

EGYPTIAN ELECTIONS, ROUND ONE

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Washington, D.C.

BARBARA SLAVIN: Good morning, everyone. Thank you very much for coming out today. We are very excited. This is a – this event is a collaboration between the Carnegie Endowment and Al-Monitor.com, which is a new website – al-monitor.com – a new website devoted to news from and about the Middle East. It is a combination of very carefully selected articles translated from Arabic, Turkish and Hebrew and original content by a number of contributors, including myself – I’m Washington correspondent for Al-Monitor. And my name is Barbara Slavin; I’m also a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council. So we hope that you will take a look at the website, and we encourage you to interact with it. It’s supposed to be a bridge between the Middle East and the West. And I hope we are beginning to fulfill that function.

We’re going to talk about the Egyptian elections, which obviously is a crucial topic now for the United States and other countries as they look at the Arab Spring and what has transpired, where it is going, what it means for U.S. interests in the region, what it means for political Islam, what it means for the regional order in terms of which countries will emerge as the most powerful, which will lose influence in the region.

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And we have a fabulous panel here to discuss these issues. We’re going to start with Michael Wahid Hanna, who is a fellow at the Century Foundation; works on issues of international security, human rights, postconflict justice and U.S. foreign policy in the broader Middle East and South Asia. He recently served as co-director of the Century Foundation’s International Task Force in – on Afghanistan. He’s been a consultant for Human Rights Watch in Baghdad and was a senior fellow at the International Human Rights Law Institute.

Michael is going to be followed by Samer Shehata, who teaches comparative and Middle East politics and U.S. policy toward the Middle East at Georgetown University. He’s been acting director of the Master of Arts in Arab Studies program. Before he went to Georgetown University, he was a fellow at the Society of Fellows at Columbia University and director of graduate studies at New York University’s Center for Near Eastern Studies. He’s the author of “Shop Floor Culture and Politics in Egypt.” I should mention that both Samer and Michael were in Egypt recently; Samer was there for the first round of the presidential elections.

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And then our cleanup hitter is Marina Ottaway, who, as all of you know, is a senior associate in the Carnegie Middle East program and focuses on political transformation in the Middle East and Gulf security. She is a longtime analyst of the formation and transformation of political systems and has also written about political reconstruction in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans and in Africa.

So without further ado, let’s start with Michael. Let’s talk about the first round of the Egyptian elections. What surprised us? What are the implications going forward? And can you predict who’s going to win in the – (laughter) – runoff – the runoff election on June 16 and June 17?

MICHAEL WAHID HANNA: Definitely not on the latter question.

Thanks, Barbara. So I think the first place to start with respect to the first round of the elections is to note, I think, some of their deficiencies. I'll get to some of the more optimistic sort of green shoots that exist that I do think come out of these results. But I think it's important to note that these are not fully free and fair elections. We know that President Carter was there as part of the Carter Center's mission and essentially endorsed the process. But this is a sort of tightly focused endorsement.

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It is true, these are competitive elections. Nobody in Egypt, including the military rulers, any of the political players, knows exactly what's going to happen. It is an unknown. Nobody can direct outcomes. Number two, there aren't people stuffing ballot boxes. This isn't a case of massive fraud. In terms of the allegations of fraud we've seen, I know that the sort of specific allegations that I think can be substantiated are on the individual polling station level. The broader claims of systematic fraud – I've seen nothing to suggest that that took place.

And that's in keeping with everything that I expected going in. There isn't – these aren't Mubarak-style elections. They are competitive. There is not wholesale, centrally directed fraud. That being said, these are – this is not a fair political environment. I think we have to look at – and what this tells us – it tells us a lot about the challenges that will face any civilian government going forward.

So I think the first obvious area where the political environment is compromised is state media. It is still a propaganda outlet. I remember talking to a prominent political leader, and he – and he was explaining the way state media functions. And he said, don't think of it so much as direct orders. SCAF isn't on the phone telling these producers what exactly they need to do. This is the way they work. This is their mindset: State media is there to serve the government. The government is now SCAF. They are pushing a certain line. There's obviously communication involved. And they are filling that role. They simply – the culture at Maspero, the state – the state TV and radio broadcasting center, is – it's been inculcated over many years. They don't know how to function any other way. They're not a neutral entity.

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And the propaganda that has been in place for many months now has very serious political effects. It primes the political climate and environment. It stigmatizes certain actors. It describes a narrative about what is going wrong with the country. And these have an effect over time. And they clearly had a political effect and had a big part, I think, in how these results came out.

Now there are state – there are nonstate media. They have an impact as well. There are private satellite channels, a profusion of newspapers. And so there's quite a cacophony. And I don't mean to say the state media has a monopoly on people's minds, because it's no

longer the case. There are lots of viewpoints represented in Egypt. But clearly still it has a very important role to play, and it remains one of the primary sources for many people in terms of their gathering news. And so it plays a disproportionate role. And I think it's important to note how it has shaped this political environment. There's no way that state media can play this role and us to simply ignore it and to act as if the day of balloting is the only significant moment when we can judge free and fair. So I think that's point number one.

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Point number two is the state bureaucracy. It is Mubarak's bureaucracy. One of the SCAF generals recently told someone I'm close with that – he said, look, look around, the judges – these are the same judges that were there during the fraudulent 2010 elections. This bureaucracy – this is Mubarak's bureaucracy. And it's certainly true. I mean, what happened on February 11th, 2011 was – a very specific layer of the ruling regime was removed. But the backbone, the institutional infrastructure – it has remained. There's been no vetting. There's been no bureaucratic reform, whether it be in the judiciary, whether it be in the security sector. The bureaucracy remains intact.

And we have seen the bureaucracy acting, I think, in ad hoc fashion and ways that I think defy any description that would comport to the rule of law. We look at Khairat al-Shater's disqualification from the presidential election. It's based on a politicized prosecution that happened in the Mubarak years. There's no way to justify this, frankly. You can justify it on a sort of very narrow reading and a – and sort of technical definition. But there's no way to justify it as comporting to any sense of broader justice.

Now the disqualifications that happened – Khairat al-Shater, Hazem Salah Abu Ismail and Omar Suleiman – you know, Hazem Salah Abu Ismail's disqualification is by the book. There is no way around it. His mother's an American citizen, the law has been changed, and so this is a straightforward case. But when you package them together – and I think particularly Khairat al-Shater's disqualification I think is of dubious – is of dubious quality – clearly the bureaucracy looks to be acting in political ways.

Now, these disqualifications, I would say, made these elections much less dangerous and much less fraud. I think Omar Suleiman/Khairat al-Shater runoff would have been Morsi/Shafiq, you know, on steroids. (Laughter.) I mean, it would have been really – I mean, really – and if you add in Hazem Salah, who actually was quite competitive, I mean, I think these would have been much more dangerous possibilities for the country. And so there is that aspect to these rulings. But of course, if we're looking at this by a sort of straight-by-the-book analysis, it's hard to say that these bureaucratic maneuverings were not politicized.

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And we come then to the supreme court. Clearly the supreme court is also acting in politicized ways. We have them now sort of debating what they'll do with the disenfranchisement law. This is a law that would have barred Ahmed Shafiq from running for president. And you know, we also know that – in back-room discussions that the SCAF,

the military council, is using the prospect of parliament being dissolved by the supreme court as additional leverage. You know, the notion is the – this decision is in a drawer somewhere; and if negotiations over the constituent assembly, the constitution, some of the issues that are dear to the military going forward – if these aren't dealt with properly, this decision is coming out of the drawer. Parliament is going to be dissolved.

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And so we have a climate in which the bureaucracy is still functioning in politicized ways. The SCAF remains the most potent political player in the country and remains very influential. And that is going to be the case regardless of what transpires with these elections. When a civilian president takes over, whether it be Morsi, whether it be Shafiq, SCAF is going to be hugely influential. Now, the boundaries of its actions will be different. It's no longer going to be endowed with executive and legislative authority. They'll have to act in more discreet fashion. But clearly they are in a very serious position of political authority, and that's going to continue.

And that was always the case. On February 12th, 2011, the military emerged strengthened. Their institutional rivals from within the regime had been vanquished in many ways, the police and then the crony capitalist class around Gamal Mubarak. And so the military's role and position was solidified. And I think, you know, it's clearly going to be the case that trying to assert civilian supremacy over the military is a multiyear process that is going to – that's not – that's neither assured or is possibility that's going to take place in any short – in the near term. It's going to take quite a long time. It will require a sort of unity of purpose on the part of civilian politicians in the political class, the likes of which we have not seen since February 11th, 2011.

You know, it's one of the sort of tragic flaws of this transition, how political fragmentation has magnified the already quite potent power of the SCAF and I think has squandered some of the possibilities that existed very early on. As opposed to focusing on unified demands, quickly the political forces turn to politics. And I think that was destructive in many ways. It was short-term, it was myopic, it was a shift to what is a sort of contested environment when all the core goals of the revolution – most of them were not realized. And I – and I think that was a lost opportunity. So you know, we note the role of the military, the sort of – this is the backdrop to – with which – that the elections transpired.

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Now turning to the elections, I was in Egypt a couple of weeks ago. You know, and I think I got some things right and some things very wrong. I think I – what I – what I did put my finger on before the elections were some of the trends. What I didn't understand at the time was how – who was going to benefit specifically from these trends. So very clearly in my time in Egypt, I think it emerged that there is in fact a backlash against the Muslim Brotherhood. I don't think there's any question about that. It's – you know, people have said this is exaggerated. I don't think that's the case. You know, part of this is unfair because the brothers control Parliament. They control a parliament that has no obvious authorities. Their power is bounded by the SCAF. And so in some ways, they were gamed by the SCAF. They were given something of a poisoned chalice. They were made to look

ineffectual when at times some of that ineffectiveness was, frankly, mandated by the parameters given to them and by the role of the military.

That being said, I do think that their role in the constituent assembly, when they clearly overreached, tried to pack the assembly with their cronies, made them look bad. It made them look like political novices. It made them look ineffective. And you know, you combine that with some of the unrealistic expectations that existed on the Egyptian street, and you do have some frustration that this parliament has done nothing, that it has – even its core task, which was to form the constituent assembly to draft a constitution – that has been a failure. And so I do think that was a real trend, and I think the parliamentary results bore – the presidential results bore this out.

