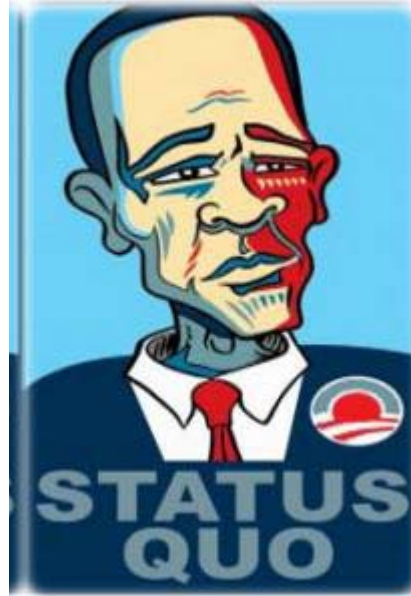


Military Resistance 10L8



[Black Agenda Report]

“The Young Soldier Pointed Out To The Brigade Commander That He Was Violating His Rights To Due Process”

“The Brigade Commander’s Comment Was, ‘You’re An Enlisted Soldier. You Do Not Have Rights’”

“I Cannot Count The Number Of Times I See Senior Officers Hold Soldiers To Different Ethical Behavior Standards Than They Held Themselves”

Army Times
Letters to the Editor
Dec. 17, 2012

Retired Lt. Col. Mike Young hit the nail on the head, with his letter about the double standard between senior officers and soldiers (“Stop the hypocrisy,” Dec. 3).

I cannot count the number of times I see senior officers hold soldiers to different ethical behavior standards than they held themselves.

In one of the most blatant cases, I witnessed a battalion commander and brigade commander prosecute a young sergeant, ignoring that there was no evidence, ignoring that they were violating Army regulations in the prosecution.

Yet they proceeded even after a judge advocate general told them they were not following procedures.

When the young soldier pointed out to the brigade commander that he was violating his rights to due process, the brigade commander’s comment was, “You’re an enlisted soldier. You do not have rights.”

I later helped this soldier present his appeal to the board for the correction of military records, which threw the case out, and the secretary of the Army restored the soldier to his previous rank with full back pay and benefits. But it slowed the soldier’s advancements.

The officers were rewarded with promotions to full colonel and general officer.

Unfortunately, this is the caliber of too many of our senior officers. We do not need a new set of rules for ethical behavior. We need to enforce the ethical standards we already have.

Lt. Col. Charles Dagleish (ret.)
Westlake, La.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

“About 14,500 IED Attacks In Afghanistan In 2012 Have Killed Or Injured 1,874 U.S. Troops”

Dec 13, 2012 By Rick Maze - Staff writer; Army Times [Excerpts]

About 14,500 IED attacks in Afghanistan in 2012 have killed or injured 1,874 U.S. troops.

Army Lt. Gen. Michael Barbero, director of the Joint IED Defeat Organization, warned the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that U.S. casualties from IED attacks could increase in Afghanistan as troops are withdrawn — both because U.S. forces may lose their “situational awareness” and because troop movements will become more predictable, making them easier targets.

“Fertilizer-based explosives still remain our greatest challenge in Afghanistan,” he said. “More than 85 percent of IEDs employed against coalition forces are homemade explosives.”

“We are playing defense,” Barbero said. [**“We” are sitting safely in D.C. talking about “playing.” T**]

Insurgent Attack During SecDef Visit To Kandahar Air Base Kills U.S. Serviceman; Three More Wounded

Dec 13, 2012 By Robert Burns - AP National Security Writer [Excerpts]

KABUL — Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said Thursday that President Hamid Karzai has accepted an invitation from President Obama to meet in Washington next month for critical talks on the future of Afghanistan.

Panetta also said that a car bomber who staged an attack at the Kandahar Air Base killed one American serviceman and wounded three others.

Two Afghan civilians were also killed in the attack Thursday.

Taliban spokesman Qari Jusuf Ahmedi claimed responsibility for the attack in an email, saying a car bomber had targeted foreign military vehicles that were stopped near the gate of Kandahar Airfield.

It was unclear if the attack had anything to do with Panetta’s unannounced visit to Kandahar Airfield. [**“Unclear” to who? T**]

Kandahar is a huge and sprawling facility that houses more than 20,000 service members from 20 countries and has more than 11,000 civilian contract workers.

**POLITICIANS REFUSE TO HALT THE
BLOODSHED**

**THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE
WAR**

While U.S. Troops Die:

**Thieving Afghan Government
Officials Smuggling Billions Of
Dollars To Their Overseas Bank
Accounts:**

**“In 2011 Alone, An Estimated \$4.5
Billion Was Spirited Out Of
Afghanistan To Places Like Dubai,
Where Many Of The Ruling Afghan
Elite Have Bank Accounts”**

**“Money That Should Be Spent
Developing Post-War Afghanistan,
Including Its Security Forces, Is
Instead Being Pilfered To Enrich
Well-Connected Bandits”**

**“Afghanistan Is In A Three-Way Tie With
Somalia And North Korea As The Most
Corrupt Country In The World”**

Dec. 12, 2012 By Nick Schwellenbach, Time Inc.

