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American ideals. Universal values.

How to Turn Around Egypt's Disastrous Post-Mubarak Transition

Blueprint for U.S. Government Policy

December 2013

BLUEPRINT

American ideals. Universal values.

On human rights, the United States must be a beacon. Activists fighting for freedom around the globe continue to look to us for inspiration and count on us for support. Upholding human rights is not only a moral obligation; it's a vital national interest. America is strongest when our policies and actions match our values.

Human Rights First is an independent advocacy and action organization that challenges America to live up to its ideals. We believe American leadership is essential in the struggle for human rights so we press the U.S. government and private companies to respect human rights and the rule of law. When they don't, we step in to demand reform, accountability and justice. Around the world, we work where we can best harness American influence to secure core freedoms.

We know that it is not enough to expose and protest injustice, so we create the political environment and policy solutions necessary to ensure consistent respect for human rights. Whether we are protecting refugees, combating torture, or defending persecuted minorities, we focus not on making a point, but on making a difference. For over 30 years, we've built bipartisan coalitions and teamed up with frontline activists and lawyers to tackle issues that demand American leadership.

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Introduction

Egypt's political crisis has become a constant source of low-level disquiet for U.S. policy makers in a region of proliferating crises. In normal circumstances, the collapse of a mostly reliable strategic partner in one of the region's most populous and influential countries would be a first priority concern for U.S. policy makers, but concern over Egypt in U.S. policy circles has been, strangely, mostly muted. It seems when Egypt is mentioned at all, it is usually said to be in the midst of a transition to democracy, which may be bumpy or troubled, but is generally heading in the right direction, towards an inclusive democratic future, that Washington claims to favor.

This rose-tinted view of developments in Egypt over the past three years, since the protests that led to the removal from office in February 2011 of President Mubarak, remains remarkably durable, despite the alarming events that continue to take place. The current interim Egyptian government, installed after the military stepped in to remove Egypt's first elected civilian President, Mohamed Morsi, from office on July 3, 2013 now has a roadmap to democracy.

True to form, U.S. policy makers have been enthusiastic to support the roadmap. In his remarks with Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil Fahmy in Cairo on November 3, Secretary of State John Kerry stated, "I welcomed Minister Fahmy's restatement of the interim government's commitment to the roadmap that will move Egypt forward on an inclusive path to democracy and to economic stability."

Quite how these desirable objectives will be reached seems absent from the statements of U.S. policy makers that may be characterized more as wishful thinking than as reality-based policy proposals. Leading Egyptian human rights activist Bahey Eddin Hassan had a sardonic response to Kerry's November visit to Cairo, "Secretary Kerry is a man of firm principle. I met him in March 2013 [when Morsi was still in office] and I met him in November 2013 [after Morsi's removal], both times he was a supporter of the Egyptian government."

This seemingly unchanging U.S. policy of supporting the central power in Cairo—whether it was Mubarak, direct military rule by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), the Muslim Brotherhood–backed government of President Morsi, or now the military–backed interim government—has earned Washington the distrust of virtually all political factions in Egypt. It is also a policy that has failed; it has failed to respond to radical change in Egypt, and it has failed to provide an adequate policy response to severe and worsening social, economic, and political problems in Egypt that, if left unresolved, will threaten vital U.S. national interests.

Even worse than the administration's apparent complacency in the face of Egypt's travails is an emerging debate in Congress that would downplay efforts to promote human rights and democracy in Egypt as unachievable. For example, Congressman Eliot Engel, the senior Democratic member on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, started his opening statement to a recent congressional committee hearing on Egypt by baldly asserting: "There are times when our ideals and our security interests don't conveniently align. The situation in Egypt is case-in-point." He went on to explain that given the binary choice between the Muslim Brotherhood and military rule, the only choice for the United States is to back military rule. Other members of Congress are advocating an end to U.S. foreign assistance to Egypt as part of a broader disengagement from foreign entanglements, especially in the Middle East.

President Obama, in his remarks before the United Nations General Assembly in September specified Egypt as a country where the United States could protect its vital interests even if the government fails to meet "the highest international expectations."