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The other obvious trend is a sense and a yearning for law and order and security. There has been a backlash against the activist class and the protest movement for months now. I think it crystallized particularly during the summer sit-in in Tahrir, and it has – this has been a defining feature. And obviously, this is egged on by state media; it's egged on by the narrative put forward by the SCAF. The sit-in that took place in front of the Ministry of Defense could not have been more perfect in terms of how the SCAF would want to frame the situation. It was a disastrous tactical decision and, I think, had a big role in terms of shifting even more support toward Shafiq. You know, there were people with arms in the crowd in front of MOD, and you had Ayman al-Zawahiri's brother in the crowd. I mean, this created a sense of something – that red lines were being crossed. And I think the Abbasiya demonstration really had a big impact on many voters' expectations.

A couple other points – I'll be quick. The other thing that was clear going in and I think was part of a misreading of the parliamentary elections was the nature of soft support. The MB and the Salafis have core support, people that are going to come – their base, the people that they will always be able to turn out. But I think it was an overreach in terms of analysis to look at the parliamentary elections as the baseline for Egypt, that when Egypt votes, conservative Egyptians will naturally opt for Islamists. And I think this Islamist/non-Islamist dichotomy is somewhat overstated, and it overlooks the sort of complicated political allegiances that are evolving. It's a chaotic, fluid environment. Many of the folks who voted for the MB or the Salafis also were very strong proponents of the military.

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Now, for the cadres, the very – the sort of dedicated cadres of both, of the MB and of the military, this is – this is cognitive dissonance. These people are institutional and political and historical rivals. And yet for most Egyptians, this isn't a problem. This is a comfortable position to have. You can vote for the MB and be a strong proponent of the military. This isn't necessarily a huge contradiction. And I think some of that fluidity, some of those complicated allegiances, came out in a big way in the presidential vote. And that's interesting. I think what the presidential vote tells us is that politics in Egypt are incredibly fluid. You know, the MB have huge organizational advantages. When there are competent and credible alternatives, sometimes those alternatives will compete and compete very effectively. If we break down some of the – sort of the ways that the vote played out, you had Hamdeen Sabahi and Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, the two candidates who were sort

of most clearly associated with the pro-revolution activist crowd. You know, they combined would have won this election. That's an important result, the fact that if you add up Hamdeen Sabahi, Ahmed Shafiq and Amr Moussa, that's essentially a majority of Egyptians voted for non-Islamist candidates.

Now, we also don't want to overreach in terms of analysis of these elections to assume this is the new baseline, because I think these are no more conclusory (sic) results than the parliamentary elections were. This is a fluid environment, but what is interesting is how much potential there is for change and how precarious the position of all the political players are. If I'm the Muslim Brotherhood and I look at the fact that I got – that my democratic alliance was a – which was, for the most part, a Muslim Brotherhood-dominated political list in the parliamentary elections – received something on the order of 10 million votes, the fact that Mohamed Morsi received 5 million votes – it's true, this is sort of an apples-to-oranges comparison; it's not a direct comparison. This is a parliamentary versus a presidential vote. But the fact that they could not mobilize anywhere near the same number of voter – that's an alarm bell for the Muslim Brotherhood. And frankly, for Egypt's politics, I think that is a good thing. I mean, I don't think we want to see the emergence of one-party rule even if it comes through the ballot box.

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So I think I'll leave it there to give everybody else another chance. But you know, this is – you know, we know that Shafiq and Morsi is the worst, most divisive, most polarizing possibility for this runoff. I think obviously, part of that is a result of political fragmentation that allowed the two extremes to come to the fore. But there's a lot more, I think, that if we are able to look beyond into the future – and it's a tough thing because Egyptians are in a bind at the moment – there are some interesting dynamics that suggest political fluidity that I think are promising in the long run, assuming we don't have very awful authoritarian relapse, whether under Shafiq or Morsi.

MS. SLAVIN: Thank you very much.

Samer, I think there's still plenty to talk about in these elections. I want you to look at what is a secular liberal supposed to do in the runoff? Who can they possibly vote for given the choice that's being presented? Do you agree that the SCAF is going to continue to pull the strings behind the scenes? Will the SCAF be more or less powerful if it's Morsi who wins or Shafiq who wins? Morsi – it would seem, if the Muslim Brotherhood has both the presidency and the parliament, together they would be quite a juggernaut. Is that – is that the wrong interpretation? Are they still going to be subjected to the whims of the military? And anything else you want to say about it – (inaudible) –

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SAMER SHEHATA: Sure, and I will, yeah. (Laughter.) Well, the question of who should a secular liberal vote for, of course, is a very difficult one. And I'll just, you know, address the questions briefly and then go on to some remarks having to do with the elections.

I think that, you know, the debate going on right now obviously in Egypt since the first tallies, even before the official results, was this is, you know, a terrible situation between

bad and worse, as it were, between Shafiq and Morsi. And you know, there are different debates going on. I mean, some are saying that we should, if we support the principles of the revolution, hold our nose and vote for Morsi because he's certainly better than Shafiq. I don't think that sentiment is probably shared by large numbers of Egyptians Copts or those whose first priority is anti-Muslim Brotherhood sentiment. Apparently, Ahmed Maher's April 6th wing yesterday said that they will vote for or support Mohamed Morsi.

There is also a debate going on right now about whether people should boycott the – I think it's a ridiculous position to hold – to boycott the second round of the elections, as it were.

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I think there's just one other thing I want to say about this, and that is to think that Ahmed Shafiq in any way represents secularism or liberalism is to very much misrepresent Ahmed Shafiq, right? I don't think that simply because he is hostile to the Muslim Brotherhood and hostile to Islamist politics that he upholds or champions or deeply believes in secular let-alone principles. For me, the situation, I think, is quite apparent. The Mubarak regime, which has been in power since October 6th, 1981, and which Shafiq is certainly a member of, being in the military, being the head of the Air Force, being the minister of civil aviation, being the prime minister during the last days of Mubarak's rule, including the – during the Battle of the Camels and other violence against the protesters in Tahrir and elsewhere, is reprehensible.

And regardless of what we think of the Muslim Brotherhood – and I've been working on the Muslim Brotherhood and studying the Muslim Brotherhood for the last five or six years – their track record – they're certainly not liberals in the sense that they champion a full citizenship rights and the inclusion of Christians and women and so on, but I think their record is different than the Shafiq – and at the very worst, untested. So I would – I would, you know, advocate Mohamed Morsi, with the stipulation that, of course, the struggle has to continue and that one has to kind of further push for the deepening of democratization in Egypt.

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So let me just then move on to a slightly different reading from Michael's assessment of the elections. I think that of course it's easy – and everyone in Egypt right now is incredibly distraught or many are incredibly distraught about the choice that Egyptians face. My reading of the situation is slightly different. I do think that certainly the political situation in Egypt is incredibly problematic, if not on the brink of disaster, when you think of the mines ahead in the road with regard to the possible ruling that the parliament is unconstitutional as a result of the parliamentary elections law, the idea that the Supreme Constitutional Court could disqualify Ahmed Shafiq as a presidential candidate and so on. So this has really been an incredibly messy transition – if we wanted to even use the word “transition,” or transition in quotation marks.

But with regard to the elections, I think I have a slightly different perspective than Michael. The elections themselves went off very well. And you'll remember that there was a great deal of concern about the possibility of violence, the possibility of electoral fraud, the

possibility of very serious administrative problems. We had significantly fewer polling stations in these elections than in the parliamentary elections, and you'll remember the lines of three and four and five hours during those elections. And there was a serious fear among many specialists that we would face similar problems, especially as a result of the fewer number of polling stations with people waiting for 10 hours and so on, let alone fears that somehow, because of the potential of electoral fraud, the integrity of the process and the outcome could be questioned.

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We've really seen none of that. We've seen really no serious claims that any of the things that Michael has spoken about has – well, I should be more careful – any of these concerns – not so much the state media – had a significant impact on the outcome, right? I mean, nobody can claim that somehow the shortcomings benefited Mohamed Morsi. There were certainly, I think, a number of surprises, I mean – and let alone – not to mention first and foremost the outcome. You'll remember that all of the polling data that was one before, which was flawed, largely, put Amr Moussa as the leading candidate, and in fact, many Egyptians felt that way. The only presidential debate that took place that was widely watched was between the perceived frontrunners, Amr Moussa versus Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh. And of course Amr Moussa performed miserably, and Abdel Moneim even performed less than what many people expected he would do, being number four as opposed to, say, number two or number three.

The other thing that was surprising and somewhat worrying was the turnout, right? I mean, these were the first presidential elections – the first potentially free presidential elections in Egyptian history, and the turnout was really kind of somewhat miserably low, I think, with 47 (percent), 46 (percent), depending on how you read the turnout.

Sabahi's performance was also a great surprise. And this was one of the trends that we noticed in the week or so or the two weeks before the elections, in which there was a great deal of talk for – about Hamdeen Sabahi throughout the country and a great deal of excitement – populist figure, a charismatic individual, you know, a good orator, an Arab Nasserist in a way. And his performance, I think, was very surprising, as was Shafiq's.

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Explaining the outcome in hindsight isn't so difficult. Morsi, of course, has the organizational machine of the Muslim Brotherhood that was very well-functioning, very well-financed. He had the largest campaign events in the run-up to the elections. And it's interesting to note that the discourse during the campaign by Mohamed Morsi or, I should say, by the Freedom and Justice Party more generally – somewhat less so with regard to Mohamed Morsi's own discourse – was one of speaking to the base. It was not a discourse of inclusion. It was not a discourse of trying to woo undecided voters. It was not a discourse that one would expect in a campaign, you know, to try to get undecided voters to vote for you. It was very much a Friday sermon at the two campaign events that I attended in Benha and in Cairo, somewhat understandable if you consider what we first saw on May 23rd and 24th as a primary, right, trying to mobilize the base and get people out. And quite understandably, immediately after the announcement of the elections, the day after, the discourse by Mohammed Morsi and also Shafiq, to some extent, has changed, talking about

the commitment to a civil state, talking about inclusion, making the claim that he's not interested in mandating women's dress, the president – the presidency as an institution as opposed to an individual, and the possibility of appointing non-Freedom and Justice Party individuals into the presidency as advisers or vice president. So the discourse has changed from one of mobilizing the base and so on to one of inclusion.

