



## EGYPT ON THE BRINK

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MICHELE DUNNE: Good afternoon. And welcome to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace for our event on “Egypt on the Brink.” My name is Michele Dunne. I’m a senior associate in the Middle East Program here.

[00:00:14]

We see, I think, very confused and troubling signs out of Egypt today in the context of the ongoing protests. As you all know, within the past 48 hours we’ve seen government-employed thugs using violence against peaceful demonstrators. A very unclear role played by the Egyptian military as to whether it was complicit in this violence and so forth.

We hear about possible military deployments into Cairo; we’re not clear for what purpose. Actions have been taken against human-rights organizations in Egypt within the last 24 hours by security forces, perhaps also with military involvement.

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The vice president, Suleiman, has just given an interview. And we see, as I said, some very confusing signals. Now, the Egyptian vice president and Prime Minister Shafiq have both suggested in their comments that these were somehow rogue elements carrying out this violence, and that they’re going to investigate this, and so forth. And that they are somehow disassociating themselves from this.

They’ve also made some other sort of conciliatory statements about – there were reports that some controversial figures from the previous regime such as Interior Minister Adli and Ahmed Ezz from the National Democratic Party have had a travel ban imposed on them and their assets frozen.

And Vice President Suleiman has offered a dialogue with the opposition, including the Muslim Brotherhood. But it’s not clear under exactly what context and to what extent he has already met with members of the – of the opposition.

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So what’s going on here? Is this a good cop, bad cop game inside the Egyptian government? Is there some sort of rift inside the Egyptian government? Also, what is the state of the opposition? Also very confusing information coming out about the opposition groups and their stances on negotiating with the Egyptian government: Under what circumstances are they willing to negotiate? Are they still willing to negotiate after violence was used against the demonstrators yesterday?

Where does the United States stand? The Obama administration has tried to carefully calibrate its rhetoric and so forth. But I’ll just note, I mean, I also saw just today a new statement by – you know, by P.J. Crowley at the State Department. And there are – you know, I think there is still some confusion in these statements as to whether the United States – the United States is calling for a transition, but are we talking about a transition with President Mubarak at the head of it, or not?

And I think there's ambiguity still in U.S. statements about that. The U.S. is trying to send out these subtle, carefully crafted messages. How are they being heard? How are they being heard in Egypt?

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And all of this is happening in a climate of tension building particularly toward tomorrow when demonstrators were talking about a massive protest that would march to the presidential palace to demand Mubarak's resignation. I think there's a great deal of anxiety in Cairo and here in Washington about what is going to happen tomorrow.

Okay, well, we have a wonderful panel to talk about these things today. We have Bahey al-Din Hassan, the director of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies. Bahey has been my teacher about Egypt and my friend for over 10 years now. And he is the single most respected figure in the human-rights community, and I daresay even in the entire civil-society sector in Egypt.

And also Neil Hicks, a longtime Egypt watcher from Human Rights First, deeply experienced in Egyptian affairs. But even before that, we have a special bonus, which is that my colleague Amr Hamzawy is in Cairo, and we have him on the telephone. He is going to give us a quick update on how he sees the signs in Cairo. And if we can keep the telephone line open, he might be able to take a couple of your questions.

[00:04:48]

So Amr, can you – can you hear me now?

AMR HAMZAWY: I can hear you well, Michele.

MS. DUNNE: Okay. Wonderful to have you with us, Amr. So please tell us, how do you see the situation going? How do you see the security situation and the political situation developing at this point?

MR. HAMZAWY: Right. Let me – let me start by the second, which is the political situation. And let me excuse the fact that I am – I am at a checkpoint right now, so it might turn a bit loud.

With regard to the political situation, and I find it quite challenging to separate in my mind between the analysts and the activists who have come to me in the last days. So I might sound more like an activist and less as an analyst, but I hope you will still find it useful.

[00:05:39]

What is happening politically is that we finally have a social – a political road map for the way ahead, for the transitional period. The interview which General Suleiman, the vice president, gave a few minutes ago – and it was clear what he was going to say. A little of what he said was leaked already.

[Suleiman] sounded very positive at four levels. One, he opened up the transitional period with regard to the constitution, amendments to more than articles 76 and 77. He spoke specifically about article 88, which is the article that pertains to the judicial supervision over Egyptian elections. And he even said that whatever – (inaudible, audio break) – is going to be agreed upon as an article in the constitution needs to be amended in the timeline given, which is 70 days.

[00:06:35]

And then, the constitution articles can be looked at depending on the outcome of his dialogue with the opposition. This sounded encouraging.

The second issue, which sounded encouraging as well, was the fact that he said he has started already his dialogue with the opposition, and that he did not exclude anyone. And what he said about the Muslim Brotherhood was quite encouraging in that context, that they do have a chance, it's a precious chance, as he said.

And he is encouraging them along with the Wafd and the Tagammu authorities that are yet to join the dialogue, to join the dialogue and speak with him.

[00:07:09]

The third level, which is sort of – was one of the central demands that we and – and again I'm referring to a group of people who put out yesterday a statement. Maybe you read it, Michele, and everyone else. We are being called – (in Arabic) – a committee of wise men. This is fine for myself to be characterized as a wise man. (Laughter.)

We were calling on the president to give the vice president all the presidential powers needed to manage the transition. And he has started to manage the transition effectively today. He has started to manage the transition effectively today; it's what he said. So we have seen a delegation even without an announcement of presidential powers to vice president Suleiman to manage the transition period.

The fourth encouraging sign from the vice president was that he said he and the authorities are going to put on trial everyone who was responsible for the violence last night, the violence today at Tahrir Square, as well as the violence in the last days. And he said that the young demonstrators who will be detained and activists who will be detained are going to be freed as long as they were not implicated in violence. And as you know, most of them – all of them were not implicated in violence.

