THE UNSPOKEN POWER:
CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND THE PROSPECTS FOR REFORM

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Note from the Project Convenors

The *Brookings Project on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World* is designed to respond to some of the most difficult challenges that the United States will face in the coming years, most particularly how to prosecute the continuing war on global terrorism while still promoting positive relations with Muslim states and communities. A key part of the Project is the production of *Analysis Papers* that investigate critical, but under-explored, issues in American policy towards the Islamic world.

The new U.S. agenda towards the Muslim world claims to be centered on how best it can support change in prevailing political structures, as a means towards undercutting the causes of and support for violent radicalism. However, little strategy has been developed for how this U.S. policy of change plans to deal with a key bulwark of the status quo, the present imbalance in civil-military relations in much of the region. Until an understanding is made of the central role of militaries and a proper response built, the talk of reform and democratization will remain pure rhetoric.

As such, we are pleased to present *The Unspoken Power: Civil-Military Relations and the Prospects for Reform* by Steven A. Cook. Dr. Cook was an early member of the Project as a Brookings Research Fellow and has now become a Next Generation Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. We appreciate his contribution to the Project's work and certainly are proud to share his views and analysis on this important issue with the wider public.

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Executive Summary

Civil-military relations are a critical, but often overlooked area, in the discussion of political reform in the Arab and Islamic worlds. In a variety of key countries stretching across North Africa, the Levant, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, militaries have played important roles in modernization and institutionalization. Yet, while military establishments may have at one time been the appropriate organizations to carry out state-building, they have often become conservative elements clinging to the authoritarian status quo.

Case studies of Egypt, Pakistan, and Syria demonstrate how military leaderships benefit from and seek to maintain the largely authoritarian political regimes of their respective countries. While political reform is possible, Egyptian, Pakistani, and Syrian officers are likely to resist efforts to undertake any meaningful reform that will alter prevailing power relations and political institutions. Rather, the commanders will probably, as they have done in the past, seek marginal political change that instills greater legitimacy and credibility to their regimes. While taking account of demands for change from below, the officers and their civilian allies will resist efforts to undermine critical means of political control. Put simply, there may be greater freedom of expression, relatively freer elections, and increased opportunities to establish political parties, but the critical linkage between the Egyptian presidency and the army, the broad domain of Pakistan's National Security Council, and the civil-

military compact encompassed in the Ba'thist regime and Syria's state of emergency will remain powerful means through which the military and its civilian allies can ensure political control.

Reform in military-dominated states will thus be difficult. While political change is ultimately an internal political process, however, there are a number of steps the United States can take to help create *conditions* more conducive to progressive political development in Egypt, Pakistan, and Syria specifically, as well as in other states of the Islamic world where militaries have played key political roles. These include:

- **Stand Up For Local Reformers:** In general, beyond the rhetorical commitments of senior policymakers, Washington must make a strong policy stance on the importance of human rights and democracy in Egypt, Pakistan, and Syria. There is a sense among intellectuals, activists, and even leaders in the Middle East that the United States is not serious about promoting political reform given Washington's overriding security concerns in the region. This has allowed Egyptian, Pakistani, and Syrian officials—who have become adept at the discourse of reform—to deflect and diffuse demands for political change. US policymakers should press Cairo, Islamabad, and Damascus to live up to their rhetorical commitments to political, economic, and social reform. One way the United States can

demonstrate its own interest in political change in the region is through a renewed emphasis on human rights. The Egyptian, Pakistani, and Syrian national security states have taken a heavy toll on political dissidents. Broad efforts must be made on behalf of dissidents and activists in the region, who importantly have local credibility.

- **Support Civilian Control Over the Military:** In their broad discussions about reform with Presidents Mubarak, Musharraf, and Asad, US policymakers and diplomats must stress the importance of civilian control over the military. Altering the deep-rooted national security states of Egypt, Pakistan, and Syria is no easy task and will require significant institutional change. Moreover, achieving a shift in civil-military relations in favor of civilians is no guarantee of political change. After all, civilians are not immune from predatory policies. Still, as cases from Latin America and Asia suggest, civilian superiority provides the best chance for political liberalization and economic reform. Washington would thus need to encourage changes that 1) close channels through which Egyptian, Pakistani, and Syrian officers have been able to influence politics; 2) prevent the officers from engaging in activities not strictly related to defense and national security; 3) provide civilians with the means to override the officers, and 4) alter the prevailing ethos held within the officer corps that justifies their influence and intervention.

- **Leverage Positive Influence Through Conditionality:** Washington can use its considerable leverage to create *positive* incentives to encourage Egyptian, Syrian, and Pakistani elites to take steps toward political reform. Military and economic assistance should, in part, be conditioned on progress toward the establishment of pluralism, rule of law, power sharing, property rights, and free markets. This is not to suggest that military aid to Egypt be summarily cut off or reduced as some in Congress have suggested. To do so would not be in the interests of the United States. Rather, Washington should provide incentives such as access to additional military and economic aid *if* the Egyptians and Pakistanis take credible steps toward, for example, government accountability and transparency.

Although "cookie cutter" approaches to political liberalization in the Islamic world are unwise, the conditions in Egypt, Pakistan, and Syria parallel a variety of countries in the wider Islamic world. Policy recommendations for these countries include:

- **Don't Forget the Military Role in Reform Policy:** For analysts interested in the internal political development of a variety of Muslim countries, the role of the military establishment cannot be ignored. Military officers were either the "founders" or pillars of regimes in Egypt, Turkey, Algeria, Pakistan, Syria, Tunisia, and Indonesia. As a result, political and

social institutions in these countries tend to reflect the interests of the military establishment and their civilian allies. While officers may have at one time been progressive forces of modernization, they have, in general, become conservative elements that have sought to preserve political orders that are increasingly illegitimate.

- **Distinguish Cosmetic Reform from Real Reform:** In the military-dominated states of the Arab and Islamic worlds, there is a tendency for leaders to take into account some demands for reform from below, while ensuring that key institutions of political control are maintained. When assessing political reform initiatives, analysts must ask whether these policies alter the institutions that support prevailing power relations. For example, changes to electoral laws, political parties, press laws, and the penal code may enhance a façade of democracy, but may not actually broaden basic freedoms or political participation.

- **Incorporate Extra-Regional Lessons:** While there are few models of civil-military relations that can easily be grafted onto the primary Arab and Islamic cases, the successful transitions to democracy in formerly military-dominated societies such as South Korea and Brazil can be instructive. In addition, as Turkey has undertaken significant political reform, the changes in the relationship between Turkish military officers and the political system deserve greater attention. As a result, policymakers should incorporate some of the lessons learned from South Korea, Brazil, and Turkey into their approach to military-dominated societies of the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

- **Conditionality and Multilateralism:** Positive conditionality may create both incentives and constraints that convince military officers to remove themselves from, and permanently stay out of, politics. As noted just above, this conditionality can include financial rewards in the form of increased military and economic aid. On the multilateral level, Washington can work with its European partners and international financial institutions to create incentives for political change such as membership in "clubs" like the World Trade Organization or an expanded Partnership for Peace.

Civil-military relations represent an important, but all too often missing, dimension of policy approaches to political liberalization in the Middle East and the wider Islamic world. Understanding the organic linkage between military officers and political systems can provide insight into the prospects for political reform, as well as better direct US policy and strategy.

The Author

Steven A. Cook is a Next Generation Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. He is an expert on Arab and Turkish politics as well as US-Middle East policy. Dr. Cook is currently completing the book "Ruling, but Not Governing," investigating the role of military establishments in the political development of Egypt, Turkey, and Algeria. Prior to joining the Council, Dr. Cook was a Research Fellow at the Brookings Institution and a Soref Research Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. He has published in the *New York Times, Salon, Arab Reform Bulletin, Middle East Quarterly, Middle East Insight, Insight Turkey, ZAMAN, The Encyclopedia of US Foreign Relations, SAIS Review, Arab World Geographer, Millennium,* and the *Christian Science Monitor.* Dr. Cook holds a B.A. in international studies from Vassar College, an M.A. in international relations from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, and a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Pennsylvania.

Introduction

Over the last five decades, political liberalization and economic reform have not been priorities of US policy toward the Middle East and the broader Islamic world. Rhetoric emphasizing human rights, American values, and democratization notwithstanding, senior policymakers have historically accepted the notion that stability borne of the authoritarian status quo best serves the constellation of US interests. That calculation changed following the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001.

September 11th changed the conventional wisdom and made clear to many policymakers that the Arab world's democracy deficit represented a threat to the security of the United States. The Bush administration has consistently emphasized that the persistence of authoritarian politics in the Broader Middle East has produced a potent mix of political and economic alienation, extremist ideologies, and intolerance—an environment conducive to the development of both terrorist organizations and rogue states. As a result, on November 6, 2003 President Bush indicated that the United States would pursue a "forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East." Yet, in all the discussion of political and economic reform in the Arab and Islamic world that followed the president's stirring rhetoric, the broad issue of civil-military relations in the region has been left largely unaddressed.

The requirements associated with battling global terror and promoting political liberalization have actually had a contradictory influence on US policy in the Middle East. On the one hand, the need to fight terrorism and confront rogue regimes has led the United States to strengthen its existing military-security ties with key Arab allies such as Egypt and Jordan, and to expand ties dramatically with Qatar, Yemen, and Algeria, among others. On the other hand, as the president indicated, the Bush administration has adopted a new, long-term strategy to transform political conditions in the Arab world. The approach contains a significant, but under-examined, challenge: to fight terrorism and confront radicalism, the United States seeks close ties with Arab military and security organizations. Yet, the elites that presently lead these institutions have historically resisted political liberalization and as a result may actively seek to diffuse and deflect US efforts to promote change that would undermine their power. This is not to suggest that military elites are inherently opposed to reform, but the *kinds* of proposed reforms are crucial. Local commanders' outlook, professional responsibilities, and livelihood are bound up in a particular political order, and any US reform push may put this under threat.

Military organizations are key political and economic actors in the regimes of a variety of countries throughout the Broader Middle East. This study will focus on

three case studies of civil-military relations—Egypt, Syria, and Pakistan (important for both their comparative research value as well as their strategic position), in an effort to understand the likely role that military officers will play in political and economic reform and to draw lessons for the wider Islamic world. In promoting reform, the United States and its partners face a considerable challenge. They must either provide incentives for militaries to embrace, or at least countenance, *fundamental* change or craft policies that effectively constrain the officers' ability to oppose liberalization.

This study is divided into three broad sections. The first provides a general overview of the role of Middle Eastern military establishments in political development. Section II provides an in-depth examination of how the Egyptian, Syrian, and Pakistani militaries have shaped their respective political systems and, in turn, how the officers in these countries might affect political reform. The final section offers a number of policy prescriptions specific to the Egyptian, Syrian, and Pakistani cases as well as recommendations for the wider Islamic world.