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Shafiq's discourse – Shafiq's performance also was surprising. And I think Michael hit this on the head when he spoke about the concern that many Egyptians have regarding security. Now I think the Gallup organization did a poll in May that showed that the number-one priority among Egyptians going into the elections was security. There is no question that there has been a deterioration in security, crime, some degree of lawlessness in Egypt in the period after the revolution. More importantly, the perception of lawlessness and the perception of an increase in crime is almost out of control. I mean, there's no question that crime has increased. I mean, my mother-in-law's car was stolen and so on, you know. But the perception that there are wanton acts of violence, that there are child abductions and kidnappings and ransoms – there are some – and so on.

MS. SLAVIN: By the way, two Americans kidnapped in the Sinai this morning.

MR. SHEHATA: Released.

MS. SLAVIN: But I understand they've just been released. (Chuckles.)

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MR. SHEHATA: Right. And so on – is out of control. And Shafiq's platform was essentially, I will restore law and order in 24 hours. I mean, he says that: I will restore law and order in 24 hours. And of course, being a military man, being potentially on good terms with the Ministry of Interior – which has been largely absent, the Ministry of Interior; the police have withdrawn from the streets and have really refused to police in the aftermath of the revolution, because the revolution was an – a criticism, a critique of them and an attempt to reorder the relationship between the Ministry of Interior and the police and the citizenry. So certainly those who wanted security, those who wanted stability.

In addition to those whose economic situations have suffered since the revolution – 20 percent of Egyptians live below poverty, another 20 percent live close to poverty – there's been a deterioration in the economic situation. And there is the desire to have at least the economic situation that they had on January 24th before the revolution. And Shafiq promises them that – not to mention the votes that he elicits from the machine of the National Democratic Party. There have been reports that the NDP machine was working to – you know, in fifth gear for Ahmed Shafiq in the – in these elections. Not to mention the families of the Ministry of Interior people and the army, in addition to – I think it's somewhat accurate to say – large numbers or a big percentage of Coptic Christians.

With regard to the question that you asked, the last question, I think, which Michael refused to answer, which is who will win, I will hesitate – (laughter) – not hesitate to answer. I think Mohammed Morsi will win.

MR. HANNA: If someone put a gun to my head, I would say Shafiq. (Laughter.) But I wouldn't – I wouldn't –

MR. SHEHATA: I think Mohammed Morsi will win. And I think for the following reasons. The 25 percent of the vote that Mohammed Morsi received is not going to decrease, right? Most of the voters, the majority of the voters, I would guess, who supported Abd el-Munam Abu al-Fatuah – 18 percent of the voters – most of them, the majority will go for Mohammed Morsi. The few – the small percentage that Mohammed Selim Al-Awa received – I don't know if it's 1 percent, but he received some amount – will also go for Mohammed Morsi. And then some amount of the Hamdeen Sabahi voters, maybe not half, but some amount of the Hamdeen Sabahi voters will also go with Mohammed Morsi. And that gets him, at the very least, to 50 percent plus 1 (percent).

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If we look at Shafiq's room for growth, it's significantly limited. Shafiq will get the voters who voted for him. And he will also get a significant percentage, possibly the majority of – maybe – of Amr Moussa voters, the 11 percent or 10 percent that Amr Moussa managed to scrounge up. That does not get him close to 50 percent.

Now what's interesting is that – and I'm – and I'll just say two things and then I'll stop. Part of it has to do with the narratives that are being deployed right now about the choice that faces Egyptians. If the narrative is Egyptians face the possibility of an Islamic state versus a secular liberal state, which is the narrative that Ahmed Shafiq wants to put forward, that of course is discomfiting for many Egyptians and would lead them to vote for – cast their vote for Ahmed Shafiq.

If the narrative, however – and I think this is the ascendant narrative – is of revolution versus the Mubarak regime, continuing the revolution versus the counter-revolution, then of course Mohammed Morsi wins. And I think that, as I mentioned with the April 6th movement, supposedly – at least it was stated on Egyptian television yesterday evening – that Mohammed – that Ahmed Maher's branch of the April 6th – the youth movement has come out on the side of Mohammed Morsi – again, holding their nose and voting for Ahmed Morsi (sic), then of course, I think, Ahmed – Mohammed Morsi – I'm sorry – Mohammed Morsi and the Freedom and Justice Party will win.

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The last thing I'll say is this. The Muslim Brotherhood and the Freedom and Justice Party and Egypt more generally face an incredibly momentous and historic moment, decision and opportunity. And I think this is significant for Islamist politics in the Arab world more generally. If Mohammed Morsi and the Freedom and Justice Party are willing to sincerely make efforts to move to a more liberal political philosophy – not fully liberal, but more liberal – and to provide guarantees, real guarantees and assurances to Egyptians – to

Egyptian Copts, to Egyptian women, to liberal and secular Egyptians and so on – about what they would do in the next very important four years in terms of deepening democratization, fundamentally changing the character of the Egyptian state and so on, that would be a significant change in the Muslim Brotherhood and the Freedom and Justice Party and could bode very, very well for Egypt, despite the tremendous challenges that any president of Egypt will face regarding the deteriorating economic situation, the staggering amount of work needed to restructure the bureaucracy in the Egyptian state and so on.

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However, if the Muslim Brotherhood chooses to immodestly try to do it alone as it were and so on, two fates await them: one, the possibility of an Ahmed Shafiq victory, which would be disastrous for the organization's interests because Shafiq has already talked about putting the Muslim Brotherhood back in their place or limiting their, you know, room for maneuver and so on, not to mention what Ahmed Shafiq would do in terms of ending, I think, the possibility of Egypt consolidating any kind of a democratic transition. So I'll stop there.

MS. SLAVIN: Thank you very much, Samer.

Marina, I'm going to turn to you. I want you to look at some of the minefields along the way, the fact that people are voting for a president and they don't even know what the powers of that president will be because Egypt doesn't have a new constitution yet. And if you could also deal with this question of whether the military really will give up its grip on power behind the scenes, even if they do nominally transfer to a civilian.

MARINA OTTAWAY: OK. Thank you. Before I start, for those of you who are standing at the back, there are some seats in front here if people want to come around.

MS. SLAVIN: Yes, they're – and also here. Two seats close to the front also if anybody needs. Yeah.

MS. OTTAWAY: Yeah. The – let me start by answering the question you did not ask me to answer, that is who's going to win between the two.

MS. SLAVIN: Sorry.

MS. OTTAWAY: And my answer is it doesn't matter to some extent, because no matter who wins the election, the Muslim Brothers are not going to be governing Egypt in the near future, because a lot of the battle for power is being fought outside the realm of the elections. They are going to – Michael talked a little bit at the beginning, but I want to develop some of those points much more.

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The – Egypt today is, I would argue, where Turkey was in 1997; that is, when the battle started in Turkey between an elected Islamist party that at that point had the – had control of the prime ministership and their institutions of what the Turks called the deep

state. And I think we can call about the existence of a deep state in Egypt, that the military, the bureaucracy and so on. And it's quite clear that the very important part of the battle for power is being fought – is going to be a battle between the deep state and the elected institutions. And I would argue that it's very likely that the first round of that battle is going to be won by the state and not by the elected institutions.

Before I develop that point, I want to make one comment about the elections and the election results. And one of the most striking aspects of the election – of the election process – not so much the result, but the process – is the complete failure of the – let's say the – you know, the body politics of Egypt to generate credible, new secular candidates.

[00:41:05]

In other words, in order to have – who were the secular candidates? It'd be – we know who they were. I mean, I'm talking about the main ones. Amr Moussa – not exactly new blood in the body politics of Egypt; Ahmed Shafiq – again, very much part of – very much a part of the older regime, and then Sabahi. They have to go and dust off essentially an old Nasserite in order to introduce a – you know, another secular – another secular candidate. The uprisings, the events since January of 2011 have not really brought to the fore any new blood on the liberal side and, even more broadly, on the secular side. We see – we saw it in the presidential election, and we have seen it – and we see it in parliament.

A few weeks ago, our former colleague Amr Hamzawy was speaking here at Carnegie. And he talked about – he counted the number of liberals, the liberal bloc in the Egyptian parliament – 27 people, OK? Now if you – it doesn't – not take very much math. There are over 500 members of parliament. Thirty percent of them are secular. Well, 30 percent of 500 – more than 500 is well over 27 (percent), which means that most of the secular element or the non-Islamist element, if you want, in the parliament is not liberal.

And that is one – this is a missing segment of the – of the political spectrum essentially that seems to be absent in the case of Egypt. I would argue it's largely absent in the case of all countries in transition, because if you look at that, it's not that their situation is not much better, although slightly better but not by much. In the case of Tunisia, it's not much better; in the case of Morocco either, I would argue. So I think we see a real sort of puzzling element and very disturbing element, I think, in the transitions in – that are taking place in Arab countries.

But make – let me move beyond the election and really come to the – to the statement that I made that no matter who wins the election, the Muslim Brotherhood are not going to be running Egypt in the near future. And the reason is that, first of all, we have to look at what courts are doing.

[00:43:34]

And again, I want to make more emphatically the point that Michael Hanna did before: The courts are playing an incredibly – and incredibly political role. The decision to put the courts in charge of the elections essentially, which originated way back in the days of Mubarak in an attempt to make the elections a little more credible, under the circumstances,

has resulted in the complete politicalization of the Egyptian judiciary. Judiciary has taken all the most important decisions or a number of the most important decisions that – political decisions, let me repeat – that had been taken since January of 2011. It was the judiciary that decided the NDP could be disbanded. That is a political decision obviously, but it was made by a judiciary body. It was the judiciary that decided who could run and who could not run for the – who could or could not be a presidential candidate. Again, as we heard, many of those decisions were taken on very thin juridical ground.