Machines that count huge stacks of cash and are used to identify money laundering are not being used when “very important persons” and “very very important persons” leave Afghanistan via Kabul International Airport (KBL), according to a new Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) report.

In 2011 alone, an estimated \$4.5 billion was spirited out of Afghanistan to places like Dubai, where many of the ruling Afghan elite have bank accounts and there is a significant amount of bank secrecy.

This massive outflow of cash, much of it provided by the U.S. and other nations, fuels concerns there is quite a bit of money laundering and bulk cash smuggling, “tools often used to finance terrorist, narcotics, and other illicit operations,” SIGAR reports.

The outflow also means much of the money that should be spent developing post-war Afghanistan, including its security forces, justice system, and infrastructure is instead being pilfered to enrich well-connected bandits.

Perhaps this shouldn't be much of a surprise: Afghanistan is in a three-way tie with Somalia and North Korea as the most corrupt country in the world, according to Transparency International's 2012 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Bulk-currency counters are a key means of detecting and preventing money laundering and cash smuggling, especially in a cash-based society where fewer than 5% of Afghans use banks and 90% rely on the more informal hawala system.

The counters bought by the Kabul International Airport can count 900 bills a minute, record serial numbers, create databases of cash movements, and are designed to report all this to Afghanistan's Central Bank's Financial Transactions and Records Analysis Center of Afghanistan (FinTRACA).

SIGAR found that “more than 1 year since our last visit to KBL, the cash counters are still not being used for their intended purpose, and VIPs continue to bypass key controls.”

Even though the machines worked, and Afghan officials were trained to use them, SIGAR never observed any use of the machines, which are being stored in a “small closet-like area.”

The counters were not connected to Internet, defeating one of their main purposes: reporting info to FinTRACA, the agency responsible for identifying data trends to assist in the investigation and prosecution of financial crimes.

Meanwhile, other systems at the airport are being connected to the internet.

A U.S. official told SIGAR that Afghan customs officials at the airport “were afraid that they would experience negative repercussions” from the Afghan government “if progress in instituting controls at the airport was made.”

And it looks like the hobbling of such screening isn't being done for your everyday Pashtun villager.

According to the report:

“No bulk currency counter was available for the counting or data collection of currency declared by VIPs, who do not undergo main customs or security screenings. According to a DHS (U.S. Department of Homeland Security) official, many of the individuals who traffic money leave from the VIP area.

“A new Very Very Important Persons (VVIP) lounge was built to provide easier boarding access for high-ranking officials, again allowing transit without main customs screenings or use of a bulk currency counter.”

Video cameras — while installed in the regular baggage screening area of the airport — are not installed in the VIP baggage and cargo screening areas.

The Afghan government has been hindering these efforts for a long time.

In 2011 report, SIGAR found:

“Although the contract to install these bulk currency counters at airport customs areas was awarded in July 2010, they were not installed until April 2011, in part because U.S. and Afghan officials disagreed on where to put them.

“When we visited the airport in April 2011, the machines were being used to count declared cash, but not to record currency serial numbers and report financial data to FinTRACA.

“Passengers designated by GIRoA (Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan) as Very Important Persons (VIPs) could bypass the main security and customs screenings and instead use a separate facility to enter the airport's secured area.

“While these VIPs were required to declare the amount of currency they were carrying, their cash was not scanned through bulk currency counters, and Afghan officials reportedly had no plans to do so.”

This isn't mere money-laundering. It appears more like industrial-strength dry-cleaning. Unfortunately, U.S. taxpayers are the ones being taken to the cleaners.

MILITARY NEWS

Rebels Fighting To Overthrow The Tyrant Assad Blow Up Interior Ministry

Headquarters In Damascus, “The Symbol Of His Power”



Dec. 12, 2012: Three bombs collapsed walls in the Syrian Interior Ministry building Wednesday in Damascus, killing several, as rebels fighting to overthrow President Bashar Assad edged closer to the capital, the symbol of his power. (AP Photo/SANA)



Kurdish members of the Free Syrian Army with a tank captured from the Syrian Army in Fafeen village, north of Aleppo province, Syria, Dec 12, 2012 (AP Photo / Manu Brabo)

“Thirty-One Percent Of Claims Filed With The Veterans Affairs Department Are Likely To Be Denied — And 60 Percent Of Those Denials Will Be Erroneous”
“A Veteran Calling VA’s Benefits Hotline Has Just A 49 Percent Chance Of Being Connected To Someone And Receiving A Correct Answer”
“Delay, Deny And Hope He Dies”

[Here it is again. Same old story. Used up, thrown away, and the politicians couldn't care less. To repeat for the 3,568th time, the enemy is not in Afghanistan.

