In 2011, the president Hosni Mubarak, chairman of the National Democratic Party, is deposed after 30 years of governance. Although he was elected and reelected successively in 1987, 1993 and 1999, he lost the popular support during the 1990s. He was considered as a dictator due to the clear invalidity of the election results. During his reign, the economic performance decreases because of the high government expenditures. On 11 February 2011, Mubarak has no other choice but to quit owing to the millions of Egyptians protesting against lack of political freedom, police brutality, corruption, and widespread poverty. This revolution brought them together in a diverse coalition that included liberals, nationalists, unionists, feminists, and Islamists and they sought to transform Egypt into a modern democracy. There was an ever-fragile solidarity between liberals and Islamists, but that solidarity was broken through the electoral success and subsequent overreach of Muslim Brotherhood in June 2012. After Mubarak’s resignation, the leadership of the country is entrusted to the Supreme Council of Egyptian Armed Forces who declared that it would wield power for six months, or until elections could be held. During this period, the Supreme Council dissolved Egypt’s parliament and suspended the constitution in response to demands by demonstrators. On 30 June 2012, Mohamed Morsi becomes the President of Egypt. He was a leading member in the Muslim Brotherhood – a political party which is aimed at
a islamic renaissance and a non-violent struggle against the western influence. Morsi is the first democratically elected head of state in Egypt history. One year after his accession to power, he is massively contested by the opposition which reproach him a dictatorial drift. The liberals joined a broad alliance that pushed the Muslim Brotherhood’s Mohamed Morsi from the Presidency in a popular, illegal coup on 3 July 2013. Al-Sisi, which Morsi appointed as Minister of Defense in August of 2012, played a leading role in ousting Morsi. The crackdown was extremely bloody, resulting in the deaths of 638 people, of which 595 were civilians and 43 police officers. Despite the vocal concerns of liberal activists, Sisi’s action received widespread public support.

After Morsi’s fall, the power is entrusted to the Egyptian Armed Forces. A lot of violence between Morsi’s supporters and the ones in support of the military and interim government follows. Protests continue the whole next year and Abdel Fattah al-Sissi, former chief of the Egyptian Armed Forces, becomes President of Egypt on 8 June 2014. He was elected with more than 93% of the vote, although the outcome of this ballot contested.

The fluidity of the Egyptian affiliations presents both opportunities and threats to those who wish to reform Egypt. Perhaps the greatest opportunity lies in the potential to draw together some new and unforeseen coalition that might challenge the power of the state and its worst abuses. Egyptians have always been governed by a dictator, with the violence, the poverty and the corruption that go with it. Their strength relies on this common characteristic: the activists forming a coalition should take account of all the institutions and groups they might gather together, and therefore create a movement for lasting change.

1) THE UN-DEMOCRATIC STATE OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

THE PRESIDENCY: The President of the Arab Republic of Egypt is the head of state of Egypt. Under the various iterations of the Constitution of Egypt, the president is also the supreme commander of the armed forces and head of the executive branch of the Egyptian government. He is elected for a mandate of 4 years, renewable one single time. Before the constitutional reform of 2005/2007, the president was elected by at least two thirds of the People’s Assembly’s members for a six-year term, renewable infinitely by indirect universal suffrage. Then, the electors have to validate this designation during a referendum.
From 2005, the president is elected by universal suffrage after a referendum.
So Egyptian Presidents are formally elected, but Egyptian elections are nowhere close to fair and free. For instance, Hosni Moubarak was elected in 1981, and reelected three times, but no other candidates could run against the president because of a restriction in the Egyptian constitution. For over half a century, the military has been responsible for the rise and fall of Presidents, and while this appeared to change with the popular election of Mohamed Morsi in 2012, his overthrow, and the subsequent rise of Defense Minister Abdel Fattah al-Sisi appears to have re-established military supremacy under the rule of an autocrat.
Egyptians have often banded together behind strong military leaders who promise national unity and reform. This populism has been for most of their modern history the closest they have gotten to democracy, but it often erodes democratic institutions. Popular military autocrats the world over often come to office with high hopes and good intentions only to sink into the corruption and stagnation of their predecessors.

Since 1866, Egypt witnessed seven parliamentary systems whose legislative and oversight competences varied and reflected the history of the Egyptian people's struggle to establish a society based on democracy and freedom. After all, the Parliament continues to lack the powers to effectively balance the powers of the President.
Under the reign of Hosni Mubarak, Parliament was a weak institution. Elections were rigged and controlled by the President, and the development of political parties was limited. With the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, the Parliament was dissolved by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces and this reform brought real political parties to power under a genuinely democratic system, where Parliament might have served as a counterbalance to the Presidency. But on 14 June 2012, as the Parliament's members have been elected, the Constitutional Court of Egypt ruled that the election was unconstitutional, and one third of the winners were illegitimate, so the Parliament was dissolved and since then Egypt does not have Parliament.
The next Egyptian parliamentary elections will take place in October, November and December of 2015. They were supposed to occur in March of 2015, but the Supreme Constitutional Court of Egypt considered the electoral laws framing the organization of legislative election unconstitutional therefore they were reported. Henceforth, the parliament is expected to be made up of 596 seats,
with 448 being awarded to independent candidates, 120 to political parties, and 28 selected by the president. Almost 16,000 officials will keep an eye on polling places during the election. Since political parties serve both as a source of ideological coherence and support for their representatives, this shift to independent candidates facilitates Presidential control. Hence, the move has angered most political parties. Even the seats open to political parties are not strictly reserved for them, and only a party with an absolute majority in a district will receive any seats. Parliament will retain the constitutional right to impeach the President, but the numerous incentives and disincentives that might be used by a strong President will likely turn this right into a mere formality. However, if popular support for the President diminishes, weak legislature like this might find their voice.

Insofar as they are able to oversee parliament and presidential elections, the courts in Egypt are powerful. The Supreme Constitutional Court is the highest judicial power. The tradition of constitutional law is well developed in Egypt, but the courts have tended to favor a communitarian interpretation that preferences the well being of majorities above all else. This has led to a selective interpretation of legal precedents that has made it easy for them to justify abuses of Presidential power. Since the start of Sisi's administration, the courts have doled out harsh sentences to members of the Muslim Brotherhood, in particular, and political dissenters of all kinds, more generally. In June of 2014, for instance, they upheld death sentences for 183 Brotherhood members who were accused of killing two police officers during the violence that followed Morsi’s ousting. In another case, the court sentenced 700 Brotherhood members to death for so-called “rioting.” There have been brazen violations of human rights; for instance, all 183 defendants in the first case were tried in absentia. Although a lot of death sentences have been pronounced since Sisi’s election, the first execution happened on 7 March 2015, one of Morsi’s partisan was hanged for two teenagers’ murder. The objective of these death sentences is mostly to have a dissuasive effect.

The courts have had their hands full since the new “Protest Law” was put into effect in late 2013. This law grants the Ministry of Interior the right to deny, disburse, violently suppress, and criminally charge protestors practically at whim. In many ways, this is just an extension of the 1958 Emergency Law that authorized the judiciary to do away with due process whenever it deemed this to be necessary or to detain people without charging them. The courts have made ample use of this
law in prosecuting not only Muslim Brotherhood members but also April 6th movement leaders, prominent lawyers, and human rights advocates. Amnesty International has reported that there has been a “catastrophic decline” in human rights since the beginning of Sisi’s administration, citing some 16,000 prisoners who have suffered ill treatment and torture.

On 25 October 2014, the Egyptian government approved a legislative proposal under which military courts will rule on the business concerning terrorist acts that threaten the security and the integrity of the nation. The objective is to accelerate the trials to realize a bigger dissuasion. Two days after, Sisi broaden the scope of action of the military justice; this legislative decree authorize the army to secure, with the police, establishments and public buildings.

However, it is important to remember that there are also checks on the power of the courts. They must somehow justify their decisions not only to the Egyptian public but also in the court of international public opinion. So far, they have publicly embarrassed themselves by sentencing prominent journalists for their coverage of the state’s treatment of the Muslim Brotherhood and peaceful protestors. After the courts doled out lengthy prison sentences to high-profile Al-Jazeera journalists, including Australian Peter Greste, Sisi took notice of the strong international disapproval and made a statement criticizing the court’s actions. Yet he simultaneously insisted that the executive branch did not have the authority to overturn these court rulings.