[00:08:21]

So these were encouraging signs and a sort of a road map for how to transition to democracy in Egypt. Now what remains – what remains contested and what's going to be a question for the next days is the following: number one, one of our demands and other people's demands was to dissolve the parliament, which was – it's two chambers – an outcome of rigged elections.

And General Suleiman said – and he had an argument about the timeline, that if you dissolve the parliament, you will not have enough time to amend the constitution. He said, let's amend the constitution, get it right for the presidential elections. He assured everyone the democratic demands of the young movement as well as opposition parties will be respected.

[00:09:05]

Let's get them amended with this current parliament and see what will come next. This is going to be an issue of contestation and probably part of the dialogue, which he has with parties as well as with personalities like the group which put out the statement I am restating.

The second point of contestation is basically to end, which we demanded – (inaudible) – has yet to end the violence immediately against activists as well as – against activists as well as against demonstrators in Cairo and other places across the nation. And he has promised to end the violence immediately and made it very clear that this was not the responsibility of state institutions or state authorities, but rogue elements, apparently, within the security apparatus. He referred even to businessmen, corrupt businessmen, and so on and so forth. But the end of violence is key.

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The third issue is that he is asking everyone to free – to stop demonstrating at Tahrir Square and of course refrain from staging a massive demonstration tomorrow. Just the names contested among the different protesting groups and activists – I tend to see it as a concession which now we have to give since the road map is clear and since we are entering into negotiations and since some concrete steps were announced.

Finally, there is a great need for safeguards – constitution safeguards, political safeguards as well as safeguards from the military establishment as to how the transition is going to be managed. I guess this is an issue which will be sort of a gradual process, not too long. But we basically are looking at six months, 200 days, as he said. So we need guarantees. We need safeguards. And he will still have to assure – (inaudible, audio break) – that this is not going to be violated, the commitment to democratic change and reform.

[00:11:05]

That's it from my side. And I'm happy to take any questions from the audience.

MS. DUNNE: Okay. If I could just start with one quick one. There was one word that I didn't hear in your presentation: Mubarak. What's the deal? What's Suleiman offering here in terms of, does Mubarak continue to be there during this 200-day transition, or not?

MR. HAMZAWY: Yes, well, the agreement, Michele, and the consensus – and I'm not sure about the Muslim Brotherhood and I'm not sure about ElBaradei, but other groups as well as independent personalities have agreed on the following formula, which is President Mubarak is going to stay in office as more or less, quote-unquote, an "honorary" president.

He will not – he will not – he will delegate the authorities to manage the transition period to the vice president Suleiman who has started with that management today. This is a face-saving solution which is, to my mind, widely accepted in Egypt among many people. President Mubarak, in his last speech has appealed very emotionally to Egyptians by stating that Egypt is his country. He was born here, and he would like to die here, of course.

[00:12:23]

The calls to remove President Mubarak did not call for removing him from the country but for removing him from power. What we are seeing is an indirect – an indirect application of that by giving Vice President Suleiman the authority to manage the transition period.

I guess this is an issue which will remain contested among some groups. I myself don't see it as problematic. And I see it as a face-saving strategy which we need to manage a safe transition to democracy. We cannot – we cannot go on with the violence and the chaos which we had. And the rogue elements, be it in the NDP

or in the security apparatus, need to be brought under control. People are terrified, are running out of food, are running out of oil and gasoline, and so on and so forth. So it's a compromise. And I guess it satisfies many people, and I am one of them.

MS. DUNNE: Okay, Amr. Thank you very much. I have – I have a hundred more questions, but I'm going to let the audience ask them instead. So –

MR. HAMZAWY: (Off mic.)

MS. DUNNE: Can you – can you hold on, Amr, for a few minutes?

MR. HAMZAWY: Yeah, sure.

MS. DUNNE: Okay. I think this lady has the first question. If you could please tell us who you are, what organization you're from, and ask a brief question.

Q: Sure.

MS. DUNNE: Thank you.

Q: Salaam alaikum. My name is Sahar Taman. I'm with Journeys to Understanding.

Dr. Hamzawy, I am interested to know how the protesters on the ground, as well as all their families, the rest of the 82 million Egyptians, are holding up. What I'm seeing on the Internet are families falling apart, a lot of disagreement. I have something like a hundred cousins, and slowly, slowly, many of them are saying, okay, let's compromise, let's give it –

[00:14:05]

MR. HAMZAWY: (Inaudible) –

MS. DUNNE: Okay, that – all right, that's – okay. Thank you. Let's – we're going to collect a few more questions and then let Amr respond. This gentleman here.

Q: I'm Dick Rosen (sp) with the Council for a Community of Democracies. How is it possible that the constitution can be amended by a parliament that is only – whose only members are those from the party that doesn't want to be ousted from power?

MS. DUNNE: Thank you.

MR. HAMZAWY: (Inaudible.)

MS. DUNNE: One – maybe perhaps one more question. Greg.

[00:14:36]

Q: Yes, I'm Greg Aftandilian (sp), an independent consultant. My question is concerning judicial supervision of the elections. We had that, actually, in the year 2005, but even so, there were a tremendous amount of

irregularities. So even though there will be, as you say, judicial supervision of the elections, what about the measures to stop the other problems? Thank you.

MS. DUNNE: Okay. Amr, would you like to respond to those questions?

MR. HAMZAWY: Right. So let me start with the last question, Michele, on the issue of judicial supervision. Of course, as you know, there was judicial supervision up until 2005, and it did not help with regard to rigging the elections. So the reform that we had before the amendments in 2007 was not the best, in the sense of full judicial supervision with a judge on every ballot box. This is not practical.