Let me point out that it is the judiciary that's going to be decide pretty soon whether the parliament is going to allow to continue sitting or it's going to be disbanded. And that decision is going to be a political decision and not a judicial (sic) decision.

[00:45:05]

Why am I so sure about this? Because the argument on which the decision that's being taken is whether the election law that led to the election, that was used in the election of the parliament, was unconstitutional. I don't know how you judge the unconstitutionality of any law when the country does not have a constitution. (Laughter.) In other words, there is – no, this is the – this is not a joke. I mean, the country is working on the basis of a constitutional declaration that was jerry-rigged by the military on the basis of some articles of the 1971 constitution that were amended and submitted to a referendum, plus the – plus other articles that were plucked from the old constitution without any consultation, without any referendum, without any decision because the military realized that you – that this – that these amended articles of the old constitution no longer had a body in which they could fit because the constitution itself was suspended.

So what we have now is a constitution that is an extremely strange and an extremely controversial document, and it's on the basis – so that when the Supreme Court is going to make a decision on whether that law is constitutional or not, it's going to make by definition a political decision, and there are no two ways about it. Let me add, for those of you who have – don't know or have forgotten, that the head of the Supreme Constitutional Court is also head of the presidential election commission, which, of course, makes you fear even more for – or confirm the fact that these are going to be political – that are going to be political decisions.

[00:47:01]

So what – both of you said that is a decision that's ready be to – to be trotted out. I understand that it's very likely that the parliament is going to be – that the parliament is going to be dismissed, which will leave the – now, what that means, it's very unclear per usual because there are examples, historical examples in Egypt in the last – in the last decade of the courts deciding that the parliament was elected unconstitutionally. And what they have done in the past is to allow some of the decisions of the parliament to stand, even if the parliament essentially was the – was disbanded and new elections were called. So it's not quite clear what all the implication of a dismissal over the parliament are, but they could be quite, quite far-reaching.

If that happens, essentially – and I think it's very likely to happen, even more likely to happen should Morsi win the elections, of course – then I think what we are going to have is a president with totally unclear powers presiding on a country that no longer has any elected institution. And where is the result? It's the old institution of the state that really prevail. I said this is Turkey in 1997. What happened in 1997? Erbakan's party was disbanded by the – disbanded by the courts, and the first – sort of the first electoral victory of an Islamist party was totally nullified as a result.

I am not – I have not seen any indications at this point that the – that the courts will try to disband the Freedom and Justice Party, although occasionally, there are – and I don't think it's going to happen; at least I don't see anything that allows me to reach that conclusion, although you hear periodically the fact that, you know, the – increasingly, in fact, that the relation between the Freedom and Justice Party and the Muslim Brotherhood are too close, that there is no clear separation between the two, and therefore, that the – that the Freedom and Justice Party is a religious party, and religious parties are not allowed, again, under this Egyptian constitution that nobody quite knows what it is at this point. So there is another battle that is – that is – that is looming there and so on.

[00:49:42]

Finally, let me come to the point that Barbara asked me about concerning the constitution and the powers of the president. Now, Egyptians are electing a president whose powers are not very well-defined because the powers of the president at this point are defined by the constitutional declaration that SCAF issued in March of 2011 that, as far as I can tell, leave – give the president pretty much the same power that the president had under Mubarak. And in fact, one of the problems, the struggle between the elected parliament and the SCAF in the last few months, is whether the SCAF has sole control over the appointment of the cabinet, or – because the SCAF is now acting in lieu of the president and, therefore, has sole control over the appointment of the cabinet, or the parliament has a voice in the appointment of the cabinet. The SCAF won the battle for the very simple reason that there are – you know, they had already appointed the cabinet, and all they had to do is to do nothing, essentially, and the cabinet remained as – remained as it was.

It's going to be very interesting to know what's going to – to see what's going to happen. And again, what you are seeing is a battle that's beginning to try to determine the powers of the president that's taking place outside the institutions that should decide what the constitution is. There is not – in theory, it is the parliament that elects the – elects the constituent assembly that then is going to decide – that is going to formulate the constitution. The constitutional declaration is a disaster on that point because it makes very clear only one thing that says, the parliament elects the constituent assembly. It does not say anything about criteria that have to be used, who is eligible to do this, by what kind of majority the constituent assembly has to approve the constitution. It's a total vacuum. There is absolutely no information about what should happen.

[00:52:04]

Furthermore, the attempt – the first attempt by the parliament to elect a constituent assembly was struck down as – again, as unconstitutional, I don't know on what basis,

because if the – all the constitution says the parliament elects the constituent assembly, well, if you don't like the results, that's just too bad. I think politically, the constituent assembly that was chosen by the Muslim Brotherhood was a disaster. It was lopsided. It left too many people outside. It would have caused a great deal of conflict. But I don't know how you can – if all the constitutional declaration says is: “the parliament elects the constituent assembly,” it does not seem to be – again, the juridical ground for questioning that decision is very thin. Political grounds are very large, but there is a constant confusion in the process that's taking place between the juridical and the political.

Now, in terms of the constitution, the writing of the constitution, we are seeing the same conflict between the political and the – then – the juridical, because although it is the parliament that should decide on the constitution through the constituent assembly, according to the constitutional declaration, which is the constitution of the country now, there is – there are all sorts of maneuvers that are taking place right now to try once again to take the writing of the constitution out of the hands of the parliament. There is an attempt – there is a renewed attempt of coming to some agreement beforehand among political parties and the SCAF on the content of the constitution, therefore devoiding the constituent assembly of any power. There are attempts by the – by some of the so-called liberal parties – and I always use the term so-called because most so-called liberal parties are really not terribly liberal – to try and impose conditions on the candidates, how they think they can impose condition on the presidential candidates. For example, one of the requests that is out there now is that the presidential candidates should announce what their cabinet is going to be – what their cabinet will be before the elections – before the elections take place.

[00:54:36]

But in the end – and I stop here so that we have time for discussion – I think what will determine where power resides when the dust settle on the situation now, it's not going – so much the – so much the results of the elections themselves; it's the decisions that are taken by the state institution, that is, that are taken – and it's really the battle between the deep state – which is – which is the military, which is the bureaucracy, which is the courts – and the groups that want change. I think it's very unfortunate at this point that the main exponent of change in this battle that is being fought now is the Muslim Brotherhood, that is an organization that certainly – whose democratic credential can be questioned – as can be the democratic credential of any player on the Egyptian political scene now, but it is certainly an extremely divisive organization. But that is the battle that is – that is being fought right now. So let me stop.

MS. SLAVIN: Thank you very much, Marina. Wow. Thank you all for those comments. Let me start with one or two, and then I'll open it up to the audience.

Given what you have just said, what all of you have said, if you were the Obama administration – (chuckles) – what would you do? It's been conspicuous in its silence about the elections. Mostly, what it said is that it thought that the first round was free and fair and that they would work with whoever emerges at the end of it. But apart from that, they are being very, very careful. Is there anything the United States can do at this point, or does it simply have to sit and wait until, as you say, the dust settles? And maybe I'll start with Samer.

[00:56:28]

MR. SHEHATA: Well, I mean, you know, there is only a limited amount that the United States, I think, can do at this stage. It is worth remembering, however, that the Obama administration or the United States more generally has not really – does not have a good record of pushing for democracy or even the deepening of democracy or the rights of peaceful protests in Egypt, even recently, right? I mean, there has not received the extent – significance – condemnation at the – at the levels that should have – should have received in the last 15 months after the massive use of force by the security forces on a number of different occasions in Egypt against peaceful protesters.

But with regard to the outcome – and of course, I think the more general point needs to be mentioned, which is the United States is a power in decline in the region, and maybe in the world – I only work on the region, so I can only, you know, speak about that with some confidence – there is no question that as states move towards greater representative government, and governments are accountable to populations and to voters, that the United States is going to have less influence over those regimes than it did when the Mubaraks and the Ben Alis of the world were around. And I think that's a very good thing. You know, that's going to make the situation much more – maybe more difficult and so on.

[00:57:53]

But I think it's also worth remembering that the stakes, although are high, I don't think there is going to be a significant amount of change in the short term. I mean, the Brotherhood and all political actors have said that the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty is going to be maintained. They respect and uphold all international treaties and obligations. They will want to maybe look at the specifics of those treaties and renegotiate certain things having to do with the placement of troops in zones A, B and C in Sinai and so on. But I think for the short term, you know, there are going to be no major changes.

In the medium and long term, I think there could very well be. You know, Mohamed Morsi says that any strong country is a country that has food security, that produces its own medicine and that produces its own arms. And I think that, you know, again, this is something for the medium and long term because of the points that Marina mentioned a moment ago, but one could see a democratic Egypt in a decade or so having significantly different relations with the United States on a military level and strategic level – not antagonistic, but certainly less part of the American orbit.

It's all I'll say with that.

[00:59:17]

MR. HANNA: Yeah, I mean, I think when we look at U.S. policy, one thing that I think people have figured out of late is, you know, there has been this notion that we need to be on the right side of history, and that's meant the protesters. And as the year has gone on, as the protest movement has lost popularity, as the law and order narrative has taken hold in Egypt, to get on the right side of history means taking on the military. If you take on

the military, as we saw in a sort of different context with respect to the NGO crisis, it's a very unpopular move, you know. So for the United States at times to do the right thing, to stand up for the right of peaceful protest, that's putting yourself perhaps in a minority position in Egypt. I mean, those who have been dedicated to the protest movement are no longer a majority in the country – if they ever were, if they ever were. And so to take on the SCAF on those terms, say Muhammad Mahmoud, the demonstrations that kicked off right off of Tahrir Square, right before the parliamentary elections, it's difficult. That's not a popular position. I mean, there is not majority support. I mean, we saw the Muslim Brotherhood take a very Machiavellian stand with respect to the Muhammad Mahmoud protests and essentially adopted the narrative of the state. So it's a complicated place for the United States to insert themselves.

