Wendy Chamberlin: And now, it is my very great pleasure to welcome again to the podium, he’s becoming a regular at the Middle East Institute, Michael Hanna, who is a senior fellow at the Century Foundation. He’s widely published on Egypt and on the Middle East and on South Asia issues. Um, so please join me in welcoming Michael and the panelists, who he will shortly introduce. Thank you.

[applause]

Michael Hanna: Good morning. Thanks, Wendy. We’re starting off the day with a panel entitled Reforming the State, Fostering Inclusion. I have here to my left, an old friend, Samer Shehata, who’s an associate professor of Middle Eastern politics at the University of Oklahoma, Mohamed Salmawy, the President of the Writers Union of Egypt, um, Dalia Fahmy, who’s an Associate Professor of Political Science at Long Island University, uh and Hala Shukrallah, who is the President of the Dostour Party in Egypt. Um, Egypt has been transitioning now for over three years, um, and it is still transitioning. It is a new regime and government that is under construction. Um, this is something that looks actually quite different than the Mubarak regime. Uh, it is apparently a government that sees economic reform as a priority, but has yet to offer a course correction in terms of the political environment uh, and of course, there’s a persistent, uh, security issue, uh, and a problem of terrorism that I think is going to be with the Egyptian state for years to come. Uh, and so it is a fairly unclear picture whether this formula can succeed one, in stabilizing the country and providing for, for its people, um, and I’m very lucky to have this, uh, distinguished panel with me today and I’d like to start with Mohamed Salmawy and perhaps give us a sense of what the vision is for the state. We know very well the things that the state is opposed to, uh, that is quite clear from what happened last summer in the ouster of Morsi and what has succeeded those events. But what is the affirmative vision of President Sisi? What is it that he and his advisors imagine the way forward for Egypt? What does that look like?

Mohamed Salmawy: Thank you very much, Michael. Um, first of all, I’d like to say how happy I am to be at the Middle East Institute. I’ve been following the work of this prestigious institution for some time when I met its, uh, uh, residents back in Cairo and I, uh, uh, actually congratulate the Institute on a lot of good work that they are doing that is very objective, scientific and non-partisan. Uh, second, I, uh, let me, uh, start with the description of the outline you have pointed out, which I think is very accurate. You have very accurately, uh, described the situation in Egypt, except for one thing, one little detail. When you say Egypt is in transition and has been in transition for the past, uh, now three years or so. Actually the transition started only, as far as I see, only last year with the ouster of Morsi. Before that, we were in total chaos really. One year of, uh, Muslim rule that, uh, you know, reached, uh, total failure, preceded by two years, uh, where we did not know where we were going, where the country was in a lot of turmoil and since the ouster of Morsi, we started,
um, so to speak finding the right track. We are on the right track, but it’s a very difficult road, as you pointed out. It will, uh, take years to reach what we really want to, uh, to, to, to attain. But in answer to your question, what is the vision of where we’re going or what is the political, uh, future that we, we are heading at, um, I think it’s still a bit foggy in many ways. In the sense that the political institutions are not all there. I mean, we don’t have a Parliament and according to the new constitution, a lot depends on the Parliament. For the first time we have, uh, not had a president in the new constitution who holds all the reigns in his hands. For the first time, responsibility has been given to the constitution. Some people think we have given more than we should, I mean to the Parliament, and some people think we have given more than we should to the Parliament and this will create some kind of stalemate. But, as it is, uh, the Parliament does have a lot to do with the political vision and the political, uh, dealings of the country. We still don’t have this Parliament in place. Uh, we don’t even have the advisors, uh, of Morsi, of a, of a, sorry… I keep making this mistake between Morsi, Mubarak and Sisi all the time, because we’ve had three presidents in three years, which even the United States, with all its democracy has not had.

[laughter]

Michael Hanna: Four, four. Four presidents.

Mohamed Salmawy: For four.

Michael Hanna: You forgot, uh, the interim, Adly Mansour.

Mohamed Salmawy: Yes, of course. Four. You see, we forget. Uh, so, um, we, he didn’t even choose his advisors yet. Only recently a few days ago, he chose a panel of advisors on, uh, scientific affairs with people like Farouk El Baz and Ahmed Zewail and others that you may know. But, uh, we don’t know his advisors yet. Uh, what we do know is that we have a new constitution that is the most democratic in the history of Egypt’s, uh, constitutions and Egypt has, uh, a long history with its constitutions that date back for many years, uh, not only to 1923 when we had the real proper constitution, but even before that there were, uh, attempts at documents that, uh, uh, resembled constitutions in many ways. This one is the most liberal, the most democratic, the most, uh, civilian as opposed to, uh, religious, the religious constitution that we had under the Muslim Brotherhood and according to this constitution, the vision whether it’s going to be applied or not, is a vision of a modern state that is democratic where, uh, power is shared between, uh, the presidents, Parliament and civil society. In terms of, uh, of freedoms and liberties and all that, we’ve had 48 new clauses in the constitution that had never appeared in our previous constitutions, most of them relating to, uh, freedom and freedom of expression and freedom of political belief and even freedom of, uh, religious belief
and all that. Uh, this draws a kind of outline, uh, of the vision we all aspire, uh, to reach. Uh, until we have all our institutions in place, we cannot really judge, uh, whether this vision is being adhered to or not. But as it is, we are, uh, we have made a lot of progress over the past three years, not only over the past year where, where we have the, uh, the one year where we had the Muslim Brotherhood, but even the two years that preceded it and certainly the 30 years that preceded that under, um, um, Mubarak. We do have a lot of difficulties. You have outlined, uh, some of them that have to do with human rights, uh, uh, with the economy and all that and, uh, we'll have to deal with them and I think if we stick to the constitution, we'd be on the right way to solving some of these problems. Uh, I don't know how long I have, but have I answered for the time?

Michael Hanna: Yes. Yes. Yeah. We'll go to the other panelists as well. Um, Hala Shukrallah, Mohamed Salmawy mentions the idea of distribution of powers as laid out in a, in the constitution. Obviously there is no Parliament.

Hala Shukrallah: Obviously.

Michael Hanna: And that is going to be the subject of much negotiation and discussion and from my perspective, there'll probably won't be a Parliament during this calendar year. It’s probably an issue for 2015. Uh, what is your expectation now, uh, for the role of political parties? This is a country that is, um, in many ways tired of politics. Fatigued, disillusioned with what, uh, political parties and the political process has wrought, uh, in terms of tangible benefits to their lives. What do you imagine now, uh, will be the role for political parties like the Dostour Party and does your vision for political party life, uh, have a place in the vision that the state has for the way forward?