[Afghan citizens and U.S. troops have a common enemy. That common enemy owns and operates the Imperial government in Washington DC for their own benefit. That common enemy conducts wars of conquest on a platform of lies, because they can't tell the truth: U.S. Imperial wars are about making money for them. Payback is overdue. T]

Dec 13, 2012 By Rick Maze - Staff writer, Army Times [Excerpts]

A new report on an old problem contains some sad statistics about veterans' benefits claims:

Thirty-one percent of claims filed with the Veterans Affairs Department are likely to be denied — and 60 percent of those denials will be erroneous.

Sixty percent of claims will take longer than 125 days to be processed, more than 7 percent of claims will be misplaced, and 4 percent will be completely lost.

A veteran calling VA's benefits hotline has just a 49 percent chance of being connected to someone and receiving a correct answer.

The report, "The Veterans Disability System: Problems and Solutions," was released Dec. 12 by the nonprofit National Center for Policy Analysis.

Based on a review of the 870,000 benefits claims pending before VA in 2011 — a number that has climbed to about 900,000 pending claims today — the report says the pile of pending claims has grown despite the fact that VA is processing more claims than ever before and using a variety of new efforts to work faster and more accurately.

The nonpartisan National Center for Policy Analysis, which specializes in retirement and health care programs, is skeptical about VA's stated goal of eliminating the claims backlog by the end of 2015.

VA "is barely able to process current claims," the report says, "and has exhibited little to no progress toward their stated goal of 125 days and 98 percent accuracy for processed claims by 2015."

"Delay, Deny And Hope He Dies"
[Reader Comment:]

Jeff Del Mastro · Top Commenter · Pasadena City College

I had to go to SSI to get anything from the VA for injuries I got for 3 deployments. All of us older national guard soldiers, like myself at 49 that served in the infantry is not as hardy as I was when I was 18. So naturally I'm going to get bang up and take longer to bounce back.

The VA is a huge joke period. A bunch of non serving civilians trained to save money.

New motto: Delay, deny and hope he dies.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

“For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.

“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

“The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppose.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

Hope for change doesn't cut it when you're still losing buddies.
-- J.D. Englehart, Iraq Veterans Against The War

Egypt: Behind The Scenes:

**“The Tensions That This Crisis
Has Highlighted In The
Relationship Between The
Brotherhood And Security
Agencies Speak To The Reality
That The Muslim Brotherhood-
Presidency Remains An
Uncomfortable Guest Inside The
Deep State”**

**“The “Deep State” Refers To
Longstanding, Powerful
Bureaucratic Interests Entrenched
Inside The Egyptian State,
Including, But Not Limited To,
Military Institutions”**

**“The New Egypt Is One In Which
Popular Pressure Does Not Take A
Backseat To Elite-Led Pacts And
Backroom Deals”**

**“This Same Revolutionary Spirit Stands
In Resilience Throughout Egypt On The
Streets, In Public Squares, And, As Of
Now, In Front Of The Presidential
Palace”**



Portrait of Muslim Brotherhood leaders, including Mohamed Morsi (third from the right), in a broken frame found at the group's headquarters in Cairo after they were stormed by protesters. Photo by Jonathan Rashad]

If it were up to the Muslim Brotherhood and the deep state, they would have divided Egypt between themselves behind closed doors long time ago when the realm of elite politics was dominated by a SCAF-Brotherhood partnership.

Their failure to do so speaks to the power of a revolutionary spirit inside the sphere of Egyptian contentious politics — one that has consistently subverted elite-led pacts that sought to exclude the Egyptian people from the table.

12.8.12 by Hesham Sallam, Jadaliyya

The events of 5 December 2012 mark an important shift in Egyptian politics in light of the violence that pitted Muslim Brotherhood members and partisans of President Mohamed Morsi against protesters opposed to the president's recent moves to centralize power and allow the Brotherhood to dictate the terms of Egypt's new political order.

Dominant narratives in international media have implicitly or explicitly embraced the view that the clashes are the manifestation of an unfortunate cycle of conflict between two sides that are equally responsible for pushing the nation to the brink of civil strife by stubbornly sticking to blind partisanship.

After all, each of the "two sides" has alleged that the opposing party employed violence — and in the case of the Brotherhood systematic torture of anti-Morsi protesters — leaving the observer with the impression that the clashes are part of a "messy battle" in which transgressions have been committed by all sides.

What this perspective misses, however, is that — regardless of how much violence each "side" has committed — the clashes were instigated by a deliberate, conscious decision by Muslim Brotherhood leaders to escalate the conflict with its adversaries.

One day after thousands of opposition protesters had marched to the presidential palace and staged a sit-in in order to pressure Morsi into reversing his controversial constitutional declaration, the Muslim Brotherhood called on its supporters to march to the palace.

Organizing a march to the same site where Morsi's opponents are gathered is a tall order, and an inevitable recipe for physical clashes.