So what we are hoping for once we open up the debate to amend the constitution, 76, 77, 88 as well as other articles, is that independent judges and experts in constitutional law and legal experts will give their views, and we will reach maybe a formula which will allow us to form an independent election commission, sort of a real HEC [Higher Electoral Commission], a real independent and neutral higher election commission, unlike the one which we had been having since 2007.

[00:16:09]

(Inaudible) So this is the general remark which I have. This is a process which is beginning now. The streets – these young demonstrators have imposed change on Egypt, and this is going to be a tough period, a tough transitional period. I have no illusions that there are factors, forces, powers which are going to try to keep the old [system] that we have.

But what I am telling you is that the old formula, the old regime which ruled Egypt for the last three decades and was close to father-son succession, is over. That's definitely over. What citizens did show – and I've been in the demonstrations since January 25 – was that the resilience of Egyptians, of families, the commitment to democratic change is not going to wither away. And everyone up there in the apparatus, be it Vice President Suleiman or other key figures, know what needs to be done and know that the street is not going to go back unless these demands are going to be met in a credible and in an honorable manner. That's what Vice President Suleiman said – saying that they are going to be – these demands are going to be respected, full stop, that there is no room for maneuvering here. So – but it's a process, and it needs to be – it needs to be followed by everyone in Egypt and by the international community.

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Now, secondly, the second question, on – of course, I'm mixing – I'm mixing the order of the questions – the first question was about families: These were very tough days. I mean, everyone was terrified, including myself. We had very tough nights, very tough days. Like many other Egyptians, I was demonstrating during the day and going back to help with the so-called people's committees to protect the safety of our neighborhoods during the night. We are running out of food. People are running out of medicine.

[00:18:04]

And so this emergency situation which we have been having has influenced everyone. We are terrorized: The gangs and drug elements, which continue to run around, albeit in a limited manner, in the last two days, continue to terrorize. So we just hope that this will end soon. There were clear assurances by the new prime minister as well as by the vice president that this was going to be both under control very soon and in a manner which does not violate human rights.

And the third question I did forget, Michele, if you do not mind – can you remind me?

MS. DUNNE: The parliament: Could these reforms be carried out by the current parliament?

MR. HAMZAWY: Right, exactly. The demands which we put out, included, in fact, dissolving the parliament and calling for parliamentary elections and giving the authorities the legal power to amend the constitution to a constitutional assembly, formed of independent judges, independent legal experts. This was rejected by the vice president in his interview, referring to the timeline, that we cannot dissolve the parliament, we have only six months to amend the constitution, which takes – the cycle will take 70 days. And the constitutional assembly – forming a constitutional assembly is an issue which is contested constitutionally today and yesterday among different legal experts.

However, what he offered is – which is not after our expectation, but once again, it's not a perfect transition, or the transition period in which we are entering, it's a tough one. He offered that basically all people's assemblies – (audio break) – which are, which were announced to be part of legality due to different rulings by the administrative courts.

Elections in these seats are going to happen very soon, will be repeated very soon and he was referring to – (inaudible, audio break) – days. And up until then, the People's Assembly and the Shura Council will not be meeting to take any decisions. Decisions are suspended until the elections – the new elections. And the total number of these seats are over 250 or around 250, Michelle, if I'm not mistaken.

MS. DUNNE: Okay.

MR. HAMZAWY: Which would give you, I guess, a degree of – definitely of non-NDP representation. It's not a complete solution. Once again, it needs to be followed and it needs to be – to be observed very, very consciously and with great attention by active Egyptian groups and sources in Egypt as well as the international community.

[00:20:47]

MS. DUNNE: Amr, can I just clarify something? Do you have an indication that this is a package that Suleiman is just offering or do you have an indication that you know, the significant and meaningful opposition forces in Egypt have actually agreed to this?

MR. HAMZAWY: No, it is package which the vice president is offering and it is a package which he has come to offer us a set of meetings which he had yesterday and today. He met some opposition figures. He will be meeting other opposition figures and personalities.

He will be meeting them. And he said it's all up to negotiations. However, what is reassuring Michele, is that he's not simply giving very little and too late, which is what the president did in his speech. This time, the vice president gave a package with different steps, with a road map of sorts, which can be negotiated.

And – (inaudible, audio break) – was the – (inaudible, audio break) – in which he apologized for the violence that took place, the first time for a prime minister from Egypt to apologize. He apologized and he promised to control the security situation and not to harm peaceful demonstrators, not to let them be harmed. Of course, we have doubts. What we saw last night and during the day is horrifying. However, once again, this is what



we are being offered. And it's up to dissident groups and dissident movements to try to assemble, and it's happening even among the young demonstrators, try to assemble and – (audio break) – to the vice president to meet him.

What is helpful here – and this is going to be my last remark on your question, Michele – is that the demands are very clear. I mean, we have a road map – a demand road map, if you wish. I mean, the demands are not – are not contested. We might disagree or agree on who represents – (audio break). But this question cannot be settled until we have free elections, until we have real elections, the presidential elections and then the parliamentary elections.

MS. DUNNE: Just one last point. I'm going to let you go. The sound's beginning to break up a little bit. What does this mean for tomorrow? It's already Thursday evening in Egypt, so what's your prediction about whether there's going to be a large demonstration on Friday or not?

MR. HAMZAWY: Michele – I haven't – I haven't heard the question. It was – the line was breaking. Would you mind repeating your question?

MS. DUNNE: Okay. Do you – do you expect there to be a large demonstration tomorrow or not?