This blithe supposition that the United States can protect its vital national interests, even while Egypt drifts and stumbles from crisis to crisis with ever-deepening political polarization and violence, appears, at best, dangerously misguided.

The United States is badly in need of an innovative policy approach that responds to the sweeping changes and myriad crises and challenges that have emerged in the Arab region over the last three years. A policy that would arrest Egypt's dangerous drift towards instability and move the country towards constitutional legitimacy, the rule of law, and legal guarantees for the rights of all Egyptians would be an anchor, in the region's bellwether state, for a new policy approach better suited to a regional order that can no longer be reduced to bilateral arrangements with authoritarian regimes.

As the Lebanese commentator Rami Khouri has observed, "The struggle between old men with guns and citizens with

constitutional rights remains the central battle across the entire Arab world." Egypt is a defining battleground in this struggle and it remains unclear on which side the United States will put its support.

Human Rights First has longstanding ties with human rights defenders and civil society leaders in Egypt. In the past three years, staff members have made repeated visits to Egypt and issued multiple reports and dozens of statements intended to promote U.S. leadership in improving respect for human rights there. This blueprint was developed from consultations with long-time and new activists, government officials, journalists, academics, and international leaders.

The Current Situation

Social Division and Thought Control

There are deep divisions within Egyptian society about how to describe the political events of the last three years, and especially the events since June 30, 2013, when a mass demonstration took place calling for the removal of President Morsi.

The current interim government and its supporters in the Egyptian media are at the forefront of efforts to control and manipulate the way events are reported and understood. Seeking to shape and control the message often becomes enforced thought control with punishment—in the form of vitriolic personal attacks in the media, or criminal investigations or prosecutions for "insulting" state institutions of various kinds—for those who dare to deviate from the official version of events.

Supporters and apologists for the deposed Morsi government are also guilty of seeking to rewrite history to claim accomplishments that they did not make, and to deny responsibility for errors and violations for which they bear responsibility. But currently, the ability of the pro-government forces to enforce their version of events on Egyptian public consciousness—and they hope on international opinion—is far greater than that of the supporters of the deposed Morsi government.

The insistence of each of the major competing political forces that they alone have a monopoly on the truth is fueling an atmosphere that stifles political pluralism. The major error that President Morsi is accused of is that he refused to include his political opponents in his governing coalition and instead surrounded himself, and appointed to state positions, other Islamists and especially other supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood. This behavior, labeled as exclusive and sectarian, fueled a narrative that the Muslim Brotherhood was carrying out a plan to dominate state institutions, to *Ikhwanize* the state.

Ironically, the current military–backed interim government has itself adopted a practice of not only excluding Muslim Brotherhood supporters and sympathizers from political life, but also of marginalizing those who question or criticize the official narrative that the government is on the path to democracy and that its repression of the Brotherhood and its supporters is a fight against terrorism.

All sides claim a popular mandate for their positions. Morsi and his supporters point out that he won a relatively free and fair election and that therefore he has electoral legitimacy. Supporters of the interim government point out that Morsi had lost the support of major state institutions and that there was a massive popular mobilization calling for his dismissal on June 30 and that therefore it enjoys popular legitimacy. In post–February 2011 Egypt, the legitimacy endowed by massive mobilization in the streets has high prestige.

Public opinion within Egypt is highly volatile and it has little value as a guide to policy making by Egyptian leaders or by other governments that wish to support peaceful democratic transformation in Egypt. While there are no accurate barometers of public opinion, anecdotal evidence points to the existence of five broad strands of public sentiment on the political situation:

1. Favorable to General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and the military–backed government, supportive of the roadmap leading to a new constitution and new elections. Content to see the permanent exclusion of the Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters from public life. This is the officially approved view and dissenting from it carries a cost. It is a position that is welcomed by former supporters of the Mubarak regime (disparagingly referred to as *Feloul*, or remnants, in street protests), many of whom have retained their positions in state institutions over the last three tumultuous years.

