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## It's not just Morsi, it's the entire political class

Morsi won't leave office nor should he without the opposition having a concrete political programme

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June 30 marked the largest protest in Egypt's history with demonstrators demanding Morsi resign

The protests taking place across Egypt have focused attention on the failings of president Mohammad Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). A loose conglomerate of opposition activists, politicians, and average citizens has called for Morsi's resignation as the Egyptian economy flounders and the goals of the 2011 uprisings remain unachieved. Today security services continue to brutalise the people, a subsidy system that keeps bread and gas cheap is on the verge of collapse, inflation is soaring, extremists attack minority groups, and Egyptians see little to indicate that the bureaucracy is working on behalf of average citizens.

Some among the opposition voted for Morsi, believing it was better to give the MB a chance at ruling than allowing Ahmed Shafiq, an insider candidate from the previous regime, to nullify the progress of the 2011 uprisings. A smaller minority announced from the outset that they would never accept Morsi, proclaiming rather breathlessly that this would be the first step towards the Talibanisation of Egypt. Morsi could have done nothing to placate this latter group, but he has squandered the support of those who held their noses while handing him the presidency.

Morsi's political ineptitude and increasingly authoritarian ruling style are largely to blame for this outcome. For example, in November 2012 Morsi effectively **declared his decrees immune from judicial review** after the judiciary thwarted his attempts at much needed political reform. While the judiciary was filled with appointees from the previous regime, this act was greeted with outrage in a country with a tradition of relative judicial independence.

Rather than using the bully pulpit to make his case, Morsi did little to win over the public, which feared this was a signal that the MB would circumvent the rule of law to achieve its goals. Had Mr. Morsi a sliver of political charisma, or surrounded himself with competent political advisors, he might have been able to confront the judiciary with more success. Instead he continued with astonishing blunders such as **appointing to the governorship of Luxor a member of al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya**, the militant group responsible for massacring dozens of foreign tourists there in 1997.

### **Qualified to succeed but failing**

There were two areas where Morsi and the MB seemed uniquely qualified to succeed but have failed: provision of social services and security sector reform. From its infancy in the 1930s, the MB has flourished by providing public goods like education, cooking gas, and electricity while cultivating support among groups often ignored by the state. In 2011 Brotherhood members used their logistical expertise to provide material assistance that sustained protests against the Mubarak regime.

Having assumed power, the MB has been unable to translate this experience into identifiable progress. Rubbish remains a plague in urban areas, **blackouts seem to be more frequent** than before, and the public education system is woefully inadequate. It will take years to make meaningful reforms, thus Morsi and the MB are partially suffering from inflated expectations. Mr. Morsi has tried to identify this gap, but Egyptians are impatient in the face of his political mistakes.

The other area where Morsi might have succeeded was in security sector reform. This would

have been exceedingly difficult, as Morsi needed to keep the security services satisfied enough to prevent the country from sliding deeper into lawlessness. The leadership of the MB was in a unique position to push for such reform however: many of them were being held as political prisoners when the 2011 uprisings began.

Indeed this might have been an opportunity to establish common ground with activists and politicians on the left, and Morsi might have used the momentum from the uprisings to stamp out torture and abuse within the security sector. Morsi's Islamist base could have rallied around this policy, as many of them maintain historical memories of victimisation at the hands of the security services. Because the president has not acted on such reforms, many within the opposition believe that the MB cut a deal with the security services to share power and engage in the same kinds of predatory behaviour as the Mubarak regime.

### **Little alternative vision**

The opposition then has a great deal to complain about, but they also offer little in the way of an alternative vision. This is because there isn't one single opposition. Instead there are liberals, secularists, members of the former regime, moderate Islamists, leftists, and fed up average people. Beyond getting Morsi out of office, these groups lack a unified political vision. As such, it is easy for Morsi's supporters to frame the opposition as sore losers seeking to sow chaos and reestablish the former regime. It doesn't help when some in the opposition call for the military to seize power.

Now elements of the opposition are calling for a caretaker technocratic government presided over by the military. Ignoring the dangerous precedent that military intervention sets for Egyptian democracy, the calls for technocratic rule expose a deeper problem among Egypt's political class: a common belief that technical expertise and administration will solve the country's various crises. If Morsi's failure tells us anything, it is that Egypt needs not technocrats but real politicians, with charisma and the ability to build broad coalitions. Seemingly technical problems like blackouts and rubbish collection are actually profoundly political, because solving them will require balancing conflicting interests and sacrifices from average people. Mere technocrats won't be able to convince the Egyptian people that they should pay more for petrol. To enact such crucial reforms, politicians must construct coalitions, make their case to the people, explain why sacrifice is necessary, and what average people will gain in the long term. At present, no opposition figure has demonstrated such rare political skills and opposition groups have been weak on coalition building from the outset. Until the opposition can figure out how to coordinate on actual policy, their future--at least in democratic contests--remains dim.