While the courts have thus far backed Sisi, it is possible they have done so merely in the interest of social stability since the judiciary system is an independent branch of the government. If they so choose, they might also act as a significant check on his power.
The Egyptian Constitution was passed in a referendum in January 2014 under the interim Mansour administration in which Sisi played a prominent role prior to being elected President. It replaced the constitution formed under Morsi. The current document states that the President may serve for no more than two four-year terms, and that he may be impeached by Parliament. Under the constitution, there is a guarantee of gender equality and freedom of religion, and even freedom of speech, which is nonetheless subject to major exceptions. Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood boycotted the vote, saying the process was illegitimate. The constitution has been criticized by the left for leaving too much power in the hands of the military and for continuing to allow the military to appoint the Minister of Defense. Most people thought that this vote represented a resounding rejection of terrorism and a clear endorsement of the roadmap to democracy, as well as economic development and stability, but unfortunately, 20 months after this new constitution, the situation did not improve.

Under the constitution of 2014, political parties may not be based on "religion, race, gender or geography". However in practice, religious parties have been allowed. There are currently over 100 registered political parties in Egypt.

The constitution guarantees a multi-party system, yet in reality Mubarak’s National Democratic Party monopolized Parliament until the revolution in 2011. The current law allows new parties to form if they have at least 5,000 members from at least ten of Egypt’s provinces. The law has been widely criticized for presenting too many barriers to political party formation. Yet the parties that formed and came to power after the revolution may yet come to play some role in future Egyptian politics. The strongest party was the Muslim Brotherhood’s Democratic Alliance for Egypt which won repeated Parliamentary and Presidential elections, but they are now outlawed. The Islamic Bloc, led by the Salafi Al-Nour party, gained the second largest share of the votes in 2011, and while they supported ousting Morsi, they have not since supported Sisi. The liberal nationalist, New Wafd party, and the social liberal Egyptian Bloc nearly tied for third in the 2011 elections, thereby showing great potential for the formation of a larger and more successful liberal coalition. Many of these parties will surely be kept weak, but those that are allowed to participate will continue to represent an ideological alternative to Sisi’s rule and perhaps a Parliamentary counter-balance to his power.
2) CONTINUING STRUGGLE FOR LIBERAL REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVISTS

Among the broad coalition of interest groups and citizens involved in the January 25th revolution, the youth-led April 6th movement, which had been organizing nonviolently for regime change for years, was among the most visible and vocal. The April 6th movement, and the many independent revolutionary activists, human rights attorneys, writers, and organizers that their political views represent, has been increasingly marginalized since the deposition of Mubarak. First, by the speedy election of the Brotherhood’s Mohammed Morsi, which drew them again to the streets in protest of what they feared would become an entirely Islamist government. The April 6th movement took part in the military-instigated protests that eventually toppled Morsi, yet immediately distanced themselves from the interim government that began a violent crackdown on Brotherhood members. On September 24, 2013 they held a conference to announce the formation of a new organization, The Road of the Revolution Front that rejects any alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood or security state, which it sees as two wings of the counterrevolution.

Under the interim President Adly Mansour, in the spring of 2014, the April 6th movement was outlawed, yet they have continued to organize, particularly after the passage of the aforementioned “Protest Law.” Three of the main leaders of the April 6th movement, Ahmed Maher, Mohamed Adel, and Ahmed Douma, have been convicted of violating this law, sentenced to three years of hard labor, and fined EGP 50,000. They have spoken out and led hunger strikes against their treatment in prison. Their story represents the situation of liberal activists that were leaders in the January 25th revolution, for their struggle has been continuous, and the repression they are experiencing now echoes that experienced in the Mubarak era. Though arguably their struggle has become more difficult to publicize, as many in Egypt and the world have accepted the leadership of al-Sisi.

Since al-Sisi came to power, many young pro-democracy activists have been rounded up and put in prison, sometimes for violating the law that allows them — doesn’t allow them to protest. Sisi argues that he didn’t stop protests in Egypt but only regulated the right of protesting in Egypt. Despite what he says, the sentences are hard. For example, 23 pro-democracy activists condemn to three years of jail because they march without an authorization in October 2014. Moreover, 230 liberal activists were delivered a sentence of life imprisonment because they took part in a demonstration that led to a confrontation with the police in December 2012.
3) RAPIDLY CHANGING NATURE OF POLITICAL ISLAM

Islam comprises 94.7% of the population in Egypt as of 2010, and politically organized Muslims who seek to purge the country of its secular politics are known as “Islamists,” which have had a strained relationship with secularists throughout Egyptian history.

**SALAFISM:**

While the exact size of the Muslim Brotherhood is unknown, it is generally acknowledged that Salafists greatly outnumber Brotherhood members. The Salafists are an estimated 5-6 million Egyptians, and while they have significant diversity of opinion they are much more conservative than the Brotherhood. They are not organized as a single unit, but are represented by a number of more militant and conservative Islamic groups that arose in Egypt during the 70’s and 80’s, including those who assassinated Sadat, the third President of Egypt, in 1981. Many militant Muslim organizations made in-roads into universities and social institutions during this time, and their demographics became more middle class by the early 90’s. The focus of their political efforts has been the country’s adoption of Sharia as a legal system. Sharia law is Islam’s legal system, it acts as a code for living that all Muslims should adhere to, according to God’s wishes. Egypt’s 2014 Constitution declares the principles of Islamic Sharia to be the main source of legislation. The Salafi Al-Nour party, which has an ultra-conservative Islamist ideology and which believes in implementing strict Sharia law, led the Islamic Bloc and received up to 1/3 of the votes cast in the 2011 Parliamentary elections. Ironically, the Al-Nour party joined with secular liberals to take down Morsi in 2013, who they saw as too moderate. However, the Al-Nour party has now distanced itself from Sisi, particularly following his large-scale violence against the Brotherhood and hostility towards political Islam. There has been a few lawsuits against the party, demanding its dissolution, but they came to nothing because a lack of jurisdiction.

**MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD:**

The most well known Islamic organization is the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1928 by Hassan al Banna, which is a Sunni Islamist religious, political and social movement. They were repressed for the first half of the 20th Century, until Anwar Sadat granted them amnesty in the 1970s, at which time they renounced violence as a means to their political ends. They joined the revolution against Mubarak on January 23rd, and then swept the subsequent presidential elections with a victory for their own Morsi. After the coup against Morsi, the Brotherhood was again targeted by the military government. After a few months of violence coming from Muslim
Brotherhood and arrestations from the military-backed interim government, this organisation was report as a terrorist group and was declared illegal by Mansour in December 2013. Since then they have been the target of violence, arrests, and widespread death sentences that continue to this day. They hold regular and well-organized nonviolent protests against the coup, but they are also responsible for an ongoing smattering of violence against state security forces.

5) THE TAMAROD MOVEMENT

The Tamarod movement (Arabic for “rebellion”) is the grassroots movement that ousted former President Morsi, and which is understood to be lead by at least some high-ranking members of the Egyptian military. The movement has strongly supported Sisi’s presidency, the crackdown on Muslim Brotherhood members, and the jailing of citizens in violation of the Protest Law. They are also very outspoken critics of the U.S., and one of their main logos has been an Egyptian man burning the American flag. Leaders of this movement were planning to turn this movement into a political party following the 2014 Egyptian presidential election, and they already had a significant presence in the re-drafting of the Constitution. Members of the Tamarod movement formed a political party called Arabic Popular Movement that will run in the 2015 parliamentary election. Many liberals have been critical of Tamarod’s seemingly unceasing support for the military and police. This movement was also heavily criticized by Morsi supporters. In early 2014, some leaders of the movement broke away and formed a splinter group called Taharor, also known as Tamarod 2, in response to the authoritarianism of the post-coup military backed government.

6) ESCALATING CONFLICT IN THE SINAI

As a result of instability following the 2011 revolution, militant Islamism has been unleashed among the Bedouins in the Sinai. They were harshly repressed by Mansour’s interim government, which seems to have fueled their violence against police and security forces in the area. A few police officers are killed each week in the Sinai, and the overall conflict has only heightened since Sisi came to office. In addition to resenting the treatment of Islamists by Sisi, the Bedouins have long felt rejected from participating in Egyptian national life. Some Sinai groups have close ties with Hamas, and this area is one of those that are showing sharp disapproval of Sisi’s seeming support for Israel in the negotiations.