MILITARIES, MILITARY REGIMES, AND MILITARY-DOMINATED STATES

While little discussed these days, scholars of an earlier era were quite interested in the relationship between military establishments and political development in the Middle East. Their work asserted that militaries were progressive forces of modernization and democratization. This was largely the result of modernization theories, which dominated academia between the 1950s and the 1970s. Broadly, this school of thought held that industrialization was the key to the development of modern societies.[1] For analysts such as Manfred Halpern, Samuel Huntington, Lucien Pye, and Edward Shils, the military was the ideal instrument to direct the process of industrialization because the officers were infused with a sense of mission, organizational capacity, and nationalist sentiment. Industrialization would, in turn, naturally lead to the institutionalization, order, and reform necessary for the development of a modern society.[2] Some writers of this generation demurred. For instance, Samuel Finer, writing in 1962, was more cautious than his colleagues about the role the military forces could play in these critical areas. Finer cautioned that the military "lacked…title to govern."[3] Despite Finer's dissent, the work on civil-military relations during this era generally proceeded from the assumption that the "new authoritarians" would relinquish their prestigious positions once national goals were met.

Such theoretical questions aside, the practice quickly proved that while military officers in developing countries were often successful in generating economic performance, they often became conservative elements clinging tenaciously to regimes in which they were (and are) the primary beneficiaries. Of course, military officers and their civilian allies do not always pursue policies that result in problematic or undesirable outcomes. Militaries in the developing world have carried out successful programs of national infrastructure development, including road building, electrification, and the development of running water facilities in rural areas. Though there is substantive importance to such national service projects, they also help to instill in the population normative sentiments concerning the leading role of the military in society.

In countries of the Broader Middle East, where militaries have played key roles in political development, officers tend to be separated from society in

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1 Reinhard Bendix, *Nation-Building and Citizenship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).
2 See for example, Manfred Halpern, *The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963); Lucian W. Pye, "Armies in the Process of Political Modernization," in John J. Johnson, *The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962); Edward Shils, "The Military in the Political Development of New States," in John J. Johnson, *The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962); Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).
3 S.E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1962): 17.

military-only facilities such as schools, hospitals, clubs, and residential areas. Yet, more profound and politically more salient than the actual physical separation between the military and most civilians is the distinctive worldview to which senior military personnel tend to subscribe. Commanders maintain specific ideas about the military's organizational and technological capacities as well as a particular nationalist narrative that, from the perspective of those within the ranks of the officer corps, places the military in a superior position in relation to civilians and their institutions. In fact, nationalism and the military's central place in the nationalist pantheon of Egypt, Syria, and Pakistan is a crucial component of the officers' worldview. Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak's speech on the 50th anniversary of the Free Officers' "revolution" exemplifies the military's outlook:

> Citizen brothers, brothers and sons, the officers and soldiers of the Armed Forces. The graduation of this new batch of military academy cadets coincides with the 50th anniversary of the glorious July Revolution that was carried out by a group of loyal sons of Egypt, Armed Forces officers who were motivated by the strong patriotic feelings and lofty loyalty to the people to make their blessed revolution.

> It was a comprehensive revolution against the situation prevailing in the country. Egypt's internal situation was beyond reform because of the tyranny of foreign occupation and ruling elite's lack of social and political maturity and awareness. The executive and legislative bodies were far removed from the people's aspirations.

Although Mubarak was speaking of events five decades prior, the implication of his remarks are clear.

The military—the ultimate national organization—remains the guardian of Egypt's ideals. If not for the military, civilians who lacked the wherewithal to resist foreign penetration and the will to overcome their own differences would have placed the Egyptian people in jeopardy. These themes are not unique to Mubarak or Egypt, but can be found in the official statements of both Syrian and Pakistani leaders as well.

The officer corps' sense of superiority also stems from the fact that military figures not only played key roles in the founding of contemporary Egypt and Syria, but also were all "high modernists." High modernism places a premium on the scientific and technical knowledge necessary for modernization. However, it is a worldview that many view as "inherently authoritarian," in that it views only those with this type of specialized skills as having a mandate to exercise political power.[4] While the military does not claim to have had a central role in the founding of Pakistan, it has nevertheless evolved into a powerful political actor and has adopted a high modernist worldview similar to its counterparts in Egypt and Syria. Indeed, the military elite in all three countries regard themselves to be great modernizing forces.

Egypt, Syria, and Pakistan should not be confused with military dictatorships, however. They are better characterized as military-dominated states. In each of these countries the military has sought to avoid day-to-day governance, believing, quite correctly, that the vicissitudes of politics are likely to undermine the officers' corporate coherence and potentially, their grip on power. This is not to suggest, however, that these militaries would not intervene in politics when the officers see fit. The Pakistani military has, after all, engaged in four coups d'etat since 1958 and General Pervez Musharraf, leader of the 1999 coup and current president of Pakistan, has delayed returning power to civilian leaders.[5] Regardless of when Musharraf trades in

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4 James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998): 87–102.
5 While in 2003 Musharraf publicly committed himself to step down as army chief-of-staff by the end of December 2004, there are some signs that he is backing away from this pledge. See Ardeshir Cowasjee, "Selective Amnesia," *Dawn*, 18 April 2004.

his epaulets and stars for pinstripes and a tie, however, he will remain a leading member of Pakistan's military establishment. Indeed, as is the case with Egypt, where some suggest the only thing civilian about President Hosni Mubarak is his suit, the Pakistani leader will remain tied closely to the military establishment.

The ostensible civilianization of the presidency is a critical component of what can only be considered the democratic façades of the Egyptian and Pakistani states. While the Pakistani officer corps is more politically active and represents a more coherently defined class than its Egyptian counterpart, in both Pakistan and Egypt military officers have overseen the development of political institutions that allow for the appearance of pluralism but also incorporate key mechanisms for their oversight and control. Yet, during periods of crisis the military elite tend to strip away this façade, revealing themselves as the locus of power and reinforcing the authoritarian core of the political order. For their part, the Syrian political-military elite have the same controls, but have invested significantly less time in creating a democratic façade.

The Military, Reform, and the Question of Succession: The Case of Egypt

On July 23, 1952 a group of predominantly mid-level ranking Egyptian army officers undertook a coup d'etat ending the Albanian-Ottoman dynasty that had ruled Egypt since Mohamed Ali. United in their loathing of the continued British penetration of Egypt, palace corruption and intrigue, and the incompetence and venality of Egyptian politicians, the "Free Officers" sought at first merely to reform Egyptian politics and return a reformed liberal order to civilian politicians. Yet, after only a short time in power, the Free Officers began to view their intervention in a different light.[6] Rather than reform, the commanders undertook a more thoroughgoing reconstitution of the political system, which ultimately was to have little similarity to the order that prevailed on July 22, 1952.[7] In February 1953, Gamal Abd al-Nasir, the dominant personality among the leading cadre of Free Officers, declared: "…this aim [changing the government] is a minor objective compared to the wider aims of our revolution. The latter [objective] seeks to change the political system."[8] Indeed, in their effort to alter Egypt's political system and to begin work toward achieving the six goals of their revolution—the eradication of all aspects of imperialism; the extinction of feudalism; the abolition of monopolies and control of capitalist influence over the system of government; the establishment of a strong national army; the establishment of social justice; and the establishment of a sound democratic society—the officers systematically stripped away remnants of the *ancien regime.* This process began as early as July 26, 1952, when King Farouk was forced to flee the country for exile in Italy, and continued with the dissolution of Egypt's parliament and the outlawing of political parties in 1953.[9]

During this period, political power was concentrated within a Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), composed of the leading nine to twelve Free Officers, though even before he assumed the Egyptian presidency Nasir was the undisputed leader of this body.

6 P.J. Vatikiotis, "Some Political Consequences of the 1952 Revolution in Egypt," in P.M. Holt (ed.) *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968): 369–370. This is by no means to suggest that Egypt's military establishment was united in its support for the Free Officers Movement. Indeed, once it became clear that Nasir and his colleagues did not intend to hand the reins of government back to civilians, opposition to the Free Officers developed within the ranks of the officer corps. Most notably, General Mohamed Neguib, who had fronted as the leader of the Free Officers at the time of the coup, opposed his erstwhile allies as did a number of commanders who rallied around Neguib. After the Free Officers outmaneuvered Neguib in April 1954, his supporters were purged.

7 Joel Gordon, *Nasser's Blessed Movement: Egypt's Free Officers and the July Revolution* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1996): 13.

8 Gamal Abd al-Nasir quoted in Gehad Audah, "The State of Political Control: The Case of Nasser 1960–1967," *The Arab Journal of the Social Sciences* 2, no. 1 (April 1987): 98.

9 For a complete discussion see, Anwar Abd el-Malek, *Egypt: Military Society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968); P.J. Vatikiotis, *The Egyptian Army in Politics: Pattern for New Nations?* (Bloomington, Indiana U. Press, 1961); Derek Hopwood, *Egypt—Politics and Society 1945–1984*—2nd Edition (Boston: Unwin and Hyman, 1985); P.J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt*—4th Edition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); James Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002).

It was through the RCC that the Free Officers—and the Egyptian military establishment in general—constructed their new order. For example, in addition to the political decapitation that involved disbanding parliament and political parties, as well as the termination of the monarchy, the officers undertook a series of economic measures, including agricultural reform and sequestration of private property, which would force changes to the social structures of Egyptian society. Overall, it was from this program, which was intended to bring "greater material well-being, justice, and freedom, within a democratic polity" that the officers derived revolutionary legitimacy.[10] This provided the justification for military officers to oversee virtually every aspect of the Egypt's political and economic development in the 15 years between the Free Officers' coup and the Six Day War.

Many analysts believe that the stunning defeat of Egypt's armed forces in June 1967—known commonly in Arabic as *al-naksa* (the setback)—is the event that began the de-militarization of Egyptian politics. In the period immediately following the June war, a series of crises buffeted the military establishment that compromised the organization's significant prestige. The first blow came in August 1967, when the commander in chief of the armed forces, Field Marshal Abdel Hakim 'Amr, committed suicide. After 'Amr's death a number of his closest associates, including the Minister of War, Colonel Shams Badran, and the commander of the air force, Lieutenant General Sidqi Mahmud, were placed on trial over the poor performance of the armed forces. This was unprecedented for an organization that in the previous 15 years had been beyond reproach. To add insult to injury, Egypt experienced the first popular anti-government demonstra-

tions of the Free Officer era, ostensibly to protest the lenient sentences meted out to these officers. Egyptian president Gamal Abd al-Nasir responded to these challenges with his "March 30 Program," that committed Nasir not only to rebuild the armed forces, but also to rein in the officers.

Furthermore, standard accounts of the period indicate that Anwar as-Sadat's "Corrective Revolution" of May 1971 further compromised the political role of Egypt's military establishment. The Corrective Revolution sought to resolve what Sadat perceived to be the shortcomings of the 19 years since the officers took power. A critical component of the new Egyptian president's agenda involved the elimination of a number of powerful and politicized senior military officers with close ties to Nasir. The subsequent decline in the number of Cabinet officials with military backgrounds in successive Egyptian governments suggests that, since the early 1970s, Egypt's commanders have been generally content to remain in their barracks.[11]

The implications of the events of the late 1960s and early 1970s were indeed important to the future trajectory of the Egyptian political system. The officers did give up their role in the day-to-day governing of the country and as a result there was a concomitant reduction of officers in successive Egyptian cabinets. Perhaps the most important consequence of the immediate diminution of the prestige of the officer corps was the institutionalization of the Egyptian presidency as the undisputed principal actor in Egyptian politics. In turn, Egypt's officers, with a number of notable exceptions, have sought to maintain a low profile. Yet withdrawal from day-to-day governance and a marked decrease in the number of

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10 Vatikiotis, "Some Political Consequences…," 368.