2. Supportive of the protest movement against President Morsi and of the removal from office of Morsi on July 3, but concerned by the conflict and polarization that have ensued and by the reemergence of military

control over the government. Recognizing the need for some kind of reconciliation with Morsi supporters and the eventual inclusion of Brotherhood supporters in the political process under certain conditions. This view encompasses many self-styled liberals and stretches from: those who believe that the military took advantage of the popular protest movement whose demands focused on a referendum of Morsi remaining in office and on early elections for a new president without endorsing a return to direct or indirect military rule; to some ministers within the interim government, like Deputy Prime Minister Ziad Bahey Eddin, who have spoken publicly of the need for national reconciliation while continuing to support a strong military role in this transitional phase.

3. Opposed to military rule and to the removal of Morsi from office, but critical of Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood's positions and performance in office. This may be a widely held view among former Morsi supporters and even among some members of the Muslim Brotherhood disillusioned with the leadership, but there is little scope for diverse positions within Islamism to be publicly aired and debated.

4. Insistent on the legitimacy of President Morsi and on the need for his return to office—an increasingly unrealistic demand. This is the official position of the Muslim Brotherhood and of the National Alliance to Support Legitimacy campaign with its four-fingered salute, representing the *Raba'a al-Adawiya* Square where hundreds of Morsi supporters were killed on August 14 when security forces moved in to clear a sit-in by force. This point of view is actively suppressed by the security forces.

5. Rejecting the Brotherhood, the military, and the returning "remnants" of the Mubarak era. This is the position of self-styled revolutionaries, mainly young, secular, urban activists who see themselves as continuing the true legacy of the January 2011 uprising, which they see as having been stolen both by the military and by the Brotherhood. These activists staged protests in Cairo on November 19 to mark the second anniversary of the Mohamed Mahmoud battle when the Central Security Forces killed over 40 protesters, who were protesting the break–up of a demonstration by families of those killed during January and February uprising. They have continued to step up their protests against the interim government's efforts to restrict rights and freedoms through new laws and a revised constitution.

Not to be discounted are a sixth large constituency of Egyptians who are weary of continuing protests and conflict, have no strong political views, and are looking for an improvement in economic conditions, a restoration of public security and the reliable provision of essential services, all of which have declined catastrophically since January 2011.

The Role of the Military

With the removal from office of President Morsi on July 3, 2013, the military has again shown itself to be the dispositive force with respect to the question of who rules Egypt. The military used similar powers in February 2011 to engineer the removal of President Mubarak from office in favor of direct rule by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) of which the current Minister of Defense, General al-Sisi, was a prominent member.

The military's role in recent years has been to stand aside from brewing political conflict—be it dissatisfaction with the dysfunctional authoritarian paralysis of the later Mubarak years, or concern over the lack of inclusivity, the incompetence and the apparent extremism of the Morsi period—until popular opposition reaches a point where the military steps in to actually carry out the change that mass demonstrations have been demanding. This points both to the limitations of popular protests that, based on Egypt's experiences over the last three years, can oppose and obstruct government plans and policies, and even bring down governments, but seem unable to provide a basis for sustainable, representative democratic government.

To this extent, the military can make the case for its actions, which it has done consciously and vociferously since June 30, that it is acting in accordance with the will of the Egyptian people. To build on the popular slogan, "The military and the people are one hand," it is the military, not the institutions of representative democracy, that has the capacity to translate the mobilized energy of popular discontent into political change; it is the hand with functional motor control over its digits. However, because of what it is, and the way in which it has exercised its power, the military is intrinsically incapable of providing the foundation for inclusive, representative civilian government. In fact, the military's prime interest in Egypt's successive transfers of power in the wake of popular

protests has been to protect its own privileges and immunities. Its jealous grip of its status as a body that operates above the law, resisting efforts to bring transparency to its budget or accountability for its actions constitutes a permanent drag on any momentum towards democracy that may otherwise exist. The newly revised draft constitution leaves the military free of public oversight and retains exceptional powers for the military to bring civilians to trial before military courts.