MR. HAMZAWY: No. No, I do not – I do not – once again, it remains – it remains a contested issue, but up until now things seem to be moving in the direction of no big demonstrations tomorrow and letting the political roadmap, which is the package which was announced, let it – let it be negotiated and discussed upon.

[00:23:50]

I am not afraid of sort of losing the momentum. I mean, the momentum will not be lost, because as you know, and you will be discussing, the change which happened is basically structural. Citizens rediscovered or regained the street for the first time since 1919, in fact – (line cuts off).

MS. DUNNE: Okay. Thank you, Amr. We knew the line would run out at some point. And unfortunately, at an interesting question. But I'm sorry, Bahey, we – seems we've lost him. So I'll turn it over now to Bahey al-Din Hassan.

BAHEY AL-DIN HASSAN: Thank you very much, Michele, and to Carnegie for inviting me to exchange views on the situation – current situation in Egypt in such a crucial moment.

First of all, I would like to express in public how much I feel respect for and proud of the Egyptian people, who are struggling in streets, especially the young generation, for their democratic demands, for a better future for Egypt.

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Of course, there are hundreds of people who were killed because of their struggle – at least 500. Thousands were injured because of that. At least 500 have been arrested – at least. And no one knows where they are, you know, in such a chaotic situation.

Just as an indication of how much is the strength of this movement, that despite of the attacks of the armed militia, state armed militia yesterday, on the demonstrators, where at least 1,000 were injured, at least 4 people were killed, there were yesterday evening 15,000 sleeping until the morning to protect the Tahrir Square.

Of course, they weren't able to secure all the square, but still it is an indication of how much the Egyptian people are determined to achieve their goals and to have better future for Egypt. And this may explain what the road map which Amr Hamzawy referred to and the offer which has been made by Omar Suleiman.

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I would like also in this regard to express my gratitude to Carnegie in general and to Michele Dunne and Neil Hicks in particular. This is just a symbol of the solidarity of the people in general across the world. We see just cause of the Egyptian people. Michele Dunne, Neil Hicks, Carnegie, Human Rights First, POMED and others, whether in United States or in Europe, they were always ready to work – were ready to do their best to help the Egyptian people to achieve their aspirations and just cause.

I would start by just introducing what happened today. This is the other face of the coin of what Amr Hamzawy has told us. Today has witnessed for the first time the appearance of a new party, which is the military police. This is the first time that such an institution participated in what is going on. In one hand, the military police went accompanied by the group of – (inaudible) – members – some members of the ruling party, some state armed militia. Two officers of human rights – (inaudible) – were arrested; the civil human-rights defendants, including also human-rights researchers from Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

On the other hand, the military police now has – (inaudible) – a role in Tahrir Square. They are closing all the outlets despite the fact that the army is still there. But it seems that, you know, no one knows who controls what or who. You know, it seems that there is no consistent coordination between those several bodies, whatever – the armies, the military police, the security, such – and also the state armed militia. And this is more worrying about what is going on in Egypt.

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I hope very much that the – what Amr Hamzawy has told us just a few minutes ago, that it would work out. The main concern now in Egypt, it is not only the political question or the political agenda. Also, there is an ongoing massive humanitarian – (inaudible) – on the street because of such state-handmade chaos.

Concerning – I am responding to the question which Michele Dunne has been – raised in her introduction, concerning the opposition, of course, we know that the opposition is divided. It is weak. And this is nothing strange in this regard, because the opposition in Egypt, like in Tunisia, like in most parts of the Arab world, were under severe, consistent and continuous repressions for decades, not only under – in the – in the last three decades, but since – in Egypt since July 1952.

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So nothing's – this is not surprising, in this regard. But in this context, I think what may makes a difference in comparison with the Tunisia situation is that Egypt has an opposition figure with minimum consensus among average Egyptian people and among the opposition itself, who is Dr. ElBaradei.

I understand and I see that he has not the full support of other political forces. But if there is only one person who would be heard by the Egyptian people, I mean, even in the streets, the demonstrators, the youth movement, it would be ElBaradei. Therefore, I think the most transparent way to run what you call the road map is

not to seek negotiation with every single opposition group, or even some figures which have no following at all, just by chance they come on the scene, or maybe because they are ready to negotiate.

I assume that without going directly to negotiate and to talk with ElBaradei, it would be a very slow process. I understand and appreciate the position of the Egyptian opposition or the Egyptian opposition forces to – not to be involved in negotiation until President Mubarak leaves or retires. But I understand that. But I think in this moment, in such a catastrophic humanitarian situation, they should remake their minds again on the opposition. I think that both sides should involve themselves in such negotiation and work together as much as they can. They should mandate one or two to speak on behalf of them. And I think this would help more to make a breakthrough in such terrible situation.

[00:34:51]

I would stop here. Thank you very much.

MS. DUNNE: Okay. Thank you very much, Bahey.

Neil Hicks.

MR. HICKS: Thank you, Michele. Thank you to Carnegie and the other organizers. It's a privilege to be here. It's a particular privilege to speak after Bahey al-Din Hassan.

As someone who has worked to promote human rights and democracy in Egypt and the Middle East for several decades now, my thoughts are with those in Egypt who have led that struggle over those decades, who have been so helpful and gracious to us over the years and are now taking great risks to move the issue forward in a substantive way and in – hopefully in an exciting and positive way in the coming weeks.

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I have really two points that I want to make. The second point will lead into a discussion about U.S. policy and where we need to go from here. The first one is a more general point about the human rights movement in Egypt and the way it has developed over the last 30 years, really.