11 See for example Mark N. Cooper, *The Transformation of Egypt* (London: Croom Helm, 1982); "The Demilitarization of the Egyptian Cabinet," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 14 (1982): 203–225; Raymond A. Hinnebusch, Jr., *Egyptian Politics Under Sadat: The Post-populist Development of an Authoritarian–Modernizing* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1988); Raymond A. Hinnebusch, "The Formation of the Contemporary Egyptian State From Nasser and Sadat to Mubarak," in Ibrahim Oweiss (ed.) *The Political Economy of Contemporary Egypt* (Washington, DC: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, 1990): 188–209; Ibrahim A. Karawan, "Egypt," in Constantine P. Danopoulos and Cynthia Watson (eds.), *The Political Role of the Military: An International Handbook* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1996): 107–121; Ali Dessouki and Gehad Audah, "Military and Development: The Dynamics of Role Change—the Case of Egypt," Paper presented to the 14th World Congress of the International Political Science Association, Washington, DC (August 28–September 1, 1988); R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Egypt Under Nasir: A Study in Political Dynamics* (Albany: State University of New York, 1971).

officers involved in politics and administration does not necessarily mean that the political influence of the armed forces has been compromised. As Peter D. Feaver has noted, "A military can never coup [sic] and yet still systematically undermine civilian control."[12] Indeed, Egypt's senior command retains a crucial and influential position in the political system.

INSTITUTIONALIZING A MILITARY-DOMINATED SYSTEM

While the June war and events immediately thereafter roiled the Egyptian officer corps, the demilitarization of Egypt was not as thorough-going as some suggest. First, the exigencies of the Israeli presence on the east bank of the Suez Canal meant that the military remained in a privileged position as Egypt prepared for a decisive battle with Israel. With significant Soviet assistance the armed forces were rebuilt, retrained, and re-equipped while the group of officers that succeeded Field Marshal 'Amr, Colonel Badran, and Lieutenant General Sidqi Mahmud set about re-establishing the officers' prestige within Egyptian society. Second, and more important, was that Nasir's pledge for political change expressed in the March 30 Program and Sadat's Corrective Revolution, both undertaken in the name of political reform, nevertheless maintained the institutional underpinnings that preserved the military's influential position in the political system.

The most important of these institutions was, and remains, the Egyptian presidency. Prior to the June war, the Egyptian presidency was already a focal point in the political order constructed at the behest of the Free Officers and the Egyptian military establishment in general. For example, both the 1956 and 1964 constitutions endowed the president with considerable powers. These consisted of the decidedly mundane, such as the ability to conclude international treaties and appoint senior members of the bureaucracy, to

more significant prerogatives, such as the ability to veto legislation, dissolve the People's Assembly, promulgate ordinances with the force of law, and declare a state of emergency. The latter, in particular, has had a profound effect on the political arena, as Egypt's presidents have placed the country under a state of emergency almost continuously since the 1960s, granting key powers to target any domestic opposition. Ultimately, the combination of the full weight of presidential powers, interlocking with the two-thirds parliamentary majority that Egypt's ruling party invariably enjoys, permanently places the balance of power decidedly in favor of the president—who for all of modern Egypt's history has been a military officer whose position ultimately depends upon the military establishment.

During the early years of the Sadat period, when the prestige and influence of the military establishment was at its lowest ebb, the president still found it necessary to cultivate officers in order to oust his rivals both within and outside the armed forces.[13] Moreover, in time, the officers regained an ability to act autonomously. During the January 1977 Bread Riots, for example, Egypt's commanders agreed to intervene and restore order throughout the country, thereby rescuing Sadat from a potentially fatal political crisis. Yet, the officers refused to act until their demand that the president rescind economic austerity measures was met. This episode, no doubt, reinforced the populist image of the military establishment, but there was also a measure of self-interest involved as the riots, which swept Egypt's major cities, posed a significant threat to a regime whose primary beneficiaries were military officers.

Analysts have often described civil-military relations in Egypt during the Mubarak era as a continual bargain, yet it is something more profound. Mubarak is president of Egypt because he is a military officer. As a result, the military establishment trusts the president

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12 Peter D. Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civil Control," *Armed Forces and Society* 23, no. 2 (Winter 1996): 154.
13 Sadat was more a professional revolutionary than a career military man, but his status as a Free Officer earned him a certain amount of respect given Egypt's national myths surrounding the role of the military.

as the steward of the state and political development.[14] Socialized in the same manner as the officers through military education, training, and experiences, Egypt's current head of state maintains a worldview that tracks closely with that of his colleagues both in and out of uniform and he can be expected to pursue policies and initiatives that do not contradict the interests of the senior command.[15] This does not mean, however, that the officers have relinquished their considerable ability to shape policy, as the uneasy relationship throughout the 1980s between Mubarak and then Minister of Defense Field Marshal Abd Halim Abu Ghazala attests.

Equally important as the formal rules, regulations, and decrees that shape Egypt's political system are informal institutions based on uncodified norms and expectations. In Egypt, the origins of these institutions lie in the precedents set at the time of the Free Officers coup, which placed the military establishment in an exalted political and social position. Despite the attenuation of the military's prestige after June 1967 and the alteration of the overt role of the officer corps, the nexus between the presidency and Egypt's commanders indicates that the informal institutions, which support the power of the military establishment, endure.

Consider, for example, the much-discussed issue of presidential succession. Egypt's constitutions all specify in detail the procedures for the selection of a new president in the event of retirement, resignation, incapacity, or death of the incumbent.[16] In practice,

Egypt's heads of state—thus far, all military officers—have either been selected through, or relied upon the decisive influence of, the officer corps.[17] When Anwar Sadat chose Air Force General Mohamed Hosni Mubarak to be his vice president in 1976, this was widely regarded as both Sadat's effort to further undermine his opponents among the cadre of officers who took part in the 1952 coup and an acknowledgement that the "October Generation" would become politically influential. Sadat's assassination in October 1981 brought this influence into sharp relief. Although constitutionally the speaker of the people's assembly, rather than the vice president, is the next in line to the presidency, there was never any question that Mubarak would succeed Sadat.[18] This is not to suggest that a civilian could not become the Egyptian head of state, but that support within the military high command is an essential requirement for the position.[19]

The informal institutional power of Egypt's military establishment is also reflected in the pattern of relations between the presidency, its military-affiliated personnel, and the parliament. For example, the staff of the presidency has been composed almost exclusively of currently serving or retired military officers, who have a significant role in the administration of the Egyptian state. Accordingly, these officers are routinely deployed throughout the ministries and agencies to impress upon the vast Egyptian bureaucracy the priorities of the leadership.[20] Furthermore, while the executive's power in areas related to armament allocation and procurement—particularly from foreign

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14 Interview with a retired military officer 8 November 1999 (Cairo); interview with a retired military officer 7 December 1999 (Cairo); interview with a retired military officer 18 January 2000 (Cairo); interview with a retired military officer 22 January 2000 (Cairo); interview with a retired military officer 24 January 2000 (Cairo).

15 One strategic analyst, who is also a retired military officer, has explained that at the highest level of the Egyptian state there is no appreciable difference between military and civilian. As he related in an interview in December 1999, "We are all military." Interview with a retired military officer 7 December 1999 (Cairo).

16 Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Part 5, Chapter 1, Articles 76, 78, 82–84.

17 Interview with a retired Egyptian military officer 8 October 1999 (Cairo); interview with a retired Egyptian military officer 18 January 2000 (Cairo).

18 Interview with a retired Egyptian military officer 18 January 2000 (Cairo). In the immediate aftermath of Sadat's death, Dr. Sufi Abu Talib, the speaker of the people's assembly, did assume the duties of the president during the remainder of October 6th until Mubarak was nominated president on October 7th, but even as this occurred Mubarak was preparing to assume the office.

19 Interview with a retired military officer 22 November 1999 (Cairo); interview with a retired military officer 22 January 2000 (Cairo).

20 In addition to the president, one informant explains that the staff of the presidency is composed almost exclusively of currently serving or retired military officers, who have a significant role in the administration of the Egyptian state. Accordingly, these officers are routinely deployed throughout the ministries and agencies to impress upon the vast Egyptian bureaucracy the priorities of the leadership.

suppliers—is legally subject to parliamentary review, this has never occurred. Indeed, despite the wide-ranging powers of oversight with which the People's Assembly is formally vested, there is no actual oversight. Egypt's minister of defense is formally required to make an annual presentation to the Assembly's standing committee on defense, national security, and mobilization and is obliged to answer parliamentarians' questions, but these queries are, in general, not forthcoming.[21] As one military officer explains, "The minister of defense may brief the parliament, but there is no real dialogue, the members are not culturally inclined to question the military."[22] As this officer suggests, the historically high regard with which the military has been held in Egyptian society has placed the military above criticism. The differences between what Egypt's formal institutions require and actual practice is not limited to defense-related or even broader political issues. The significant economic activities of the Egyptian armed forces have also been made possible through informal institutions.

Egypt features a thoroughly institutionalized system that ensures both the privileges of Egypt's "military-political complex" and political continuity. This is based on an institutional framework that places the officers in a highly influential position through the military's crucial and intimate association with the presidency. This link, at the fulcrum of Egypt's political order, is the primary means through which the Egyptian officer corps can, if necessary, influence political events. It is this mutually reinforcing relationship with the president, combined with the array of formal and informal institutions that ensures stability, and has allowed the officers to remove themselves from the day-to-day governance of Egypt. In the end, this arrangement does not bode well for meaningful

political change. It is unlikely that in the current political environment, in which the language of reform has popular local support as well as American and European encouragement, that Egypt's military-political leadership will openly oppose reform. Yet, the officers and their civilian allies have an abiding interest in maintaining the prevailing political order. As a result, while Egyptian authorities may pay lip service to political change, the type of institutional alterations that would usher in a more liberal—and possibly democratic—political order are unlikely.