Hala Shukrallah: Well, it depends. I mean, uh, the last thing that, uh, Salmawy said if we stick to the constitution. Now, the constitution itself is under fire right now. We cannot ignore what’s happening, uh, uh, at present. Through the media and through the new political parties, which are just, uh, uh, fronts for the former NDP, you know, the old regime’s political party, are now, uh, uh, placing as their objective the change of the constitution. So what is the role now of, uh, of political parties who align themselves, who identify themselves with the 25th of January and 30th of June? Uh, uh, you know, revolution and extension of the 30th of June is to safeguard that constitution, because that is all we have come out from the revolution. The, the revolution did not rule. So, let’s be very, uh, clear about that. Uh, uh, never have in any of the governments that, that, uh, consecutively took power, never did once did the revolution rule. Maybe there was a battles of power at one point, which brought about, especially after the Tamarod, the rebel movement which ousted, uh, uh, Morsi, there was some kind of balance of power, which brought in a few of the people from like [Egyptian], like, Dr. Ziad Bahaa Eldin, you know, some of the figures.
from the political parties. Uh, uh, they stayed for a few months and then, you know, uh, mysterious, uh, change of the mysterious cabinet took place and we were ousted. You know, what do you think the objective of the mysterious cabinet was? I said there’s no, uh, change in the mysterious cabinet. These people were fired. Uh, so that balance of power was over and it was time to consolidate the power that existed. So, you know, let’s just be very clear about the context that is going on, uh, in place. Now, going back to the constitution, yes, the constitution is, uh, is in danger of, of being changed. Why? Because it does bring more power to the Parliament and it lessens the, uh, you know, extra, uh, extra constitutional powers of the, um, of the government and the, uh, executive bodies, uh, which is something that has not been seen in Egypt for a long time. What are...? What is the rule of, of the political parties that are now finding themselves in opposition after they were partners in, in, in the creation of a path towards democracy? Well, I think it’s to gather together and really very clearly, uh, create a path, a third path, that takes us out of the vicious cycle between the, uh, oppressive regimes, oppressive corrupt regimes and the, uh, you know, Muslim Brotherhood and the Jihad and fundamentalists, whatever you want to call it. Because we’ve been... We’ve been stuck within this duality, uh, which is you either have that or that. What do you want to choose? This has been our choice every time. Choose this or this. You’re not gonna get another choice. This happened during the elections. This has happened throughout Mubarak’s rule, um, they were always keeping the Muslim Brotherhood as a card in order to, you know, give out these messages to the west. Well, you don’t like what we’re doing but the alternatives are these terrorists. You know? Uh, they’re giving out this message internally now very, very, uh, uh, clearly because for the first time people have actually, uh, experienced rule under the Muslim Brotherhood and they did not like it at all. Uh, contrary to the, you know, uh, uh, the perceptions of foreign governments. It’s that you know, they are closer to you culturally. We will not accept them. No. They’re not closer to us culturally. We will not accept them. Um, and so, uh, uh, it’s very important for us to carve a, a path that is truly democratic, that is truly, uh, uh, will take us to a democratic, uh, mechanisms and democratic situations. So that is what we’re attempting to do. We’re attempting to do it through coalitions. We’re attempting to do it through, um, a minimum program that will bring us all together for very clear objectives.

Michael Hanna: So you touch on the sort of the often discussed idea of a third way, uh, the alternative to the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamism, uh, and a military-led political order. Uh, this, we’ve talked about this a lot. It’s been discussed, uh, ad infinitum. Uh, Samer, maybe if you could give us a few thoughts of whether you think that third way is a, a tenable one, if it has space in Egyptian society. That’s an important point. Um, do these nascent parties, do democratic forces have a constituency, uh, in Egypt, uh, and, uh, in light of this sort of regional turbulence? Uh, is that kind of, um, appetite for reform, uh, one that is vital and, uh, one that can
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carry forward reform or are we now in a period of, uh, regime consolidation in which, um, political energies have, have run their course?

Samer Shehata: Yeah. Well, it’s a very difficult question and I think that, you know, the short answer is no, that’s really not a possibility, unfortunately, and I think that that in fact the regime or the political powers in Egypt that exist today also have it in their interest not to find a third way. Part of creating this duality, this polarization, is as a justification for the status quo and the justification for the consolidation of a regime, which I wish, as an Egyptian American and a political scientist, I could say is transitioning to democracy. But, unfortunately, on all fronts, is not transitioning to democracy, whether it’s regard, with regards to the NGO law, which is a remnant from the Mubarak era that has, um, you know, going to become, um, uh, a threat to civil society, or the banning of political activities on college campuses or the abysmal state of the Egyptian press, um, uh, or uh, the role of the military or the lack of security sector reform and so on. So I wish there was a third way, um, and I think that, of course, one mechanism of trying to get to a third way would be through some kind of national reconciliation and at one time, of course, on, on in fact, um, on July 3, 2013, there was talk of national reconciliation, um, but I haven’t seen any, um, positive movement on that kind of front. No one, I think, no one in their right mind is talking about going back to somehow before June 30th. That’s impossible and that’s not what the Egyptian people want. But there does need to be, I think, an acknowledgement of this deep polarization, the necessity of national reconciliation and that means many different things. That means not only the events that have taken place over the last month and a half, but national reconciliation in terms of the events that have taken place over the last 30 years, you know, um, uh, and the, and the necessity of prosecuting or seeking some kind of transitional justice and so on. Um, so I wish there was a third way, but unfortunately, I don’t see that materializing. And just to kind of end, to be brief, without national reconciliation and without political inclusion, which I believe is the part of the title of the panel and so on, there can be no movement towards democracy in Egypt. I’m very sad to say that, because of course, I think all of us, uh, would like that.

Michael Hanna: So this, we’re looking at national reconciliation from the perspective of the state, as you just did. Uh, if we, um, pull back a little bit and think about national reconciliation perhaps from the perspective of the Muslim Brotherhood, um, uh, is there now, like Dalia said, address this, but is there now, um, any reconciliation of tactics, vision, uh, uh, a deeper understanding, appreciation of what happened during the transitional period, particularly under Morsi’s rule, uh, for there to be reconciliation. Yes, the first step is likely to have to come from the state, from the government. Um, but is there also a corresponding, a corollary willingness now, uh, on the part of the Brotherhood to reconsider? From, from my perspective it looks as if the Brotherhood has one set of tactics, um, and has yet to really begin to examine what happened, uh, and perhaps a way forward. There’s still talk about the
restoration of Morsi. Um, we see dwindling numbers of protests. Um, the Brotherhood project as currently constructed is not one that can change the political trajectory of the country. Do you think that that kind of deeper introspection, um, the Brotherhood’s own course correction in terms of trying to readjust to a political life that has, has gone on without them? Is that happening?

Female: So … (inaudible)

[trying to fix the microphone]

Female: So, I think we have to acknowledge (inaudible).

[Microphone went out]

Michael Hanna: Would you like to use this one? You know, there’s nothing… it’s not a fixed object.

Female: All right. It’s just that it’s far.

Female: Is it far? All right. I’ll move it closer.

Michael Hanna: Speak into the mike.

Dalia Fahmy: Um, Egypt is not immune to the laws of political science and in political science, we know that there are winners and there are losers and we need to understand what is the political makeup of Egypt today. Right? What is, what are the forces at play? And so we have the Sisi regime, we have the military, the security apparatus and we have a really strong big business apparatus and so in order for there to be this system of reconciliation, we have to understand there has to be change within this sphere as well. And so when we talk about reconciliation with the Brotherhood, as if they’re this one monolith, right? Who, who is the Brotherhood and where are they? If we look at them as a three-tiered organization, the entire first tier is in prison. Right? Facing these life sentences. The second and third tier are either in exile or among the 22,000 political prisoners that are existing in Egypt. So we talk about reconciliation, in dialogue, we have to say who are, who are the partners in dialogue? The situation in Egypt today is just as Hala was saying. When we talk about who are the winners and losers and political players, for so long we have looked at stability and democracy as two sides of the same coin. Right? And so we’re going to forego elements of democracy because security and stability are really what we’re all, all about. Um, however, what we saw Tahir Square in 2011 is that we can’t undermine the acknowledgement that long term stability has to come through political inclusion and the narrative of that stability will come through a strong executive, um, is no longer going to take place. When we look at the road
map to change that was, um, that is set forth, right? So we had a constitution. There was supposed to be parliamentary elections. We kind of shifted the order to presidential before parliamentary elections. Um, what we’re seeing is the, the beginnings of the, of a strong executive forming where the parliament, if it’s going to be reconstituted of the old Mubarak regime and spaces for some alternate voices, but are not really strong, what you’re gonna get is a rubber stamp parliament. And when you get a rubber stamp parliament, you’re not going to get a system of checks and balances and so when you want to talk about dialogue and negotiation with Muslim Brotherhood, I know were some reports that were released last week that they might offer, um, some kind of platform for reconciliation, but if anybody read the, um, Muslim Brotherhood website this morning, again, very strong statements recognizing the legitimacy of President Morsi, um, and you know standing firm to this, uh, this kind of resistance of the current regime. If we also look at the Muslim Brotherhood in its internal structure and dynamic, we’ve seen that much of the youth has been marginalized, um, especially during the Morsi regime. Right? Very disgruntled with what was happening. But we also seen elements of, of the youth that has been like put in prison, tortured and so the question is, what happens to that segment of the Muslim Brotherhood youth? We know that historically the Muslim Brotherhood, whether there’s been political openings or closing, has been committed to moderation and political inclusion and has accepted that democracy is the only game in town. The critical question now is, when there’s this increased repression that is to a certain extent unprecedented, um, what is going to happen in the prisons of Egypt? And unfortunately, we’ve known historically what emerges out of extreme repression in Egypt’s prisons and so when we talk about political inclusion, this has to be part of a roadmap to national reconciliation. Right? And this is part of transitional justice. In order for transitional justice to occur and to be taken seriously, it actually has to include, um, all segments of society. The Muslim Brotherhood today is deemed a terrorist organization. Um, we used to say, okay, so the [Egyptian] act, but the Freedom of Justice Party can still be involved in politics. That’s no longer the case and so we can’t talk about reconciliation without being honest about the cards on the table and how we’re going to actually get to that roadmap.