When I first started going to Egypt – when I first started going to Egypt in the 1980s, it was a very different kind of movement than it is today. It was much smaller. It was much older people, tended to be lawyers, some former politicians. And they had limited objectives, I think, and limited expectations of what was possible within the framework of the Egyptian state. And it's only relatively recently – since 2005 elections, and particularly in the last two or three years – that there's been a change in the ambition and the nature, I think, of the human rights movement.

I've been going out of my way in my recent trips to Egypt to meet with these younger activists, who are not connected with groups like the Cairo Institute or the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, but they have their own new organizations, new networks, and they're involved much more in outreach to the general public, and they're also interested in street demonstrations as a tactic and as a way of advancing political freedoms.

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This tactic was often ridiculed and doubted by the more experienced people within the Egyptian human-rights movement, who would observe that, well, yes, they can maybe put 50 people on the street, but they're quickly surrounded by 200 riot policemen, and it doesn't really have much impact.

But I think we are seeing, with the events that started on the 25<sup>th</sup>, that the networks which they have been able to put in place, largely – recently through the elections, there were networks of thousands of people established by some of these organizations throughout the country, taking part voluntarily in election-monitoring efforts. These networks have shown their value. And when the time came, they were able to mobilize a significant number of people onto the streets, and a tipping point was reached. And as Amr noted, there was – the Egyptian people have regained the streets for the first time since 1919 was, I think, what Amr observed.

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So that's a qualitative change. And it's a change which has probably come about through the maturation of the Egyptian human-rights movement. And, you know, people like Bahey are the fathers – I won't call them the grandfather; that would be unkind – but the fathers of that movement. But –

MR. HASSAN: Maybe the mother? (Laughs)

MR. HICKS: But we are, you know, seeing a very welcome proliferation in the number of activists and a widening scope of their ambitions and obviously real achievements in recent days. And that is very much to be welcomed.

And the final, important point about that is that, as in Tunisia, the change that is coming in Egypt was done indigenously. It was done by people themselves in Egypt. It was not something initiated by America or the West or any other kind of foreign agency. This –

MS. DUNNE: Tell that to Egyptian television, please.

MR. HICKS: I hope they're listening.

What is happening is as surprising to us as it is to everybody else. But I think that's obviously its strength. This is authentic. It comes from the people. And that needs to be underlined.

Now let me move on to U.S. policy and how – I mean, our basic critique of the administration and of the U.S. government is that they are behind the curve on this. We just had some meetings this morning on the hill and we were saying that it seems to us that the administration is a day behind events and that the Congress is a day behind the administration.

In President Mubarak's speech on Tuesday evening, where he made this famous choice between stability or chaos, you know, I think that was widely misunderstood. Instead of being a promise that he could bring stability, I think it was more of a threat, that if you didn't go my way, then I would bring chaos. And indeed, that is what Mubarak has done in these last few days.

[00:40:40]

Just to reflect a moment on some of the steps he has taken to cling to power: the closing of the Internet – you know, clearly, this is an extremely Draconian and heavy-handed measure, which has been enormously damaging

to commerce and business interests in Egypt. The tourists have all been sent home. The tourism industry has been devastated – I don't think it's too strong a word. The losses to the Egyptian economy from that must be enormous.

But even before those measures and the violence, of course, that has been used against protesters – even before those measures of the last few days, there were signs, I think, that President Mubarak's regime was fraying in its ability to maintain the stability for which it was valued. The rigged elections in November, which people have referred to, were themselves, I think, a sign of incompetence and panic from the administration, a sign of weakness, which should have had a stronger response than they received from the U.S. administration.

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And we have seen, of course, gruesome incidents of police brutality – the killing of Khaled Said in Alexandria, who was, you know, beaten to death in the street by police officers. And that, indeed, has been a mobilizing factor for young people in Egypt. He was very much linked to the question of Internet freedom. You know, the argument with the police officer broke out in an Internet café and became symbolic of the freedom, which the younger generation in Egypt is demanding, and which the Mubarak government has been denying them.

And another indicator, I think, of the fraying of authority and competence of the Mubarak regime has been the rise in sectarian tensions and the attacks on Christians that we have seen, and the failure, really, of the Mubarak government to hold people accountable for those incidents of violence and incitement against minority religious communities.

[00:42:57]

So I think now there's a clear choice facing U.S. policymakers, and it's a choice which the administration has been running away from. I think Mubarak's recent actions destroyed, really, any possibility of pretending that there is a democratic façade to the Egyptian government as we knew it. And I think the choice now is either Mubarak stays in power as the Mugabe of North Africa or there has to be a move to a new, transitional government, which can lead us to democratic elections and a new government, which would meet the legitimate interests of the Egyptian people.

So that implies, I think, and requires that the administration should make clear that it no longer has faith in President Mubarak as any kind of leader in a transitional process. You know, Amr was very optimistic – and I was pleased to hear that – in his analysis of the transitional role being played by Omar Suleiman.

[00:44:13]

It remains to be seen whether that will be accepted by the opposition, but if there can be this agreement whereby Mubarak is sidelined, if not ejected, and that, that is sufficient, then that obviously will be an optimistic thing. But the absolute need for the change, meaning the exit from power of President Mubarak, is something which the administration should be embracing clearly, rather than just hinting at and suggesting.

There are two other pressing, current issues, which I would like to see stronger public messaging on from the administration. Bahey referred to the humanitarian crisis, or the potential for humanitarian crisis, in the streets of Cairo. Again, Amr optimistically suggested that we might not be seeing a major demonstration tomorrow and a major confrontation. Nonetheless, you know, we still have troops in the streets and we have demonstrators on the streets and the possibility for further violence, for killing of demonstrators by the armed forces and other security forces is present.