PAST REFORM AND PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

Given the important changes in Egypt over the last 50 years it may seem somewhat radical to suggest that the contours of the Free Officers regime remain largely in place. Since the late 1960s, Egypt has, indeed, undergone a series of political reforms. For example, after the June war, Nasir outlined a ten-point program for a new constitution that underscored the importance of such basic individual rights as freedom of expression, thought, and opinion, as well as freedom of the press. At the same time, the Egyptian leader proposed the establishment of a High Constitutional Court vested with the power of judicial review. Since this court's establishment, its justices have fiercely protected its constitutionally-mandated independence. Indeed, these jurists have never shied away from striking down laws—even those emerging from the presidency—that they deemed to be unconstitutional. In the mid-1970s, Sadat effectively brought an end to the era of the single, mass-based vanguard party when he first called for the establishment of *manabir*, or platforms—representing the left, right, and center—within the Arab Socialist Union and shortly thereafter abolished

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21 Both Ahmad Abdalla and Mona Makram Ebeid have made similar points with regard to the hegemony of the Egyptian executive in general. See for example Abdalla's monograph on Egypt's 1995 elections, *Parliamentary Elections in Egypt: What Egypt…What Parliament…and Which Egypt?* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam Middle East Papers, 1995); Mona Makram-Ebeid, "Egypt's 1995 Elections: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back?" *Middle East Policy* 4, no. 3 (March 1996): 119–136.
22 Interview with a retired military officer 22 January 2000 (Cairo).

the Union in favor of multi-party politics. This was followed by a series of constitutional amendments in May of 1980 that ostensibly deepened Egypt's democratic practices. The amendments stressed the importance of democracy and social justice, including constitutional recognition of the multi-partyism that Egypt had embarked upon in 1976. The amended constitution also established a new parliamentary chamber—the *Majlis ash-Shura* (Consultative Council). Consisting of 264 members, two-thirds of whom are elected by direct and secret elections, with the remaining third subject to presidential appointment, the Shura Council was established to provide greater consultation on state policy.[23]

More recently, in the summer of 2003, the People's Assembly undertook three major reform initiatives at the behest of the Policy Secretariat of the ruling National Democratic Party, which is under the direction of President Mubarak's son, Gamal. The first included the creation of a National Council for Human Rights (NCHR). Affiliated with the Shura Council, the NCHR is ostensibly empowered to advance human rights, verify charges of human rights abuses, assist the government in implementing international human rights treaties, and prepare an annual human rights report for the presidency and both houses of the legislature. The second reform struck "hard labor" from the penal code. Finally, the members of the People's Assembly voted to abolish the State Security Courts established under law 105 of 1980.

By 2004, Egyptian officials could boast that Egyptians now vote (if not in any great number) in regularly scheduled elections in which a number of parties compete, the press is relatively freer, and there is a general relaxation of police powers. Yet, beneath the surface, the initiatives that the Egyptian government has undertaken ostensibly to promote liberalization are not what they appear. The reforms of July 2003 are instructive in this manner. For example, the NCHR is

an appendage of the Shura Council—which the ruling National Democratic Party dominates. Most importantly, it has no means to compel the Egyptian government to improve its human rights practices. The abolition of the State Security Courts is virtually meaningless, as the reform bill merely transferred the specialized jurisdiction of these courts to "ordinary courts" cited in the Law on Criminal Procedure (1950). Moreover, the significant powers of the public prosecutor, such as holding suspects for indefinite periods pending investigation, were not eliminated in the July 2003 reform package. And, most important, while the State Security Courts are abolished, Egyptians will continue to face prosecution in the *Supreme* State Security Courts, used since the Emergency Law of 1958 was invoked in 1981.

The reforms of July 2003 should give policymakers, analysts, and other observers pause about the future of political liberalization in Egypt. "Reform" does not always portend meaningful political change—i.e. changes to the institutions that maintain prevailing power relations. In Egypt, the political-military leadership has overseen mere institutional revisions rather than what reform is often conceptualized to signify. These changes are intended to confer a certain amount of legitimacy on the regime while simultaneously maintaining the largely authoritarian status quo. This is nothing new, as the regime has multiple times before sought to satisfy demands for political change from below, but has never before and is not likely inclined to permit change that would alter the non-democratic nature of the Egyptian regime. Simply, Egypt's senior military and political leaders have an interest in both a façade of democracy and in the maintenance of key institutions of political control. The pretenses of democracy serve to insulate officers from politics, while ensuring that political development remains within a relatively narrow band. This system, in their worldview, preserves both stability and the primacy of Egypt's prevailing elite.

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23 The provisions that established the *Majlis ash-Shura* in the 1980 version of the constitution did not specifically stipulate the number of members, though it did specify that the Council was not to have less than 132 mandates. Law 120/1980, which was subsequently amended in 1989 and 1995, set the Consultative Council's membership at 264.

What about Gamal?

For almost four years, Egyptians have openly speculated about who might succeed Hosni Mubarak as president. The historic institutional linkage between the military establishment and the presidency would suggest that, like Mubarak in 1981, an officer will assume the Egyptian presidency to fill any future vacancy. This is the expectation of a variety of current and former Egyptian officials and analysts. Yet, there are persistent rumors that Mubarak has sought to place his son, Gamal, in a position to succeed him. The younger Mubarak maintains a high profile position in the National Democratic Party, has represented his father on overseas trips, and has publicly spoken out on the need for political reform. Yet, with all the hype in the semi-official Egyptian press surrounding Gamal's reputation as a reformer, he has used his position within the NDP to oversee changes that have not resulted in greater political openness, but rather in the further institutionalization of the NDP's—and the regime's—lock on power.

If Gamal, who has no military experience, were to assume the presidency upon his father's death or resignation, this event would represent a crucial institutional change to Egypt's political order—i.e. the formal separation of the military establishment from the presidency. Although Gamal's ascendance would formally represent the civilianization of the Egyptian presidency this still will not resolve the military question in Egypt.

Given the influence of the officers, Gamal would still need to cultivate ties to what would be his most important constituency. Paradoxically, a Gamal Mubarak presidency may actually augur a more politically active and autonomous military precisely because the linkage between the president and the military would be severed. This critical linkage in the past has been the key factor in rendering Egypt "coup proof." As a result, Gamal would be potentially constrained from pursuing policies independent of the military. For example, the officers would likely oppose any reforms or policy shifts that would impinge upon the military's well-developed economic interests, institutional change subordinating the military to civilian authority, or foreign policies that separate Egypt from the Arab consensus. The narrow bandwidth would be even more constraining for Gamal than for a military officer.

To be sure, Gamal's ascendance is by no means certain. The younger Mubarak must still contend with rivals and opposition within the ranks of the senior command. Some analysts have pointed to the current Minister of Defense, Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi, as a possible successor, but Tantatwi appears not to have political ambitions or the overwhelming confidence of the officer corps. In the late 1990s, the armed forces chief-of-staff, Magdi Hatata, was seen as a potential successor to Mubarak. But, since his retirement in October 2001, rumors of his presidential ambitions have cooled considerably. This leaves General Omar Suleyman, Egypt's chief of intelligence. Suleyman, who holds the rank of general, emerged from the shadows of Egypt's intelligence services after the outbreak of the *al-Aqsa Intifada* in late 2000, though Egypt watchers have been aware of his prominence for some time. Early on in the conflict Suleyman assumed a key role maintaining back channel negotiations between Israel, the Palestinians, and Egypt. Suleyman is reportedly more preferable to the senior military command than Gamal. When President Mubarak publicly distanced himself from reports that he was grooming his son to assume the presidency, Suleyman became the focus of speculation concerning who would succeed the Egyptian president.

The organic connection between the Egyptian armed forces and the existing political order is likely to place a drag on Egyptian reform and complicate US efforts to bolster change. With their influence institutionalized at the highest levels of the state, the officers are likely to countenance reforms that merely shore up the existing regime, but do not effect in any way their highly influential role over the course of Egypt's political development.

GENERALS, COUPS, AND DEMOCRACY: THE CASE OF PAKISTAN

The partition of the Indian sub-continent produced the new state of Pakistan in 1947, having a profound effect on the Muslim officers of the British Indian Army who were to become the leadership of the Pakistani military. Throughout the colonial period, British training emphasized the importance of civilian rule and the subordinate position of the military. Although independent Pakistan's military academies and staff colleges did not jettison these principles from their curricula, the exigencies of building the new state led the officers to revise their understanding of the military's proper role. Simply, Pakistan's officers saw themselves as the critical component of modernization and institutionalization, as well as state survival. Subsequent socialization of the Pakistani officer corps emphasized the importance of the armed forces to the country's development and produced a military establishment that saw itself as the "special expression of Pakistan."[24]

Yet, unlike Egypt or Syria, the leaders that established Pakistan after the partition of India favored electoral politics and the rule of law, despite the fact that political differences prevented them from drafting a constitution.[25] Also in contrast to the two other cases, Pakistan has a tradition, albeit a weak one, of democratic politics. While this is ostensibly an asset to any future Pakistani effort to undertake political reform and liberalization, it is precisely *because* Pakistan's democratic institutions have some meaning and a measure of power that the military has intervened in the political system so often. The officers have internalized their own ideas about what is best for Pakistan and express disdain for the corruption of civilian politicians. In short, they see a duty to prevent non-military affiliated civilians from influencing the country's political trajectory in a form that diverges from their own vision.[26] Although the officers handed the reins of government back to civilian leaders after the 1958, 1969, and 1977 coups d'etat, the Pakistani military establishment has nevertheless hindered the institutionalization of democratic politics. The propensity for the military to intervene, borne of the officers' deep mistrust of civilian politicians, desire to protect parochial interests that have enriched the senior command, and continuing effort to ensure that civilians cannot influence national security policy, does not bode well for any future Pakistani political liberalization.

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24 Stephen P. Cohen, *The Pakistan Army* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998): 105.

25 Stephen P. Cohen, "The Jihadist Threat to Pakistan," *Washington Quarterly* (Summer 2003): 8.

26 After the military's 1958 intervention Field Marshal Ayub Khan assured Pakistanis "This is a drastic step taken with extreme reluctance…Our ultimate aim is to restore democracy, but of the type that people can understand." Upon taking power in October 1999, General Pervez Musharraf declared: "The armed forces have moved in as a last resort, to prevent any further destabilization. I have done so with all sincerity, loyalty, and selfless devotion to the country." See Pamela Constable, "Pakistan Predicament," *Journal of Democracy* 12, no. 1 (January 2001).

The Military and Islam

Putting the terms "Pakistan," "Islamism," and "the army" together tends to produce grave anxiety among policymakers. This anxiety stems from the centrality of both the armed forces and Islam in Pakistani society. While the relationship between the Pakistani military and Islamist groups has implications for the global war on terror and efforts to stanch the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the apparent ties Pakistan's officers maintain with Islamist groups also raise a number of important questions related to political reform.

Islam has been an important touchstone in the development of Pakistani identity and national unity. While the founders of Pakistan (including the military) were not Islamists, but secular-oriented members of the middle class concerned with the perceived problems of living in a Hindu-majority country, over time there has been greater emphasis on Islam. This has particularly been the case within the armed forces for three reasons: first, the dominant group in the Pakistani military is composed of Punjabi Muslims and officers who hail from the Northwest Frontier Provinces (NWFP).[27] These groups have tended to stress that the "Islamic character of Pakistan [is] reflected in the Islamic character of the military."[28] Second, officer corps recruitment patterns indicate an increase in young men from more traditional/conservative and rural families. For these recruits, the military remains an important means to improve their socio-economic standing. Finally, General Zia al-Haq, who dominated Pakistani politics between 1976 and 1988, sought to develop Pakistan's Islamic identity not only because of Zia's reported personal piety, but also in an effort to thwart the development of democratic politics that would have placed the position of both Zia and the military in jeopardy. Given Zia's military background and the importance of the armed forces as Pakistan's leading national organization, the Islamization of the officer corps was a key aspect of this program. The combination of these factors has resulted in an evolution of the Pakistani officer corps in which Islam has had a more profound effect on the worldview of a younger "new guard," who have begun to assume decision-making positions. Still, the result has not been the radicalization of the Pakistani officer corps. Quite like Egypt's commanders, many members of Pakistan's military establishment are devout and wish to pursue their professions in accordance with the principles of Islam, but they are not religious fundamentalists.