Michael Hanna: Well, from, from the perspective of the state, um, clearly much of the soft support for, for the Brotherhood has evaporated over time, but their core constituency remains. Um, and it, it is a robust organization despite some of the, some of the challenges it now faces. Is there a way back for the Brotherhood? Uh, Is there, uh, after they’ve been stigmatized, they have been labeled a terrorist organization. Um, is, is there a way back for inclusion and other parties? The Wasat Party, the Anti-coup Coalition that the Brotherhood has sought to lead has fallen apart. Um, is that an opening perhaps to begin bringing in other players who’ve been ostracized of late? Is there a role for, for these players? For Islamists to, uh, in the Egyptian, in Egyptian political life?
Mohamed Salmawy: Well I think definitely there is a place because they're there and nobody's denying their presence. We are talking about an organization that, uh, um, as Dalia pointed out, refuses to recognize the changes that have happened in society and this immediately puts it out of the arena. Uh, but there should be. We, we have to reach some kind of, of inclusion at some point. I think the trouble with this talk about reconciliation is that people who talk about reconciliation more often than not do not talk about the timing. You do not have a French Revolution and the second day talk about reconciliation with the King and the, and the, the nobility. It’s just not done. When you have a very violent reaction and a huge public reaction against the certain rule and that rule, rule is brought down, you do not…this is not the right time for reconciliation. We are passing through a period that all revolutions and we in Egypt like to think of what happened on the 25th of January and on the 30th of June, two years later, as a revolution that has changed the status quo that brought down a regime and tried to bring in another one and, uh, uh, revolutions, as you well know in this country and in others, really kill their opponent. Kill the, the, the regime they rise against. This did not happen in Egypt and it never did, neither with the 23rd revolution, well the 23rd of July revolution nor with the present revolution. But this is the wrong time in history to talk about reconciliation. What we should be doing is to pave the way, to make reconciliation easier and sooner than it can take. This is, this is where we should work, but it’s not reconciliation or no reconciliation. Of course there will be a reconciliation at some point. When and how and what can we do now to bring about this reconciliation? When it is said that the first steps should come from the government. The first step has come from the government and immediately after the third of June, it was said that whoever, uh, uh, uh disapproves of violence and decides to join the political arena will be welcome and this was an opening for them. It was an opening done at the wrong time, because you do not bring down a rule and then ask its adherence immediately to jump on the wagon and, uh, adhere to the new regime. But that was the first step. The first step now should come from the Muslim Brotherhood themselves. They should renounce violence. They should show some kind of recognition of the changes that have, uh, that we have undergone in Egypt since the fall down of Morsi. They have shown no sign of that. They seem to be, uh, you know, in a state of denial and this is not the best situation for a reconciliation. But I, I want to go on from that to the third way. The third way, it is, I believe that the future is for the third way. In fact, I believe that what the revolution of the 25th of July was all about, was the third way. For many years, we have been faced with a situation, which as it was rightly pointed out by Ms. Shukrallah, uh, it was either the Mubarak regime or the Muslim Brotherhood, there was no third way. But all of a sudden, a revolution takes place all over the country and a third way emerges. The people who did this revolution were against both alternatives. They represented a younger generation, uh, that is well educated, that was dissatisfied with the status quo in Egypt. That aspired to a more modern, more up-to-date, uh, states that Egypt deserves and they, for, for a while, we saw a third way emerging that is neither Muslim Brotherhood nor the old Mubarak regime.
But it was an innocent choice and an innocent movement, that with the fall of Mubarak, for its mission has been accomplished. They cleaned up the street behind them, left Tahir Square and went back home and that was the chance when the Muslim Brotherhood jumped on the wagon and acquired, uh, power, because there was a vacancy there. I think one of the things we would like to see happening with the new parliament is that these young revolutionaries, who hopefully, and I do know that they have learned their lesson, uh, over, from the events of the past three years and know they should have stuck there and remained there and fought on, these would present themselves as candidates to the new, uh, parliament. That the emergence of this new power through the parliament, which is given a lot of power in the new constitution, would help bring back these people to power, would help build up this third alternative and would help bring in the state that we all aspire to. Of course these people need help. I have not seen from any of the parties that exist any attempts to include these younger, this younger generation, these people who really represented, uh, the 25th of January and the 30th of June, uh, revolutions. The people who have brought about this change. We in Egypt have a responsibility to adopt this new, uh, generation, these new revolutionaries and this is the only way out, because the, the constitution allows for that through the power it gives the (inaudible).

Male: They can't do that, because they're in jail.

Female: Yeah.

Male: The young revolutionaries are in jail. I think the problem is… This is, this is also a very important issue. You see, I think...

Mohamed Salmawy: I’m sorry. This is a sweeping generalization.

Male: It is a sweeping generalization.

Mohamed Salmawy: You cannot all say that the revolutionaries who have done… There were hundreds of thousands…

Male: April 6th is… [Egyptian] is in jail. [Egyptian] is in jail. We can go on and on and on...

[all talking at once]

Male: But the point is, the point is that Egypt isn’t transitioning to democracy, even for non-Islamists. Right? Let…You know, even for non-Islamists, Egypt isn’t necessarily transitioning to democracy and I think that’s also…
Mohamed Salmawy: That’s another sweeping generalization.

Michael Hanna: Well, I mean, even if we… If we look at the description of a, of a revolutionary competition between the state and the Muslim Brotherhood, it’s clear now that the scope of repression is much wider than the Brotherhood. Someone like Ahmad Mahir is in jail. Uh, other young activists are in jail. We see hunger strikes. It’s not solely a competition between Islamists and the state now and, Samer, what of that? I mean, where, is there, you know, how can we talk about democratization, base for democratization when we see these kinds of counter signals, um, in Egyptian political life?

Samer Shehata: Well, I, I think we can’t speak about Egypt’s transition to democracy, unfortunately and I’m very sad, because I wish, you know, we could, we were moving in that direction. But I mean, as I mentioned, almost on any measure, right, whether we’re talking about civil society and civil society freedoms, whether we’re talking about the ability of students on college campuses to engage in peaceful politics. Of course, some kinds of activity is, is not allowed and I agree and against the law, but peaceful political activity, whether we’re talking about the necessity of security sector reform. And, and let me just say something here for a moment. I think for, for some of us, at least, one of the most important hopes of the January 25, 2011 uprising, because it wasn’t a revolution, unfortunately, was for the possibility of a fundamentally restructuring of the relationship between citizen and state and the restoration of dignity to the individual in all of their dealings with the state and representatives of the state and particularly the police and the security forces and so on. We haven’t seen any discourse! Any recognition even from the current regime that there needs to be a fundamental restructuring of the Ministry of the Interior. We haven’t heard that kind of a discourse. If you ask me, that is more important than putting a, a piece of paper in a ballot box every four years. That is the rule of law. No more abuse by the police. No more intimidation. Treating people with dignity and so on. These things, I think, are fundamental and they go beyond whether it’s the Islamists or the non-Islamists and so on and we can go on whether it with regard to journalists in jail, um, whether it’s in regards to issues in transparency in politics and so on. I haven’t seen sufficient evidence to convince me that Egypt is transitioning, uh, um, to democracy and in fact, I’ve seen evidence in the contrary.