[00:45:26]

And the administration needs to be making sure that, that catastrophe is not allowed to happen and that it's very clearly understood by military leadership in Egypt that the consequences of any involvement in killing of peaceful demonstrators would be severe and the relationship with the U.S. military would suffer accordingly, both in terms of aid and in terms of close cooperation that they currently enjoy.

And finally, there have been these raids on human rights organizations that we've seen today. The Hisham Mubarak Law Center in downtown Cairo was raided in a very violent manner, it seems. A number of staff members and other human rights activists gathered there have been detained. We have lists of names of human rights defenders and journalists who have been taken into detention. These people must be released and the U.S. government should be front and center calling for their release. And I'll stop there.

[00:46:17]

MS. DUNNE: Thank you very much, Neil. So you know, what we've heard is Amr – and by the way, I didn't introduce him. I sort of assume Amr Hamzawy needs no introduction, but he is the research director at the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut and a very well-known Egyptian political scientist.

So Amr described an offer by Vice President Suleiman, which I think goes somewhat beyond what President Mubarak offered in his recent speech, but it's also short of what the demonstrators and opposition have been demanding. And I would say there's kind of – the essential difference between what Suleiman is offering and what the opposition has been demanding is that the present Egyptian government would – the powers that be in Egypt would still be in control.

[00:47:10]

The opposition would not be brought into the government in the transitional period. The opposition would continue to be on the outside. Also, the parliament would not be dissolved, although we heard a significant number of races might be rerun. And of course, President Mubarak would still be there. So those are some significant differences.

Amr described it as a compromise that he thinks might be acceptable. I think there are a lot of questions now. Will this deal fly? You know, what does this mean for whether there will be continuing demonstrations? If the deal does fly, to what extent will a government headed by Omar Suleiman and Mubarak still on the scene carry out real political reforms that would lead to free elections?

[00:47:59]

And also, what will the U.S. relationship be, both with an Egyptian government in a transitional period and afterwards? I think a lot has happened between the United States and the Egyptian government in the last week. And I don't think there's any going back. I think there's going to be some significant changes here. We're going to open it up, now, for your questions. I would ask you, please put your hand up. I see the first question there. Wait for the microphone to come to you. Second question in the back.

Wait for a microphone to come to you and please identify yourself. And please keep your questions brief. Let me know if you want your question to be answered by a specific person. I think we'll collect three or four

questions and then let our panelists respond. Yeah, okay. The first question is here. You can give her the mic. Thank you.

[00:48:50]

Q: My name is Heba Kotzi (ph). I'm a journalist from Al-Masry Al-Youm, the Egyptian newspaper. My huge fear, as a Coptic Christian, Egyptian citizen, is about Muslim Brotherhood, is about people in Muslim Brotherhood, which is most organized opposition group in Egypt, can hijack demonstration and impose their jihad.

And all of us know how they have ties with al-Qaida, with Hamas in Gaza, with all Islamic jihadi extremists. Nobody spoke about the second article in the constitution that speaks about Islamic law as the main source of Egyptian law. Nobody called for changing this article, which is a huge – it will be a huge change for 10 million or more Christian people who live in Cairo. But my second question is about –

[00:49:54]

MS. DUNNE: So Heba, your question is, what will the role of the Muslim Brotherhood be?

Q: Yeah.

MS. DUNNE: Okay.

Q: My second question is about the American aid to Egypt. And there is another – I don't know if it will raise tension between the United States and Egypt, discussing if they will cut the American aid for Egypt or not. And my third concern is about – sorry –

[00:50:20]

MS. DUNNE: Very brief.

Q: My third concern is about General James Mattis. He said yesterday, I believe in London, that there is a possibility of interfering diplomatically and militarily if the Suez Canal is closed. Thank you.

MS. DUNNE: Thank you, Heba. Okay, question in the back.

[00:50:43]

Q: Hello, my name is Danielle Riph (ph). I'm an independent consultant, Egyptian. My question is related to the military role. The American military and the Egyptian military have very close ties. Are they talking – and I guess Mr. Hicks might answer this question – are they talking together and what's the relationship now?

MS. DUNNE: Okay, thank you. There's another question there in the back?

Q: Thank you. Aprille Muscara, Inter Press Service.

MS. DUNNE: I'm sorry, can you repeat that?

[00:51:15]

Q: Inter Press Service. It's related to the role of the military and the army. Some analysts have put forward the theory that what we're seeing might be a military coup. What do you think of this? Why are they rounding up journalists and human rights activists?

MS. DUNNE: Okay, thanks. Let's start with those questions and then we'll take some more. Who would like to begin?

[00:51:39]

MR. HASSAN: I would respond to the question on the Muslim Brotherhood. Yes, the Muslim Brotherhood is the most organized political, religious group in Egypt, but there are a lot of exaggerations about its weight, its influence and this has become very clear in what we have watched during the last week.

The movement – the whole movement – it was organized by the young generation groups, which mostly are with – they have a labor background, but definitely not a political Islamic background. I haven't seen, in any report, whatever – from the press, whatever in Egypt or in the international media – that the Muslim Brotherhood have a great influence on what is happening on the street.

Definitely, they participated, but it was very difficult to recognize them in this movement. The same, by the way, in Tunisia. I would say, in this regard, that the exaggeration of the role and the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, or even the al-Nahda in Tunisia – it is state-made propaganda to push the international community away from supporting political reform in the Arab region, and also to – for the secularist liberals in those countries to distance themselves from the call for political reform.

[00:54:05]

This is, of course, including – when I say liberals and secularists, this definitely also includes the other religious minorities in this region, including other Islamic-faith minorities. In such context, also, the Shia minority, of course, is very worried about which role, which influence for the Muslim Brotherhood or Islamists in general, whatever in Egypt or in other parts of the Arab region.