Despite their avowed faith, Pakistan's officers have not shied away from using their dominant position in the Pakistani political system from manipulating Islamist groups for their own political purposes, however. For example, in the November 1988 elections—the first election after Zia's death—the military supported the *Islami Jamhoori Ittehad,* a coalition of nine parties under the leadership of the moderate Islamist *Jama'at-i-Islami* to check the power of Benazir Bhutto and her Pakistan People's Party.[29] More recently, the military has provided support for radical Islamic groups such as *Jaish-e-Mohamed* and *Lashkar-e-Taiba*, and, of course, Pakistani officers were heavily involved with the Taliban in Afghanistan. The relationship with these groups had less to do with ideological affinity than geo-political consideration. The logistical support and training for both *Jaish-e-Mohamed* and *Lashkar-e-Taiba*, much like Syria's use of *Hizballah* as a proxy, represented an effort to advance the military's goals in Kashmir without directly engaging Indian forces. The relations with the Taliban were again based less on ideological affinity than on Pakistani interest in creating stability along its long western border, the exigencies of strategic depth in the event of an Indian assault, and illicit activities like drug running and money laundering that have benefited some Inter-Services Intelligence agents and military officers.

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27 Ethnically, Musharraf is an outsider among Pakistani officers. The 58-year-old Musharraf is a *Mohajir*—i.e. he was born in Delhi to an Urdu speaking family that moved to Karachi after partition of the sub-continent. Musharraf was educated at elite schools such as St. Patrick's High School in Karachi and Forman Christian College in Lahore before being admitted to the military academy in 1961.

28 Cohen, 42.

29 *Pakistan: Transition to Democracy?* International Crisis Group Report 40 (3 October 2002).

The military's manipulation of Islamist groups and its emphasis on Islam contain a certain amount of risk for Pakistan's senior command. Like Egypt in the 1980s, when the political-military leadership entered into an unspoken alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood, Pakistan's officers risk empowering groups that have alternative visions of the country's future. The military establishment is, no doubt, counting on its unrivaled position and predominance in the political system to contain the emergence of an independent base of Islamist power, but like all individuals, Pakistani officers are not perfect assessors of fluid political events.

Beginning in 2001, there were indications that the military's manipulation of Islamist groups was coming back to haunt the officers. Pakistan's uneasy alliance with the United States in the turbulent post-9/11 political and geo-strategic environment provided an opportunity for a variety of Pakistani Islamist groups to openly challenge Musharraf and his support in the military. Indeed, the perception of Musharraf's complicity in the destruction of the Taliban regime galvanized Pakistan's Islamist opposition and factions within Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI), which had close ties to the Taliban. With the return of the Pakistani electoral process in October 2002, a coalition of Pakistani Islamist groups under the name *Muttahhida Majlis-e-Amal Pakistan* (United Action Front, MMA) sought to harness Islamabad's unpopular ties with Washington for political benefit.

The goal of the MMA, which is composed of *Jama'at ul-Ulema-i-Islami, Jama'at-i-Islami, Jama'at Ulema-i-Pakistan* and a variety of small parties, was twofold: maximize Islamist political power and provide a viable counter-weight to Pakistan's two main political parties—the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP).[30] General Musharraf—despite the MMA's vociferous opposition to his relationship with Washington—covertly supported the MMA in the apparent belief that the Islamists would provide a counterweight to the pro-Nawaz Sharif faction of the PML (the PML-N) and the PPP. Musharraf calculated that the MMA would prove to be a far less formidable adversary believing that the Islamist coalition would fracture once it entered the Pakistani National Assembly.[31]

In the event, the MMA secured 11% of the national popular vote, which gave the party 53 seats and the third largest delegation in Pakistan's 342-seat National Assembly.[32] The MMA's potential power was enhanced by the fact that no party was able to secure an outright majority, placing the Islamists in the position of either joining a coalition government or constituting one of the largest opposition blocs in the legislature. After a three week deadlock, Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali of the pro-Musharraf faction of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q) was able to secure enough support in the National Assembly to establish a government without the MMA, which went into opposition.

In what is now a common story in the political systems of the Muslim world, Musharraf's efforts to use the MMA as a tool to weaken his opponents in the PPP and PML-N seem to have backfired on the Pakistani leader. Contrary to Musharraf's expectations, the MMA did not split upon entering the legislature and established itself as a key opposition group in the National Assembly along with the PPP and PML-N. The MMA's unexpected cohesion has forced Musarraf to deal seriously with the party's demands, compelling both sides to make unwelcome concessions. The International Crisis Group reports that Musharraf has bowed to MMA's Islamization program in the Northwest Frontier Provinces and Baluchistan in exchange for the Islamists' assurances that they would

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30 Vali Nasr, "Military Rule, Islamism, and Democracy in Pakistan," *Middle East Journal* 58, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 203.
31 Ibid.
32 International Foundation for Election Systems, "Pakistan 2002 Parliamentary Election Results"
    <http://www.ifes.org/eguide/resultsum/pakistan_par02.htm>. The Front also did well in provincial elections in which it gained control over Baluchistan and the strategically sensitive Northwest Frontier Provinces.

not seek to bring down the PML-Q government. Moreover, in exchange for official forbearance, the MMA did not actively oppose Musharraf's plan to enhance the powers of the Pakistani presidency. Despite these guarantees, the MMA has taken a leading role in opposing Musharraf's continued close identification with the United States and opposed the general's efforts to establish a National Security Council.

Troublesome though the political maneuvering of the MMA and Musharraf's efforts to manipulate the Islamists may be, this political struggle pales in comparison to recent revelations concerning Pakistan's nuclear activity, which has implications for political reform. When Libya's Muammar Qaddafi decided to abandon his quest to develop nuclear weapons and opened up Tripoli's WMD program to the International Atomic Energy Agency, investigators determined that Pakistan was the hub of a worldwide nuclear proliferation network. At the center of this effort was Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan (known as AQ Khan), an Islamist with ties to the military, ISI, and extremist organizations such as *Laskhar-e-Taiba* (LeT). Musharraf and his fellow officers claim ignorance of Khan's extensive links with Libya, Iran, and North Korea, but these denials are transparent. Although it was a civilian—Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto—who provided the intellectual justification for Pakistan's nuclear program, the military establishment assumed exclusive control over this project after it had Bhutto arrested in 1977 and then executed two years later. Beyond the likelihood that the military, or at least elements within the military establishment, must have been complicit in Khan's proliferation activities, Khan's apparent worldview (and reported links with not only LeT, but also the Taliban and *al-Qa'ida*) raise a host of serious and disturbing questions about control of Pakistan's nuclear weapons stockpile. It reveals the very disturbing possibility that factions within the military establishment might share WMD technology with extremist organizations. In turn, it demonstrates how the nuclear issue might affect political reform. Despite the obvious concerns of the international community, the military is unlikely to give up its hard-fought supremacy over the nation's nuclear program. This severely compromises both the authority of civilian leaders and the quality of Pakistan's democratic processes.

These extremists and their partners within the military obviously regard Musharraf and his pro-US tilt as an obstacle. In December 2003 and May 2004, there were two attempts on Musharraf's life. Pakistani investigators suspect that junior military officers in league with Islamist extremists were behind the assassination attempts. This is the unintended consequence of the senior command's efforts to manipulate Islam and Islamists for their own political benefit. Zia's effort to forge an "Islamic identity" for the military and Musharraf's subsequent encouragement of Islamist groups sowed the seeds of future religious-based opposition, which believe the Pakistani regime has deviated from Islam.

The implications of increased Islamist activism for political reform are clear. Efforts to defuse Islamist opposition through political concessions, similar to those made to the MMA in NWFP and Baluchistan, would reduce the likelihood of attempts on Musharraf's life but at the same time compromise the potential for progressive political development. A crackdown would likely result in a confrontation with the Islamists, potentially further radicalizing the Pakistani political arena and provide further justification for authoritarian measures to ensure political control.

FROM KEMAL, KHAN, AND ZIA TO MUSHARRAF

Between 1949 and 1956 Musharraf, the son of a diplomat, lived in the Turkish capital, Ankara. While in Turkey, the young Musharraf developed an affinity for Mustafa Kemal Ataturk—the charismatic founder of the Turkish Republic—whose thinking has had a significant influence on the Pakistani leader. In fact, along with a portrait of Mohamed Ali Jinnah—*de rigeur* for Pakistani officialdom—Musharraf's office contains a portrait of Ataturk.

Quite like Turkey's officers who seized power in 1961 and 1980, Musharraf has sought to enhance the political role of the Pakistani military establishment through constitutional mechanisms. The Pakistani leader claimed that his changes would not only provide greater checks and balances between the branches of government, but would also remove the military from politics. Musharraf's changes did neither. Rather, the amendments to the 1973 constitution provided checks on the legislature and executive, but removed the ability of these branches to balance the presidency. Instead of removing the armed forces from politics, Musharraf's constitutional revisions actually institutionalized the military's influence on Pakistani politics.

In August 2002, Musharraf issued a Legal Framework Order (LFO), which served as the legal apparatus through which Musharraf went about altering Pakistan's constitution by fiat. The first of Musharraf's institutional changes sought to enhance presidential powers at the expense of the National Assembly. With the implementation of the amendments, Musharraf or any future Pakistani president would have the right to dissolve the legislature, specifically undermining parliamentary sovereignty laid out in the 1973 version of the constitution. The LFO also undermined legislative prerogative, as it was used to confer constitutional legitimacy to all acts and decrees of the military government and extended Musharraf's term as president for five years.[33] According to the 1973 constitution, however, only the National Assembly can choose the Pakistani head of state.

Second, the president's enhanced powers endowed Musharraf with the right to reject the prime minister's nominations to Pakistan's highest courts, thereby compromising, at least in part, the principle of judicial independence. Finally, the prime minister's recommendations for provincial governors would no longer be binding on the president. In fact, the president would have the right to choose provincial governors

on his own, which gave the president the power, albeit indirect, to dissolve provincial assemblies.[34] In all, the amendments so thoroughly undermined the powers of the prime minister that the head of government, the leader of the largest popularly elected party in the National Assembly, was reduced to serving at the pleasure of the president.

In the starkest parallel with the Turkish officer corps, Musharraf, through the LFO, established a National Security Council (NSC) that would be the primary means through which the officers stood watch over Pakistani political development. The council is composed of the president, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the service chiefs, the prime minister, the leader of the opposition, the speaker of the National Assembly, and the chairman of the Senate. Given the prevailing patterns of civil-military relations in Pakistan, the military dominates this formally advisory body. Even more, the NSC is guided by a purposefully expansive definition of national security—"strategic matters pertaining to the sovereignty of the state; and matters relating to democracy, governance and inter-provincial harmony." This provides the military with the legal pretext to exert its influence in multiple areas outside of its professional competence. Parliamentary affairs, national education, and the development of the national economy all have fallen under the NSC's—and thus the military's—purview.

