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**THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES IN  
EGYPT**

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## **THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES IN EGYPT**

### **Abstract:**

Egyptian military and Muslim Brotherhood seem to be installed in a mutual intransigence posture. The violence, including terrorism acts, continue, so that both sides must reconcile their positions and allow the return to a relative democratic normalcy. Otherwise violence can become rampant and open a new front to international jihadism.

### **Resumen:**

*Hermanos Musulmanes y militares egipcios parecen instalados en una postura de mutua intransigencia. Los episodios de violencia, incluso terroristas, continúan, por lo que ambos bandos deben de acercar sus posturas y permitir el retorno a la normalidad democrática. En caso contrario la violencia puede devenir en endémica y abrir un nuevo frente al yihadismo internacional.*

### **Keywords:**

Egypt, Mursi, al Sisi, Muslim Brotherhood, international jihadism

### **Palabras clave:**

*Egipto, Mursi, al Sisi, Hermanos Musulmanes, yihadismo internacional*

## THE OUTLAWED AND PLUNDERED BROTHERHOOD

Shielded after the events related to the use of chemical weapons in Syria, which have eclipsed for weeks the rest of the processes arising from the transition process in the Arab countries, the fact is that the deactivation of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt continues stepwise.

Following the arrest of the most emblematic and influential leaders of the organization, on Monday September 23<sup>rd</sup> the Cairo Court of Justice ruled the dissolution of the Brotherhood and the confiscation of all its assets. Thus, what has become a quasi-parallel state, not only disappears from the Egyptian political scene, but will also be deprived of the material means to pursue its unofficial policies of support for those most in need, which have given them political revenue after their legalization and presence in the elections, both legislative and presidential. Until a higher authority of the Egyptian judiciary does not pronounce itself, these assets are blocked and frozen, but it seems that in the current situation it will be difficult to return them to an organization largely in an open rebellion against the power emerged after the fall of Mursi last July.

Thus, although many authors consider that, only just three months after the deposition of President Mursi as Head of State, it has returned to a previous situation similar to the last days of President Mubarak, the fact is that it is not like that. At that time the Brotherhood, although it was still illegal, it was tolerated and carried out many activities, especially of a welfare nature, in a more or less discreet manner but known by all people, including the Armed Forces and the Egyptian security forces.

Today the situation is different, and it will possibly take some time until the circumstances allow a new assimilation of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Egyptian political and public life, perhaps even with a different acronym to safeguard the legal appearances.

But the truth is that at present the Brotherhood continues, of course, in the crosshairs of the security forces, but also of the political parties most opposed to the project of the forced Islamization that was derailed by the Armed Forces. So, parties as the leftist Tagammu have no hesitation in describing the most active members of the Brotherhood as terrorists, with statements close to this tenor by much of the Egyptian political spectrum.

## THE INSTABILITY CONTINUES IN EGYPT

A count of more than 1,000 dead, thousands of detainees and an almost entirely arrested leadership, however it does not impede their supporters continue to defy the "new" personalized power of the marshal Al Sisi.

After a few weeks of a reduced activity, in a new wave of protests, the riots of the last weekend have caused at least 50 deaths. But there are details that make the concern in Egypt higher during the past days.

Indeed, in recent years the country has experienced attacks both against gas infrastructures - primarily - as against members of the Armed Forces or the Police, but although some of them were serious, they were limited to the geographical area of Sinai, usually close to the borders with Gaza and Israel. Even the arrival in power of President Mursi meant a wave of these attacks, which were firmly answered by the Islamist government of Cairo.

Nevertheless, recent attacks have begun to happen in locations less remote of the country, such as the strategic Ismailia, at the bottom of the Suez Canal, and even in the capital. These attacks, with strafing vehicles, facilities and members of the army and police, or indiscriminate rocket attacks in urban areas, including the likely use of a car bomb in the tourist area of South Sinai, resulting in a number of deaths, represent, undoubtedly, an escalation of both dangerousness and political intention of its realization.

They may, in fact, mark the beginning of a form of action that adds itself to the continuation of street protests, as the one convened to "take" the emblematic Tahrir Square next Friday, October 11, in what, in case of a response sufficiently large of protesters, will be a new episode of violence and deaths.