Michael Hanna: Hala, maybe, I mean, it’s the scope of repression that Samer talks about, um, in relation to the stability of the state. The state has no rivals at this point, uh, from my perspective. Um, this is a regime that’s here to stay. It’s not going anywhere. Um, why then is the, the sort of the scope of repression so wide? What is the goal? And this is a regime that is, that is not going to be threatened frankly by these nascent political parties, by youth activists. Um, why is, why is the scope of repression so wide? Why is the enforcement of the protest law so Draconian? What, what does the state hope to accomplish here?
Hala Shukrallah: Well, I think you have, uh, you have the ghosts of 25th of January very much looming, uh, above everything that, uh, the state needs to correct. Um, you have the same institutions as you were saying. You have the same institutions that functioned during the Mubarak era are still functioning right now and that is the crux of the matter. This is very central to the problem. Uh, the same people who were, uh, in charge of the Ministry of Interior, are the ones that are in charge of the Ministry of the Interior. So, one of the, one of the main targets of the 25th of January was the Ministry of Interior, because I mean, if we all remember, the movement of [Egyptian], we are all [Egyptian], the, the young man who was killed in Alexandria under police brutality, um, he’s one of the, you know, it’s one of the main issues which mobilized all of these people around, you know, the fact that we have to do something. We cannot live like this any longer and that’s why human dignity was one of the main slogans. And so, now when you’re looking at the reconstruction of the state, you’re looking at how do you prevent these people from once more rising against state institutions in the same way. And so, uh, yeah, yeah, one of the things that, that immediately happened, uh, the, the, you know, the passing of the, of the legislation preventing demonstration. Now, we did not see that that law was in any way implemented against the Muslim Brotherhood or the Islams or the Jihadists. It was not implemented against them. It was implemented against the peaceful demonstrators. Uh, (inaudible) and we, we have a severe problem with that, with what’s happening with these youth and then, you know, talking about it and talking about it in the media and going to, you know, the district, uh, attorney and so on. But set that aside. Uh, neither was this reform done under, uh, Morsi nor was it done under, uh, Sisi nor was it done beforehand. I mean, of the four, uh, uh, presidents we had, the Ministry of Interior was not touched. Morsi brought in the same Minister that, that, that was there beforehand, ex-Minister of Interior. So from the beginning, uh, you know, whether you are changing a few figures from the top, there is absolutely no change going on in the, uh, in the regime, which is, you know, one of the main slogans was the people want a change of the regime. Well that didn’t happen. Um, so, so what you’re looking for is, how do you do it now, you know, under the, under very different context with the whole issue of terrorism looming? And we all know when that, you know, big sign is, is flashing in a country and you had it here in the US war against terrorism, you know, people immediately are willing to give a little bit of their freedom, um, in order to combat terrorism and so that’s what’s happening in Egypt. Not only that, Egyptians actually live under the Morsi regime. Egyptians actually were subjected during the [Egyptian] and the [Egyptian] sit ins to, uh, certain forms of violence that occurred in, in [Egyptian]. Definitely they were. Many of them were, were attacked or slaughtered in, in the most horrible way and after the disbursement of the [Egyptian] and [Egyptian], uh, the Jihadists and the, the Muslim Brotherhood, uh, took to task the Christian Egyptians and felt that they were the ones, the culprits. The real culprits were the 30th of June and went and burned something like over 82 churches and shops of Christians and they really, you
know, carried out, uh, uh, sort of a cleansing of upper Egypt from, from Christians. So you have, you have this fear, you know, a fear from the return of the Muslim Brotherhood and on the other hand, you have a very vague kind of regime, uh, that people are hoping will maybe give them what they want. But right now, they’re not sure that it’s going to give them and so it’s very, very difficult to maneuver within these two, two elements.

Michael Hanna: And talking about security, uh, and obviously there’s this, the discourse about the war on terrorism, Egypt has a problem with militancy. It’s awash in arms from the Libyan War. Uh, arm smuggling has happened for years coming up through the Sudan. Um, so, there is a problem with, with violence. There is a problem with terrorism and Dalia, you mentioned Egyptian prisons, um, and what is happening inside. Um, what do you think the prospects are now for further radicalization, uh, and how do you imagine that the Muslim Brotherhood, um, will deal with, with the potential of, and the use, um, defecting? Going to more radical options? Um, how do you, how do you assess those issues going forward?

Dalia Fahmy: So I, I think we have to look at this in a couple of ways and first is structural, sorry. I forgot. We have to look at this in a couple of ways and the first is structural. Right? What do... what do the protest laws and the terrorism laws actually do to society? Protest laws are if you want to have a non-violent protest, you need to submit paperwork, authorization for three days and after three, and if you don’t get it, you’re, you’re, you’re charged with, um, seven years in prison. And so the protest law means to eliminate any public voice of dissent, especially peaceful ones, like you said. Um, the terrorism law wording is so vague, anyone who threatens the integrity of the state, anyone who defames the state, anyone who is, uh, is uh, interferes with the economic functioning, with schools, and so the terrorism law is so vast that any political activity, social activity, voices of dissent activity, can be considered a terrorist. Which would mean that the two uprisings, although the people involved in those are also terrorists according to this definition. So I think we have to be realistic about the structural conditions that are leading to the marginalization of large segments of society. If we’re gonna talk about the Muslim Brotherhood, let’s take a step back and look at the structural conditions historically in Egypt that have led to when we think about Egypt, the state and opposition, only thinking about the Muslim Brotherhood. Um, so in 2007, the, the constitutional, the court of, uh, that authorizes political party formation, of the 12 political parties that had submitted paperwork, 11 were denied and 11 were secular parties and what was the point? What was the reason why they were denied? Oh, because they had similar political platforms. And so historically systematically leftist parties, secular parties, socialist parties in Egypt have been undermined and so when you come to post-2011, what with your left with is, well the Muslim Brotherhood can now put its foot on the scene. But something happens in the first two months after 2011, is that the number of political parties formed flourishes to over 40 and so you have...
Mohamed Salmawy: Nine.

Michael Hanna: In the first two months.

Mohamed Salmawy: We had nine.

Michael Hanna: In the first two months.

Mohamed Salmawy: Oh, okay.

Dalia Fahmy: But I mean... Yeah, I mean registered and what you have is many secular parties, many leftist parties, socialist parties, but the, the critical thing for, for us to talk about is that several Islamist parties, um, registered and the first one was [Egyptian], the Center Party. And so for the first time, the Muslim Brotherhood did not have a monopoly on the use of religion and so we end to talk about that kind of magical moment where they had to talk about political pluralism and redefinition and if we’re gonna hold onto our revolutionary youth who came out into the street, absent the formal, um, involvement of the Muslim Brotherhood echelon, we need to rethink and re-strategize. And so this is a critical moment we need to think about and how far we’ve come since then. If we look at the Muslim Brotherhood today and the dialogue that must occur internally, this is not the first time they’ve been faced with this crisis. Right? So if we look historically between the great debates between [Egyptian] and the [Egyptian], right? About the future of the Muslim Brotherhood, a couple of decades ago, will we continue to be in politics? Will we return back to [Egyptian] organization and focus on social programs? This is a dialogue that must happen internally. Um, will they be separate from the political wing? Will the political wing, meaning the Freedom Justice Party, actually be able to reenter politics? Um, this dialogue must happen, but the question is, who’s it gonna happen with? Right? Um, unless it’s happening in some prison cells, you know, uh, that we don’t know about. Um, of course they have to go through a period of, of reconciliation within themselves and re-strategizing. I remember thinking that if, if the Muslim Brotherhood platform in terms of its social platform is about [Egyptian] and the, the raising of society, what we, what we saw during the Morsi regime was a group of people who lacked [Egyptian]. Right? And so there almost had to be a re-strategizing what it is we want for ourselves and for the future of Egypt. Um, I think that if we really investigate that critical, uh, Morsi year, um, not only did they not anticipate the consequences of winning, they actually didn’t have a plan for the future of Egypt in, in many ways. Um, and they actually thought they were gonna come in and be successful. They didn’t actually think about the obstacles in, in front of them, as, as far as we can tell, um, outside of their internal discussions. And so, of course, the Muslim Brotherhood has to go through a period of re-strategizing. In terms of the radicalization of youth, I’m, I’m gonna disagree. I think that the Muslim
Brotherhood has categorically said, “Be peaceful.” Right? “We reject violence,” um, at least in their official capacity. What the youth do and what happens to them over a time, um, and again, we’re not gonna look at them as a, as a monolith. Right? Because they, they run the spectrum. But those who are marginalized, tortured, families have disappeared, feel excluded from the process, considered, um, radicals, have, are going through a media campaign that systematically turns them into this non-Egyptian. I mean, they’re being called not part of society. What are the long term consequences on a segment of society that’s, that’s, uh, that’s being treated like this? The most generous estimates in Egypt that talk about the Muslim Brotherhood say there’s not more than 20% adherence. Right? But when a massive percentage of the population that is in of the 22,000 and, uh, political prisoners are of them, what you are seeing is that those people in prison are not just members of the Muslim Brotherhood. They’re also several of their loyalists, are people who believe in, in, in their message. And for them to also be not just marginalized, but be suffering under the effects of, of laws that if we really think about because they occurred without a parliament, these are all laws that are through presidential fiat. Right? They, they actually have not been legislated and articulated by a parliamentary body and so there are vast long term consequences. Not just for the Islamists, not just for the seculars, but ultimately long term for society and including of the youth.