If Musharraf's constitutional revisions and institutionalization of the military's influence on the political system are reminiscent of the Turkish experience, other aspects of the general's efforts to rig Pakistan's political system are taken directly from his predecessors—Field Marshal Ayub Khan and General Zia. After the military's seizure of power in 1958, Ayub Khan also used the mechanism of a Legal Framework Order to alter the Pakistani political system. One of the primary components of Khan's program was what was called "Basic Democracy," which would diffuse power

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33 *Pakistan: Transition to Democracy?* International Crisis Group Report 40 (3 October 2002): 21.
34 Ibid. Constitution of the Federation of Pakistan 1973, Article 101.

to the local level. Local councils were created at the district and sub-district levels to perform local and municipal administrative functions.[35] Representatives or "Basic Democrats" on these councils also constituted an Electoral College, which was charged with nominating the president. At first blush, Khan's "Basic Democracy" looked like an effort to widen participation and create a cadre of grass-roots politicians to oversee local affairs. In reality, "Basic Democracy" was a means to provide a social base for Khan's leadership through a vast patronage network that was intended to do little more than co-opt local leaders and de-politicize Pakistani society. The key to this was the bureaucracy's continued control over resources for the district and sub-district council. This allowed Khan to use the machinery of the state to manipulate local officials—half of whom were appointed anyway and none of whom were permitted to have a party affiliation—to ensure that independent bases of power would not emerge to challenge the political program of the Field Marshal and his allies. In September 1979, General Zia pursued a similar policy with his own local government initiative, which also sought to depoliticize Pakistan and create a social base for the military government through state patronage.

In March 2000, Musharraf and his fellow officers proposed a similar "devolution" of political power to the local level. According to Musharraf, the plan,

> …represent[ed] the beginning of the Pakistani revolution, a peaceful, constructive, democratic, dynamic revolution—whose sole objective is to place in the hands of the people the power to shape their own destiny…With this new concept of elected community government, an unprecedented transfer of power will take place from elites to the vast majority.[36]

Devolution vested elected local leaders with a variety of administrative functions and even called for the establishment of locally elected mayors who would control district administrators and the police. Among a variety of functions, district assemblies were endowed with the responsibility of overseeing administration, taxes, bylaws, and budgets. Like Khan's "Basic Democracy" and Zia's local government initiative, Musharraf's decentralization appeared reform-minded, but actually masked an effort designed ultimately to depoliticize Pakistan and thus consolidate the power of his military government. Elections were to be strictly non-partisan, local financial resources continued to be under the control of the state through federal grants, and decentralization provided an opportunity for the military to manipulate the outcome of local elections. Thus, while Musharraf's rhetoric stressed democratic revolution and populism, devolution proved to be little more than a sophisticated effort to establish pseudo-democratic institutions that reinforced the authoritarian character of the Pakistani regime.

The implications of the military establishment's worldview, its relationship with Islamist movements, Musharraf's 2002 constitutional amendments, and the military's efforts to centralize power through pseudo-democratic institutions suggest that Pakistan's military establishment is unlikely to consent to substantive democratic reforms. In fact, the opposite is more likely the case. Policymakers and analysts should expect Pakistani officers to leverage their influence in the political system to ensure the integrity of the current political order. The growing influence of Islamist groups in the Pakistani political arena does complicate matters for Musharraf and his allies. Yet, the Pakistani leader is a shrewd political operator and will continue to seek ways to manipulate the Islamists and other political forces to his benefit. Moreover, despite the assassination attempts and the relative lawlessness of

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35 *Devolution in Pakistan: Reform or Regression?* International Crisis Group Report 77 (22 March 2004): 3.
36 "CE Announces Holding of Local Government Elections from December 2000–July 2001," *Associated Press of Pakistan—News Summary* (24 March 2000) <http://www.fas.org/news/pakistan/2000/000324-pak-app1.htm>.

the NWFP, the military retains overpowering force should it be necessary to employ coercive measures to ensure political control. Given Pakistan's current political dynamics, it is remote that the officers will reverse the changes they have wrought since 1999 and submit to civilian superiority.

Over the longer term, however, the ability of the Pakistani military to maintain its corporate coherence should be a growing concern. By many measures the Pakistani domestic situation is deteriorating. Although macro-economic management has improved under Musharraf, economic indicators continue to decline. In addition, while sectarian violence in Karachi and Lahore remain a significant and growing problem, Musharraf has been either unwilling or unable to use the military to quell this bloodshed. Should the domestic political situation continue to deteriorate, the Pakistanis experience some type of setback in their relations with India, or political developments in Afghanistan begin to impinge on Islamabad's interests, the veneer of unity among the ranks of the officers corps could break. Musharraf would be substantially weakened as a result. At the same time, if the MMA were to maintain its own unity (by no means guaranteed), the emergence of a military-Islamist alignment is a distinct possibility. Given the worldview of both groups, it is likely that US interests in the region would be compromised. More germane to the overall concerns of this study, the prospects for progressive political reform, far from strong to begin with, would be further weakened.

THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE MILITARY: THE CASE OF SYRIA

Accounts of Syrian politics often refer to the period between Syria's independence in 1946 and 1970 as an era of coups d'etat. In those 24 years, Syria had 29 different governments. The combination of military meddling, civilian power grabs, and the overall inability of Syria's elite to forge effective institutions compelled the Syrians to seek Egyptian help in 1958. In exchange for the stability that the Syrians believed Gamal Abd al-Nasir would supply, Syria's leaders agreed to relinquish the country's sovereignty and join with Egypt to form the United Arab Republic. Only three years later, however, a group of Syrian military officers forced Syria's succession from the union. They were unhappy with Cairo's efforts to render Damascus its junior partner of the United Arab Republic and the heavy-handed tactics of Nasir's representative in Damascus, Field Marshal Abdel Hakim 'Amr. After this traumatic event, the Syrian military sought to establish political stability through both the officers' direct control of district administration and the abolition of political parties.[37]

Though the government was briefly returned to civilians, at the end of March 1962 some of the same officers who had been instrumental in undermining the union with Egypt brought down the civilian government. The officers charged that Syria's civilian leadership had failed to pursue the officers' prescribed program of social equality and a renegotiation of a union with Egypt on the basis of equality between two states.[38] The unintended consequence of the March 28 coup was a significant fissure within the armed forces that set off a series of coups and counter-coups until almost a year later. In early March 1963, a group of officers—often referred to as the neo-Ba'thists—pushed Prime Minister Khalid al-Azm from office and set about establishing authoritarian institutions that conformed to their own version of Ba'thist ideology. Among the officers who undertook the coup was an air force officer named Hafiz al-Asad. After the June 1967 war, Asad became the primary competitor to Syrian leader Salah Jadid. In 1970, Asad, who had established a firm grip on the armed forces, toppled Jadid. This was to be the last of Syria's coups, but not the end of the Syrian military's influence on politics.

ASAD AND THE MILITARY

The overt role of the Syrian armed forces in politics came to a close with the concomitant consolidation of both Asad's power and the authoritarian institutions that underpinned the political order. Yet, over the course of Asad's 30-year reign, the military remained critically influential. Throughout his presidency Asad

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37 Steven Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999): 151–152.
38 Heydemann, 155.

relied on a small cadre of officers to ensure political control. While Syria features a parliament, cabinet, and a number of small political parties in addition to the Ba'th party, these pseudo-democratic institutions mask the centrality of men in uniform to the Syrian political system. Decision-making during the Asad era was restricted to the president, senior military officers, and the heads of Syria's security services. Moreover, there was a distinctly sectarian quality to this inner circle. All the prominent commanders surrounding Asad at various periods—Ali Aslan (who replaced longtime Chief-of-Staff Hikmat al-Shihabi), Mohamed al-Khawli, Adnan Makhluf, Ali Duba, Ibrahim Safi, and Shafiq Fayyad, hail from Asad's Alawi sect.[39] Asad's minister of defense, Mustafa Tlas, is a Sunni and was close friend of Asad. Despite Tlas's lofty position, however, he only nominally commands the armed forces.[40]

The close connection between Hafiz al-Asad and the military did not preclude a number of crises in civil-military relations. For example, members of the officer corps opposed turning their guns on the Palestinian Liberation Organization in Lebanon in the 1970s. Elements of the rank and file deserted or defected during brutal efforts to pacify Hama in 1982. Asad's younger brother Rifa'at, who led the effort in Hama, sought to overthrow Hafiz twice: once in 1983, after the president suffered a heart attack, and again in 1984, when the Syrian president dismantled the instruments of his brother's political influence, the para-military Defense Companies, and transferred the remnants of this praetorian guard to the command of another officer. There were other crises within the inner circle that led to the dismissal of such longtime confidantes as Hikmat Shihabi, Ali Haydar—who in 1984 was instrumental in preventing the Rifa'at's forces from taking Damascus—and Ali Duba.

Despite these problems, throughout the Hafiz al-Asad period, Syria's senior command remained loyal servants of the president. The combination of three factors tied these officers to President Asad during his three decades in power. The first is, of course, Alawi cohesion. Syria's Alawi community, which comprises a mere 12 percent of the Syrian population, benefited significantly during Asad's tenure. For the officers, support for President Asad was critical to ensuring the favored position of a community that might find itself at risk in the event of a leadership crisis. Dovetailing well with the exigencies of securing the country against the perceived Israeli threat, the armed forces under Hafiz al-Asad enjoyed the bulk of Syria's relatively meager resources. A full seven percent of gross domestic product and 50 percent of the Syrian government's budget were devoted to the armed forces. Although Asad's goal of strategic parity with Israel went unrealized—despite significant Soviet assistance—Syrian officers have historically enjoyed a steady flow of new equipment. Syria's ability to maintain a modern military became problematic over the course of the 1990s, however. Unlike during the Soviet period, the Kremlin has been unwilling to extend credits to Syria to upgrade and maintain its military forces, though there have been ongoing discussions between the Russians and Syrians about major new arms purchases. The under-capitalization of the military is a cause for concern for the Syrian military establishment, but does not seem to have caused unrest among the senior command. Syria has been able to maintain its significant force of armor along the Golan Heights, has invested in well-equipped special forces, and, of course, has used *Hizballah* as a proxy force all in an effort to deter Israel.

Finally, Asad gave Syria's commanders and their subordinates the opportunity to pursue their own parochial interests. The proximity of the officers to the Syrian state allowed the officers to accumulate significant wealth. Graft and corruption surrounding

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39 Some of these officers have, in fact, been replaced since Bashar al-Asad's succession to the Syrian presidency, but this in no way diminishes the influence of the officers in general.

40 Tlas was not the only Sunni among Hafiz al-Asad's inner circle—Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa and Vice President Abdel Halim Khaddam are both Sunnis.

government contracts and smuggling are the most common means by which Syria's officers have enriched themselves. In fact, it is the vested interests of the officer corps rather than genuine security concerns that are most likely to keep the Syrian military in Lebanon for the foreseeable future. Unlike the rest of Syrian society, which must pay up to 250 percent duty on goods brought in from Lebanon, Syrian officers "import" a variety of goods ranging from mundane household items to luxury cars, jewelry, and reportedly, narcotics along their own private road from the Lebanese capital to the Syrian border.[41] Though by all accounts Asad was not himself corrupt, he determined that allowing the officers to enrich themselves was worth the price of their loyalty. So long as the officers' personal financial ambitions did not threaten to become an independent base of political power, Asad regarded the economic activities of the commanders as a means of ensuring loyalty and control.