You do not rally your activists at the same site where your opponents are assembled, expecting a peaceful tailgating picnic — and there is evidence that the Brotherhood was well aware of this.

For example, last week the Muslim Brotherhood backtracked on its decision to organize a rally in support of Morsi in Tahrir Square on 1 December. The Brotherhood changed the location of the gathering to the area surrounding Cairo University in response to warnings that rallying Morsi's supporters around Tahrir would lead to violence with opposition protesters who were already assembled in the square as part of an established sit-in.

Fast forward a few days, the goal of averting physical clashes with adversaries seemed no longer relevant for the Muslim Brotherhood as its leaders pressed members to march to Itihadiyya presidential palace on Wednesday 5 December in order to protect the legitimacy of the elected president.

Moreover, the call for the 5 December protests issued by the Muslim Brotherhood was anything but an invitation for a peaceful expression of political views.

Reducing the president's opponents to a subversive few, Brotherhood spokesperson Mahmoud Ghozlan called on supporters to "protect" the legitimacy of the current political order from what he characterized as a minority that is forcefully imposing its own views on the rest of the country.

He stated that the Brotherhood's protests aimed to "protect (constitutional) legitimacy after the brute transgressions that a certain group has committed on Tuesday, thinking that it could destabilize [constitutional] legitimacy or impose its views by force, which has driven popular forces to demonstrate that the Egyptian people are the ones who have chosen this legitimacy and elected it, and that they, God willingly, are able to protect it, and to uphold their constitution and protect their institutions."

Statements by other Brotherhood leaders demonized Morsi's adversaries and invited the president's supporters to protect him from the opposition's alleged aggression.

Prominent Brotherhood figure Essam El-Erian was quoted by Al-Masry Al-Youm saying that the Egyptian people possess the ability to impose their own will, and that they will "flood squares in all governorates, especially (around) the Itihadiyya (presidential) palace to protect legitimacy."

In a more ominous statement, he threatened, "Those adventurous ones, who want to seize power without respecting referendum and election ballot boxes, must reconsider (their actions) before it is too late."

The demonization of the opposition by Brotherhood official continued even after the violence. For example, Khairat El-Shater said today that opposition protesters are small minority of thugs and remnants of the Mubarak regime.

The clashes, in other words, ensued in a context in which the Brotherhood was asking supporters, not to simply march to the palace to express support for the president and demonstrate that many Egyptians stand by his decisions, but rather to suppress and crush Morsi's opposition.

The professed objective of Brotherhood protests was made in clear reference to Morsi's opponents, the need to contain them, and protect the president from their "subversive ways."

Stated simply, to say that the Muslim Brotherhood's call for protests was designed to incite attacks against the Itihadiyya sit-in is an understatement.

“Muslim Brotherhood Leader Essam Hashish Expressed His Frustration With The Fact That The Republican Guard Had Not Stepped Up To The Plate In Protecting The Presidential Palace”

The Muslim Brotherhood's decision to escalate the conflict with its challengers was not merely aimed at dealing the opposition an unquestionable defeat by forcing an end to its sit-in around the presidential palace and clearing the way for a transition dictated by the Brotherhood and its allies.

Through this action the Brotherhood also sought to send a message to leaders of military and civilian security agencies that the Brothers are ready to take matters into their own hands, should the police and the army continue to show ambivalence in dealing with the opposition.

The events of the past week have highlighted the Brotherhood's sense of frustration with the Ministry of Interior's failure to contain protests organized in opposition to the president's constitutional declaration and the Brotherhood-backed draft constitution.

For instance, Essam El-Erian's statement that called on Muslim Brotherhood supporters to march to the Itahadiyya presidential palace on Wednesday contained a subtle warning to Egypt's security establishment: “If the state apparatus is weak and marred by the wounds of the past period, the people, led by members of the (Freedom and Justice) Party, are ready to impose their will and to protect legitimacy.”

A day earlier, Muslim Brotherhood leader Essam Hashish expressed his frustration with the fact that the Republican Guard had not stepped up to the plate in protecting the presidential palace on Tuesday, when Morsi was forced to evacuate his office after finding himself surrounded by thousands of his opponents in Ithadiyya.

Similarly, Brotherhood spokesperson Ghozlan suggested on Wednesday that security forces were soft on opposition protesters the night before the clashes, noting that they “withdrew and cleared the way for the opposition to reach the presidential palace.”

These statements coincided with media reports alleging that the president's office had shared unkind words with Minister of Interior Essam Gamal El-Din on Tuesday night, and was considering replacing him due to the failure of security forces to fend off opposition protesters surrounding the palace.

The Brotherhood's frustration was not entirely unfounded.

After protesters were able to overcome barbed wires set-up in the streets leading to the presidential palace on Tuesday, security personnel withdrew to the immediate vicinity of Ithadiyya, thereby allowing Morsi's opponents to surround the palace.

Some media reports claim that the protesters applauded security forces for showing some restraint.