On 24 October 2014, Egyptian army suffered the most murderous attack in its history. 34 militaries were killed, and 30 others were injured in North Sinai. Al-Sisi declared a state of emergency in this part of the region and closed the crossing point from Rafah to Gaza. The president encourages the Egyptian nation to coalesce with the army and the police, denouncing a conspiracy coming from the outsiders. One day later, the Egyptian government approves a new law that gives more power to the army.

Ansar Beit al-Maqdis is an active Jihadist group in Sinai that swore allegiance to the Islamic State in November 2014 and since then it proclaimed himself State of the Sinai and killed a lot of polices and militaries in the region. In July 2015, they have become even more powerful, and committed the biggest attack since the Egyptian-Israeli war in 1973. The government approved a new Anti-Terrorism Act a few days later. And soon after, Abdel Fatah al-Sissi visited his troops in the Sinai to show that the army take back the control of the region. But on 19 July, some other attacks against the army happened.
Hundreds of cases of sexual harassment and rape were reported or documented during the various protests in Egypt since 2011. Numerous groups have been formed to address this issue, and al-Sisi has taken a public stand, famously visiting the hospital room of a rape survivor. The courts under Sisi have also started to bring rapists to justice, and several men have been handed life sentences for sexual assaults that took place in the context of rallies and protests. Concerned NGOs have called this a good first step, but urge the government to follow through on the 500 other cases of sexual violence that have been documented between 2012 and 2014. The National Council for Women collaborated with a number of governmental bodies to launch a strategic initiative to combat violence against women, and the anti-harassment group “I Saw Harassment” organized during the 2014 Eid holiday to patrol high crime areas. The initiative reports stopping 35 cases of sexual harassment or assault.

However, the measure, including improved policing and public awareness-raising campaigns, announced by the authorities had not materialized by the end of 2014. On 21 January 2015, Amnesty International denounces violence and discrimination which affect all the women in Egypt. Almost every woman reported that she had experienced some form of sexual harassment. There have been a handful of convictions since a new law making sexual harassment a crime punishable by a minimum of one year in prison was introduced. However, the vast majority of women are still waiting for justice. The literacy rate, which is above 83 percent for males and below 60 percent for women, is also a sign of the inequality and show that there is still a lot of progress to do in Egypt.

Being gay is not a crime in Egypt, but since Sisi became president, there’s been a lot of repression against gays. For example, in November 2014, 8 gays were condemned for 3 years of prison because they were celebrating a fake gay wedding, and were ac-
Security forces also arrested over 30 men in a raid on a Cairo bathhouse in November, and the trial of 26 of the men on charges of “debauchery” began in December. Although the Constitution guarantees religious freedom, in December 2014, the Egyptian authorities organized an “atheists hunt” and the police destroyed a coffee shop where atheists meet, according to the sources. To sanction the atheism, terms such as “contempt for religions” are used. Egyptian Christians account for about 10% of the population. Nearly all of them are Copts, which mean they are adherents of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

Recently, a delegation from the US Congress met with Egypt’s Pope Tawadros II in Cairo to discuss the situation of the Coptic community in Egypt. The Pope expressed positive sentiments towards Egypt’s stability and the improved situation of Copts in the country in comparison with the past few years. Copts have long complained of discrimination under successive Egyptian leaders and Sisi’s actions suggested he would deliver on promises of being an inclusive president who could unite the country after years of political turmoil. This is how they feel after President al-Sisi dispatched fighter jets this year against Islamic State targets in Libya in retaliation for the beheading of 21 Copts. However, only a few months later, the spokesman of the Coptic Solidarity Organization, Magdi Khalil, has said that the policies of President Abdel Sisi towards the Copts are no different from those of ousted premier Hosni Mubarak.

8) NEW ANTI-TERRORIST LEGISLATION

On 17 May 2015, six members of the terrorist organization Ansar Beit al-Maqdis were executed. They committed an attack against an army barrage in 2014, where four militaries have been killed. The group said it would seek revenge after this execution, and on the 29 June, it killed the Egyptian Attorney General in a bomb attack. Because of all those recent attacks, the government prepared a new law to strengthen the antiterrorist legislation. The project defines terrorism as “the use of the force or the threat to use it for the purpose of violating the public order and the security and the integrity of the society”. It widens the surveyors’ power, notably involving the investigation of the suspects’ bank accounts and their seizure. However, the human right NGOs are afraid that this law reinforces the repressive arsenal against the opposition. According to the new law, journalists will have to pay between 200,000 and 500,000 Egyptian pounds (€ 23,000 - € 57,000) for disseminating “false” information that contradicts the official version of events. The law also punishes anyone who promotes “ideas” advocating terrorism with five years in prison. Some political parties and the media are also against this law, but despite this, President Al-Sisi ratified it on 17 August 2015. Since there is currently no Parliament in Egypt, Sisi may legislate by decree.
9) EGYPTIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION 2015

Egypt has no Parliament since 14 June 2012. Egyptian parliamentary elections to the House of Representatives, the unicameral parliament of Egypt, will take place in October, November and December of 2015. The elected parliament will be entrusted with the task of reviewing the laws that were passed while a parliament was not in session. The parliament will be made up of 596 seats, with 448 seats elected through the individual candidacy system, 120 elected through winner-take-all party lists (with quotas for youth, women, Christians, and workers) and 28 selected by the president. Almost 16,000 officials will keep an eye on polling places during the election. The first phase of Egypt’s parliamentary elections will start on 17-18 October for Egyptians abroad and 18-19 October for voters inside Egypt.

A coalition of independents calling themselves the 25-30 Alliance will run. Their name refers to the revolution that overthrew Hosni Mubarak on 25 January 2011 and the overthrow of Mohamed Morsi on 30 June 2013. Members of the April 6th Movement and Tamarod will join the alliance. A lot of political parties will run the elections but a majority of Egyptians have a favorable view of the National Salvation Front, an alliance formed to defeat Mohammed Morsi, and of the Al-Nour Party. The Freedom and Justice party was also very popular, but since Morsi was the president of this party, the Supreme Administrative Court ordered its dissolution in August 2014. A June 2013 Zogby Research Services poll found that 25% of Egyptians have confidence in the April 6 Youth Movement. An opinion poll done in September 2013 by Zogby found that the Tamarod movement had the highest level of confidence at 35%.

In September, Egypt’s Supreme Election Committee announced an initial list of candidates for Egypt’s upcoming Parliamentary Elections, declaring that a total of 5,955 had submitted applications. However, nine percent were rejected. The reasons for the rejections are varied, but the majority were due to the fact that a large number of applicants failed obligatory drug testing. However, is everything fair Ahmed Ezz, a senior member of Mubarak’s dissolved National Democratic Party, tried to appeal a February court decision barring from him from running in legislative elections, but the Supreme Administrative court upheld the decision. Ezz, who was in jail on corruption charges, could not present a bank account regarding financing his campaign, a document required of all candidates, as a court had ordered seizure of his funds, which in turn prohibits him from opening new accounts.

On 19 September 2014, that is one month before the elections, President Sisi has sworn in a new government without clear reasons, one week after the previous Cabinet resigned. The new cabinet, headed by newly appointed Prime Minister Sherif Ismail, includes 16 new ministers out of 33 in total. The ministers of foreign affairs, defense, interior, justice and finance have kept their positions in the new cabinet. The new chamber will have a say over the government and can even reject Sisi’s choice for prime minister, according to the country’s constitution. But Sisi’s critics say that in reality it will be a rubber-stamp house because of a tough crackdown on his critics and a weak opposition.
1) Legacy of Economic Exploitation

Egypt was ruled by outside powers for roughly 2,500 years, and the norm throughout that period was one of economic exploitation. Egypt went from being a great civilization in ancient times to a mere breadbasket for ruling empires. The situation was unusually persistent and probably played a major role in shaping the sense of stagnation that frustrates many in Egyptian society. In the mid-nineteenth century, Egypt appeared as if it might be poised for independence and economic take off. Investment in a canal linking the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean promised to allow Egypt to capture much of the trade that was then passing between Europe and the East. But the construction of the Suez Canal contributed to a debt crisis in Egypt, and the British used the debt crisis as an excuse to assume control of the Egyptian economy, initiating near a century more of economic exploitation.