And I mean, this isn't to say that there's not a right and a wrong answer here. I mean, killing peaceful protesters is wrong. But to insert yourself in the Egyptian political process and to essentially say the military is using undue force, excessive force, there is a right to peaceful protest – it's a much more complicated proposition than perhaps it was on – you know, on January 28th. This is a polarizing issue. In Egypt, the military remains very popular. The military is the most popular institution in the country, and so taking them on frontally is not a place where we're going to win a lot of friends; in fact, it probably is an action that becomes controversial. And of course, there is state media, once again, that will be in the service, as we saw in the NGO crisis, that is going to fill in a narrative about what's going on, and about foreign interference.

[01:01:26]

One thing that I – that I have seen in the past year – and part of it is catch-up in terms of the fact that we neglected political contacts; you know, we liked one-stop shopping, the fact that we could deal with Hosni, we could deal with Omar Suleiman and that was it. You know, we didn't have to bother with everybody else. It was very efficient, it was very easy, typical client state patterns. And in an effort, I think, to scramble in terms of now broadening our contacts, one of the things that I worried about over the course of the past months is an assumption that that means now the Muslim Brotherhood is supreme and we have to court them excessively, that all of a sudden now we are treating them now as the de facto heirs to the state. And I think that's a problematic thing to do. I mean, I think we have to be more – we have to talk to them. Obviously, I mean, this isn't a question. The policy of ignoring them was beyond myopic. It was very short-sighted. But we don't want to treat them as the heirs apparent. You know, we treat – we – what we need to do is approach Egyptian institutions.

[01:02:28]

And this is where I think the dynamic between the Freedom and Justice Party and the Muslim Brotherhood I think is very complicated. What is the position of U.S. officials in terms of going to visit Khairat al-Shater, who is the most important man within the Brotherhood, and as a result, one of the most important people in Egypt. He's an unelected person. You know, his allegiance is to the Murshid, to Mohammad Badie, who leads the MB. These are not – there's no transparency in these organizations. He fills no elected position in Egyptian politics. And so, you know, we have to think very carefully about how we approach this, that we don't now adopt a position that is a sort of obsequious in its – in

our relationship with the MB. We treat them as we treat all other political forces. We treat them – I think we should treat them with respect to their political power and through Egyptian institutions. And so I think that's a delicate balance. We don't want to overcompensate, in a way.

[01:03:21]

And just to touch on Samer's point, I think we aren't going to see any sort of abrupt shifts in U.S.-Egyptian relations. I think the military and the intelligence – the *mukhabarat* – are clearly – those are files that are reserved to them. This isn't something where the parliament is going to have a say. And frankly, in a lot of ways, I think that's a relief to the Muslim Brotherhood. You know, they're not at the moment, I don't think, interested in taking on the very controversial foreign policy issues.

But going forward, I think U.S.-Egyptian relations will have to shift from a client state-based model – which I think is a failure for a lot of reasons; I think Egypt was a bad ally, not a very useful one. I mean, their client state status has meant that their political power and regional influence is gone. I mean, they can't serve sort of proactive U.S. foreign policy goals in the region because they have no diplomatic sway in the Arab world anymore. So I think it's going to be uncomfortable to move from that client state model to something that looks like interests-based. And if there's not a sustainable interests-based model where there's a convergence of enough U.S.-Egyptian interests to sustain this relationship, then that should indicate to us that this relationship can't continue even in broad parameters in the same fashion. So I think that's going to be an uncomfortable shift. It will require the United States to be able to deal with those areas much like we do with Turkey now, where we do see divergences, very significant ones, very – ones that are difficult to deal with – but in the end, enough convergences and enough utility of purpose that the relationship makes sense. And so that's a question: Is there enough of a convergence of interests remaining now for a democratically – Egypt on the way to a more representative government. Does that make sense? And does that relationship – can that be sustained going forward? And I think that's something that's going to be worked out, I think, in the medium to long term.

[01:05:10]

MR. SHEHATA: If could just say one thing about the military about this. The – you know, it is true that the military has some degree of support in the Egyptian populace right now. But there's also no question – there's absolutely no question; the polling data confirms this – that the military's popularity has declined significantly in Egypt from February 11th until the present. There's absolutely no question about that.

And there is also widespread agreement across the political spectrum – liberal, secular, Muslim Brotherhood and so on – that the military has mismanaged to an incredible degree, if not with malice, the period from February 11th until the present. And there has also been in the last six months or so a discourse that differentiates between the military as an institution, which all Egyptians respect and so on and believe is a national institution, and the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, the 22 or 18 or 19 generals that make 2 million (pounds) or 3 million pounds a month that are, you know, beneficiaries of the Mubarak regime.

Everyone is calling for an end to military rule. That is a universal – a universal demand. And in fact this is also another way to look at the matchup between Mohamed Morsi and Ahmed Shafiq: a civilian, professor of engineering, USC graduate Mohamed Morsi; and Ahmed Shafiq, a military man just like Mubarak, just like Anwar Sadat, just like Gamal Abdel Nasser, just like Mohamed Naguib.

MR. HANNA: Well, I mean, the polling data – I mean, if it was suspect for the – for the presidential race, which it was – it's suspect for this too. And I – and you know, when we talk about unity of purpose for the political class, what we've seen is triangulation in the SCAF, an ability to divide and conquer, right? So the seculars were more than happy to curry favor with an expansive military role if the Selmi document and the sort of guarantees of rights were – was – were ensured. The Muslim Brotherhood has been more than happy to work in back rooms all year long to try to ensure some sort of power-sharing modus vivendi.

[01:07:26]

So yeah, sure, in public they've talked a good game. In action the political class has been a complete and utter failure with respect to holding any type of unified line with respect to checking military power. A very few – very few instances – you know, the backlash to the Selmi document; but I think it's a thin reed upon which to base, I think, the read going forward about how the political actors are going to deal with SCAF.

And if Morsi is president, I can assure you that SCAF is going to then play up its role in terms of the balancer of the political system, the guarantor of the civil state. And they're going to have a lot of takers in Egyptian society who are opposed to the Brotherhood. And so I think – I think it's a little bit more fragmented in practice than it needs – than it needs to be or should be.

[01:08:14]

MS. SLAVIN: Marina, before you answer the question about U.S. role, I have one question. There is an NGO law which I believe is in the parliament. Is it possible that that law will finally get approved? Is that – has the parliament approved any important legislation since it was elected?

MS. OTTAWAY: What the parliament approved one important law, which is the one that in theory disqualified Ahmed Shafiq from running. (Laughter.) It was signed, and the law was totally disregarded. And in fact, in the explanation that I have gotten when I have raised the issue: Here is the constitutional declaration, says that the election commission has the final word about who – decisions that have to do with the elections.

And my question – my next question then in those discussion is always, does that mean that the election commission is above the law? Has received no answer to this at this point. So I think yes, the parliament has passed some laws. We are trying to – in fact to put together a list. We are working on this, about what laws have been discussed and so on. Very little has been enacted. The most important one has been disregarded.

Let me come a moment to the issue of the – of what U.S. should and should not do. And I'll keep it very clear. I think it's very important to keep in mind that what – the position the United States takes is not going to affect the outcome in Egypt. I don't think anybody is going to vote for Morsi versus Shafiq because of the – of the perception that the U.S. favors one over the other. What position the United States is going to take is to affect the relationship between Egypt and the United States.

And I'm making this point because there has been a lot of – I hear a lot of things that are about – on this point that are very confusing. If only the United States could provide more aid to Egypt, that might lead to a different outcome. Very frankly, I don't think – I think it's way beyond the capacity of the United States to influence the outcome in Egypt. It does – but what is at stake is the – (inaudible) – between Egypt and the United States.

[01:10:37]

Given the uncertainties of the situation, I'm all in favor of the U.S. saying as little as possible, short of, you know, the – I think it's one of those cases where the platitudes may be the best thing to say. That is, it's – you know, it is up to the Egyptian people to choose the president that they want, and so on; because, very frankly, there is not only the – any position that the U.S. takes is not going to have an impact, but it also risks making life more complicated in the future. I think the U.S. will have to learn to deal with whatever power configuration emerges in Egypt, which is likely to be one when the military continues to play a very determinant role.

MS. SLAVIN: OK, it's your turn. So when I call on you, say your name and wait for the microphone. And Said, right there in the middle – wait for the microphone, if you would.

Q: Yes, thank you, Barbara. My name is Said Arikat from Al-Quds. I wanted just – I want both or all to elaborate a little bit on – not what the U.S. should do; what will the U.S. do with an elected Morsi versus an elected Shafiq? Thank you.

[01:11:54]

MS. SLAVIN: Who wants to grab that? Samer, you want to take that?

MR. SHEHATA: Not really, but I – but I – (laughter) – well, I mean, you know, the United States has already – I mean, high-ranking – I mean, it's – you know, it's not clear what the significance even of the answer would be, right? I mean, American officials have been – I don't want to say stepping over themselves, but they have made significant efforts to begin a dialogue with the Muslim Brotherhood.

As you know, John Kerry has visited the Freedom and Justice Party and met with high-ranking officials, whether it's Khairat al-Shater, Mohamed Morsi – as has Lindsey Graham, as has Ambassador Anne Patterson on several occasions, as has Bill Burns and I'm

sure many others. And I think that they essentially have come to the conclusion that they can do business with the Freedom and Justice Party and the Muslim Brotherhood.

[01:12:52]

Shafiq has said also that if he is elected president, his first stop will be the United States, his first trip overseas will be the United States, in a way signaling that he wants to have very good relations with the United States, maybe in a way that Mr. Mubarak had at one point and so on. So I don't know what the difference will be. Certainly, possibly relations with the military – U.S.-Egyptian military – one could conceive of some – of being somewhat – slightly different or having different aspects, whether Shafiq is president or Morsi. That's it.

MS. : Yeah, I mean –

MR. HANNA: I'll take the question from a somewhat different angle. I mean, there is an assumption that Shafiq is the sort of – the favored candidate now. And I think we should question that. I mean, I think, one, for Egypt and for the United States' perspective on Egypt, the most important thing now is stability. And looking at this choice, I do think that there is a risk of instability if Shafiq is elected president. I mean, I do think that this could reactivate a lot of the ethos of protest and calls for mass mobilization. I do think that's a risk.