In fact, opposition figure Hamdi Qandil commended security forces for allowing protesters to enter the presidential palace area, asserting that this marks the beginning of the “return of the police back into the arms of the people.”

Although these reports may have exaggerated the police’s cooperation with the protesters, they appear to have left the Brotherhood with the impression that security agencies stood passively on the sidelines, as Morsi and his team were confronting masses of angry demonstrators by themselves.

Reflecting the humiliating state in which Morsi was left, comments circulated on social networking sites that the president had to be quietly smuggled out of the “servants’ entrance” in order to avoid the angry crowds.

This week was not the first instance in which Muslim Brotherhood officials were dismayed by police performance in protecting the group’s figures and interests.

Brotherhood leaders were similarly angered at the inability (or perhaps refusal) of police personnel during the past few weeks to stop foes from attacking the offices of the Brotherhood and its Freedom and Justice Party (FJP).

The military on its part tried to signal initially that it is not party to this conflict.

As observers began speculating that the armed forces deployed around the presidential palace on Wednesday morning following the end of clashes were an indication that the military had taken Morsi’s side, a military spokesperson eagerly announced that these were Republican Guard units and not regular armed forces.

(Republican Guard forces are not subject to the conventional chain of military command, and its head takes orders from the president.)

Reinforcing the perception, immediately after Wednesday’s violence, the Minister of Defense Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi stated that the armed forces are “working in complete loyalty to the Egyptian people.” By Friday night, protesters by the presidential palace were taking pictures with Republican Guard forces and writing on their tanks “down with Morsi” and “down with the rule (Muslim Brotherhood General) Guide.”

The military, in the immediate aftermath of the violence, seemed keen on avoiding any hints of bias toward Morsi and his partisans.

“The Muslim Brotherhood-Controlled Presidency Remains An Uncomfortable Guest Inside The So-Called Deep State”

The tensions that this crisis has highlighted in the relationship between the Brotherhood and security agencies speak to the reality that the Muslim Brotherhood-controlled presidency remains an uncomfortable guest inside the so-called deep state.

The “deep state,” broadly speaking, refers to a diverse set of longstanding, powerful bureaucratic interests entrenched inside the Egyptian state and inherited from the previous political order, including, but not limited to, military institutions and domestic security agencies.

While these various bureaucratic interests do not exhibit any ideological or political cohesion, they are all unified by a commitment to resisting any attempts by outside political forces, particularly elected officials, to undermine the financial and institutional autonomy that these organizations have garnered over the course of decades.

In some sectors of this deep state, this autonomy is reflected through the prevalence of “special private funds” and off-budget spending that are subject to minimal oversight, and that afford these agencies a great deal of discretion in running their own affairs away from formal lines of accountability.

“For The Security Agencies Inside The “Deep State,” The Greatest Threat They Face Is The Prospect Of Having To Confront A New Class Of Ruling Elite”

For the security agencies inside the “deep state,” the greatest threat they face is the prospect of having to confront a new class of ruling elite that is determined to advance a security sector reform agenda that could undermine their institutional autonomy, not to mention the anti-democratic privileges that this autonomy has long harbored.

The Egyptian military, as many have noted, is known to own and benefit from a variety of revenue generating economic enterprises that are subject to zero accountability and transparency.

The ministry of interior has long been a hub for a range of corrupt and illicit practices, many of which have continued even after Hosni Mubarak’s downfall, most notably the chronic use of deadly force against unarmed protesters, not to mention police brutality against suspects in non-political contexts.

Since the earliest days of his presidency, Morsi and his group have taken a cautiously accommodationist stance toward powerful sectors of the deep state.

The Brotherhood appeared to be well aware of the fact that it cannot promote its policies and programs in a way that allows it to establish an incumbency advantage in the electoral sphere until it makes its peace with the deep state.

It was, therefore, not surprising that the first government that emerged under Morsi’s leadership came to be publicly perceived as a partnership between the Muslim Brotherhood and the deep state, namely between elements that are sympathetic, if not loyal, to the Muslim Brotherhood’s leadership, and veteran insiders to the Egyptian bureaucracy.

“Under Morsi’s Presidency, The Military And The Civilian Security Establishment Continued To Enjoy The Leadership Of Traditional Bureaucrats And Officers Committed”

In some ways, Prime Minister Hesham Qandil embodies this partnership, as a longtime technocrat at the Ministry of Irrigation, and, at the same time, someone with ties to ranking members of the Muslim Brotherhood's Guidance Bureau.

Also under Morsi's presidency, the military and the civilian security establishment continued to enjoy the leadership of traditional bureaucrats and officers committed to the non-democratic autonomy of their agencies from usual standards of accountability and transparency.

On his part, Morsi has stayed out of the "business" (quite literally) of the military and the policing establishment, steering clear of any security sector reform initiatives that could undermine their interests.

As the head of the Central Accountability Agency has recently remarked, the military's economic enterprises remain above the reach of public transparency and accountability.