Throwing off the passivity imbued by this exploitation was one of the primary social goals of the Egyptian Revolution, yet today the exploitation continues. Today it is the military that controls much of the economy and exploits it to maintain their own privileges. One commonly cited, but widely disputed, figure places the military control of 40 percent of Egypt’s economy. The extent of the military control over the economy distorts the nature of Egyptian markets and thereby slows growth. Over the past five years, Egypt's economic freedom has declined due to the political instability that has hurt tourism and foreign investment, both of which are important sources of foreign exchange. However, this decline has come to a halt: in 2015, Egypt improved in labor, monetary and investment freedom, the tourism also started to find his way back in December 2014 even though people are still afraid of the insecurity and the attacks. However there also was a decline in trade freedom and the control of government spending. Further action to restore and improve economic freedom is essential to counter economic stagnation and poverty. Long-established weakness in the institutional framework that include price controls and government subsidies of gasoline have greatly burdened the budget and forced the government to seek a bailout from both the IMF and other Arab states. The rule of law is ineffective and arbitrary, and judicial procedures are long and costly.

This presents a difficult situation, because any attempts to reform the economy may run the risk of military disaffection and possibly a coup.
With an average per capita income of just above $3,000, Egypt is what would usually be characterized as a middle-income country. Three quarters of the population is literate and rising, and the average person lives to be 73. But the Egyptian economy has long been stagnant. Twenty-five percent of the population lives below the state’s own poverty line. Meanwhile, the population has long been divided between a rural, conservative hinterland, which lies further up the Nile, and the more cosmopolitan mouth of the Nile, including Cairo.

The Egyptian economy of today is characterized by a massive regime of subsidies. Since the 2011 revolution, spending on food, fuel and energy subsidies has consistently represented over a quarter of all annual government expenditures, which is more than Egypt spends on health services and education combined. Yet removing these subsidies risks popular unrest. It is important to remember that the Arab Spring first broke out during a time in which the price of grain was soaring.

President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi came to power in May 2014 with a pledge to stabilize the nation’s economy. His platform included subsidy reform, which aimed to calm investors by shrinking Egypt’s deficit and stemming the outflow of foreign currency reserves. In July 2014, the government allowed the price of energy for households and businesses to increase by as much as 80%, with the goal of allowing prices to continue rising by about...
20% every year until 2018. A more radical reform is to simply eliminate subsidies entirely and instead distribute cash directly to the poor. This is already being tried in some impoverished villages in rural Egypt, where families receive cash in exchange for sending their children to school and undergoing regular medical checkups. In Egypt, the administrative costs are so high that replacing subsidized bread with cash transfers could cut program costs in half. After a year in office, the success of the president’s reforms appears to be mixed: energy subsidies fell by about 10% between July 2014 and May 2015, but total spending on subsidies increased by more than 15 percent. Nevertheless, President Sisi has been recognized for his efforts. On 13 March 2015, Egypt organized an international conference about its economic development to attract foreign investors. International corporations and Gulf neighbors pledged to invest billions into Egypt’s economy. Yet, absent more fundamental reforms that decentralize power, reduce regulation, and eliminate corruption, Egypt’s economy will not realize the full benefit of subsidy reform. Even under a best-case scenario, the reforms are likely to cause short-term suffering amongst the poor with uncertain final results. The administration is in a double bind: both reforming and not reforming the economy seem equally hazardous and it remains to be seen how they will negotiate this transition. The money saved by slashing subsidies will be very difficult to funnel towards the needs of the poorest in society who will be most hurt by this economic reform. There may be growth overall, but coupled with ever-higher rates of economic inequality. This economic inequality may continue to tear the society apart. Numerous studies have demonstrated that economic inequality is linked to a wide array of negative social indicators, including higher rates of murder, suicide, obesity, mental illness, infant mortality, incarceration, and social mistrust. And following almost three years of social and political instability and conflict, Egyptians are in desperate need of reconciliation.
3) PROSPECTS AND PROJECTS FOR THE FUTURE

Between the beginning of 2011 and 2013, foreign exchange reserves fell roughly by half. Standard and Poor’s has downgraded Egypt’s credit rating from a B+ to a B, and its short-term credit rating from a B to a C. Improving the economy, to a great extent, means rebranding Egypt since instability and human rights abuses are still a characteristic of the recent political transition. Since March 2015, more foreign companies are pledging to invest in Egypt, as the country begins to reap the benefits of economic reforms introduced over the past nine months under President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi. The outcome of his reform programs aimed at jump-starting and strengthening the economy largely hinges on keeping domestic security under control, providing sufficient assurance to investors wanting to stay, enter or return to the country. Despite these security concerns, which some analysts argue are relatively contained compared with other countries in the region, Egypt’s potential for economic recovery is seen as huge and there are signs Mr. Sisi’s policies are bearing fruit. Foreign direct investment has started to find its way back to Egypt after nearly drying up over the past four years. Egypt’s initial economic recovery, which began about a year ago, was largely due to the largess of oil-rich Gulf states that had opposed the Morsi regime and were eager to do business with his successor.

In September 2015, Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi announced that his government is planning to move toward a value-added tax regime as part of a series of major economic reforms. He says the value-added tax regime, along with a simplified tax system for small and medium-sized enterprises, will “raise revenues and bolster investment incentives by boosting growth, creating jobs and improving firms’ cash flow.”
In August 2015, Egypt launched Suez Canal expansion which would double the capacity of the existing canal from 49 to 97 ships a day. It is expected to make the Suez Canal's revenues increase by 259% from current annual revenues of $5 billion. This new Suez Canal was inaugurated on 8 August 2015.

On 13 March 2015, Egypt organized an international conference about its economic development to attract foreign investors. Tens of billions of dollars were collected despite the critiques of human rights NGOs and Muslim Brotherhood's opposition. This same month, Egypt decided to build a new administrative capital that will locate between Cairo and Suez. The first phase of this project will take 5 to 7 years and the budget is estimated at 45 billions dollars.
1) THE WIDER MIDDLE EAST

The nature of Egypt’s geopolitical alignments will be largely determined by the fast changing landscape of relations in the Middle East. The Arab Spring initiated a process of realignment that is still in motion. The borders of Iraq and Syria now seem certain to change, and it is quite possible that two new states will arise, one in Kurdistan and another in northwest Iraq and eastern Syria, under the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. Events happening there today could result in regional instabilities that last for generations. The outcome of this conflict might also determine the shape of Iranian influence in the region, especially in regards to its ability to support Hamas and Hezbollah. In February 2015, the military wing of Hamas was forbidden in Egypt and declared as a terrorist organization by Sisi, since they were in favor of Muslim Brotherhood. They are accused, inter alia, of delivering arms to jihadist movement in the Sinai. In June, the relationship between Hamas and Egypt gets better and the government cancelled his judgment.

The Arab League decided in September 2014 to take action to cope with the Islamic State so they agreed on stopping the flow of arms destined to Iraqi and Syrian Jihadists. But Egypt didn’t agree on bringing military support to the international coalition against the Islamic State because they already have to take care of the terrorism in Egypt. The group Ansar Beit al-Maqdis, based in North Sinai and responsible for most of the attacks in the region, swore allegiance to the Islamic State in November.
Power relations in the Middle East will largely be shaped by the Iranian quest for nuclear weapons. Should Iran acquire these weapons, it could set off a nuclear arms race, with Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, and perhaps Qatar and Kuwait all seeking to become nuclear powers. Some countries would seek to be nuclear powers in their own right, and some would seek to win favor with the West through foregoing nuclear weapons. The process of realignment would be complex and it is difficult to predict at this point in time. However, it might radically alter the nature of Egyptian politics. Qatar wants to break out of its regional and international isolation so it changed its policy with Egypt by shutting down a channel favorable to the Muslim Brotherhood. It also asked seven leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood to leave the country.

Egypt has a very close relationship with Saudi Arabia. After the king’s death in January 2014, Al-Sisi declared a national mourning for a week and therefore, the authorities cancelled the festivities for the anniversary of the revolution that forced Mubarak to resign.