So you know, I agree mostly with what Samer said. I mean, I think whoever's president is going to deal with the United States, and the United States is going to deal with him. I mean, I think, you know, there's not going to be any magic formula that all of a sudden there's an elected president. You know, when we think about how the military is going to play a role, I – they don't know. You know, I mean, it's not – there's no playbook.

I mean, one thing to think on is that the military had played a very diminished political role in the Egyptian context. Their role has diminished. You know, they had institutional rivals. Abu Ghazala, the very charismatic defense minister, was sacked in the late '80s. They have been compensated in some sort of economic quid pro quo since Camp David. Their sort of political ambitions have been checked. I mean, they're playing in a whole different space. I mean, it's a mistake to say the curtain has been pulled back, and now the real state is there. That's not true. The military hasn't played this type of political role since the days of Abdel Nasser. Not even under Sadat did they play this kind of role.

[01:15:10]

And so how that's going to manifest itself in a – in a – in a more – in more discrete ways, in – you know, I don't know. And they don't know themselves. I mean, I think there is a lot of ambiguity. I will say that ambiguity in the political system favors the military in terms of their assertion of power. But there are all sorts of counterforces within Egyptian society. Now, I mean, I think Samer's right to point out that there is – there are points where even the Egyptian political class is able to unify and try to check military power. But you know, I think this is going to be something that evolves over time. And I don't think

anybody – none of the players involved have a clear sense of what this looks like going forward.

MS. OTTAWAY: I don't –

[01:15:50]

MR. SHEHATA: Let me just say one other thing about this, and that's to emphasize something that Michael has just said, which is – I wouldn't say that there is a risk of widespread protest if Ahmed Shafiq is elected president. It is a certainty. There is no question that if Ahmed Shafiq is somehow declared the president, there have already been calls for widespread protest among different segments of society. The revolutionary forces, the youth and so on, reject the idea that Ahmed Shafiq or an ancien régime figure could be president. The Muslim Brotherhood, the Freedom and Justice Party, has already stated – at least in the campaign period up until May 23rd and 24th – that a remnant of the old regime becoming president is unacceptable.

And this is – why this is important is because it will become then incredibly divisive in Egypt, with a significant segment of the population rejecting the outcome and another segment of the population saying no, elections have taken place; they have been free and fair; this is what you called for; and the outcome is legitimate. And Shafiq has already said that if he is elected president, he has no time for these demonstrators in Tahrir Square. He will be the legitimately elected president of Egypt, and this nonsense of protest and so on will have to end.

And why this is problematic is then it put into question the whole transition process. And you have then a rejection of the – of the legitimacy of the transition process and the government and the government institutions that are produced by significant segments of the population, the Muslim Brotherhood and what we can call the revolutionary classes.

That's a very different outcome than if Mohamed Morsi is elected president. No Egyptian will believe for a moment that Mohamed Morsi was the beneficiary of the – (chuckles) – supreme electoral commission or the military, that they rigged votes in his favor. Many Egyptians will be very unhappy with a Mohamed Morsi presidency. Many Egyptians will recuse themselves from the political process and so on. But there will not be the same kind of rejection of the transition mechanism that – (inaudible).

[01:18:05]

MS. SLAVIN: I actually disagree with you a little bit. Having lived in Egypt back in the 1980s and knowing how conspiratorial Egyptians are, I'm sure that there will be people who will say that the SCAF and the Muslim Brotherhood reached a deal behind the scenes that allowed Mohamed Morsi to be elected president, in return for which he will let the military continue to run military things and keep their ill-gotten gains. So I wouldn't – I wouldn't be surprised if there was – (chuckles) – a line like that somewhat. I mean, it's – look, it's a lousy choice between the Muslim Brotherhood and Ahmed Shafiq. And I don't think there's any way around that.

MS. OTTAWAY: I'll – I think I'll change my mind and come in very briefly. (Laughter.) I think – I think there is – we shouldn't – there is going to be instability no matter who wins, because whether or not we have this, you know – yes, I agree that with Ahmed Shafiq winning, we are much more likely to have the street protest again. With the Muslim Brotherhood winning, we are going to have – we are going to have what our friend – our colleague Nathan Brown, in a piece that should appear today or tomorrow, called judicial turbulence; that we are going to have this confrontation between the institutions of the state and the Muslim Brotherhood. We are in for – Egypt is in for a period of instability no matter what.

[01:19:28]

MS. SLAVIN: Well said.

The gentleman in the blue shirt there.

Q: Hi. Thank you. Zack Gold from Brookings. Thank you all for a fascinating panel. This has been a great conversation. I wanted to go back to the analysis of the Egyptian electorate and sort of talk about – Samer, I completely agree with your primary-election-to-general-election, you know, dichotomy. And I was wondering – for both, I guess, Michael and Samer – given the large promises that the Brotherhood has moved back on before, do the – what we in America call independent voters trust Morsi's centrist statements in the past few days? Thank you.

MR. HANNA: Well, I mean, you know – to say that, you know, obviously Shafiq and the old regime have a much broader track record, so I agree with Samer there. But to say that the MB is totally untested – I think that's not true. We do have a brief track record and it's a very unappealing one. It's a track record of broken promises; it's a track record of going it alone; it's a track record of selling out revolutionary goals from the very first instant.

In February, March, when there was a real opening – and they have proven themselves to be an organization that works almost exclusively for institutional self-interest as opposed to national self-interest – and I understand that that's how politics works. Obviously. But I do think that at a moment of sort of historical potential, it wasn't too much to ask the MB to hold their electoral ambitions in check for just a short period of time to try to push forward the sort of core goals, the animating rationales behind which the sort of uprising arose.

[01:20:59]

So you know, I do think there is a reason why there is so much skepticism. You know, the constituent assembly was sort of the last straw. We shouldn't forget the fact that, you know, they could have drafted a disenfranchisement law months ago – months ago. They all of a sudden decided this was important when Omar Suleiman entered the race, right? I mean, you know, this isn't, you know –

You know, there's plenty of things that have given rise to skepticism, not the least of which is their decision to run a president after Mohamed Morsi himself came out on

television and many – and several interviews saying, we’re never going to run a president; this isn’t something we’re going to do. So yes, there is a lot of reason to be skeptical. And, you know, not so long ago, just before, you know – when their political platform came out they had an internal discussion. Are we going to be – can we say that we can allow women and Copts to serve as president? You know, this was – this is about a year ago. I mean, so, you know, again, there’s – nobody can claim that they have liberal credentials. But these sorts of discussions are happening still within the MB. So yes, I think there’s a lot of reasons to be skeptical. And I’m not sure, you know – I don’t think we can say they’re untested. And their brief sort of window of exercising authority I think has been a disaster.

[01:22:16]

MS. SLAVIN: Edward.

Q: (Off mic.)

MS. SLAVIN: Whoa, wait for the microphone. This is Edward Felsenthal, who is my editor at al-monitor.com.

Q: Michael, you touched on this at the beginning, but I’d love to hear a little more from any of you about the role of the press in the run up to the election. Sort of – I’m interested, and suspect others would be, from two angles. The first – I mean, we have our – we have partners with news organizations through the region, including in Egypt, and one of our supposedly independent media partners ran a story, which we translated and ran, essentially – the lead of which is more or less: Egyptian military experts say the protests are unnecessary and provocative. (Laughter).

You know – so I’m just interested in that dynamic and how it played into the run up. And secondly, we heard so much about the role of social media and Facebook in particular last year, but – in what happened and what unfolded in Egypt. But I feel like we’ve heard relatively little about its role around the election. Maybe it’s just under-covered here, but would be interested in your perspectives on what kind of factor that is and will be next month.

[01:23:40]

MR. HANNA: Do you want to go ahead?

MS. SLAVIN: You go first.

MS. OTTAWAY: Let me try and bring this up. I think the – there are two parts to the answer. One is that there is no doubt that the state media are still the state media. There is no doubt that there has not been, you know, the same way as you have not had the turnover of personnel in the state bureaucracy. You really have not had a turnover of personnel in most of the state-controlled media. That said, it’s also true that the country is awash with information. In other words, these are not the days of Nasser, where, you know, the state media was the state media and there was nothing else. I don’t think that there is any shortage of information out there. It still – that does not mean that it’s unimportant that the state media – that certain media are still controlled by the state, because it tells you

something about, you know, the mentality in the political system. But in terms of access to information on behalf of the voting public, I don't think that's an issue.

MR. SHEHATA: Just one thing about this. I mean, you know, it is true that many of the individuals who ran the state media organizations at the – not the very highest level, at the level below – are still there. And it's – I think it's also true that the deep state, as it were, can influence what is on the state media channels, Egyptian land TV and so on. But it's also true that it's not the state media of Mr. Mubarak. I mean, just yesterday you do have different voices that are heard. I mean, just last evening before I went to sleep there was a TV show on Egyptian satellite network which had an individual who was a transparency advocate and so on saying – he was the only guest – I'm going to vote for Mohamed Morsi, and I'm going to hold my nose because he's better than Ahmed Shafiq. So that – you know, that needs to be said. So there has been the beginnings of some opening – still, I think, biased, but the beginning of something.

[01:25:45]

Secondly – and I'm not a media expert – but I would imagine that the viewing public and the listening and reading public is skewed or is divided, as it were, between those who consume largely and get their news from satellite stations, which are independent, and then advocacy – right, I mean everybody's watching on TV, everybody's watching Dream TV and so on – which are hard-hitting, critical of the military, critical of the Muslim Brotherhood in some cases and so on. People are reading the non-state press. Al-masry Al-youm is, you know, maybe the most respected along with Al-Shorouk Newspaper, as opposed to the old Al Ahram and so on. So there's – you know, there is a very vibrant – a very vibrant media.

Social media, I think you're right to say, didn't play as big of a role in the elections as it did in the revolution. I'm not a social media expert. There were text messages, you know – vote for Hamdeen Sabahi; jokes about this candidate and that candidate – but I don't think it was as significant in any way compared with its role in the revolution.

MS. SLAVIN: Do you agree on that? I mean, there was a lot on Twitter, certainly, during the voting process that I followed.