Article 197 of the constitution that the Brotherhood-backed constituent assembly drafted exempts the military from conventional parliamentary oversight and delegates it to a military-dominated National Defense Council, similar to the articles of the controversial Al-Selmi document that the SCAF-sponsored government presented in November 2011 and that the Brotherhood had (ironically) opposed.

Additionally, Article 198 gives the military the discretion to try civilians in military courts, specifically in cases involving "crimes that harm the Armed Forces."

In other words, the political order that the Muslim Brotherhood has been attempting to establish is one that accommodates the interests of the deep state, and, on some level, shields it from revolutionary movements and activists who seem less amenable than the Brotherhood to compromise and accommodation with entrenched bureaucratic interests.

Yet these concessions by themselves, as evidenced by recent events, were not enough to institutionalize a durable partnership between the Brothers and the deep state.

"Despite The Accommodationist Gestures That The Brotherhood And Morsi Have Made To Leaders Of The Domestic And Military Security Establishments Over The Past Months, They Appeared Anything But Eager To Come To Morsi's Aid"

In many ways, the ongoing conflict between Morsi and his challengers is putting the delicate relationship between the deep state and the Muslim Brotherhood to the test.

Despite the accommodationist gestures that the Brotherhood and Morsi have made to leaders of the domestic and military security establishments over the past months, they appeared anything but eager to come to Morsi's aid during the early phases of the Brotherhood's current standoff with the opposition — as evidenced by the MB's statements cited above.

Their reluctance is not surprising.

While the Morsi presidency and its pragmatic orientation toward the deep state may offer the military and the policing establishments some degree of protection from revolutionary demands for far-reaching reforms, it is clear that their faith in the stability and sustainability of the political order that the Brotherhood is erecting is tenuous.

They realize that anti-Morsi popular pressure could limit if not overturn the Brotherhood's dominance in the political arena, which makes them nervous about putting all their eggs in the Morsi basket by going into a full-scale battle with the opposition on behalf of the president.

Thus, both the ministry of interior and the military have tried to emphasize in their initial public statements that they are taking a neutral stance in this conflict, even while their actions on the ground veered away from this stated position.

Similar to the approach of military leaders to the standoff between Mubarak and his challengers during the 2011 eighteen-day uprising, the security sector of the deep state may be inclined to wait on the sidelines to determine the outcome of the ongoing battle before committing fully to protecting the emergent (and perhaps favorable) political order that the Brotherhood is constructing.

With the escalation of conflict, however, following such a strategy has proven especially difficult for the military, particularly now that it has taken on, at the order of the president, new responsibilities to protect public order and vital installations.

The military's predicament is deep.

On the one hand, it sees safety for its institutional interests in the Brotherhood's evolving political order, which would leave intact its unusual privileges without having to take on the burden of intervening in day-to-day politics — a task that has proven costly and internally divisive during the recent period of formal military rule.

Yet at the same, if the military has to take on an active and visible role in order to protect and reap the benefits of the Brotherhood-dictated transition, the reasoning goes, then at what point do the benefits that this new order offers outweigh the costs of maintaining and preserving it?

This dilemma is reflected in the military's statement today that followed the announcement that it would formally take on new protective powers.

Like in many of its previous statements, the military tried to emphasize its neutrality in this conflict and affirmed that its foremost commitment and loyalty is to the Egyptian people.

At the same time, the statement implicitly rebuffed widespread calls for Morsi's departure, paying lip service to "legal legitimacy and democratic rules."

It also endorsed (perhaps indirectly) the president's call for dialogue with the opposition, stating: "Dialogue is the ideal and only way to reaching a consensus that achieves the interests of the nation and citizens."

Illustrating the military's fear of being closely associated with the Brotherhood-controlled presidency, shortly after the statement was released, an unidentified military source told Al-Masry Al-Youm that this announcement must not be interpreted as a signal that the military is returning to politics.

These tensions and concerns will likely persist, as the Brotherhood continues to call on military leaders for support.

"The Muslim Brotherhood-Initiated Escalation Is A Strong Message To The Deep State That The Brotherhood-Controlled Presidency Is Fully Capable Of Erecting A Political Arena In Which Its Decisions And Commitments Are Supreme"

Many Muslim Brotherhood figures have characterized the clashes at Ithadiyya presidential palace as a manifestation of its conflict with the deep state and remnants of the Mubarak era.

But in reality, the Brotherhood is not fighting against the alleged "deep state" and Mubarak remnants within the opposition and inside the courts, as it claims, but rather the deep state within the ranks of its sponsored government.

The Brotherhood's decision to escalate its standoff with the opposition, and the seemingly irrational ferocity with which it has begun to antagonize its opponents must not be understood merely as an attempt to eliminate challengers.

Equally importantly, the Muslim Brotherhood-initiated escalation is a strong message to the deep state that the Brotherhood-controlled presidency is fully capable of erecting a political arena in which its decisions and commitments are supreme. The Brotherhood and its sponsored political order, the message goes, is here to stay, and you would be better served to jump on this bandwagon and come to its defense before it is too late.

