radical Islamists - who later won the elections - political power, Algeria endured the blood shed of 100,000 innocent people, over a ten year period.

**[Gulf Islamists Irked as Monarchs Back Egypt's Generals](#)**: *Egypt Independent*, Aug. 27, 2013—While they have been careful to express only muted dissent in public, Islamists and some other conservative Gulf Muslims are quietly seething at Saudi Arabia's whole-hearted backing of Egyptian army chief General Abdul Fattah al-Sisi.

**[Constitutional Tweaks May Empower Mubarak-Era Politicians in Egypt](#)**: *Egypt Independent*, Aug. 24, 2013—Islamists and liberals have voiced alarm about the proposals made by a constitutional committee set up by the generals who removed the Muslim Brotherhood's Mursi on July 3 amid widespread protests against Egypt's first freely elected leader.

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