FROM ASAD TO ASAD

Before Hafiz al-Asad's death, some analysts predicted that once the Syrian president passed from the scene, the era of Syrian stability would come to an abrupt end. It was believed that factions within the military, elements of the Alawi power structure, the Sunni elite, and a revitalized Islamist movement would emerge to vie for power. These predictions proved incorrect as Syria experienced a smooth transition of power, and in the four years since Asad's death in June 2000 there has been little evidence that independent centers of power have emerged to challenge Bashar al-Asad's leadership. Two factors militated against instability and disintegration of Hafiz al-Asad's political order. First, for the last two decades the Alawi-dominated military-political elite and the Sunni merchant classes have enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship that has kept the

Alawis in power and enriched the Sunnis.[42] At the time of Asad's death, both groups had an abiding interest in regime stability. The durability of this alliance is by no means guaranteed, however, as the business community has reportedly grown increasingly concerned about Syria's deteriorating economy and the slow pace of reforms intended to address this significant problem.

Second, Hafiz Asad prepared the way for Bashar. Immediately following the death of Hafiz's designated successor, Basil al-Asad, in a January 1994 car accident, Bashar began his apprenticeship. In an implicit recognition of the importance of the armed forces to the maintenance of the regime, Bashar took his brother's place as a commander in the Republican Guards. The younger Asad was also given responsibility for Damascus's Lebanon policy and a high-profile, though largely superficial, effort to root out official corruption. In the years just prior to his death Asad also took care to remove potential contenders to the Syrian presidency and those who questioned the president's plans for Bashar.[43] For example, Major General Ali Haydar was relieved of his 26-year command of Syria's special forces and was subsequently arrested in 1994 when he questioned the wisdom of grooming Bashar al-Asad for the presidency. In 1995, Republican Guard commander Major General Adnan Makhlouf was also pushed out of his post after a disagreement with Bashar. Chief-of-Staff, Hikmet Shihabi, a long-time member of Asad's inner circle, was removed from his post in 1998.[44] Officially, Shihabi was relieved of his command for alleged corruption, but it is clear that the chief of staff was regarded as a significant threat to a Bashar presidency. And in 1999, the Syrian army attacked supporters of Bashar's uncles, Rifa'at and Jamil, in the northern port city of Latakia. Like Ali Haydar, Rifa'at and Jamil had questioned whether Bashar should assume his father's position.

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41 Najib Ghadbian, "The New Assad: Dynamics of Continuity and Change in Syria," *Middle East Journal* 55, no. 4 (Autumn 2001): 626; Glenn E. Robinson, "Elite Cohesion, Regime Succession and Political Instability in Syria," *Middle East Policy* 5, no. 4 (January 1998): 172.
42 Glenn E. Robinson, "Elite Cohesion, Regime Succession and Political Instability in Syria," *Middle East Policy* 5, no. 4 (January 1998).
43 Najib Ghadbian, "The New Assad: Dynamics of Continuity and Change in Syria," *Middle East Journal* 55, no. 4 (Autumn 2001): 625.
44 Shihabi had at one time been entrusted with critical missions on behalf of President Asad. In the mid-1990s Shihabi was sent to meet with then-Israeli chiefs of staff Ehud Barak and Amnon Lipkin Shahak as part of the on-again, off-again Syrian-Israeli peace negotiations.

With would-be challengers to Bashar's ascendancy sidelined, a core group of officers ensured the transition from father to son. This included the chief of staff Lieutenant General Ali Aslan, a leading figure in military intelligence, Major General 'Asif Shwkat, who also happens to be Bashar's brother-in-law, the head of Internal Security, Major General Bahjat Sulayman, and Bashar's younger brother, Major Mahir al-Asad. Long-serving Defense Minister Mustafa Tlas also played a key role ensuring that Bashar would confront few obstacles as he entered office and immediately thereafter.

BASHAR, THE MILITARY, AND REFORM

Analysts are generally divided in their assessment of Bashar al-Asad, his relationship to the Syrian military establishment, and his worldview. To some, Bashar is in the same category as King Abdallah II of Jordan and Mohamed VI of Morocco, young men with experience in the West who ostensibly see the value of political and economic liberalization. There is some evidence that Bashar belongs to this club. In his inaugural address Bashar stated:

> ….Democracy is our duty towards others before it becomes a right for us. Democratic thinking is the building and the structure. We all know that when the foundation of a building is weak the building will be threatened to fall for the slightest reason.[45]

After assuming power the new Syrian president permitted the establishment of political salons and oversaw the establishment of private newspapers. In addition, political prisoners were released from Syrian jails. According to this stream of thought, Bashar would do more if not for the persistent influence of an old guard of officers and cronies who were attached to Hafiz al-Asad. Other

analysts suggest that Bashar, in contrast, is little more than a creature of his father's regime. The idea of an old guard restricting Bashar's freedom of maneuver, they contend, is a myth and the younger Asad has no intention of altering Syria's political system.[46]

The debate is largely artificial, however. While it is important to recognize that Bashar is the extension of his father's leadership and that Syria features sophisticated institutions of political control, there is reason to believe that Bashar can and most likely will undertake reform—it just may not be the kind and extent of reform that some analysts expect. Moreover, these reforms must be undertaken with the support of the Syrian military establishment. Paradoxically, for both the Alawi officers that dominate the military and Bashar, the exigencies of regime preservation will drive reform.

The Syrian leadership is confronted with a range of economic and social pressures that cannot be ignored. First, Syria relies on oil revenues for anywhere between one-third and two-thirds of its exports, which approaches half of state revenue. While Syrian coffers are relatively flush given the recent spike in the price of oil, Damascus will not be in the oil business for much longer. Reliable external estimates indicate that Syria's oil fields will be depleted in the coming decade.[47] Without the development of the non-oil sector, Syria is likely to confront a severe balance of payments crisis.[48] This will be a significant challenge, given that Syria's critical macroeconomic indicators such as growth, gross domestic product, per capita income, and productivity, have been on the decline. All the while, Syria has experienced one of the highest population growth rates in the Middle East.

The combination of these problems poses a significant risk to Bashar and the group of officers who ensured

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45 "Inaugural Address of President Bashar al-Asad" <http://www.al-bab.com/arab/countries/syria/bashar00a.htm>
46 Most prominent among these analysts is Gary C. Cambill. See his article, "The Myth of Syria's Old Guard," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* 6, no. 2/2 (February–March 2004). <http://www.meib.org/articles/0402_s1.htm>
47 "Syria Country Analysis Brief," US Department of Energy <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/syria.html>
48 Volker Perthes, "The Political Economy of Syrian Succession," *Survival*, 43, no. 1 (Spring 2001).

the president's smooth transition to power. Falling economic indicators and a rising population is a recipe for anti-regime activism. Bashar and his associates seem to recognize this danger, as they have undertaken a series of reforms and will likely pursue other initiatives. As noted briefly above, Syrians have enjoyed relatively greater freedom of expression and a freer press. In 2000, for example, Syrian intellectuals issued an open letter to the new president demanding the end of martial law and the state of emergency that has been in effect since 1963. Another group called the "Friends of Civil Society," circulated a similar petition calling for political pluralism in addition to the end of martial law. At the same time, the government permitted two new Syrian newspapers to begin publication. The political opening did not last long, however. By early 2001, Bashar placed restrictions on political salons and the leadership demonstrated that there was only so much freedom of expression that it would tolerate.

Still, there was no widespread crackdown on dissent. In the spring of 2001, the "Civil Society Committee" published the "Social Pact" in which they called for democracy and economic reform. The Muslim Brotherhood surfaced from underground with its own pact, which emphasized the organization's constitutionalist strategy and rejection of violence, and called for a national dialogue between the government and political groups. The Syrian government did little in the way of response. On the economic front, the Syrian leadership has met the demands of the Sunni merchant class in liberalizing banking and foreign direct investment laws, in an effort to prevent this critical constituency from breaking with the government.

However, the fact that the government has not engaged in wide-ranging repression of those calling for change should not be misinterpreted as an indicator that the Syrian leadership has made a strategic decision to undertake fundamental political reform. Much like Egypt's military-political leadership, the Syrian state elite is likely to satisfy some demands for change from below, with an eye not towards fundamental change but at ensuring the integrity of the

existing political order. The goal is to instill legitimacy into the system without altering the institutions that maintain the power of Bashar and the Alawi officer-elite. The leadership will countenance political salons and manifestoes; but that tolerance will rapidly erode if dissent does not remain within what the president and his associates perceive to be tolerable levels. The success of this strategy is dependent in large part on the loyalty of Syria's officer corps to Bashar's leadership and the officers' own internal cohesion. With a number of potential political rivals removed during the waning days of Hafiz al-Asad's rule, the new Syrian president's position seems secure, but the drift in Syrian domestic policy risks creating divisions among the officers. Moreover, the consequences of continued poor economic performance and/or regional developments related to both Iraq and the Arab-Israeli conflict have the potential to affect political alignments and calculations in Damascus. Under these circumstances, it seems likely that Bashar will continue to pursue his current strategy. It is one intended to shore up the officers' support and avoid any bold moves that risk sowing fissures within the military establishment. As in the other states, this strategy bodes worrisome for true reform, as well as long-term stability. The legacy the father left behind could prove unsustainable for the son.

Conclusions & Policy Recommendations

The regimes in Egypt, Pakistan, and Syria should not be confused with the authoritarian regimes of Eastern Europe in the late 1980s. Shorn of their Soviet backing, these states proved brittle in the face of significant political challenge from below. Nor should the military establishments of Egypt, Pakistan, and Syria be confused with the former Warsaw Pact militaries, which generally stayed out of the transitions. The Egyptian, Pakistani, and Syrian military-political leaderships have an abiding interest in regime stability and have strategically supported a measure of reform and political liberalization, while maintaining critical institutions of political control. This strategy affords the authoritarian political systems in Egypt, Pakistan, and Syria a certain amount of flexibility. As a result, policymakers and other observers should not misapprehend the widening of political participation, relaxation of restrictions on freedom of the press, or a variety of economic changes as indications that democratization is in the offing.

Many analysts optimistically believe in the snowball effect of minor or cosmetic changes. They wager that such tactical liberalization will change the terms of the debate and ultimately produce so much pressure that Egyptian, Pakistani, and Syrian military political elites will cede to democrats or become overwhelmed in a democratic revolution. This is a hopeful, even romantic scenario, but it does not reflect the reality of political dynamics in the present case studies. The much talked about reforms in Egypt and Pakistan, which the Syrian military-political elite hope to emulate, are significantly less substantial than what meets the eye. Moreover, observers and policymakers should not overestimate the influence of local liberals. A tiny, albeit active, group, these individuals currently command very little in the way of popular support. The Islamists, in contrast, pose a far more formidable political force. And while many Arab liberals now seek inclusion of the Islamists in the legal political arena, they have previously cooperated with the state in justifying the repression of Islamists. While the Egyptian, Pakistani, and Syrian state elite are not above manipulating Islamists for their own political ends, they are unlikely to allow these organizations to accrue power beyond certain circumscribed limits. Finally, while the US presence in Iraq has created some fears among authoritarian leaders in the region, the chaotic situation in that country is unlikely to encourage reform.