Seen in this light, a major problem for the United States of the current situation in Egypt is not that the military–backed authoritarian system that the United States government has supported in Cairo since the late 1970s has been swept away, or even weakened, rather that the civilian façade of the military–backed regime has crumbled. This makes it increasingly implausible for the United States to maintain the narrative that it has favored for decades, and which Secretary Kerry now seems to be seeking to rehabilitate, that Egypt is moving towards democracy.

The problem for the Egyptian military in this situation where it alone appears to be able to exercise political power are the many risks associated with being seen as responsible for the intractable social and economic problems facing Egypt. Even in the few months since the overthrow of President Morsi, the military, and General al-Sisi, have maintained their popularity by distancing themselves from the civilian government they appointed. Popular esteem for the interim government of Prime Minister Hazem Beblawi has started to wane as it is held responsible for the many unresolved problems confronting the country.

Nothing from the previous period of direct military rule under the military—from February 2011 until July 2012 under the SCAF—suggests that the military has the aptitude for being the public face of government, and there is no reason to expect that it will have the appetite for such a role in the next phase of Egypt's political development.

Moreover, the military now faces more genuine external security challenges than at any time in the last 40 years. Instability in Libya, Sudan, and in the Sinai means that Egypt faces threats on all of its land borders that must be the first priority for its military.

Towards Democracy or Reconfigured Authoritarianism

The Egyptian government is eager to advance the narrative that "normality" is returning to Egypt and that western tourism and investment is safe and welcome. While understandable, this narrative relies more on wishful thinking than on a sober analysis of the facts.

The overall rights environment has been in steady decline throughout most of the transition, especially under SCAF rule starting in mid-2011 and continued to decline under Morsi. However, things have taken a dramatic turn for the worse in the aftermath of the July 3 coup.

The removal from office of President Morsi by the military was met with widespread appreciation by many people in Egypt. (It is hard to know whether the supporters of the removal of Morsi represented a majority of Egyptians, or not.) Many of those who identified with the democratic, inclusive ideals of the protests that brought down President Mubarak joined the popular movement for *Tamarrod* (rebellion) and were prepared to see military force used as their instrument, viewing the continuation in power of President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood as a greater threat to Egypt's democratic future than the military removal of a democratically-elected president.

The interim government appointed by the military to replace President Morsi's government included several credible liberal figures. Many have commented on the irony that a military coup may have resulted in Egypt's best qualified and most competent government ever. The appointment of Mohamed el-Baradei, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, and a leader in the opposition to President Mubarak as a vice-president for international affairs was a powerful statement that the intervention of the military in Egypt's political life would be a return to the democratic ideals of the Arab Spring and not a reassertion of control by the military-backed security establishment.

This was not to be. No single act has set the tone for the military-backed interim government more than the August 14 dispersal of the pro-Morsi protests in greater Cairo at the cost of over 600 lives. Objections that some of the pro-Morsi protesters were armed and had themselves used violence cannot excuse this disproportionate use of force.

The incidents of August 14 are not the only violations of human rights perpetrated by the interim government. The authorities have held President Morsi and his close

advisers in almost total incommunicado detention since his removal from office on July 3. Thousands of senior Muslim Brotherhood leaders have been detained since August 14 and held under sweeping charges of involvement in violence or terrorism.

Media outlets have been closed down, some of which gave a platform for extremists who incited hatred against Christians and other religious minorities, but other more mainstream outlets, like Al-Jazeera, whose coverage was seen as too favorable to the Muslim Brotherhood, have also been closed.

The official media has embarked on a witch hunt against the Brotherhood and their supporters, who are indiscriminately painted as terrorists and extremists.

The harassment and persecution has not stopped at supporters or alleged supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood. Secular critics of the military-backed interim government, like Ahmed Maher, a founder and leader of the April 6 youth movement that was central to the February 2011 uprising, has also been targeted with a criminal investigation for failing to endorse the repressive tactics of the military-backed government. Numerous secular youth activists have been detained in recent days as protests against military rule and against repressive new laws have taken place in Cairo and elsewhere. University students have been targeted for harsh repression. For example, students from al-Azhar were sentenced to seventeen years in prison for occupying the dean's office.