Whether or not the Muslim Brotherhood has been able to make this case convincingly remains to be seen.

In escalating the conflict with its opponents the Muslim Brotherhood may have succeeded in sending the message to the security establishment that the group will fight until the end and will remain the only credible civilian partner for the deep state.

Yet, by playing along, Morsi has also deepened his own dependency on the Muslim Brotherhood for political survival.

Ever since his election, observers have wondered whether Morsi would be able to break loose of the Muslim Brotherhood Guidance Bureau's control and pave the way for a presidency that answers, not to the non-elected leaders of an exclusive secret society,

but rather to the Egyptian people, particularly the partisans of the revolution who came to his aid during his electoral standoff against Mubarak's last Prime Minister Ahmad Shafiq. To a large extent, Tuesday's events and the violence committed by Brotherhood supporters in the name of the president limits the long-term prospects for such a scenario.

The relationship between the presidency and the Muslim Brotherhood cannot be understood in isolation of the long-standing internal tension between the organization's core leadership and its community of professional politicians.

The idea that Muslim Brotherhood politicians and members of parliament could "go rogue" after reaching power, and abandon the group's core interests speaks to an enduring fear within its ranks — a fear that seems to have shaped many of the Brotherhood's decisions since the downfall of Mubarak.

For instance, the creation of the FJP as a legally autonomous political arm of the Brotherhood coincided with the decision to pad the party's highest ranking positions with figures whose loyalty to the Guidance Bureau is not in question. Examples of such figures include Mohamed Morsi who served as the head of the FJP until he was elected president.

On many levels, the deepening of the Brotherhood's engagement in politics in the new Egypt has threatened the internal balance of power between those Brothers committed to the realm of politics, and others who lead less politicized social, economic, and religious endeavors — endeavors that are not always compatible with the movement's political activities.

This dynamic in part explains the chronic shifts in the Muslim Brotherhood's position on how many seats it would contest in the 2011/2012 parliamentary elections during the months leading up to the race. The internal tensions that the Brotherhood's political engagement fosters inevitably make such decisions heavily contested, and thus, volatile.

But more importantly, the prospect of a stronger Brotherhood presence inside state institutions has always raised uncomfortable questions for the group's Guidance Bureau, such as: Who is in charge?

The Muslim Brotherhood's General Guide?

Or the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated president and the community of Brotherhood politicians whose power and influence are quickly expanding independently of the group?

Given this predicament, it was not surprising that the Brotherhood's position on contesting the presidential election shifted several times before its leaders reluctantly decided to enter the race. The fear of a Brotherhood presidency that is capable of asserting its independence of the Guidance Bureau has arguably influenced the group's presidential nominations. Its leaders granted the nomination first to Khairat El-Shater, who embodies the Guidance Bureau's interests in many ways, and later to Mohamed Morsi, a loyal partisan of the Brotherhood who has never shown any willingness or ability to rebel against the Guidance Bureau's preferences.

In a rare incident, the General Guide's own paranoia surrounding the possibility of a Brotherhood-controlled government was once on public display in December 2011, long before the Brotherhood had even announced it would seek the presidency. In a curious remark that made news headlines, General Guide Mohamed Badie said in an interview on Al-Mehwar that the "position of the General Guide is more important than the position of the president."

What appeared at the time a perplexing and incomprehensible statement speaks today to the essence of one of Egypt's most salient political trends, namely the efforts of the Brotherhood's core leaders to establish a presidency that is subordinate to the Guidance Bureau's interests and preferences.

The first step toward this goal was nominating to the presidency a candidate with strong loyalty to the Muslim Brotherhood's core leadership. But clearly the president's personal loyalty was not sufficient to mitigate the concerns of the Guidance Bureau. While Morsi's commitment to the Brotherhood was hardly ever questionable, there was a looming fear that the institution of the presidency could develop an independent team that, by virtue of the basic logic of politics, confronts institutional incentives and pressures that steer executive decisions away from the preferences of the Brotherhood's leaders. After all, notwithstanding his strong partisan credentials, Morsi entered the presidency facing two political forces that were seeking to carve out a role for themselves around Egypt's new leader, namely the deep state and the traditional class of bureaucrats that occupy it, and revolutionary forces and activists whom Morsi had promised a prominent role on the presidential team in order to secure their endorsement during his tight run-off with Shafiq.

Thus, to counterbalance these pressures, the Brotherhood's core leaders have filled Morsi's presidential team with individuals who enjoy strong ties to the Guidance Bureau.