Michael Hanna: So we’re gonna do one last round of questions up here before we turn it over to the audience, so please be brief, this, uh, this go round. Um, Mohamed, um, we’ve heard a lot of the obstacles that, that face the Egyptian government at present. Um, do you think that the current course can succeed and most importantly, what are the things you think have to change, the reforms that have to happen, for it to succeed?

Mohamed Salmawy: A lot has to be done, actually because the reform has not started yet. As it was pointed out by all the speakers, many of the forces, many of the laws, many of the, uh, institutions that existed even prior to, uh, 2011, are still there, are still in place, are still functioning. The reason for that is that the constitution has not been applied yet, because we don’t have a parliament that would put or formulate or promulgate the, the laws that would enact all of the clauses of the constitution. So we are living with a new constitution that the people have voted for overwhelmingly, uh, as a sign of adherence to the new system and as a sign of their objection to the old system that, uh, they brought down. And on the other hand, we do not have the parliament that would, uh, uh, you know, uh, carry out the, uh, the necessary legislation to make that constitution function. So, when we talk now about the situation in Egypt and we say it’s not democratic because there is a law that, uh, that does this or does that, many of these laws date back to the time of Mubarak. Many of these laws have not been changed yet, because the instrument for this change has not been put in place yet. Uh, and of… I remember very well the
forces engage of that see will themselves there the allow uh, forces are there, has, the aspirations. which do prison. have actions kind when government chief including advantage example of, uh, the Morsi government when it first came and used to its, uh, advantage all the old despotic laws that were there under the Mubarak regime, including the one about the press. In one fell sweep, they changed 55 editors-in-chief of all the newspapers, because this was one of the prerogatives of the old government of, of, uh, Mubarak. They didn’t make any attempt at changing that and when the president decided, President Morsi, decided to bring out the law, because he does have the legislative power in the absence of the parliament, he brought about a constitution, a presidential, uh, uh, decree that made him immune to any kind of, uh, legal objection or legal, uh, questioning that made him, that made his actions unquestionable. So we are living still in a period, and that is why I said, we have not been living in a period of transition. We are just starting the period of transition. We are still living under the old laws. But what we have not spoken about at all, is the new forces that, that came about. It is not true that everybody is now in prison. Everybody who matters is shot, in jail and being tortured and you only have the old Mubarak. This is not true. This is very simplistic way of looking at things. We do have new forces that have come, one of which is this new party, a Dostour Party, which came from the womb of this new revolution. It was not there under Mubarak. It is a direct result of the revolution of the 2011. It embodies all its, uh, slogans and its aspirations. It has a lot of, uh, young generation following. We have another party, the free Egyptians, [Egyptian], which was also created after the revolution, uh, which has, which represents the same thing, which is very widespread. We have forces there, political forces that have developed over the past three years. These forces are getting ready to run for elections in the parliament and it is out of these new forces that represent the younger generation who are not all in prison, by the way, uh, that we are, we are to expect the change. Now do the laws and the constitution allow this new force to create the new Egypt that we all aspire to? Yes, it is there in the constitution. It is up to these new parties of which I have mentioned too and there are other forces that have not been organized into official parties that are also active, like the Tamarod movement or the rebel movement that are also organizing themselves and getting ready to go into parliament and all this, these forces, adhere to the new constitution. These are where the new change will come and this is what will bring about the new Egypt that we all aspire to.

Michael Hanna: Hala, one of… One of the distinctive features at the moment of Egyptian political life is how fragmented it is, um, and from a broad scale, we can see the ways in which certain blocks cannot work with other blocks and I don’t mean that in terms of fractious political party lives, that there are too many parties. But one of the things that was distinctive about the [Egyptian] and the initial uprising, was that you had a broad spectrum of Egyptians willing to at least on a tactical level engage with each other and some of those possibilities I think are no longer. Um, a reformist Islamist alliance, even on, on sort of basic principles, seems fantastical at the moment. Um, we knew very quickly after the uprising that the revolutionary forces wouldn’t deal with elements of the former regime. Um, these kinds of barriers
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to actually having sort of organized political life, do you imagine that they are now a sort of structural feature of, of Egyptian politics and can you imagine in the future more cooperative engagement with Islamists political actors? With, uh, elements of the former regime, uh, whether that be [Egyptian] political party? How do you see that going forward? Because it seems to me that if, if political life is vulcanized, um, there’s, there’s very little possibility for coalition building and, and effecting political change from, from political parties.

Hala: Well, definitely not right now. I mean, I think it’s, it’s, uh, it’s, uh, necessary that political parties that have a, a, similar platform first get together and create their own coalition and their own vision of the future of a democratic Egypt. It’s very difficult to speak now, uh, with all the, you know, fragmentation that exists about let’s reconcile with the, with the, uh, you know, fundamentalist movement or the, you know, uh, uh, Islamist movement, why you have not even, uh, gotten together with the, with the parties that represent a very similar program, uh, as you… so, no. Not, not at this point. At this point, what we are very much, uh, concerned with and very much invested with in is a coalition that brings together all the political parties, the social movements that are invested in a democratic Egypt and to have sort of a minimum program that joins them together and that sets out goals and objectives and a path, uh, that they, that they should follow. And this we’re doing. We’re doing. It’s difficult, but we are doing it. Uh, now, as regards to the, you know, the whole issue of, of reconciliation, I think it’s uh, it’s something that has to be well-studied, as, as, you know, as everyone was saying. That the, that the Islamic, the Muslim Brothers themselves have not, uh, sort of, uh studied their, you know, look back and, and taken out the lessons you learn from the whole process, because they’ve been an integral part of blocking the democratic path, uh, in Egypt. And I think that has to be recognized. I mean, it happened to us in the 70s and definitely during the student movement. You know, they were sprung out, uh, in order to stop the democratic, uh, movement in, in the universities. It’s, it’s been happening again. Over and over again they are being put as a, as a block towards any, any democratic part. Now they have to be able to look at that, their role historically and to be able to critique that kind of, uh, role and then to be brought into the political process again. However, and this I’ve been saying several times, what I believe that the government now is doing is that it is clamping down on the political manifestation and organization manifestation of the Muslim Brotherhood. What it is allowing is their discourse and their discourse is alive and well and we’re going to see it, um, you know, flourishing in society and it will be affecting, instead of really combating the discourse and, uh, sort of encouraging a more enlightened discourse. You are going to bring it back in and that is a very negative, uh, um, element. The other thing is, the youth. Where, where do they stand in this whole thing? Um, have they dissolved into nothingness? Are they all in jail or, you know, where are they? I think they, they’re still out there and they have formed a coalition of something like 300 youth. They are being supported by our political parties. They’re going to go down in election as a block of the youth in
order to challenge all the traditional kind of figures that, that come down in election. But we have two very essential laws that have come out this period. None of the old laws of Mubarak. It's this period. One is the election law, the electoral law, which basically says no political parties are really marginal. They don't exist. Why do we even have to put them in mind? Let them take 20% of the seats. You know, let them fight around, you know, among each other for 20% of the seats. Um, and let the, uh, elections basically be around individuals, which, which means that once more, parliament is being given in the hands of money and you know, the ones who will struggle are the, uh, together, are the ones who will be having, uh, you know, a lot of money. We're speaking millions here. And, um, and, or you know, big families and tribalism and so on. This is what's going to affect who will be in parliament in the coming, uh, year, which means, you know, an un-political parliament and if we're speaking that the role of parliament, the coming parliament, is to change the constitution into legislations, that negates it. If we're speaking about, uh, a parliament that is political, we have to change that law. Now the other [Egyptian], uh, uh, law is the demonstration law, which is absolutely, uh, ridiculous, which means that any kind of protest, you're not allowed to do. You will be thrown in jail and we are seeing a newly rising, uh, uh, social movements, the workers even, that are being severely harmed by this.