The inflammatory potential of such harsh repression of expressions of protest is apparent: "If you are going to put me in jail for seventeen years you may as well kill me, next time I won't just occupy your office, I will kill you," as one university professor bluntly explained.

The military-backed government's repression of dissenting opinion, its insistence on a "you are either with us or against us" approach, has created a chilling climate for freedom of expression that is redolent of thought control associated with repressive dictatorial regimes of the past.

The methods associated with this kind of rule are from the well-worn playbook of the Mubarak era. The state security apparatus, sidelined and chastened by the uprising and its aftermath, is back promoting a general climate of fear and intimidation under the rubric of a "war on terrorism."

To make matters worse, all of this is taking place against the backdrop of a consistent breakdown in rule of law and the deterioration of state institutions. Again, this trend began under SCAF and continued under Morsi; both engaged in politically-motivated prosecutions and selective law enforcement and even encouraged vigilante violence when it suited their political ends. The decline of the state is most dramatic in the Sinai, where decades of state neglect and marginalization have combined with political instability and the massive influx of weapons from Libya to escalate what was previously a low-level insurgency. But the trend has also reached the Nile valley heartland, as evidenced by the recent assassination attempt against the minister of the interior, as well as the takeover of towns by Islamist mobs that have chased away the police for many weeks.

Egypt has been down this road before with a brutal clampdown on the Brotherhood and Islamism resulting in acts of terrorism and low-level civil conflict. There is no reason to believe that the current repression will be any more successful than its previous iterations, and every reason to fear that the consequences may be even worse.

The clearings of the pro-Morsi protest sit-ins on August 14 were the worst incident of mass killing in Egypt's recent political history. The legacy of the hundreds of casualties remains an open wound that will not be forgotten and it will take years for the damage done to be processed by the system. The capacity of these killings to provide the fuel for a protracted cycle of violence should not be underestimated.

More broadly, labeling the Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters indiscriminately as terrorists may provide a simple message that translates readily into slogans and newspaper headlines, but it overlooks the fact that the Brotherhood has a political strategy to turn repression and marginalization to its own advantage. The more it is persecuted by the state, the stronger its identity as the virtuous antithesis to state power. This strategy has worked for it in the past, and could well work again.

Any return to credible, inclusive civilian democratic politics would require, and would have to be rooted in, an explicit framework of clear legal protections for basic rights and freedoms, especially freedom of expression, association, and assembly. Such a framework would have to be strong enough to exclude violent extremism from permitted political discourse, while also providing space for the wide diversity of political views currently espoused by

Egyptians, including support for various forms of political Islam.

The legislative agenda of the interim government seems designed to move in the opposite direction. The recently adopted public assembly law provides security forces with additional powers to break up and disperse unauthorized peaceful protests, in contravention of international human rights standards. A new NGO law would retain the restrictive force of current laws, and would be designed to increase governmental control over civil society organizations. A new counterterrorism law would adopt many of the restrictions on political rights, and the limitations on due process safeguards found in the recently lifted emergency law. This is not a framework on which any credible democratic transition can be based.

An early victim of the new public assembly law is the prominent activist Alaa Abdel Fattah. He was preparing to turn himself in to the police on December 1 to respond to charges that he had organized prohibited assemblies to protest the new law. However, reverting to the thuggish practices for which they became notorious in the Mubarak era, the state security police raided his home and took him into detention on November 30, beating him and slapping his wife while his young child slept in an adjacent room. He had prepared the following statement to be issued when he turned himself into police:

> I do not recognize the anti-protest law that the people have brought down as promptly as they brought down the monument to the military's massacres;

> The legitimacy of the current regime collapsed with the first drop of blood shed in front of the Republican Guard Club;

> Any possibility of saving this legitimacy vanished when the ruling four [interim Defense Minister Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, interim President Adly Mansour, interim Prime Minister Hazem al-Beblawi, and interim Interior Minister Mohammad Ibrahim] committed war crimes during the breakup of the Rabaa [al-Adawiyah mosque] sit-in;

> The public prosecutor's office displayed crass subservience when it provided legal cover for the widest campaign of indiscriminate administrative detention in our modern history, locking up young women, injured people, old people and children, and holding in evidence against them balloons and T-shirts;

The clear corruption in the judiciary is to be seen in the overly harsh sentences against students whose crime was their anger at the murder of their comrades, set against light sentences and acquittals for the uniformed murderers of those same young people.