[01:26:55]

MR. HANNA: Sure, I mean, I think, you know, social media played a very important role on January 25th. What it did on the – you know, there was the sort of “We are all Khaled Said” Facebook page, a lot of social media organizing. What that did – and it was a shock, I think, to the organizers – was it meant that there was a critical mass of people in the streets on January 25th. I think people looked around that day and they said, oh my Gosh; look how many we are. I mean, this was much more than any that anybody had seen. So there was a critical mass of people on the streets and I think that catalyzed a much broader movement. It shamed some of the other groups who refused to participate – you know, the Muslim Brotherhood most prominently. It sort of forced them out onto the streets. So, you know, it played that role. It was a tool. And I think we shouldn't exaggerate or also undercut its importance. There's been a sort of – you know, the predictable backlash to say it had nothing to do with anything. And that's not true either. So, you know, it was of the moment, very important on January 25th.

It's still a medium. People exchange a lot of ideas. But you know, I mean, there's no way that I think social media in a place like Egypt can compete with satellite TV, with state TV, with newspapers, which, you know, are in terms of saturation levels, reach just many more people. And I would still say state media plays a disproportionate role in the media environment in terms of shaping views.

If you go out and ask Egyptians about April 6th, more often than not you're going to get views about foreign sponsorship and foreign meddling and a sort of parroting of views you hear on state media. And that's clearly shaped and directed by the sort of campaign launched by the military to stigmatize this class of protesters. I think that has real traction.

MR. SHAHETA: Divided by socioeconomic class, of course. I mean – higher educated, more income, you're more likely to view some of these private satellite stations. Just the last thing about the media is in the run up to the elections on May 23rd and 24th a number of the most prominent satellite stations had wonderful and very long interviews and questioning and grilling of all of the political candidates. All of them. And they were widely watched. So you would have two episodes of two hours each with Mohamed Morsi or Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh or Hamdeen Sabahi answering questions about everything – about foreign policy, about Israel, about unemployment and so on. And I think that they were widely, widely viewed. And we haven't seen anything like that before in Egypt.

[01:29:23]

MR. HANNA: And Morsi was on with – just before that – on TV last night, again. So I mean, this –

(Cross talk.)

MS. SLAVIN: Let me have Stanley and then Marcel (sp).

Q: Stanley Kober. I'm looking at an article in the Egypt Independent paper and it quotes a statement on Facebook by the Freedom and Justice Party's supreme guide, Mohamed Badie. Let me, if I can, read a couple sentences: "Badie cautioned against attempts by former Mubarak officials and businessmen paying large amounts of money, quote, 'to deceive the patient and kind people, taking advantage of their poverty and need by bribing them, deceiving them, and buying their ballots. We will not be manipulated again,' unquote." That looks like a threat, that if their candidate loses the election, they will not accept the result. No? I see Marina shaking her head.

[01:30:20]

MS. OTTAWAY: I think that you can read that any way you want. You can – it's also campaign rhetoric. I do not attach any particular interpretation to that, frankly.

MR. HANNA: Yeah, and of all the political forces in Egypt, the one most likely to shun frontal confrontation with the military, as we've seen, is in fact the Muslim Brotherhood. I mean, their track record suggests one of attempted accommodation. I mean, this is not – this is not a revolutionary outfit, in fact. So of all the groups – and we've even seen them hedge their statements about Shafiq to say, well, no, we would accept

whoever – I mean, you know, they’ve hedged that statement, saying we wouldn’t demonstrate. So, you know, of all the groups thinking about who would be out on the streets if Shafiq wins the presidency, you know, I’d put the Muslim Brotherhood last. They’ll only be brought along if everybody else is out there and they feel that they have to be out there or else their credibility will be damaged.

MS. SLAVIN: I agree with Michael. Even back in the 1980s, we used to call the Muslim Brothers – or rather, they used to call themselves circus lions. (Laughter.) So remember, this is an organization that was formed in 1928. They’ve had a long time to get accustomed to not being in power.

[01:31:27]

Marsa (ph).

Q: Marsa Oahma (ph). Thank you very much for a very, very interesting discussion this morning. And I – you’ve touched upon this in many of your comments, but I wanted to see if I could get you to focus a bit on this question. Given the military is going to be the key power in Egypt for many years to come – I certainly agree with that – and if Morsi wins, as is more likely, or maybe not likely, but regardless, how do you see the next few years in terms of the military coordinating, cooperating with a Morsi or a parliament or a dissolved parliament? What will the domestic issues look like? What will the economic issues look like? How are they going to share? Is it going to be total chaos, or are they are going to find some sort of stable policy that they will agree to?

MS. SLAVIN: If I could add to that as well, we know that a lot of the businesspeople who were associated with the Mubarak regime have – if they’re not in jail, they’ve left the country, they’ve pulled money out and so on. I’m wondering if anyone sees a platform from any of these folks, from Morsi in particular, that might lure some of this money back.

Q: Well, that’s a great question because I – just judging from an article I saw earlier this week about Ahmed Shafiq, a conversation with a businessman, made it clear who they were supporting.

[01:32:51]

MS. SLAVIN: Interesting. OK. Who wants to grab that?

MS. OTTAWAY: Well, I think the – let me just have a first go at this. I think it’s – the position of the military is going to be very different depending on whether it’s Ahmed Shafiq who wins or whether it’s Morsi, because I think if Ahmed Shafiq, I think then the military will try to do what it did under Mubarak, that is, to go back to beyond the curtain, essentially, beyond the façade, which is the position in which they feel more comfortable, make sure that they maintain control over their budget, that they maintain control over the economic assets they have, but not necessarily try to make policy directly. Then the question in terms of policies depends on whether this government manages to re-establish enough stability in order to bring money in, to lure the investors to come in, to bring – to bring back

in money that has gone abroad and so on. It's – and that is – you know, to bring tourism back, et cetera, et cetera. And that depends – you know, depends a lot on what happens in the streets and so on.

Under – if it is Morsi that wins, I think we are likely to see the military play a more prominent – sort of being forced to do what they don't want to do, that is, to be – to have a more prominent role. I – whether that's going to take the form of, you know, insisting on reform, something which occasionally gets discussed of a National Security Council, for example, and so on, I don't know, but I think we are – I think they probably would feel compelled to have a more direct role, I'd think.

[01:34:36]

In terms of the economic policies, which are all important, I don't – what we are looking at is two different sets of businesspeople who have fairly similar ideas in terms of business, because the Muslim Brothers are a free market advocate as well, but are totally separate from each other in terms – they're nearly two communities that don't talk to each other.

MS. SLAVIN: Let me add on also what you think is going to happen with Mubarak himself and his trial. I noticed – I believe yesterday there were more charges that were leveled against him for insider trading – or against his sons.

(Cross talk.)

MS. OTTAWAY: And that is coming Saturday – that decision.

MS. SLAVIN: Is there – is there – is there any possibility for some kind of truth and reconciliation commission or some way to provide amnesty to at least some elements of – that benefited under the Mubarak regime in the interest of civility and getting investment back?

MR. SHEHATA: Well, I mean, you know, I would look at it in another way. Not enough people have been prosecuted, actually. (Laughter.) I mean, you know, that's the problem. I mean, there has been very little – and, in fact, in the – in the charges, there were a number of investment bankers in EFG Hermes, including one of Mohamed Hassanein Heikal's sons, who was also – has also been charged with insider trading. But if we look at – if we move away from the economic sphere, I mean, there have been very little attempts to reform seriously the Ministry of Interior, at one point 2 million people strong, which really was the repressive boot of the Mubarak regime against the neck of the Egyptian people. So I would look at another –

[01:36:20]

With regard to the military and the question that was asked, a very good question, I think, you know, there are immediate concerns, and there are kind of more medium- and long-term concerns. With regard to the immediate concerns, I think even Mohamed Morsi and the Freedom and Justice Party have tried to indicate or signal that they would provide a

safe exit for the SCAF. They have said, in fact, in the – in the period in the last two weeks that they would not attempt to hold the SCAF accountable for the violence and death that has occurred over the last 15 months and so on, which might not be justice, but it might be smart in terms of smoothing the transitions, a kind of guarantee of safe exit.

I also don't believe, for all different kinds of reasons, that the brotherhood or the Freedom and Justice Party is naïve enough to attempt a full-scale confrontation with the SCAF or the military in the coming period, unlike some of the other candidates. I mean, Abdel Moneim About Fotouh actually, you know, seemed at different times to push this issue and so on, which is popular among the revolutionaries. And then question of the civilian control of the military, it's very hard for me to imagine, even if Mohamed Morsi is elected president, to see a civilian as the minister of defense in the next two or three years.

MR. HANNA: Yeah, I mean, the safe exit scenario, even if it was About Fotouh, would have looked the same in the very short term. I mean, I took all that with a very large, you know, grain of salt. I mean, the military has four immediate priorities: They want immunity for their term in office over protester deaths, et cetera; they want budgetary independence; they want a role in national security decision-making – they've gone so far as to say they have a – essentially a veto over Egypt, whether they – Egypt goes to war; and they want to protect their business interests. Those four things are going to be protected, frankly, regardless of who's president. Nobody is going to touch those, I think. So we move beyond that, and we think about what this looks like going forward.

[01:38:26]

And I think that's a messy process. And I think Marina is right to say that paradoxically, a Morsi win might, in fact, create a much broader playing field in terms of the political role of the military. Some people will reluctantly see them as the balance or the guarantor of the civil state, and – so I think that's – you know, if we're looking long-term, that's actually a potential downside to a Morsi win. And I – and I – and I think – and then the military will gladly take this opportunity up. I mean, they will exploit this situation.

On the issue of accountability, we haven't seen any – there is no security sector reform. Prosecutions: The only – I mean, it's interesting to note what prosecutions have been successful. The prosecutions that have been successful have been corruption cases. The whole oligarchy, the crony capitalist class that the SCAF loathed and despised? Those guys are in jail, a lot of them. Ahmed Ezz is in jail. The policemen who killed protesters on January 28th, you know, that's essentially been proven to be unprosecutable in the Egyptian judiciary. Those cases come up. Another one was – came up today. They fail every time. You know, one reason, I think, on just purely legal grounds, they're hard to prosecute. Policemen defending police stations against mobs – it's a difficult legal case to make, frankly. But what it indicates is a lack of any forethought with respect to post-conflict justice issues, transitional justice at this moment. There is no sort of sense about who should be prosecuted and why.