Michael Hanna: So my apologies to Samer and Dalia, but um, I'm gonna, in the interest of time, I'm gonna turn to, to the audience. Um, there's a microphone I believe that will be going around. Um, please state your name and affiliation and questions, not declaratory statements, please.

Male: Muhammad Ahmad, IHS Foundation from West Africa. Uh, my question to the panelists, especially I just came from Egypt. So I am coming very fresh. Um, as somebody who just came and I see that basic infrastructure needs in the country is totally unstable from the states standpoint, like electricity. Like I said one day, I (inaudible) how many hours I have with the electricity. It can, five hours per day. That amount electricity I get at my house. Uh, how do you see the state addressing the basic needs for the citizens? Is it the health? The food? The standing in line to get the bread and you can't really earn a living. Like economically speaking we're dealing with Math, one plus one shall equal two regardless of who is in charge, ND, DD, BBC, it doesn't matter. People need to eat.

Male: That's right.

Male: How do you see the state practically, uh, putting a map and putting a way for the citizens?

Michael Hanna: Thank you?
Samer: Are they supposed to answer that correctly or…

Michael Hanna: Uh, whoever wants to take it. So.

Dalia: I think if we remember the original… Oh. Sorry. The original, um, point behind the whole revolution, uh, revolution uprising, soft coups of 2011 was right, freedom, transparency, democracy but also it was food, stability, jobs, (inaudible). If we think about 54% of Egypt is youth. Right? Fifty-four percent of Egypt is under the age of 24. Um, 44% of Egypt lives under $2 a day. Um, so the economic conditions you see are difficult. The Egyptian pound, if you just returned, is weaker than it ever has been. The infrastructure is deteriorating. Um, part of the curse of winning, is not only do you have to govern, but you have to, you have to actually supply service. If we saw what happened in July of this year with the, uh, fuel subsidies and the gas prices went up 78%, um, but on natural gas, which most of our taxis function on, they went up 178% and so there were protests in the street right away, which were very quickly quelled and this was by taxi drivers. And so, of course, the economic conditions that Egypt is under are the worse they’ve been in, in, in decades and there has to be an economic platform. The economic platform brought forth today, which is these great new Medinas that are going to flourish in the desserts of Egypt so that Egypt’s population, lives not in 6% of Egypt, but 100% of Egypt and this is supposed to be the, uh, kind of bullet that is going to fix the situation. We all know this has been on the books since 1985 and it hasn’t worked. It’s $148 billion project, that Egypt only has about $20 million, $20 billion in foreign funds for. And so there is no real economic platform and so you’re absolutely right. We’ve been talking about the political situation, but we all know it’s really about bread, oil and butter and if this is not dealt with in a very real systematic way, I would like to say that people will come into the street, however, because the fear factor is so high in Egypt today, it will take a while before the people reach that boiling point to get back into the street.

Michael Hanna: Samer?

Samer: I was… Just, just to add in addition to bread, oil and butter, it’s infrastructure, education and health and I think that when we really come to terms, you know, as the president himself has said, with how many problems Egypt faces and the depth of those problems really, it is staggering, unfortunately. And what that, the implications of that are, that it is likely that anyone in, in, in the situation of the president is not going to be able to effectively deal with those in a way that you and I would hope and I think that is going to have consequences and those consequences might be in the form of decreasing popularity. It might be in the form of more protests. It might be in the form of some kind of, um, dissatisfaction. But I think, uh, it’s important to understand I think the number and the depth of the challenges, let’s put it that way, that Egypt faces. They’re quite staggering, unfortunately.
Mohamed Salmawy: Well, I know we’re going to have a panel on the economic, uh, question and we have our able former minister of finance who’s going to be on it. But let me tackle the political aspect of that economic situation and, uh, I think this is where Egypt needs it’s, uh, friends in the world that, uh, standing by Egypt economically may be one way of helping it reach democracy that we all aspire to. Uh, as you have properly pointed out, the more the economic situation festers, the more we are prone to move away from democracy. To move into repressive regimes that have a population rising or wanting to rise against them because of an economic problem and the more prosperity there is or the more we are on the road to prosperity, the more we can apply, uh, more economic democratic, uh, measures and this is a very, uh, difficult situation between the economy and the political aspect and the, the, the insistence, uh, that Egypt should reform first politically so that it can get economic aid. I think beats the, the, the, the question we should realize the very intricate relationships between both and I think, uh, this is what some of the, uh, Arab States have understood, uh, and have been very forthcoming with aid to Egypt that is not going to solve the problem overnight, of course. Uh, but in giving such aids in billions to Egypt, they knew that this was also helping foster a new political, uh, system that is, uh, not on the, you know, that is against the Muslim Brotherhood and all they represent. So there is a political aspect to it, which I think we should be aware of.

Michael Hanna: So I’m gonna take three questions this round, because there’s a lot of hands up. Uh, Marina, do you want to go first?

Marina: (inaudible) I would like my question is mostly for Mohamed Salmawy, but I would like to hear from the others. You talked about the unprecedented (inaudible) democratic character of the new constitution. Can you talk to any laws that even after by this government (inaudible) whatever they are, they… they embody the democratic (inaudible) of the new constitution because (inaudible) are the ones that have received the most potential, seem to go in the opposite direction.

Michael Hanna: Okay. I’m gonna go all the way in the back in the corner.

Female: Hi. My name is Dina (inaudible) with Arab America Institute and I wanted to ask what political parties are doing right now to defy the limitations of the electoral law, given all the mistakes they must have learned from the various previous rounds of elections of the past two years.

Michael Hanna: Okay. And the gentleman in the first row?

Male: I’m [Egyptian], Egyptian American Consultant. My question is mostly to the people who came from Egypt for today is what can the United States do to help El-Sisi. I don’t anything about the Muslim Brotherhood. But E-Sisi, he’s now in charge.
How can we help them do the right thing towards democratization and is still taking the country to a fascist direction given the suspicions in Egypt of the United States that people think the United States have all these evil intentions. What can we do to help, you know, help Sisi himself do the right thing?

Michael Hanna: Okay. So we have the question about, uh, democratic character of the constitution being transferred, transformed into concrete legislation and the question about the electoral law and then the role of the United States.