2) AMERICA, ISRAEL, AND PALESTINE

The alliance between Egypt, Israel, and America began in 1979, with the Camp David Accords, which were brokered under the American Carter administration. In exchange for Israel relinquishing control of the Sinai Peninsula, Egypt forged a peace deal with Israel that has now been sustained for three and a half decades. The treaty was sustained by American aid to both Israel and Egypt, but the Egyptian Revolution brought this treaty, and the aid that is attached to it, into question on both sides.
The treaty was never popular amongst Egyptians, since it meant reconciling with an Israel that occupied Arab lands, and because American support played a large role in keeping Mubarak in power. The Americans also called the treaty into question due to the human rights abuses that occurred under a number of Egyptian leaders during this time, most recently under Sisi. Over the years since the treaty was signed the US has provided around $1.5 billion annually in chiefly military aid to the Egyptian government. Although some of that had been held back because of recent human rights abuses under the Sisi regime, the flow of aid has since resumed. President Obama recently put more pressure on the Egyptian government for its crackdown on dissent, publicly saying that Ahmed Maher, who is a dual Egyptian and American citizen and a leader of the banned April 6th Movement, needs to be released. However, this rhetoric has yet to be recently matched with a threat of holding back military aid. It seems that, for now, the US has decided to stomach these human rights abuses due to the importance of the overall relationship.

The recent Israeli attack on Gaza has provoked numerous protests by Egyptian Muslims against Sisi’s seeming support of Israel in the negotiations. While the protests themselves are a source of instability in Egypt, the prospect of a closer relationship between a now underground Muslim Brotherhood and an increasingly besieged Hamas presents problems for the Sisi administration.

The length and brutality of the Israeli attack on Gaza puts popular pressure on the Sisi administration to distance itself from Israel. But for Egypt to distance itself from Israel it must also distance itself from the U.S., with all of its military aid. Doing this would affect Egyptian military support for the Sisi administration. Thus, the Sisi administration is in another double bind. Managing this bind will largely determine the nature of Egyptian domestic and foreign strategy.
3) EU

Despite all the violation of human rights that happened in Egypt, and the will that European countries shared to see the Egypt becoming a democratic country, recently their point of view changed. They are starting to support Egyptian economy, but also its struggle against terrorism.

**FRANCE:**

President Sisi is trying to legitimize his authority at world level. In November 2014, he met Francois Hollande in Paris. Although human rights NGOs have asked President Hollande to discuss the bloody repression against the Muslim Brotherhood as well as the increasing restrictions of fundamental freedom, he did not raise the issue. Holland and Sisi debated the Libyan and Syrian situation and the Palestinian-Israeli issues. They also talked a lot about the economy, approaching the direct investments in Egypt. Al-Sisi declared that the tourists may come back in Egypt because there is nothing to be afraid of. In February 2015, Egypt ordered 24 French Rafale planes for 5.2 billions euros, a few months later, it bought two French military vessel for 950 millions euros. For the inauguration of the Suez Canal, Francois Hollande was the guest of honour. Besides, during the ceremony, Sisi stressed the relationship between France and Egypt.

**GERMANY:**

In June 2015, President Al-Sisi went to Germany where he met President Joachim Gauck, Angela Merkel and some companies' CEOs. They were supposed to meet after the Egyptian parliamentary elections but Angela Merkel reversed her decision. She wanted to be sure that the elections would happen this year and negotiated that German human rights NGOs could come back to work in Egypt.

Sisi and Merkel discussed the death sentences against opponents, which Angela strongly criticized. Angela Merkel feels that the region is safer with Sisi as a President, and he agrees by reminding that without him, Egypt might have turned out as Libya, Syria or Irak. Even if Egypt promised it will become a democratic country, for now the security is more important than this reform.

**ITALY:**

Italian foreign relations Minister visited Egypt and met President Al-Sisi in July 2015 just after a bombing attack that tried to kill Italian consul in Cairo. Paolo Gentiloni announced his support for Egypt and that Italy and Egypt will improve their anti-terrorism cooperation.
Turkey is a major military and economic power in the Middle East, and under the tenure of Mohamed Morsi, it appeared that the two countries would draw more closely together. The alliance seemed to be spurred by cultural affinity, with both countries being led by democratically elected, moderate Islamists. The ousting of Morsi weakened these ties, and the same forces that drew Egypt and Turkey closer under Morsi now draw them further apart. Al-Sisi’s persecution of Islamists has drawn harsh public condemnation from the Erdogan administration in Turkey. When Morsi was condemned to death in June 2015, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was very angry. According to him, Mohamed Morsi is still the president of Egypt, and the western countries turn a blind eye on the fundamental rights violations in Egypt. Since December 2014, every Egyptian between 18 to 40 years old needs a special authorization to go to Turkey. The objective of this law is to prevent Egyptians from joining extremist movements such as ISIS. The same system already exists with Iraq, Libya and Jordan.

Wider geopolitical forces, like the growing isolation of Russia from the West and the rise of China, might also affect Egypt’s geopolitical prospects in coming years. While the E.U. and U.S. will probably continue to pressure Egypt to improve its human rights record, a closer relationship to Russia or China would bring just the opposite pressures. A shift in alignment in these directions would be a threat to any movement seeking to democratize Egypt. Ironically, greater popular control of government would place strains on the Egyptian-American-Israeli alliance, but this alliance is likely to support democratization and human rights in ways that will be lost if Egypt shifts towards other great power alliances. After a summit meeting between Putin and Sisi, a spokesman for Russia announced that a preliminary arms deal worth $3.5 billion had been sealed between the two. In February 2015, they also signed a deal to build a nuclear plant in Egypt. Though likely in reaction to both uncertain Egyptian-US ties and new Russian isolation, this could be a possible extension of a “new cold war” into the Middle East. Those past few months, Putin and Sisi got closer. Putin wants to stay an important actor in the Middle East and he found an ally with the same tough policies against Islamists. That takes away Egypt from USA, which keeps criticizing the human rights violation unlike Russia.
Future relations with Central and East Africa are the source of both opportunities and threats that will require careful strategy to maneuver. While Africa continues to be the least developed region of the world, many countries there are growing rapidly, and Egypt is well positioned to become an economic leader amongst them. However, this relationship will be complicated by the water conflicts that are spurred by growing populations, depleted soils, and global warming. Depending on where its headwaters are placed, the Nile passes through up to nine countries before reaching Egypt. An agreement was made between Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt about the construction of a mega-dam to help stem desertification and boost its own insufficient yields. Egypt accepted this project when it got the guarantee that the dam would not modify its share of the Nile’s water.

In June 2015, 26 East African countries signed a free trade treaty which is an additional step towards their economic integration. This agreement, called “Tripartite” allows preferential custom tariffs and the removal of non tariff barriers.

On the other hand, the relationship between Libya and Egypt got worse recently. 21 Egyptian Copts were killed by ISIS in Libya and the pictures were disseminated through the Internet. Egypt responded by bombing ISIS positions for Libya in cooperation with the Libyan army.

Due to a high unemployment rate in Egypt, there are about 800'000 persons who left in Libya to work, but in February 2015, the Egyptian government had to repatriate some workers who are risking their life there.

President Sisi started a tour of Asia on 29 August 2015, visiting Singapore, China and Indonesia, to widen Egypt’s cooperation with countries worldwide and gain from successful experiences of economically emerging countries in south-east Asia. The first Egyptian head of state to visit Singapore, he met with Singaporean President Tony Tan. He also met Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing and held talks in Indonesia with Indonesian President Joko Widodo in the last stop of his tour.
II: PILLARS ANALYSIS

Ranking of Pillars by Egyptian Civil Society Representatives
(Most to least powerful)

1. Police
2. Religion
3. Army (The only institution standing after the revolution)
4. Judges
5. Media
6. Students/Education
7. Citizens
8. Families and other beneficiaries of army
9. Business

A) ABDEL FATAH AL-SISI’S PILLARS OF SUPPORT
(Key institutions and organizations supporting the regime)

Overall the support for Sisi in Egypt is broad but shallow. He represents a familiar sense of security as a secular military leader focused on social stability through repression of political rights. Although he had a lot of support when he arrived in power, the authoritarianism of the post-coup military caused a lot of protests and changes of mind. Egyptian society is very different than what it once was, and Sisi is facing new challenges that might see him losing some of his most basic pillars of support. He is receiving a lot of critics of human rights, women’s rights and gays’ rights international NGOs. The Muslim Brotherhood and the Liberal Democrats are persecuted by the current government. They could struggle together, but the islamists and the liberals have very different objectives and perspective of the future. Within the current context, it is possible that the pressures on Sisi could be leveraged to create reforms that will ready Egyptian society for the deeper social stability that a budding democracy requires.
This will have to be done without completely alienating the security forces pillar and thus inciting another coup. In other words, the goal should not be to immediately depose Sisi, but rather to build up society in preparation for democracy in the long-term. Given this goal, the pillars that are supporting Sisi in re-entrenching the norms of dictatorship are considered below, and they are contrasted with the pillars that will be supportive of pushing Sisi in making the necessary reforms that will allow the spirit of the revolution to continue to grow.