What maybe has more and more impact on people's day-to-day life in Egypt is what you call Salafist, and this is not the Muslim Brotherhood. And Salafism, has supported a lot the government in Egypt in its political discourse, especially, in particular, towards the others, whatever the Copts, the West or Baha'i or whatever.

So in the current context, I am, as a human rights defender, as also a secularist, as a liberal, I have no worry at all towards the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in such a stage. But if such a situation would continue and a breakthrough would not be achieved as soon as possible, this would work to help more the radicals, whatever the Islamists or the non-Islamists. Thank you.

MS. DUNNE: Thank you, Bahey. Neil?

[00:56:10]

MR. HICKS: On the two questions about the role of the military and U.S. relations with the military, I mean, it's our understanding that, certainly, the U.S. military leadership and the Egyptian military leadership are talking. There have been official statements to that effect from the U.S. side. It was reported, I think yesterday, that



Mike Mullen, the chair of the Joint Chiefs, was in touch with his Egyptian counterpart and had praised the Egyptian military for their professionalism – and I emphasize that word – in their role during the protests to that point.

This is a vital relationship that the U.S. has with the Egyptian military. It's, perhaps, the best hope that we have for a decent outcome here. And it's very much to be hoped for, I think, that there should be continuing encouragement from all levels of the military leadership here to their counterparts in Egypt that the Egyptian military must continue to play a constructive role, must prevent violence and must live up to this ethos of professionalism that Admiral Mullen very properly emphasized.

[00:57:27]

I think that one of the things that the Egyptian military leadership values most is its close relationship with the United States military – the possibility to have training, access to equipment and so on, even above and beyond the aid that they receive. So anything that might jeopardize that relationship – and clearly, implications that the military were involved in massive violations would very much harm that relationship.

So that, I think, is an interest, which we can use to our advantage in promoting a stable and peaceful outcome to the situation in Egypt today. Someone, very interestingly, asked about a military coup. And it's an issue which I've been thinking about a bit and to some extent, you're probably right. I mean, what happened in Tunisia was a military coup, in a way. General Amar, the head of the military, reportedly told Ben-Ali that his time was up and he should leave. And Ben-Ali left.

[00:58:26]

Maybe we're seeing something similar in Egypt, where the military will decide – and maybe they have already decided – that Mubarak's effective part in the government of Egypt is over. And what should we call that, other than a military coup? Then the question comes, is it necessarily a bad thing? And that is kind of an interesting question, which I – it is for another day, but I would suggest not necessarily.

MS. DUNNE: I would just ask Neil, in this context, the military aid issue was raised. Should the United States, at this point, be suspending military aid or be threatening to suspend military aid, either publicly or privately? Does that hurt or help, in terms of getting the Egyptian military to act properly in this situation?

[00:59:17]

MR. HICKS: I think there should be some very clear red lines, in terms of involvement by military forces in using armed force against unarmed demonstrators would be unacceptable and would lead to immediate suspension of military assistance. But beyond that, I think private messaging about the quality of this relationship that I was just talking about would be much more effective and is much more important.

MS. DUNNE: Thank you. More questions. Right here?

Q: I just – general question to the panel about the relationship between the NDP, the ruling party, and the military and to what extent those interests are intertwined and, sort of, what complications can arise if the military decides that it has a vested interest in the NDP.

MS. DUNNE: Thanks, would you just tell us who you are, please?

Q: I'm Dalia Rezka (ph). I'm a concerned citizen.

MS. DUNNE: Okay, thank you. Another question here?

[01:00:12]

Q: Good afternoon, Claude Zullo from the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative. My question is, there's been a lot of talk about Suleiman negotiating with the opposition and my question is, with whom should he be negotiating? It seems very fragmented. And are we starting to see some sort of – are they coalescing together and developing a common set of negotiating points?

MS. DUNNE: Okay. There was a question in the back, here.

[01:00:38]

Q: Radwan Zia (ph), George Washington University. Actually, my comment is to Amr and maybe to you, Michele, because I heard the interview of Omar Suleiman and I'm very disappointed. In 40 minutes in this interview, he never uses the words "democracy" or "democracy transition."

He always used the words that everything should be done under a Sharia – (inaudible) – constitutional legitimacy with the same word used by Mubarak. That means that's what we have now in Egypt or that will be a transition under military coup. And this is what – that's what's happened in Latin America in the '80s – that we'll have different personnel in the military never led democratic transition.

And this is why we should be very worried about – there is a huge difference between a smooth and a quick transition and democratic transition. And this is not clear by Omar Suleiman and others. Because Omar Suleiman, when he used the word of the roadmap, the roadmap should lead us to the stability and security.

And of course, the regime figures they have different understanding for security and for the reform and et cetera, et cetera. And I think that's what – everything depends on tomorrow's demonstration. If we have large demonstration, that should be – push the military to have more actions regarding Mubarak. And never that, maybe now we maybe lose the momentum. Thank you.

[01:02:09]

MS. DUNNE: Okay, thank you. Well, let's answer those questions and we'll come back for one last round. Just briefly, maybe, I'll just respond briefly to what Radwan said. I have to say, Radwan, you know, I share your skepticism about what Suleiman said. And that's why I raised this issue of, you know, I think what's on offer here is some kind of change, you know, is some kind of change, is some kind of reform.

But are we really talking about a transition to free and fair elections and to a democratic system or are we talking about another – you know, another attempt to carry out limited reform, you know, in the hopes that this will satisfy the population? Okay, and then I will turn it over – how about, Bahey, would you like to –

MR. HASSAN: Yeah.

MS. DUNNE: Yeah.

