

## EGYPT'S NATIONALISTS DOMINATE IN A POLITICS-FREE ZONE

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Egypt's political scene has changed radically from the vigorous pluralism that followed the 2011 uprising; in 2015 the Islamist and secular groups that won those elections are excluded or marginalized. Nationalists associated with the military or former regime of Hosni Mubarak have retaken center stage, and rivalries within that camp have reemerged. Any parliament elected under such conditions is likely to be fractious—despite the lack of real pluralism—and might have difficulty fulfilling its constitutionally mandated role.

### Echoes of the Past

- Egypt has been without a full parliament since June 2012, when the previous assembly was dissolved.
- The 2013 removal of then president Mohamed Morsi from power brought a notable revival of a specific brand of nationalism—militaristic, populist, anti-foreign—that evoked the Nasserism of the 1950s and 1960s, in contrast to the more inclusive strains of nationalism articulated during the 2011 uprising against Mubarak.
- Islamist and secular opposition forces have been mostly silenced or marginalized due to the banning of several groups including the Muslim Brotherhood, a harsh law against street protests, an electoral law that disadvantages political parties, and other measures that have undercut media and civil society.
- Nationalists have fallen into squabbling among themselves because their political rivals from other ideological trends have been mostly eliminated. Parliamentary elections have been postponed repeatedly, apparently due at least in part to President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's failure to settle these rivalries.
- Sisi's lack of interest in civilian politics is one of several reasons why there has not been a new nationalist political party formed to replace Mubarak's National Democratic Party, a major target during the 2011 uprising.
- Differences between the military and business leaders, and between the military and other security services, are on display in ways similar to those of the late Mubarak era.

### Implications for the Future

- There are many parallels between the current political scene and the one that prevailed in late 2010, when elections that excluded most opposition—and yet were still corrupt and violent—contributed to growing public disgust with the Mubarak regime.
- Elections held without real pluralism are likely to produce a parliament made up of individuals only seeking personal economic advantage. Such a body might be difficult to manage and unable to provide the check on the executive branch that is laid out in the constitution, a somewhat more robust role than during the Mubarak era.
- If the parliament is fractious, or indeed if the three-year hiatus in parliamentary life continues, Egyptians' sense of ongoing political dysfunction will only increase.

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