1) SECURITY FORCES

POLICE:

The police in Egypt have continued to lose prestige since the 2011 revolution. This means a lot given the fact that police brutality itself was one of the core causes of the revolution. The police sided with the coup against Morsi in 2013, and some police officers wore their uniforms to the anti-Brotherhood demonstrations. They were also the force behind the violent dispersal of Brotherhood demonstrations following the coup. They have come under criticism by many elements of society for the deadly violence used against the Brotherhood sit-ins. Many see the police as corrupt and continuing remnants of Mubarak’s regime. Mansour vowed to bring those who had committed police brutality under Mubarak and Morsi to justice, though there has been very little movement in this direction. And there is still a lot of violence coming from the police nowadays. Over 90 police stations have been burnt since the start of the revolution, and killings of police officers take place weekly by unknown assailants. What is often missed is the immense pressure that the police are subject to themselves. Their livelihood depends on their job and so they must remain steadfast in their loyalty to the regime if they are to survive. They are also afraid since a lot of police officers died in attacks in the past few months. Because of this, the police are very loyal to Sisi, and seem to share his agenda of cracking down on Islamists and protestors of all kinds. However, some are also guilty of crimes that Sisi might try to reign in, such as economic corruption in the form of bribes and sexual assaults in the form of harassment and rape. They are also part of the bloated bureaucratic sector, and economic reforms that Sisi enacts might also alienate them from his support. Therefore, there are a number of ways that their support for Sisi might be undermined, while careful reforms on his part might legitimately curb their worst abuses.
The military has taken on too big a social role in Egyptian society, and the administration of Sisi seems to be a continuation of that anti-democratic trend. There have almost always been military leaders at the head of the Egyptian state, and they enjoy a fair amount of independence from the executive, and often enjoy respect from the populace. They were aligned with Mubarak until they saw the tides shift in society and decided to back the revolution instead. Most consider that the military launched the Tamarod movement that ousted Morsi, and the coup was a time of national rallying around the military. Many of the protestors chanted, “The military and the people are one hand.” Further, many have considered Sisi’s presidency to be restoring military order in a way that will save Egyptian society from insecurity and unrest.

As previously mentioned, the military in Egypt is deeply tied into the economy. Much of the country’s infrastructural and economic projects are managed by the military, including hospitals, factories, clubs, construction, and real estate. Therefore, similar to the police, the main way that the military might become estranged from Sisi is if his economic reforms are significant enough to really hurt them economically. The military's power has increased since Sisi came to power. As said before, in October 2014, the Egyptian government approved a legislative proposal under which military courts will rule on terrorist acts that threaten the security and the integrity of the nation. Sisi also broaden the scope of action of the military justice; this legislative decree authorize the army to secure, with the police, companies and public buildings. As the police, the military live in insecurity due to a score of attacks these past few months. Many soldiers were killed, especially in the Sinai.

The ideal situation for social stability and growth in Egypt is for the police and military to be reigned in by Sisi with the goal of establishing a higher degree of lawfulness and economic legitimacy, while not being driven so far afield as to stage another coup. Civil society could pressure Sisi to make the moves that Mansour promised in terms of purging the most corrupt elements of the security forces, and tending to the process of transitional justice after the many abuses seen since the revolution.
2) ECONOMIC ELITES

Since the Egyptian economy has become increasingly crippled by the instability following the 2011 revolution, the country is struggling to gain and keep investments. The economic elites are a diverse group, and at least partly tied in with the military and corrupt bureaucracy. They seem to support Sisi in terms of the stability he promises, but similar to the military, the support might wane if his economic reforms cut too deep into their agenda. It is possible, however, that the economic reforms he makes will mainly affect the poorest in society and will not turn the elites against him.

3) JUDICIARY

The judiciary in Egypt enjoys a surprising amount of independence from other branches of government, and they can be seen exerting this power now. Most judges were appointed by Mubarak, and remain loyal to the undemocratic vision of stability through repression that his rule represents. There seems to be no clear plan for dealing with the fact that this judiciary is very powerful and entirely inherited from the Mubarak regime. They certainly seem aligned with Sisi at the moment, but as was already mentioned, they have created massive international problems for him by their violation of international human rights standards, particularly with the jailing of foreign journalists. They also enjoy significant oversight of the election process. Ultimately, the judiciary seems to be in a cooperative tension with Sisi, and the future is uncertain. To conclude, the judiciary would have the power to counterbalance Sisi, but their judgment are strict and undemocratic so they do not seem to want it.

4) POLITICAL PARTIES BACKING SISI

Sisi ran as an independent, but has the support of a couple of prominent political parties. The New Al-Wafd party, one of the longest-standing parties in Egypt (nationalist and liberal), announced its support for Sisi on 7 April 2014, but the party presses for ensuring basic freedoms and human rights and nothing has been applied for that yet. The Free Egyptians party (founded by businessman Naguib Sawiris) and the Egyptian National Movement Party (seen as representative of the old guard) also claims its support for Sisi.
B) SPLIT ALLEGIANCES

(Pillars that are neutral or partly in support of Sisi and opposition)

1) MEDIA

The media in Egypt is a major regional player and has many prominent newspapers and television stations. Television is the most popular news source, with 2 state-run channels, 6 regional channels, and 20 new independent channels. The 2011 revolution also spurred many Egyptians to go online, and as of 2012 there were nearly 30 million Egyptians using Internet access, and 14 million using Facebook. Both Facebook and Twitter are being used by prominent political forces in society to garner support as social network use rises.

During the Mubarak era, media was primarily state-run and supportive of the regime, but since the 2011 revolution there has been a resurgence of independent media sources that now compete with state-run media. Most independent sources are strongly ideologically tilted towards either the secularist liberal agenda, or the Islamist agenda. While Sisi has control of the state-run media, Pandora’s Box seems to have opened and the profusion of news sources and Internet users does not seem to be getting any smaller. Sisi’s jailing of prominent journalists that try to cover the suppression of the Muslim Brotherhood has had a dampening effect, but it has not stopped the resurgence of independent media. He may need to court the liberal secular independent media if he is to maintain or grow popular support. Therefore, it may be that the media is one place that can put significant pressure on him to support some of the most critical and important reforms needed in this next phase of building up Egyptian society.
B) Key Players and Potential Allies for Democratic Reform

1) Political Parties

There are many registered political parties in Egypt, but because of their historical repression most of them are not well formed or established. Nonetheless, most of the political parties can be expected to try strengthening themselves in the coming years. Most political parties will oppose Sisi due to ideological differences, his suppression of opposition, and his disempowerment of political parties in Parliament. Opposing Sisi as a singular and charismatic military leader will be their only way to political power. The issue is that political parties have very varying goals. A lots of extreme islamists don't want democracy at all so it's hard for those parties to find a common ground.

2) Civil Society Including NGOs and Labor Unions

Civil society has long been suppressed in Egypt, and this sector will need to be seriously built up in order to make the necessary changes that can lead to political, social, and economic improvement. One of the most powerful groups in this revolutionary period has been the labor unions. They played a key role in spurring the 2011 revolution, and they are still at it. In 2013, for instance, there were over 5,000 socio-economic protests in Egypt. Much of civil society did support Sisi as he came into power because they feared the repercussions of an Islamic state under Morsi. Now civil society is being repressed under Sisi in ways that hark back to the Mubarak era. The government has recently released a law that gives itself power to veto any actions of civil society organizations, or to dissolve such organizations at will. Civil society may wish to band together to curb the most serious regime abuses but nowadays, the protests are very regulated so it's hard to demonstrate and there are many chances that this ends in jail. This will likely need to include another coalition between moderate Islamists and liberal civil society leaders. A new sense of unity amongst these parts of society might plant the seed of a larger Egyptian project that is able to sustain democracy even tough their objectives are different.
3) BUREAUCRACY

The bureaucracy in Egypt is generally the most bloated sector, it is very large and has privileges unlike other sectors. It is this sector that has also seen a lot of labor agitation, with 66% of the labor protests in 2013 in the government sector alone. This sector might turn strongly against Sisi if and when his economic reforms squeeze their bloated payroll, but it may also have within it a number of reformers who can be mobilized to exert pressure to improve the regime and the national situation.

4) EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND YOUTH

The population of Egypt continues to be very young, and they have been strongly affected by the experience of the 2011 revolution. It is likely that the youth will continue to have a sense of possibility and the desire to create change in their society. There are also high levels of youth unemployment, which will continue to give the youth a reason to mobilize.

There has also been an upsurge in organizing for children’s rights and education reform, both of which seem to have been stagnant issues before the revolution. The Egyptian Coalition for Children’s rights has begun to make formal statements about the abuse of children in schools, and some youth have protested outside the Ministry of Education for better school systems. They made a significant impression in the news by being violently disbursed. There are strong divisions in this sector, as many teachers are ideologically driven by Islamism, nationalism, or liberalism. Overall, this sector seems to have a lot of energy and a long-standing need for reform.

Schools are overcrowded and face a number of financial problems. Teachers are underpaid and often have to give private lessons in addition to normal schooling in order to pay rent. As a result, many children are pressured into taking these private lessons, and those who can afford them get a much better education than those who can’t. Since they depend on them so much, teachers water down public school lessons to incentivize paying for private ones. This exacerbates inequality by further limiting the education students who can’t pay for private lessons receive.

Universities are also one of the last bastions of society that is resisting the regime. At the start of the 2014-2015 school year, protests erupted at universities all over the country in response to Sisi’s authoritarianism. Groups such as Students Against the Coup and the Association for the Freedom of Thought and Expression have voiced their outrage at the coup and subsequent crackdown on dissent. The association has stated that there are still over 900 students in prison for protesting, and that over 100 more were arrested in the recent protests. Police have been allowed to take control of university campuses and have used this to launch preemptive strikes against activist leaders, arresting them in the early hours of the morning. Numerous videos emerged of clashes between the two groups, and the authorities were accused of using live ammunition, bird shot, and tear gas. Taking advantage of this opportunity, Sisi issued an edict giving him powers to appoint university presidents and department heads, and giving these appointees expanded powers to expel and discipline students. He tries to take control of the education system, because he knows that most of the time, the revolution comes from that part of the population. The teachers have a lot of power because they can shape the way the youth thinks.

Universities were a key place of collaboration between liberals and Islamists in the movement that brought down Mubarak, and it is clear that Sisi will have no patience with such organized dissent. These universities are the last real pockets of peaceful resistance to the government, and Sisi is taking steps to make sure that this comes to an end.
There is little hope that Egypt will become a strong democracy in the near future, but the prospects are good for a more gradual path to democracy over the coming decade. Egyptians widely backed the ousting of their democratically elected President in a military coup, and then large portions of the population supported the persecution of the popularly elected Muslim Brotherhood. Without reintegrating the Brotherhood into the electoral system, Egypt will not achieve democracy. But there seems to be little interest amongst the population at large or the ruling administration to bring them back into the system. Nor would there be much reason for Muslim Brotherhood members to trust the electoral system again. But the most important issues these days may be the security and the terrorism more than the democratic reform. Still, there are longer-term paths to democracy, many of which have multiple historical precedents.
A) DISASTER SCENARIO: CIVIL WAR CAUSES STATE FAILURE

States in transition are prone to sinking into civil war. This has recently occurred in both Libya and Syria. When the nature of power is up for question, many will seek to attain it, and some will overestimate their abilities. Meanwhile, leaders will try extra hard to maintain their power, because power is insecure during such transitions. Thus, those losing the contest for power will often be brutally suppressed. This can turn otherwise nonviolent groups into rebel armies and terrorists. But since political transitions often come coupled with economic recessions as well, there is a danger that other disaffected groups will join any rebel movement that arises, particularly if the rebels are able to pay well. Such a scenario becomes all the more hazardous when there are other regional conflicts occurring that might provide arms and fighters to a fledgling rebel movement. We saw recently, for instance, how the arms from Libya spread to a rebel movement in Mali and destabilized their highly successful democratic government. It was just this sort of scenario that led to the collapse of Syria, and the same sort of scenario is still a possibility for Egypt. All the attacks that recently happened in Egypt are a bad sign; some terrorist groups were created and the reaction of the government is to establish strict law that are also contrary to human rights. The largest social movement in the history of Egypt has just been driven underground. They have a history of violence that was renounced in favor of winning power democratically. But after having won power democratically and losing it in a coup, it will be difficult for them to trust in the democratic process again. There are already signs of the movement’s radicalization in the increasing acts of terrorism in the Sinai Peninsula. Should Sisi decide to continue to persecute the Brotherhood, it would not be surprising if they became increasingly radicalized and the country slipped into all out civil war. Were this scenario to occur, the economy could be expected to slide into a depression. Although Sisi’s reforms has a purpose of restoring the economy, which is a good point, economy is still correlated with security in the country, and with people's trust in the government.
There is, however, a much worse scenario. Over the coming seasons, the governments of America, Russia, Turkey, and Iran will all feel pressed to in some way challenge the Islamic State of Syria and Iraq. Each of these militaries is powerful, and it is quite likely that ISIS will be fought through some combination of their forces. Should such a campaign be even mildly successful, ISIS fighters could be expected to leave Syria and Iraq for other more hopeful campaigns. Were a civil war in Egypt to come coupled with the flight of Jihadists from Syria and Iraq, the fighting in Egypt could become extremely bloody. Conflicts have a way of spreading across borders, not only because arms and fighters can be so easily moved, but stresses and traumas can also cross borders. The Israeli attack on Gaza, the Assad siege of cities, and the mass killings of ISIS might all have this effect, thereby intensifying any conflict that might arise in Egypt.

B) STATUS QUO SCENARIO: SISI DICTATORSHIP PERPETUATES STAGNATION

Most dictators fail to reform their economies so as to stimulate growth. Many begin with great popular support and apparently good intentions only to use their positions to extract resources from the wider population. Many are also able to put down the rebellions that arise under their tenure, and once political suppression is made a necessary tool in the dictator’s toolkit, it is difficult to forsake. Egypt’s economy is peculiarly difficult to reform, largely because reforming it means challenging the power of the military and the bureaucracy simultaneously. And there is now a tradition in Egypt of military leaders seizing power in coups, with wide popular support. So it is quite possible there will be no change in the economic status quo in Egypt for some time. And without development, it will be difficult to break out of the social stagnation that has long characterized Egyptian society.
C) DEMOCRATIC SCENARIOS

1) DEMOCRACY INCREASES GRADUALLY THROUGH BALANCE OF POWERS

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was common for democracies to gradually come into being as opposed to being born in one great sweep. The British model is usually held up as the exemplar, but aspects of it can be seen in the French and American systems as well. The general theme here is that of gradualism. The power of monarchs is first kept in check with a constitution. This forces leaders to not only abide by their own laws but by the rule of law in general. Then a Parliament will come to provide some greater balance of power. Even if the Parliament has little real powers, the monarch must now work out his or her policies through reasoned debate with other elites. While its members may at first enjoy hereditary privileges, members of Parliament will later come to increasingly rely on popular support. Thus, they become answerable to a wider swathe of the population. The benefit of such a system is that it builds a national sense of identity through democratic participation, and it maintains social stability through slowly training each class of society in responsible democratic participation.
An outside observer might have imagined Egypt to be on such a path prior to the middle of the twentieth century. Although it is a far less common path to democratization today, one might imagine that over the course of the next generation, Egypt will strengthen the independence of its courts, that it will strengthen parliament, that Presidential elections will become increasingly fair and free, and that political parties will grow in power. The reason this is a likely path is because the Sisi administration will need to demonstrate some democratic credentials, yet will be loath to give up power. The benefit of such a gradual path for Egypt is that it would help maintain social stability, it would train the population in responsible democratic participation, it would give time for political parties to grow in strength and to develop workable party platforms, and it would provide an opportunity for the military to step down from power. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, it is a compromise that might benefit all parties.