Abdel Fattah's detention provides him with the distinction of having been detained under Egypt's last three military-backed authoritarian regimes: under Mubarak, the SCAF, and now the military-backed interim government.

There is no doubt that many Egyptians are heartily sick of the disruptions of protests and yearn to return to the days of relative order and social peace before 2011. At the same time, many Egyptians will no longer be passive in the face of injustice and state repression and they have learned that they can demand change through public protest, and often obtain it. The challenge facing Egypt is to be able to find rulers who enjoy sufficient public trust from a broad range of public opinion so that the culture of perpetual protest will recede, and a much needed period of national reconstruction and reconciliation can begin.

Violence Targeting the Christian Minority

The mass protests of January and February 2011 that brought down the thirty-year presidency of Hosni Mubarak were actively supported by many Christians. Religious coexistence was one of the several positive values publicly espoused by Egyptian protesters at the time.

However, two legacies of the overthrow of President Mubarak have had a detrimental impact on the situation of Coptic Christians in Egypt. The first is a general decline in public safety that has left vulnerable minority communities at risk of harassment and violence, with little hope of protection or justice from the police or local authorities. The second is a highly polarized struggle over the political future of Egypt that has become increasingly violent in recent months.

Over 130 Coptic churches and Christian religious structures, homes and businesses were attacked in the weeks after August 14. Around 45 churches and religious structures came under simultaneous attack in the immediate aftermath of the violent dispersals of the pro-Morsi protests.

This disturbing escalation in anti-Christian violence, which had local human rights activists raising the alarm about the

possibility for broader civil conflict, has since subsided, although sporadic incidents of violence—like the drive-by shooting of guests at a wedding in Cairo on October 20, which killed four and wounded dozens, including many women and children—continue.

It is the great misfortune of the Copts that they are pawns in the highly destructive zero-sum political game between the Muslim Brotherhood and the military-backed national security state. Supporters of President Morsi have openly blamed the Copts for the removal of their president, claiming that Christian hostility to Islam and to the idea of a Muslim Egypt they claim to represent led them to conspire with the military and hostile foreign powers, like Israel and the United States, to overthrow a legitimately-elected president.

At the same time, the military-backed government and its supporters seem more interested in pointing to the anti-Christian violence as evidence of the extremism of the Muslim Brotherhood than in taking effective measures to protect Christians and their places of worship, homes, and businesses from attack. While the current situation is more extreme than in the past, this is not a new phenomenon. The Mubarak regime was always ready to point to the violent excesses of Islamic extremists as an excuse to resist any pressure to implement political reform or liberalization. In a statement dated August 25, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights noted, "The security apparatus in particular has not changed the way it deals with such attacks, an approach inherited from the era of ousted President Mubarak. It has failed to intervene to prevent escalation and has been slow to respond to citizens' pleas for help." The pattern of impunity in the aftermath of sectarian attacks continues.

The Copts are highly vulnerable. The more they protest the ill-treatment they are suffering at the hands of disgruntled Morsi supporters, the more their complaints are turned against them by Morsi supporters as evidence of the Copts' approval of wholesale official repression of the Muslim Brotherhood.

After the removal of President Morsi, the military sought the official approval of the Coptic Church for its action. The Coptic Pope, Tawadros II was among a group of leading public figures from Egyptian society who were called on to give their blessing to the military takeover. The Coptic Church has historically tried to keep an official distance from politics and the state, and the pope has been criticized for this overt political gesture.

The Copts are in an almost impossible situation. Copts were increasingly insecure under the Morsi government seeing legislative changes that further Islamized state institutions and reinforced their disfavored status in Egyptian law. At the same time, rhetoric from Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist leaders was sometimes defamatory towards Christians and at times constituted direct incitement of violence. State authorities took no actions to rein in this kind of hateful speech. These concerns meant that the great majority of Copts were pleased to see the removal of the Morsi government, and, as they are especially vulnerable in a situation of deteriorating public security, they are hopeful that the military-backed interim government can fulfill its pledge to restore order and stability.