The primary mission of the Egyptian, Pakistani, and Syrian military establishments is regime stability. Thus, senior officers, working with and through their civilian allies, have rigged political institutions in a manner intended to preserve the prevailing political order. In short, current civil military relations limit the ability of the United States to promote direct change from the outside. Ultimately, political liberalization is the result of internal political, economic, and social pressures.

Yet, this current situation does not mean that the United States is powerless or that it should sit on the sidelines. The United States has a variety of policy instruments that may help create the *conditions* conducive to reform. These include:

- **Stand Up For Local Reformers:** Beyond the rhetorical commitments of senior policymakers Washington must take a strong interest in human rights and democracy in Egypt, Pakistan, and Syria. There is a sense among intellectuals, activists, and even leaders in the Middle East that the United States is not serious about promoting political reform given Washington's overriding security concerns in the region. This has allowed Egyptian, Pakistani, and Syrian officials—who have become adept at the discourse of reform—to deflect and diffuse demands for political change. US policymakers should press Cairo, Islamabad, and Damascus to live up to their rhetorical commitments to political, economic, and social reform. One way the United States can demonstrate its own interest in political change in the region is through a renewed emphasis on human rights. The Egyptian, Pakistani, and Syrian national security states have taken a heavy toll on political dissidents. To its credit, the Bush administration did pressure the Egyptian government over the arrest and subsequent two-and-one-half year incarceration of democracy activist Saad Eddin Ibrahim. Yet, this was an isolated incident involving an individual with strong ties to both the United States and Europe. The example both proves what can be done, but also demonstrates the limits of what has been done. Broader efforts must be made on behalf of the broader set of dissidents and activists in the region, who importantly have local credibility that the United States presently lacks.

- **Support Civilian Control Over the Military:** In their broad discussions about reform with Presidents Mubarak, Musharraf, and Asad, as well as local elites and publics, US policymakers and diplomats must stress the importance of civilian control over the military. Altering the deep-rooted

national-security states of Egypt, Pakistan, and Syria is no easy task and will require significant institutional change. Moreover, achieving a shift in civil-military relations in favor of civilians is no guarantee of political change. After all, civilians are not immune from predatory policies. Still, as cases from Latin America and Asia suggest, civilian superiority provides the best chance for political liberalization and economic reform. Washington would thus need to encourage changes that 1) close channels through which Egyptian, Pakistani, and Syrian officers have been able to influence politics; 2) prevent the officers from engaging in activities not strictly related to defense and national security; 3) provide civilians with the means to override the officers, and 4) alter the prevailing ethos held within the officer corps that justifies their influence and intervention.

- **Leverage Positive Influence Through Conditionality:** Washington can also use its considerable leverage to create *positive* incentives to encourage Egyptian, Syrian, and Pakistani elites to take steps toward political reform. This is more relevant to Egypt and Pakistan than to Syria given Washington's strategic relationship with both Cairo and Islamabad. In short, military and economic assistance should, in part, be conditioned on progress toward the establishment of pluralism, rule of law, power sharing, property rights, and free markets. This is not to suggest that military aid to Egypt or Pakistan be summarily cut or reduced as some in Congress have suggested. This is not in the interests of the United States. Rather, Washington should provide incentives, such as access to additional military and economic aid, *if* Egypt and Pakistan take credible steps toward, for example, government accountability and transparency. The benefits of this approach are twofold: First, positive conditionality does not risk US interests in technologically advanced, capable military forces in Egypt and Pakistan. Second, the approach provides for a more dignified aid relationship leaving the decision to undertake reforms ultimately up to the Egyptians and Pakistanis. The

demonstratively punitive sanctions such as those recently applied to Damascus through the Syria Accountability Act are unlikely to encourage changes in Syrian behavior. Positive conditionality, while not a panacea, is nevertheless far more likely to be an effective means of promoting political change in Syria.

In the end, however, convincing the military-political elite of Egypt, Pakistan, and Syria to cede power will not be easy. The military establishments in all three countries derive significant benefit—both politically and economically—from the prevailing political orders in each setting. Continuing dialogue and positive pressure through the use of conditionality are the best tactics for Washington to pursue political liberalization. Policymakers and analysts should be cognizant, however, that the Egyptian, Pakistani, and Syrian leaders have withstood significant internal and external pressure in the past without relinquishing their control over the political arena. Political change will ultimately come to Egypt, Syria, and Pakistan, but the position of the military in these societies will make this process more difficult and slow.

While recognizing that "one-size fits all" policies are inappropriate, the previous discussion of civil-military relations in Egypt, Pakistan, and Syria is relevant to the wider Muslim world, particularly states such as Algeria, Tunisia, and Yemen. Indeed, the Egyptian, Pakistani, and Syrian cases suggest that:

• **Don't Forget the Military Role in Reform Policy:** For analysts interested in the internal political development of a variety of Muslim countries, the role of the military establishment cannot be ignored. Military officers were either the "founders" or pillars of regimes in Egypt, Turkey, Algeria, Pakistan, Syria, Tunisia, and Indonesia. As a result, political and social institutions in these countries tend to reflect the interests of the military establishment and their civilian allies. While officers may have at one time been progressive forces of modernization, they have,

in general, become conservative elements that have sought to preserve political orders that are increasingly illegitimate.

• **Distinguish Cosmetic Reform from Real Reform:** In the military-dominated states of the Arab and Islamic worlds, there is a tendency for leaders to take into account some demands for reform from below, while ensuring that key institutions of political control are maintained. When assessing political reform initiatives, analysts must ask whether these policies alter the institutions that support prevailing power relations. For example, changes to electoral, political parties, press laws, and the penal code may enhance a façade of democracy, but may not actually broaden basic freedoms or actual political participation.

• **Incorporate Extra-Regional Lessons:** While there are few models of civil-military relations that can easily be grafted onto the primary Arab and Islamic cases, the successful transitions to democracy in formerly military dominated societies such as South Korea and Brazil can be instructive. In addition, as Turkey has undertaken significant political reform, the changes in the relationship between Turkish military officers and the political system deserve greater attention. As a result, policymakers should incorporate some of the lessons learned from South Korea, Brazil, and Turkey into their approach to military-dominated societies of the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

• **Positional Conditionality and Multilateralism:** Positive conditionality may create both incentives and constraints that convince military officers to remove themselves from, and permanently stay out of, politics. As noted just above, this conditionality can include financial rewards in the form of increased military and economic aid. On the multilateral level, Washington can work with its European partners and international financial institutions to create incentives for political change such as membership in "clubs" like the World Trade Organization or an expanded Partnership for Peace.

Civil-military relations represent an important, but all too often missing, dimension of policy approaches to political liberalization in the Middle East and the wider Islamic world. Understanding the organic linkage between military officers and the political systems of states like Egypt, Algeria, Syria, Yemen, Pakistan, and Tunisia can provide insight into the prospects for political reform, as well as illustrate pathways to better policy. While military establishments in these countries may no longer be involved in day-to-day governance, the institutions that shape expectations and behavior in the political arena tend to reflect the interests of the military elite and their allies. Given both the vested interests of the officers who benefit this state of affairs and the difficulties associated with institutional change, progressive political development in the military-dominated political systems of the Arab and Islamic worlds is not impossible, but will certainly be difficult. Tackling the challenge of civil-military relations must be a cornerstone of US reform efforts.

THE BROOKINGS PROJECT ON U.S. POLICY TOWARDS THE ISLAMIC WORLD

The *Brookings Project on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World* is a major research program housed in the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. It was designed to respond to some profound questions that the terrorist attacks of September 11th raised for U.S. foreign policy. The project seeks to develop an understanding of the forces that led to the attacks, the varied reactions in the Islamic world, and the long-term U.S. policy responses. In particular, the project examines how the United States can reconcile its need to eliminate terrorism and reduce the appeal of extremist movements with its need to build more positive relations with the wider Islamic world.

The project has several interlocking components:

• The U.S.-Islamic World Forum, which brings together American and Muslim world leaders from the field of politics, business, media, academia and civil society, for discussion and dialogue;

• A task force of specialists in Islamic, regional, and foreign policy issues (emphasizing diversity in viewpoint and geographic expertise), as well as government policymakers, who meet regularly to discuss, analyze, and share information on relevant trends and issues;

• A visiting fellows program that brings distinguished experts from the Islamic world to the Saban Center at Brookings;

• A series of analysis papers and monographs that provide needed analysis of the vital issues of joint concern between the U.S. and the Islamic world;

• A Brookings Institution Press book series, which will explore U.S. policy options towards the Islamic world. The objective of which is to synthesize the project's finding for public dissemination.

The project convenors are Stephen Philip Cohen, Brookings Institution Senior Fellow; Martin Indyk, Director of the Saban Center; and Shibley Telhami, Professor of Government at the University of Maryland and Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Saban Center. Peter W. Singer, National Security Fellow at the Brookings Institution, is the Project Director.

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U.S. POLICY TOWARDS THE ISLAMIC WORLD

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THE SABAN CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY AT THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

The Saban Center for Middle East Policy was established on May 13th, 2002 with an inaugural address by His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan. The establishment of the Saban Center reflects the Brookings Institution's commitment to expand dramatically its research and analysis of Middle East policy issues at a time when the region has come to dominate the U.S. foreign policy agenda.

The Saban Center provides Washington policymakers with balanced, objective, in-depth, and timely research and policy analysis from experienced and knowledgeable people who can bring fresh perspectives to bear on the critical problems of the Middle East. The center upholds the Brookings tradition of being open to a broad range of views. Its central objective is to advance understanding of developments in the Middle East through policy-relevant scholarship and debate.

The center's establishment has been made possible by a generous founding grant from Haim and Cheryl Saban of Los Angeles. Ambassador Martin S. Indyk, senior fellow in Foreign Policy Studies, is the director of the Saban Center. Kenneth M. Pollack is the center's director of research. Joining them is a core group of Middle East experts who conduct original research and develop innovative programs to promote a better understanding of the policy choices facing American decision makers in the Middle East. They include Tamara Wittes who is a specialist on political reform in the Arab world; Shibley Telhami who holds the Sadat Chair at the University of Maryland; Shaul Bakhash an expert on Iranian politics from George Mason University; Daniel Byman a Middle East terrorism expert from Georgetown University; and Flynt Leverett, a former senior CIA analyst and Senior Director at the National Security Council who is a specialist on Syria and Lebanon. The center is located in the Foreign Policy Studies Program at Brookings, led by Vice President and Director James B. Steinberg.

The Saban Center is undertaking original research and innovating programming in five areas: the implications of regime change in Iraq, including postwar nation-building and Gulf security; the dynamics of the Iranian reformation; mechanisms and requirements for fulfilling a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; policy for Phase III of the war on terror, including the Syrian challenge; and political change in the Arab world.

The Saban Center also houses the *Project on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World* which is funded by a generous grant from the State of Qatar and directed by National Security Fellow Peter W. Singer. The project focuses on analyzing the problems that afflict the relationship between the United States and the Islamic world with the objective of developing effective policy responses. It includes a task force of experts, the annual Doha Forum (a dialogue between American and Muslim leaders), a visiting fellows program for specialists from the Islamic world, and a monograph series.