Therefore, far from abating violence, as it seemed after the hardest days of the confrontation after the fall of Mursi, at a time when the fury of one part of the population against abuses committed by the Brothers during their brief "reign", it led them to cooperate actively with the security forces and obliged the supporters of Mursi to a low-policy. Their activity seems to gain a new momentum, mixing the usual street protest with the possible terrorist action of the most radical.

Moreover, supported by a significant proportion of the population, the security forces should not be tempted to demonize systematically all streams of the Brotherhood, assigning them, freely and indiscriminately, the label of violent or even terrorist, because they correspond to a considerable percentage of Egyptians who should be allowed, and even

support, their reintegration into the political game and into the normality after the adoption of the constitution currently being drafted and the subsequent conclusion of the promised elections.

It should not be forgotten, furthermore, that the large Egyptian army is inspired by a forced recruitment, in which a considerable part of conscripted soldiers sympathize to a greater or lesser extent with the political Islam, therefore the apparently monolithic opinion of the leaders of the security forces, contrary to the Brotherhood and grouped under the leadership of al Sisi, may not be as monolithic as in the rank and the lower jobs of the dashboards.

### **SCENARIOS IN THE COMING MONTHS**

The future that is expected in Egypt in the coming months will be marked by the strategic decisions that the active leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood will take. These decisions can be basically oriented in three directions.

The first one could involve a *fait accompli* acceptance, focusing its action in the judicial field, and trying, in the shortest time possible, to recover the suspended legality and the seized property. This would have the aim of reintegration in the Egyptian political and social life, as well as the participation in the elections.

It may be wondered if, after the confirmation of their intentions after achieving the power, they would succeed in keeping a voting intention similar to the results obtained at the time. Also, and this is a very important factor, if the most radical elements of their members would accept this strategic line and would allow their leaders to impose it to the mass of supporters.

Certainly, the wave of the street violence and the armed attacks described above do not allow being optimistic about this first way, which would inevitably require the absence of violence and the conviction of the new authorities on the peaceful and firm intention of the Brotherhood.

The second way would involve a strategy of protest and harassment of the new authorities and security forces, trying to keep the international attention and the support from its external donors and supporters. This would be a long-term strategy, which could only have prospects of success in the event of a majority support of the population that would end up by overwhelming the authorities in the exercise of power, something that at the moment, although there is no reliable data enable to support this claim, it seems that is not the case.

The third, and most dangerous, might be, especially in the absence of the more “political” leaders of the Brotherhood, who are currently detained, tempted to use their funding networks and the support among their co-religionists - even from other countries - to start an armed insurrection that would lead the country to a state of permanent violence.

This decision would lead Egypt to a similar situation, at its best, to that suffered by Iraq, but without the sectarian tinges that converge up there, while in the worst case scenario the country could approach to the situation in Algeria during the civil war.

Moreover, this third way will most likely lead to the appearance of a new magnet for the international jihad, currently focused on Syria but perhaps "available" in the not too distant future. It should not be forgotten that Al Qaeda Central is now run by an Egyptian and that, for obvious reasons, this country has been always at the center of thought and intention of the terrorist organization.

In any case, the events of recent days seem to point to the implementation and continuation of the second way, with touches of the third one, in what may perhaps be the result of specific and uncontrolled events or, on the contrary, the establishment of a hybrid strategy between the second and third ways.

If case this option is chosen, the military response will be the dominant one, and will strengthen the determination of those who advocate a permanent custody of the FAS to the public and political life of the country, returning, this time, to earlier times in which the desire for a reasonable democracy in Egypt was a chimera. This situation could invest the balance and could cause the withdrawal of the significant support that the military possess, at the moment, among the Egyptian population. It should not be forgotten that the aspirations that led to the downfall of Mubarak, something that was not an act of the political Islam, continue to be present, and perhaps increased by the disappointments - a constitution and a democratically elected failed government - suffered by many since then.

## CONCLUSIONS

The positions of both the Muslim Brotherhood and the military and all those civilian forces that support them, seem to have been entrenched in a scenario of intransigence, which leads to episodes of increasing violence, including terrorist nature, and restrict the return to some kind of democratic normality.

Both, the new authorities and the leaders of the Brotherhood would do well to soften their positions and try to seek the way that allow the return of peace to the streets and the return of Muslim Brotherhood to the polls. Otherwise, scenarios next to the ones experienced in Iraq or even in Algeria are possible and even likely to occur.

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