Supporters of President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood leadership cannot escape complicity in the escalation of attacks on the Copts. The Brotherhood in its official publications and websites, and in the statements of some of its leaders, has long tolerated anti-Christian sectarian statements, speaking about the need for an Islamic Egypt in which the Copts would be, at best, second-class citizens.

The more open media environment after the overthrow of Mubarak permitted the emergence of a variety of Islamist media outlets, some of them backed by funding from extreme religious movements in the Arab Gulf region. Hateful sectarian rhetoric, targeting Christians, Jews, Shi'ite Muslims, and secular critics of Islamic extremism became more commonplace. The protests that sprang up after the removal of President Morsi from office on July 3 featured much inflammatory rhetoric blaming the Christians for supporting the military takeover. This climate of political manipulation, hatred and incitement underlies the recent wave of violence.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

While it is obviously true that Egyptians must take the lead, and assume responsibility for resolving their own political crisis, that is not an excuse for passivity from U.S. policy makers. There are many practical steps that the U.S. government can and should take to encourage Egyptians to move towards inclusive, civilian government rooted in the rule of law and respect for international human rights standards.

Too often in recent years U.S. policy makers have responded to appeals to do more to promote human rights in Egypt with the claim that their involvement is not welcome, or that public opinion is against it. Defending universal values should not be dependent on their popularity at any given moment and the United States has lost respect and trust from all parties in Egypt by being seen as too willing to adjust its positions to accommodate the supposed preferences of the current ruler. Standing up for universal values would not always be popular, perhaps especially with the government of the moment, but it would provide sound advice for Egypt's rulers and protect the U.S. government from the ubiquitous charge that it is picking political favorites in Egypt's power struggle. It would also bolster American credibility on human rights throughout the world.

The derailing of Egypt's democratic transition into a polarized, increasingly violent political conflict, is a seriously negative development that requires a much more robust response from the United States. The United States has leverage that it is not fully maximizing. Indeed, the United States should implement a major shift in policy to one that puts Egypt's commitment to human rights and democratization at its core.

Global Leadership

Egypt's political crisis is a global and regional problem. The United States has been a close ally to Egypt for decades, and as such, it should work in closer cooperation with regional and European allies who will also be adversely affected by any further deterioration in the political situation in Egypt. Working together with allies—for example, on the issues of IMF loans, the crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood, and the restrictions on civil society—can begin to exert more diplomatic pressure on all parties in Egypt to end the discourse of mutual destruction, and move towards reconciliation. It may also help reverse unprecedented levels of anti-American sentiment, tied to the perception that U.S. policy toward Egypt is self-interested, and pays little heed to the interests of the Egyptian people.

■ Working with its donor partners, the United States should establish sizeable, sustained economic incentives for Egypt's leaders that should be conditioned on Egypt adhering to democratic norms and international human rights standards. For example, the Deauville Partnership, established by the G8 at its summit in 2011 to promote democratic transitions in the Arab region, should be enhanced. While the initial investment from the United States and its partners would have to be large if it was to have the desired effect, the benefits to the international community of a successful transition and an economic recovery in Egypt would be commensurately large.

■ Consistent with the policy goal of supporting the rule of law and human rights, the United States should use its voice and vote at the IMF to refrain from approving loans to Egypt until sound economic policies are in place and meaningful progress is made on key human rights and rule of law benchmarks. The United States should also communicate to other potential lenders and donors its assessment of Egypt's economic progress and reliability. Egypt's economy desperately needs liquidity, but an IMF loan absent human rights reforms is a recipe for a new economic crisis and continued instability.

■ The U.S. government should do more to discourage other governments, such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait, from providing funds that are not linked to necessary economic and political

reforms, and which may even appear to be designed to prevent such reforms from being undertaken by the Egyptian government.