2) PATH TO DEMOCRACY BY INSTITUTIONAL REFORM AND UNDER AUTOCRAT

A more common path to democratization in recent decades has been through economic development under a strong leader. Strong leaders often have the ability to make the sort of difficult decisions that are necessary to reform an economy and to thereby set growth in motion. They can tame corruption, reform subsidies, strengthen property rights, and support infant industries targeted for growth. They can also unite their societies, thereby reducing the sort of social conflicts that can weaken trust and lead to costly civil wars. We can see this model at work in various stages in many of the East Asian Tigers, like South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Japan, and Indonesia. With economic development, levels of education tend to increase. And with greater education, citizens are better able to analyze political agendas and to see through propaganda. Development also allows for the formation of a strong middle class, and it is often the middle classes who have set their lights on a better life that are the driving force behind movements for democracy.

The prospect of such a democratic transition occurring under the administration of Sisi is promising, but only if he can maintain popular support, make hard decisions that risk alienating key constituents, and bring growth to what has thus far proven to be a stagnant economy. If he or some other leader can succeed in doing so, the population would likely grow more secure, more educated, and more empowered. Then the high hopes of the Arab Spring might return, but this time to a society that is better positioned for a stable democratic transition.
Under such a scenario, the Sisi administration might be highly successful and ultimately fall from power because of its success. There are also external forces that could make such a path more likely. It is quite possible that the Egyptian revolution was less successful because it came at a time of economic frustration as opposed to one of rising economic prospects. Democracies often form under both scenarios, but making the transition in a time of economic stress can be hazardous. If it is not a fast transition, an economy that is dependent upon foreign investment or tourism can become unstable, and this will tend to be blamed on those pushing for democracy. Similarly, there will be a tendency under such circumstances to vote in parties that promise security. But democratization is in many ways a leap into the unknown. Thus, those who understand and cherish it most can be sidelined in favor of more reactionary parties. All of this is different when the sense of security that comes with economic growth is present. So, if the global economy begins to grow again over the course of the next decade, the prospects for democratization might generally improve. And if the next round of democratization is inspired by growth, as opposed to stagnation, it might look very different and much more promising.

It may also become increasingly easy to form a democracy in coming decades. Freedom House now lists almost half the countries in the world as being fully free and democratic. As democracy has increasingly become the global norm for any state whose form of government has been placed into question, there have come to be an increasing array of outside supports for democratization. There is also the prospect of unexpected new ways of organizing protesters and civil society. Few would have predicted the rise of anything like Twitter and Facebook, and the role they played in recent protests a couple of decades ago. Nor should we expect that we know what is next on the horizon. It is quite possible that new forms of social organization will arise over the course of the next couple of decades that will result in another more stable round of democratization movements. All of this holds great promise for encouraging democratization in Egypt.
For a brief historical moment it appeared as if Egypt might make a developmental leap into pluralistic democracy through nonviolent revolution in 2011. But the instability brought about by this effort has recreated the social divisions, economic challenges, and political restrictions that were characteristic of the Mubarak era. But it is possible that over the course of the next generation the groundwork can be laid for a more organic socio-political development that results in a stable state of democracy under more prosperous economic conditions. There are three forces that can drive this development. First, the Sisi administration might feel compelled to award greater political rights as part of a broad effort to maintain power. Second, economic growth might lead to a natural demand for political rights. Third, a growing civil society might support and inspire another movement to democratize Egypt. Egyptian civil society can help foster these developments in the short and medium term. In the short term they can show that they are a positive part of society by providing services that the Sisi government has been unable to provide. One particular part of society that is lacking is education. By developing some sort of communal education that is led by civil society groups, activists can gain the support of the wider public, and show them that they can be a part of the solution. They can also initiate a process of national reconciliation that helps stabilize Egypt socially, they can press for an end to the worst human rights abuses so as to help stabilize Egypt politically, and they can work to end the worst economic corruptions so as to help stabilize Egypt economically. A key part of social stability will be reconciliation between the country’s different ethnic and religious groups. Nubians, Jews, and Christians have been targeted since the uprising, and there is much that can be done to further include these minorities into society. Including these groups will be a key component of any successful effort to improve the country. These efforts will improve the well-being of real people and help set the stage for greater economic development. Each will help stabilize the country politically and thereby facilitate international investment. Working to end the worst social, political, and economic abuses in Egypt has the potential of uniting nearly the whole of Egyptian society. Providing services that the government cannot is a good way of gaining the people’s trust. The movement can build on and deepen Sisi’s work to end sexual harassment in public places. It can work for the rights of children, Jews, and Christians. It can gently challenge the regime to reconcile with more moderate members of the Muslim Brotherhood and the April 6 Movement, which played so prominent a role in the revolution. And it can work to strengthen education and health care standards. There is great potential for building a broad movement of civil society organizations united for a better Egypt. To bring stability to Egyptian society, it is essential that there be a movement for reconciliation. And one of the best means of bringing about this reconciliation is to forge a nation-building consensus that might be backed by Islamists, liberals, labor, and the regime itself. In many ways it is a compromise agenda, but in focusing on the worst abuses, like the use of rape and torture by the police, or the corruption of the military, it is also a powerful agenda. And the adoption of such an agenda will pressure Sisi to behave better if he is to remain in power. Sisi believes that by consolidating his rule, he is paving the way towards a stable Egypt. However, there are many adverse effects to his heavy handed policies towards Islamists. By alienating such a large portion of the political spectrum, Sisi is entrenching the beliefs that he wishes to uproot, and pushing them out of the political arena.
By stifling civil society and cracking down on dissent, he has entrenched liberal groups as well, and further limited peaceful means of opposition. This has forced the supporters of political Islam to adopt tactics of opposition outside of the sphere of politics and civil society. As a result, many Egyptians, especially those who feel that they have no economic opportunity in Egypt, have turned to violent extremism in the Sinai and elsewhere in the Middle East. The insurgency in the Sinai has only grown, demonstrating the failure of Sisi’s policies. With the economy still in dire straits, and persistently high unemployment, more and more Egyptians will be pushed to violent extremism. The stability of Egypt has been put at risk by Sisi’s policies, and national reconciliation is more necessary than ever.

There are many forms such a movement for the reconciliation and improvement of Egyptian society might assume. The important point would be to build the broadest possible coalition through compromises that focused on minimum standards of decency. If prisoners are being raped and tortured, end the rape first. If the schools are falling apart and teachers are not even showing up for class, get the teachers to show up first. If Christians are being discriminated against and persecuted by mobs, prosecute the mobs first.

Demonstrations might be broadly inclusive, colorful, positive and even supportive of the administration taking its own policies and stated intentions seriously. Imagine the formation of a human rights council comprised of former Presidential candidates, Islamic leaders, international NGOs, and several generals and administration officials. The point would be to build a movement that could not be rejected because it included everyone, threatened few, worked only on the worst abuses, and sought to bring together the whole of Egyptian society. For in bringing together everyone, it might bring reconciliation through work for the betterment of Egypt, and by accomplishing the most necessary tasks, it would build trust that change is possible while laying the ground for the next stage of social, economic, and political development.

Going forward, the strategy for activists should be to focus on tactics of dispersion and reconciliation. These are the most important for the movement to be successful because tactics of concentration will not work. First, they will not be able to attract the large number that will be desired, too many people are afraid of the government’s response. They will also not be broad based enough to gather the numbers that they would need. Secondly, there is no way that a large demonstration would effectively pressure the government at this time. Without international support, the support of the military, or even of society as a whole, there is no way that the regime would actually feel the pressure from such tactics.

Reconciliation will be necessary to Egypt forward. As the security situation deteriorates, and the war in Libya gets closer, Egypt is put in a more precarious situation that could eventually lead to civil war. Therefore, reconciliation with everyone, including the regime is necessary to piece Egyptian society back together. However, activists should not allow the regime to take away the tools that will be necessary for such a reconciliation, namely civil society. The new restrictions on groups receiving foreign money should be resisted and parliamentary elections must happen. In addition to this resistance, NGOs must shake off the image of being foreign agents. By playing a functionally beneficial part of society, civil society groups can gain the support of the people. This can include efforts to better health care, education, and tolerance. Activists can also work with labor unions and political parties to expand their reach and to continue with the strategy of national reconciliation.