Essam Al-Haddad is a case in point. A former member of the Guidance Bureau, Al-Haddad currently serves as Morsi's top foreign policy advisor. He recently led a delegation to Washington, DC to prepare for Morsi's prospective official visit to the United States. Other Brotherhood ranking leaders who serve on the presidential team include former Guidance Bureau members Essam El-Erian, and Mohy Hamed. The influence of these individuals underscores the Guidance Bureau's determination to keep the president in check and to ensure that under no condition — particularly moments of intense political pressure — would he ever flirt with the idea of abandoning his partisan commitments in favor of building broader coalitions with political forces outside of the Muslim Brotherhood.

“Now That There Is A Widespread Perception That The Muslim Brotherhood And The President Have Engaged In Criminal Abuse Against Their Opponents, No Longer Are The Points Of Contention Limited To Negotiating Over Constitution Writing And Voting”

In many respects, this week's violence and Morsi's complicity in the escalations that led to it have reinforced the Guidance Bureau's efforts to create a presidency that takes its cues from none other than the Brotherhood, and that cannot survive independently of the group's support.

The overt use of violence by Muslim Brotherhood supporters against other members of the political community in the name of Morsi's leadership alienated any political force that could have provided the president with a support base outside of the Brotherhood. It is anything but surprising, therefore, that the president's calls for dialogue thus far have failed to bring to the table any political figure with meaningful stature, credibility or substantial following other than the leader of his own party (and a lonesome Ayman Nour).

Having become more beholden to the Muslim Brotherhood than ever before, the idea that the pressures and necessities of politics could force the Morsi presidency to wage more inclusive coalitions that travel beyond his core group has become more far-fetched than it was before 5 December.

Returning to the question posed earlier of whether someday Egypt could have a president that answers to the people and not to leaders of his secret society or the representatives of the deep state, this week's events suggest that such a presidency is unlikely to emerge under Morsi's leadership.

The aftermath of Wednesday's violence has killed any chance that Morsi could credibly claim to speak for all Egyptians, or build bases of support that go beyond two groups to which he is now more bound than ever: the Muslim Brotherhood and the deep state. Morsi is now past the point of no return.

Given these realities, where do we go from here?

While devising a possible exit out of the current crisis is beyond the scope of this piece, and the situation is too volatile and evolving to propose concrete solutions, three important observations are in order.

Firstly, the difficulty of the current standoff pertains to how violence has complicated any potential attempts to negotiate an easy political solution to the underlying crisis.

Now that there is a widespread perception that the Muslim Brotherhood and the president have engaged in criminal abuse against their opponents, no longer are the points of contention limited to negotiating over constitution writing and voting.

“The Brotherhood Realizes That It Stands Over A Hollow Political Process That Lacks Any Credibility And That The Façade Of Democracy Is No Longer Holding Up”

Moving forward and setting aside the losses and injuries that have been incurred as a result of this week's clashes may seem compelling for the unattached observer, but such a scenario is unlikely to hold in the face of a revolutionary popular movement that does not compromise on human dignity and sanctity of every Egyptian life.

Reflecting on events of the last two years, there was a turning point during SCAF's rule when negotiating over Egypt's new political order for the military

ceased to be a question of constitutional and legal engineering and became an existential issue for members of the military council.

One could argue that the Maspero massacre of 9 October 2011 was that turning point, after which military leaders were no longer just negotiating over the status of their institutions in the new Egypt, but more importantly, their own safe exit.

Morsi and his Brothers may have just experienced their Maspero moment. This will certainly complicate the rest of Morsi's presidency, even if in the short run a credible agreement surfaces to resolve differences over the new constitution and the constitutional declaration.

Secondly, the more the Brotherhood realizes that it stands over a hollow political process that lacks any credibility and that the façade of democracy is no longer holding up, the greater the temptations it will face in steering Egypt closer toward a de facto or de jure state of emergency.

While Morsi's decision to grant the military new protective powers may not represent a return to SCAF-style military rule, as some observers have contended, it may prove to be the lead up to an attempt to institute an indefinite state of emergency in order to manage dissent more effectively.

The viability of such an option and its sustainability will in no small part depend on how the deep state the Muslim Brotherhood-controlled presidency will choose to manage the uneasy tensions in their relationship, as mentioned above.

“The New Egypt Is One In Which Popular Pressure Does Not Take A Backseat To Elite-Led Pacts And Backroom Deals”

Finally, just because the Brotherhood and the deep state may reach agreement that the current upheavals necessitate that the country be placed under a state emergency, does not mean that they would succeed.

Such schemes may have been feasible under the rule of Hosni Mubarak, but the new Egypt is one in which popular pressure does not take a backseat to elite-led pacts and backroom deals.

If it were up to the Muslim Brotherhood and the deep state, they would have divided Egypt between themselves behind closed doors long time ago when the realm of elite politics was dominated by a SCAF-Brotherhood partnership.

Their failure to do so speaks to the power of a revolutionary spirit inside the sphere of Egyptian contentious politics — one that has consistently subverted elite-led pacts that sought to exclude the Egyptian people from the table.

This same revolutionary spirit stands in resilience throughout Egypt on the streets, in public squares, and, as of now, in front of the presidential palace.

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