Support for Democratic Institutions

The United States government knows the values and practices that undergird the functioning of a successful democratic state. These include the rule of law, protected by an independent judiciary; a free press and clear legal protections for freedom of expression; religious freedom and protection of the rights of religious minorities; and strong independent civil society organizations with the capacity to monitor the behavior and conduct of government institutions and to expose official wrongdoing. This infrastructure cannot be built overnight, and it must be put in place by Egyptians themselves. U.S. policy should be geared towards producing a substantial multilateral initiative to help Egyptians build this necessary infrastructure. The State Department and USAID should continue to find ways—bilaterally and/or multilaterally—to use targeted funding to support civil society efforts to combat human rights abuses and promote an enabling environment that advances religious pluralism and tolerance.

Inclusion of Political Islam

The United States should not ask the Egyptian authorities to accommodate Islamists who espouse violence in their political discourse or practice as part of Egypt's political system, but leaving the large part of the Egyptian electorate that wishes to support an Islamist political party in elections disenfranchised is not a recipe for stability or inclusiveness. The inclusion of an article in the new draft constitution prohibiting political parties based on religion will not be sufficient to resolve this core political challenge.

- There must be clear, uniform conditions set for the registration and operation of political parties that agree to be bound by the rules of peaceful, democratic contestation. These conditions will be set by the implementation of existing laws and proposed constitutional provisions. Espousing sectarian hatred should not be part of any legal party's platform, but claiming inspiration from the nonviolent values of a religious tradition must be accommodated.

- Senior U.S. government officials should be pushing the Egyptian government to back off from its indiscriminate crackdown on Brotherhood supporters and sympathizers.

Condition U.S. Military Aid to Egypt

- The administration is right to set human rights and democracy conditions on military aid to Egypt. The Egyptian military leadership holds effective political power in Cairo. If it wishes to benefit from a close, cooperative military relationship with the United States then it must use this power to move Egypt back on to a path of peaceful, inclusive, civilian-led governance.

- Contrary to how the issue is often portrayed in policy debates, U.S. foreign assistance to Egypt, most of which is military assistance, is not the only major lever of influence that the U.S. government controls in the bilateral relationship. U.S. military assistance to Egypt has many aspects that limit its flexibility as a tool for exerting influence on Egyptian policy, not least its importance to U.S. arms manufacturers. Crude aid conditionality has been, at best, a cumbersome tool for exerting influence in the past—although it has not been completely ineffective—and the United States should recognize that it has other ways to make its preferences clear to Egyptian leaders. Active U.S. support for economic recovery and political reform in Egypt has the potential to have a much greater impact because U.S. approval for the actions of the government in Cairo would trigger support and investment from many other governments and international lending institutions.

- There is a need for much clearer public statements from Washington on its assessment of what it thinks is happening in Egypt and the ramifications for U.S. interests, including human rights and democracy. An opaque and politic message from the United States on Egypt's political direction has not helped. Top U.S. officials should stop saying that Egypt is on the path to democracy, or that one faction or another has stolen Egypt's revolution.

Protection of Religious Minorities

The fate of vulnerable religious minorities in Egypt is bound up with Egypt's worsening political crisis. If the Coptic Christian minority in Egypt is to be protected, political reconciliation, including permitting some supporters of President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood back into the political process, is imperative. Incitement from Morsi supporters and from the Muslim Brotherhood as an institution has contributed to the spike in violence against Christians in Egypt. For such violence to decrease, it will be necessary for credible leaders associated with Morsi and the Brotherhood to adopt a discourse that consistently condemns such violence. While thousands of the Brotherhood's leaders and supporters are in jail, including its senior leadership and the leadership of its political party, the Freedom and Justice Party, there is no one with the stature to speak in the name of the organization to disown and condemn the violence. There is also no incentive for the Brotherhood to take such a conciliatory position.

■ The Egyptian authorities should investigate all incidents of violence against Christians and assaults on their property and institutions and hold accountable those responsible.

■ Measures to promote equality between Egyptians of all religious faiths, such as the article in the proposed draft constitution providing for uniform treatment of the building and restoration of religious structures, should be welcomed. U.S. policy makers should be attentive to the Egyptian authorities making good on their promises in this regard.