Mohamed Salmawy: Well, as a very, very simple answer to your question, what laws have been enacted to, uh, put the constitution, this very democratic constitution, into action. I say none. No laws have been enacted yet. Uh, we are waiting for the new parliament to do that, but until that happens, uh, there have been, uh, a lot of new democratic measures. I mean, the very act of bringing a, a new constitution into effect instead of the constitution that was written by the Muslim Brotherhood. The new constitution that is democratic, that is secular, that is modern, uh, this in itself was a very important step, I think. Uh, I was privileged to be on the Committee of 50 that wrote the constitution and their official spokesman at the time and, uh, I was explaining every day a new item that went into constitution, into the constitution, that was not even there before. For the first time, it is punishable by law, torture is punishable by law. A law has to be enacted to bring that into effect and so many, many other, uh, things as I said. Forty-eight new items out of the about 241, uh, items of the constitution, 48 have, are unprecedented. They have never made their way into the new, into any constitution of, uh, of Egypt. Uh, again, the, uh, uh, the, the election, the presidential election, uh, the, the mere idea that after the ouster of Morsi, the new regime would have to be elected. The new president would have to be elected and this was an open election that was monitored by international organizations, the coming elections of the parliament and I think they may find their way before the end of the year. It is a very important election. I think it can be one of the most important parliaments that we have. All these are very, they are basic measures taken on the road to democracy, even though they don’t represent, uh, uh, individual laws that are enacting the, the items of the constitution. The, the laws that have come out like the two laws that have been pointed out, the one on the demonstrations and the... The one on the demonstrations actually was enacted before the government. It was enacted under, oddly, Mansour. Uh, and you know, very, very little use of the legislative, uh, uh, authority has been, uh, exercised by Sisi so far. We are hoping that the parliament would do that.

Michael Hanna: Uh, Hala, maybe you can take the question about the electoral law and how the political parties are responding.

Hala Shukrallah: Yeah. Well ever since the, the, the law, uh, governing the, um, parliamentary elections came out, the political parties met with, uh, former President
Adly Mansour and they discussed it and offered an alternative. The alternative is a bit complex, but it is basically, um, it increases the, eh, the, uh, percentage of the um, the list, um, uh, the list to the individual and it also, uh, uh, makes it into um, um, what do you call it? A lot of closeness, because right now it’s closed, which means that anyone who takes 50 plus one, uh, gets all the others, uh, uh, votes and you, for instance, you get 700,000, I get 700,001 and the same electorate area, well I’ll get your votes. It’s a very un… uh, unequal law. I mean, it’s basically, uh, so, anyway, there’s this whole study that was being presented and it was not even responded to. So, we’ve been, we’ve been very few months, we’ve offered sort of, we’ve, we’ve lowered our ceiling a bit and we’ve offered a new proposition and once more we have not gotten any kind of response. We will continue to do that. Now what we’re proposing is at least make it, enlarge the, the, the list quota. Uh, make it 1/3 and 2/3 apiece. Yeah. So instead of 120 seats only for the list, make it 180 seats, uh, and we’re still waiting for, um, for a meeting with the president or with the legislative committee for the, for the election. We will see. I mean, that’s what, what…that’s what we’ve been trying to do. Plus, uh, you know, a continuous media campaign against the electoral vote.

Michael Hanna: Dalia and Samer, maybe quickly on the role of the United States, if any.

Samer Shehata: Well I think the gentleman wanted, Mr. Mohamed and Ms. Shukrallah to address that.

Mohamed Salmawy: I thought you…

Samer Shehata: He said the people coming from Egypt.

Hala Shukrallah: Oh I see!

Mohamed Salmawy: Well, half of you comes from Egypt.

Samer Shehata: That’s right! Well, more than half, but, we can talk about that afterwards. Yeah.

[laughter]

Mohamed Salmawy: So you answer half and I’ll give the other.

Samer Shehata: Sure. Sure. Sure. I think, you know, the, the, the, you know, you hit on the idea and you, you more than intimated. I think you were explicit about the distrust or the, um, um, concerns of, of the United States and of course, I was speaking to someone earlier about this. There’s a great deal of misinformation or a
great deal of, um, false ideas about what the United States is after and what American policy has been, whether the United States supported the Muslim Brotherhood and Morsi and so on and is being, uh, overly critical with the new government and so on. And I think that, you know, that’s obviously an obstacle, to, to uh, positive relations. What, what Egypt would like? I can imagine that Egypt would like, um, uh, more economic assistance, um, would like less criticism with regards to its domestic politics. Um, they would probably like military equipment to come, you know, on time as opposed to being delayed. That’s from the perspective of the current regime. Whether that’s, you know, good for democracy or good American policy is an entirely different question, I’m afraid.

Mohamed Salmawy: Now my half?

Samer Shehata: Yes.

Mohamed Salmawy: Well, let, let me address the question about the, the um, the mistrust or distrust or… Um, I think there’s a lot to be said against, uh, American policy as regards the events of the last past, the last three years, in, in Egypt. The first thing we heard from the United States was by Hillary Clinton at the time, was foreign minister. She said, “No. The Mubarak regime is a stable one.”

Samer Shehata: That’s right.

Mohamed Salmawy: “We stand by the Mubarak regime,” at a time when millions of people were out in the streets calling for the downfall of, of this regime. This was the first thing we got from the United States. Then things developed and Mubarak fell down and, uh, the, uh, end, we ended up with, uh, the other alternative apart from the third way, from the Mubarak to the Muslim Brotherhood. There was total support and we were hearing all sorts of praise as if we have reached, you know, the pinnacle of democracy in Egypt with a very undemocratic Muslim Brotherhood, uh, regime that was pulling people in the streets and beating them to death because not because they are Christian, but because they are Shiite and not Sunnis. The amount of, uh, uh, museums that were looted, the amount of Christians that were beaten and driven out of their homes and their villages in, in mass. All this, there was no, there wasn’t much concern in the United States and that was the second thing we heard from the United States. And then on the 30th of June when millions when out in the streets calling for Morsi to leave, the United States was very apprehensive and when the army stepped in, in response to these demonstrations and removed, uh, Morsi, the Americans were finally about legitimacy and the way w, we have to stick to legitimacy and Morsi has the ballot box, so we cannot. And we were saying democracy is not just the ballot box. Say yes, but he has the ballot box. We stand by legitimacy in Egypt. Of course, later on, when, uh, Sisi ran for elections by the ballot box and got his own ballot box, Kerry was saying, “Ah, but democracy is not just the
ballot box." And now what we are hearing is first of all, it was the legitimacy and the Muslim Brotherhood had to come back, which of course, nobody now said nobody in his proper mind says except for the Muslim Brotherhood, it will... American policy moved from that to now saying it's reconciliation as if this is the be all and end all of anything in Egypt. Once you have reconciliation, its milk and honey and everything will come. I mean this is very unrealistic. It, it proves to the Egyptians that the Americans are not really aware of the complexities of the situation in Egypt. You cannot have reconciliation. What have the Americans done to help the reconciliation? What, how have they used their, uh, uh, links and close ties with the Muslim Brotherhood to help them play the, the political game and not refuse all the changes, uh, that have happened. Very little. And I think it is time that the Americans recognize that there is a new system in, political system, in Egypt that they should stand by this system, help it along the road to democracy that the people wish for and aspire for. The arms, there's no problem with the arms. The regime in Egypt and the Pentagon are on very good terms. What we're talking about is the White House and the State Department and this is where a lot has to be done. Europe has been more forthcoming a little bit more forthcoming than, uh, the United States. Uh, there's been more economic aid on the, from the, from uh, Europe. There's been more recognition that there is perhaps an opening to a democratic system and unless the democratic friends of Egypt around the world stand by it, it may be very difficult for it to reach that democracy that we are all hoping for.

Michael Hanna: So two more quick questions from the audience and I'll go back to the panel for a very quick last responses. All the way in the middle there.

Matt: Thank you. My name is Matt, uh, Syria Relief and Development. The notion that political inclusion is the cornerstone of long term stability, um, I agree, but at times I feel it's an academic idea for conferences like this with little traction on the streets of the country right now. How can that notion gain steam among the Egyptian populace given the context of what's happened and the fact that their experience with inclusive politics hasn't yet produced the stability that we say it will?

Michael Hanna: And the woman in the, on the right.