[01:03:03]

MR. HASSAN: I hope, of course, that we have the right balance of power in Egypt to push for an immediate transition to democracy. I don't think that we have such balance of power. Of course, I am sharing with everyone, including Radwan, his aspiration for moving fast for a democracy tomorrow. In fact, several decades before – Egypt deserved to be a democratic country several decades before.

But this is the situation: We have, because of historical reasons I talked about before, we have a very weak opposition. And the strongest element in this opposition is the demonstrators in the street. So I think demonstrations should continue. And this is, maybe, the only guarantee to push for better and for a quick or fast move towards a transition to democracy.

[01:04:32]

In this regard, as I told you that there were almost 15,000 who were sleeping in Tahrir Square just until two hours or three hours ago, there were between 50 to 60,000 in Tahrir Square demonstrating in spite of the other, negative developments which I told you about of today. There are also dozens of thousands demonstrating in several other cities in Egypt.

There is a call for a large – more and more large demonstration for tomorrow. And I am sure that this would happen. So this is the – if there is a guarantee to push for such – any proposals – this roadmap or whatever – to push for real and substantive transition, the people in the street, and I think the people realize that and therefore, they are ready to sacrifice even their lives until they accomplish their, at least, minimum objective.

[01:05:56]

Concerning the people with whom Omar Suleiman should negotiate, I think I was clear in this regard. And I think if there is a feasible representative for the aspirations of the average Egyptian people and the main demands of the opposition, it is ElBaradei.

This doesn't mean that I agree, as a human rights defender, on all the agenda of ElBaradei, but I am talking about a fact, a solid fact. There is no other visible oppositional figure who has the same moral weight, or even one-tenth of what ElBaradei has among the Egyptian people, and even among the second and the medium cadres of the other political oppositional forces. Thank you very much.

[01:07:09]

MR. HICKS: On the question of NDP-military relations, I think one of the interesting things that has happened, you know, since the protests started, is that we have seen this fracturing of the coalition – the NDP-military coalition that was part of Mubarak's regime. And in Mubarak's first speech after the protests, he almost blamed, I think, the liberal economists, if you like, within the NDP who had antagonized the people with their economic policies.

And it's noticeable that, since the protests started, it's those parts of the business-friendly NDP, if you like, who have been sidelined by Mubarak and he has gone back to his circle of old military advisors. And he made sure that he was on the television surrounded by generals and military leaders. Obviously, the business elite are a strong constituency, and I imagine they're pretty annoyed about recent events, which will have cost them a great deal of money. So that's another question, I think, is who represents them going forward.

Obviously, they're not part of the opposition, but maybe now, they have a distinct view, which is different from the military-NDP establishment around Mubarak. That, again, raises another question: Is there another military establishment, which is more willing to cooperate with the business elite going forward? But there are now divisions evident in the coalition that did not exist before the protests started.

[1:08:41]

MS. DUNNE: Thank you. I think we have time for one or two more questions.

Q: Hi. My name's Mary Carrick (sp). I was just wondering if you guys are skeptical at all about the U.S. government really doing something to either cut down or stop the aid, considering that for the past 30-odd years, we've been backing this guy, and also that in an article I read, Vice President Biden refused to call Mubarak a dictator?

And also, he said that the complaints of – he said the complaints of the Egyptian people were illegitimate, and amongst those cited was police brutality and government torture. And then I just saw in an interview yesterday on CNN, a Republican – probably a very potential presidential candidate, Mitt Romney, also refused to refer to him as a dictator. And –

MS. DUNNE: Okay, thank you. Is there maybe one more question, one last one? Please make it brief because we're just about out of time.

[01:09:57]

Q: My name is Steven Shorr (sp). My question is, can any possible new Egyptian government, however liberal, secular and democratic, survive if it doesn't succeed in bringing down the unemployment rate for young people?

MS. DUNNE: Okay, I think, Neil, maybe this time we'll go to you first and we'll let Bahey have the last word.

[01:10:19]

MR. HICKS: Of course there's skepticism about U.S. policy and whether it will really change towards the status quo of unconditional, almost, support for the Mubarak government. I think that conditions have changed so much on the ground that they really have no alternative but to have a new approach.

I think the things that Mubarak has done in the last week, as I mentioned in my remarks, make him an unacceptable partner now. So I think there will be consequences. If a credible transition process under Suleiman, or anybody else, gets into motion, then there need not be an interruption in the assistance and we may not see any interruption in the assistance.

But I would hope that the reluctance that U.S. leaders, for a long time – for decades – have had to really push the Egyptian government on its apparent failings – its very blatant election rigging, violations of human rights and so on – the reluctance, which we have seen, and which has brought us to this point, will not be reverted to. There can be no continuation of, you know, quiet acceptance of authoritarianism and dictatorship in such a close ally.

[01:11:41]

MR. HASSAN: Concerning the second question, my brief answer is that, no, any government would not be able to survive with such a level or crisis of unemployment. But the key in this regard is the political reform – I mean, to have a government representing the Egyptian people and adopting the feasible economic reform and policies and combating corruption and making the Egyptian people responsible on the policies, which would be adopted and agree on the price of implementing such policies. So the key, once again – and this is for decades – concerning the economic crisis in Egypt is the political reform.

[01:12:40]

MS. DUNNE: Okay, so once more, we're at another very interesting juncture in this rolling situation in Egypt – you know, a compromise offer on the table – and I think you've heard some different views from the panel today about whether this might defuse the crisis or whether demonstrations or going to continue, and where all of this is going to lead. Thank you for coming to this event and please join me in thanking our guests, Bahey al-Din Hassan, Neil Hicks and Amr Hamzawy. (Applause.)

(END)