[01:39:58]

The only sort of saving grace, I would say, is that these kind of issues have a way of staying with the body politic. I mean, if we look at Latin America, there are still prosecutions happening in Argentina. So I don't think we've foreclosed the possibility of seeing issues of accountability being raised at a point in time when Egypt has moved on from the sort of day-to-day tactical disasters that have consumed people, when we do see a little bit more stability. Maybe that's five years, maybe that's 10 years down the road. I do think there is a possibility at that point, a more likely possibility that we see Egypt turn to sort of questions not just about the protests in the 18 days, which I think has distorted the picture, but 1952 to 2011, right? I mean, this is – you know, there is a long period of accountability that Egypt needs to think about. And I think it's important in terms of recreating a sort of open basis for its politics that Egypt thinks about – and Egyptians think about how they got to where they did.

MS. OTTAWAY: Yeah. I – just very quickly on this issue of these cases, I – this is just a comment, because I'm not sure myself what the implications are, in a sense. It's something to be watched more than a clear conclusion. If you look at the decisions that the courts have been taking on some of these cases that have come up, it seems to me that there has been a change in the position of the courts.

[01:41:20]

The earlier decisions were much more in the direction of supporting, quote unquote, the revolution, if you want, so that you have reversal of some of the privatization. There were three companies that were – you know, where the privatization process was called into question and so on. It seems to be more – it seems to be that decisions now – and we all have to watch very carefully what happens on Saturday, when the courts are supposed to issue the judgment on Mubarak's sons. They are going –

MR. HANNA: And Mubarak.

MS. OTTAWAY: And Mubarak.

MR. SHEHATA: It'll be delayed, probably.

[01:41:58]

MS. OTTAWAY: Yeah, I think that. But that it's – it seems to be going more in the opposite direction. It's just an impression, but I think it's something that we – that is worthwhile watching.

Q: How much influence does the military have on the judiciary?

MS. OTTAWAY: Well, you still have military courts, for one thing.

MR. HANNA: No, but I mean, it's an open question. We don't actually know what's the relationship between Supreme Constitutional Court and the military. There's a relationship, you know. I mean, the – there are – some of those judges are at – close advisers to the military, to the SCAF. We know that. Are they colluding? Are they simply

sharing a set of institutional interests that push them in a very similar direction? We don't actually know. What we do know is the sort of end result, which looks like bureaucratic capture. And we know their biases, right? I mean, and we know – exactly. So –

MR. SHEHATA: And they're – many of them are former Mubarak officials, and many of them are not sympathetic to the Muslim Brotherhood, right? We know that about the Supreme Constitutional Court. We know that about the makeup of the SPEC.

MS. OTTAWAY: More specifically, the head of the Supreme Constitutional Court, which is – who is also the head of the presidential election commission, was a political appointee of Mubarak. In other words, he was somebody who was – Mubarak picked him from one of the lower courts, from a level of the judiciary from which the head of the supreme constitutional council usually does not get chosen. So he was particularly controversial – from the beginning, way back when he was first chosen.

[01:43:34]

MS. SLAVIN: We are getting very close to the end. So I'm going to take three questions. This gentleman here, that lady there and the man back there who's been waving his hand at me. So first this gentleman, and then we'll let everybody finish up, OK?

Q: Thank you. My name is Ibrahim Housini (ph), and I am an Egyptian-American. I came here to learn from the panel how to vote between the choices. (Laughter.)

MS. OTTAWAY: Good luck.

Q: And it is very frustrating, because it – my – I was supporting somebody else, who did not make it. However, if I am, with a Ph.D. in education, unable to decipher the issues and the complicated questions we are discussing, how would the majority of the Egyptian people, who –

MS. SLAVIN: Great question.

Q: – illiteracy is very high. They don't read the media, don't worry about the media, because the majority of Egyptian – how would they decide what to do or how to vote? And did this enter in the calculation?

[01:44:35]

MS. SLAVIN: That's a great question.

The lady there with the sunglasses. Yeah.

Q: Mata Bolan (ph) from NDI. I have – the question is for Marina, actually. She stated that the revolution did not put forth any liberal or secular president candidacy. I would say Baradei, even though he did not nominate to the end – but wouldn't you say he was a secular, liberal force that was backed by most if not all the revolutionary forces? And then he cut his presidency – the nomination. But seeing now what Hamdin did and Aboul

Fotouh did, wouldn't you say, even if he had nominated himself, he would have done less than 20 percent of the votes, even though he's very much of a liberal, secular and backed by all the revolutionary?

MS. SLAVIN: OK.

And then this gentleman here.

Q: Thank you very much. My name is Yaya Fanusie; I'm with the – I'm the lead special operations division of the United States of Africa 2017 Task Force.

MS. SLAVIN: What's your question, sir?

[01:45:37]

Q: Mr. Michael Wahid, the confidence that you exhibit here – I hope it is not reflective of the military government in Egypt, because I remember in the '70s, early '70s, when we used to talk to our Tutsi brothers to reconcile with the Hutu brothers, they were exhibiting such confidence and arrogance –

MS. SLAVIN: Do you have a question, sir?

Q: No, it's just a statement.

MS. SLAVIN: Just a statement, OK. Thank you.

Q: I think I've made my point.

MS. SLAVIN: Well, then we will I guess start maybe in reverse order. So why don't you go – no, you go last, actually, OK? And Marina first.

[01:46:12]

MS. OTTAWAY: OK. Well, let me answer the question concerning Baradei. But one of the reasons why Baradei dropped off the election is that he had very little support. I mean, he had strong support in a very narrow segment of the population. That is, he has support, you know, among a particular group of the – of liberals who supported in the urban areas and so on. But if you look at all the opinion polls – and we all know that there are problem with opinion polls in Egypt – but all opinion polls did not give him much support at all.

So I'd argue yes, he was – certainly his name was – came up. Yes, in a sense – he's now trying to form this political party that is supposed to form the – to become the rallying point for the liberals in the country. It's all work in progress, and there is absolutely no evidence at this point that this is going to – that this going to work, because El-Baradei really did not turn out to be terribly appealing candidate – (inaudible) – because in order to be – in order to get somewhere in politics, you have to be able to talk to everybody and not just urban intellectuals, which essentially what El-Baradei is doing.

MS. SLAVIN: Samer, any advice for the gentleman? Who should he vote for?
(Laughter.)

MR. SHEHATA: Well, no. I mean, it's your – it's your difficult decision –

MS. OTTAWAY: I don't think he expected any – (chuckles).

MR. SHEHATA: – your difficult decision to make. I mean, in terms of, you know, I think how people are going about this – those who are voting, you know, with some logic – I mean, it is a question of what is worse, in a way: the Muslim Brother possibly in power, but we've heard the limitations to what a presidency by Mohamed Morsi would face in terms of real executive power; or the possibility of the old regime?

[01:48:03]

And for me, I think it's quite clear. You know, I'm not a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, nor am I sympathetic with their ideas. But I despise the old regime so much that I am willing for – in the short term to guarantee that they do not come back to power, with the caveat of continuing attempts to deepen the revolution and to push for democratic, liberal freedoms for all Egyptians, whether Morsi is president or someone else.

MS. SLAVIN: Michael, you get the last word.

MR. HANNA: Great. So I'll come back to the – to the question that I ducked in the very beginning and this notion of Morsi or Shafiq. And what I would – what I hesitate to do, and I think it's important, is to do – to think about these in straight-line extrapolations and to say, Hamdin Sabahi is pro-revolution, Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh pro-revolution – this bloc of voters will do X because of X reasons. And I think what we have seen is how turbulent the Egyptian electorate is, how fluid it is, the complicated decisions that are being made.

[01:49:14]

And so is a Shafiq win possible? Absolutely. Is it likely? I don't know. But I mean, what I do know is that, you know, what we are witnessing are the last elections of the Mubarak era. And these – this is a reflection of what the – what was left after the Mubarak era. And this touches a little bit on Baradei and his fate. You know, the – what remained in Egypt – we have a Nasserite, we have some Islamists, we have former regime figures. I mean, this isn't a new cast of characters, as Marina said.

And of course that's the case. I mean, in some ways how could it not be? I mean, how are we going to provide political leadership and political organization in such a short period of time? I think it's a flaw of the – of the sort of protest movement that they haven't been able to cohere around figures of leadership. But it's also been a source of their strength and their resilience that they haven't been co-opted by individuals and that they – there is a sort of – a wide spectrum of views in Egypt. I think political fragmentation is a huge danger.

But I think some of this is probably not surprising to anybody who's studied Egyptian politics for any period of time.

On the military, I mean, I think a military role in civilian governments is an utter disaster. I mean, I'm an analyst. I'm not – I don't – you know, what I say is not to cheer on the military. I'm just calling shots as I see them. The military is hugely powerful. They're going to continue to be. That's the reality of the world. I mean, I don't know any other way to analyze the situation differently. This – these are just – these are objective facts.

And lastly, you know, Samer is right. You know, this is a lesser-of-two-evils election. And I think what that's going to result in is that lots of people are going to stay home. And so some of our calculations about Aboul Fotouh's percentages, Amr Moussa's percentages and Hamdin Sabahi's – I mean, they're sort of moot, because we're going to have a whole brand-new turnout. And so you know, we have Shafiq and the MB base coming out. Who else is going to stay home? Who else is going to come out?

[01:51:25]

And that's just – you know, to come back to this sort of turbulence and unpredictability, I don't know. You know, I mean, I've sort of learned my lessons. I'm sort of chastened. I don't – I'm never going to go out and say, you know, I think the Egyptians are going to say X, because you know, until politics have settled down – and frankly, politics in five years are probably going to look quite different – different political parties, different political factions. But until that happens, I think we're in for turbulence, and I think possibility for unexpected results.

MS. SLAVIN: That's a great note to end on. On behalf of the Carnegie Endowment and Al-Monitor.com, I want to thank all of you for coming. (Applause.)

(END)