Female: Uh, with the (inaudible) Conference (inaudible) Resolution at George (inaudible) and my question is about the third way that was mentioned earlier. It seems like there’s not a lot of pieces that are moving about these laws about, um, elections, who can run protests. Um, but I wonder if one of you would be interested to speaking to, um, some of the young people have, who have been protesting since 2011 and who have lost their voice and the duality that was mentioned earlier. Um, and especially looking at incremental social change. Maybe in the next five years,
there’s not gonna be a victory, but looking in 10 and 20 years, um, what are maybe some words of hope for them?

Michael Hanna: Okay. So question on political inclusion and having constituency in Egyptian society and long term social change. So, whoever would like to address this.

Dalia Fahmy: So when... When we talked about political inclusion, which is what I talked about a little earlier about this being a possible pathway to long term, um stable democracy, so when we have historically looked at Egypt, it’s been as if stability and democracy are two sides of the same coin and so we’re going to choose to side with an authoritarian (inaudible) because we really want stability and stability is nothing more than a good partner, maintenance of Camp David, maintenance of Sinai, flyover rights and so we will forego things like democratic process for the sake of political stability. But what we saw in 2011 was this was no longer the case. Um, that you can actually get to political stability through political, I mean regional stability through political inclusion, because the people are not going to leave the street. Right? People want dignity, inclusion, transparency and so I’m talking about that long term democratic process. Democracy is a long term process. It is unstable before it is stable. Again, these are the laws of political science. Right? There’s a lot of instability before you get to stability and consolidation and we can’t put this in one year or even two year cycles and think about it. Um, I want to talk about the US foreign policy question a little bit, because if we listen closely to what President Obama has said last fall in, in the United Nations and then, um, at West Point, he talked very clearly about what US interest is in Egypt. Right? And it was what? Again, maintenance of Camp David, free flow of oil, I’m talking about the Middle East, free flow of oil and the counter of terrorism cooperation. Um, and he said, “We are gonna...” I think I can directly quote this. “We will put the full force of the US military behind these three interests.” But when it came to things like the others, as he called them, right, democracy, civil society, right. We will work with coalitions to help foster these things. What does that signal to the Egyptian population? Right? Democracy, civil society, these are not on our front burner. Right? We have strategic interests of the United States and if they’re not oil and if they’re not, uh, uh, terrorism, counterterrorism, cooperation and the maintenance of Camp David, well then, we, you don’t have the full force of our, um, our military. And so the signaling game that the administration has with not just the Egyptian regime, but also the Egyptian population is very interesting, because in 2005, the signaling game happened. Right? And this is when there was this push for the release of [Egyptian], the liberalization of the parliamentary elections. This is when the 88 members of the Muslim Brotherhood came into power and so there was this kind of moment where yes, the United States is signaling to the US, to the, uh, Egyptian population, “We are behind you in this process.” But what happens in 2007? Right? Major oppression, hands off and it’s we are no longer interested in this regard. If we
think about President Obama's first inaugural address, what does he say? He says to those who reign with tyranny, you are on the wrong side of history and back then, we all knew he was talking about Egypt. Today, we are further and further along on the wrong side of history and the United States has accepted the status quo. We just saw law week the 10 Apache helicopters that were holding onto that, um, aid that was not going to be released until the pathway was not met to democracy. Well, the ten Apache helicopters are coming. And so we think about this as interest. I think we should, um, separate the signaling game with the Egyptian (inaudible) and the commitment to democracy and the one's that being done with Egypt, uh, Egyptian administration and I think the Egyptian administration can rest assured that they have the United States behind them, um, because of the greater geopolitical situation. Right? We have influence from Russia, Saudi Arabia, Israel and so I know that’s a completely different discussion, but uh, the United States had to reassert itself on the side of Egypt very quickly.

Michael Hanna: And so, last, last comments. The last question clearly wanted some hope. So if anybody is willing to provide that, uh, you can wrap up the…

[laughter]

Samer: Yeah. No. I…

Michael Hanna: …wrap up the, uh, session.

Hala Shukrallah: Yeah. I, I, think I’ll, I’ll tackle that, if you can remind me of…

Michael Hanna: Long term social change.

Samer: And hope.

Michael Hanna: And hope. Yeah.

Mohamed Salmawy: I think you, you represent one of the signs.

Samer: that’s true. I think that’s true.

Mohamed Salmawy: Of this hope in Egypt.

Hala Shukrallah: Yeah. Yeah.

Mohamed Salmawy: These, these new parties, democratic parties that represent the new spirit and the third way we are talking about, one of which is your party, the other is the three year…
Hala Shukrallah: Egyptians and the Social Democratic Party and all the…

Mohamed Salmawy: And the Social Democratic Party and the Tomorrow Movement. All these new forces are the, what represents (inaudible) and hope.

Hala Shukrallah: Well, let me say that you know, I mean, we’ve always worked against, uh, incredible challenges. I don’t there has been a point in time where we felt that, oh it’s so easy to work, uh, to reach democracy in Egypt. I think we’ve constantly been battling, uh, incredible challenges and dangers and threats and, and we’ve had to, we’ve been forced to strategize over and over again, although planning is not something that we do very well, because we don’t … we are never given enough time to, to, uh, to have the maturity of an experience. It’s always been cut at the, at the, at a moment where we start to reach a, a point of, uh, epiphany sort of. But, but I think there is that tenaciousness that we have and I think that exists right now. Uh, we will not let go of, um, of what people attempted to do during the, the 25th of January 2011 nor in 30th of June, 2013. Uh, too many people have died. Too many people have given their lives. Uh, and not only that. I mean, we’ve been fighting for, uh, for over 30 years and, and generations, uh, before us and we’ve come to a point where we have that experience. We have that power. We have that energy in society and although, and this, this I’m always telling to the, to the youth in our party. People have a right to take their breath. You know, to stand a bit and take a step backwards and just take a breath. And that’s what’s happening now and then come back in and start to work once more. Um, so we’re… There are so many paths that are being, uh, taken. There are so much energy. Um, uh, you know, I was speaking about the 300 group of young people who are going to go down independently in the elect, in the elections, uh, on the individual campaigns. And, uh, there are different groups working on, on, on multiple issues and on the issue of democracy. We are now at the point where we are offering, um, alternatives and that’s for the first time. We, we are not at the point of only maintaining ourselves as an opposition and no opposition. You know, “No. We don’t like this. No. We don’t like this.” No, we are now offering alternatives and the last example was for instance on the whole issue of energy where we had a, a, a big conference where we actually offered an alternative policy to the government and we’ve been able to sort of impose it and, and, uh, and are going to follow it up and see how it’s being implemented. Now this cannot continue without and somebody said, what’s your power on the ground? Well this cannot continue without a power on the ground, without being able to mobilize people on these issues. Without being able to connect with people on these issues, because these people on the, on the ground in the different areas, in the different, uh, poor areas of the slum areas, were an integral part of the revolution. But, what they perceived is, well the revolution has not given us anything. So, you know, what has it given us? Well, we’re going to go back to our own reality that at least we know. Um, I think that’s,
that’s the point that we need to change. We need to change the fact that, no, there is something to offer. No, they are part of the solution and I think this, once this happens, a, a real alternative, a real third path, will be, uh, will be carved out.

Michael Hanna: So there’s the dose of optimism. I think we probably need to close.

Mohamed Salmawy: Uh, very briefly. The very importance of that, that has happened in Egypt and I think we have to be aware of that, is the maturity that the Egyptian people have, have reached. Over the past three years, the, the Egyptians, the Egyptian people have become an important factor to reckon with. Before that, nobody took the public and the people in, into concern. If you had to deal with the President of Egypt, you had Egypt. Now the Egyptians went out into the streets on the, uh, uh, uh, in 2011, brought down a regime. When they were dissatisfied with the new regime, they brought down the second regime and they have changed a lot of governments along the way. This kind of people now will not be satisfied without having the real states that they aspire to, the democratic state that, uh, uh, meets their, their dreams. They are there and unless you satisfy them, they are, of course, of change that cannot be put back into the bottle again, like the genie.

Michael Hanna: Okay. We'll end there. Thanks very much to the panelists and thank you.

[applause]

End of Panel 1