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Subject: Fared Zakaria on Egypt's lost opportunity
Date: Thu, 04 Jul 2013 01:38:23 +0000

Dear Jeffrey

If you haven't read it I tend to agree with Fared's analysis
Sultan

In Thursday's Washington Post, Fared Zakaria looks at why Morsi fell to history and his own mistakes.

Please visit the following link, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/fared-zakaria-morsis-lost-opportunity-in-egypt/2013/07/03/c1d8066c-e420-11e2-aef3-339619eab080_story.html or scroll down to read the article in its entirety.

Egypt's lost opportunity

By Fared Zakaria

Over the past three decades, when American officials would (gently) press Egypt's Hosni Mubarak to stop jailing his opponents and initiate more democratic reforms, he would invariably snap back: "Do you want the Muslim Brotherhood in power?" Wednesday's events suggest that Egyptians continue to face this choice, between military dictatorship and an illiberal democracy. To succeed, the new leadership in Egypt has to find a way to reject both. That's a task for Egyptians, not for the United States.

Much of the Western media has tended to describe the divide in Egypt as between secularists and Islamists, portraying ousted Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi as having pursued a radical Islamic agenda in his year in office. There is certainly a strand of truth to this narrative, though the story is more about grabbing power than enacting sharia.

Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood have been deceptive, avaricious and venal. The party promised that it would neither run for the presidency nor seek a parliamentary majority. It reneged on both pledges. It rushed through a constitution that was deficient in many key guarantees of individual rights. It has allowed discrimination and even violence against the Coptic Christian minority in Egypt. It has tried to shut down its opposition, banning members of Mubarak's old party from all political offices in Egypt for life.

But its biggest failing has been incompetence. Egypt is in free fall. In the year that Morsi was in power, the economy sunk, unemployment skyrocketed, public order collapsed, crime rose, and basic social services have stalled. This would by itself be enough to produce massive public discontent.

Public discontent was first channeled against the army, which ruled Egypt for 16 months after the fall of Mubarak in 2011. Now it has been directed towards Morsi. If the objective situation does not improve in the country, this discontent might not easily dissipate.

Egypt's military has presented this coup as a "soft" one, aimed at restoring democracy, not subverting it. If it succeeds, it could work like the Turkish military's removal of an Islamist government in 1997. If it fails, it could look like the Algerian coup of 1992, ushering in a decade of violence.

For now, it has certainly preserved the army's immense power and perks, which have continued despite the formal end of military rule. The military budget, for example, remains a black box subject to no parliamentary or presidential scrutiny. And while Morsi's misrule galvanized liberal forces, it is an irony that they have sought

a path to power on the backs of a fairly repressive military regime.

In Egypt, we see the results of an unfortunate dynamic produced by decades of dictatorship. Extreme autocracy produced, as its counterpoint, extreme opposition. As the regime became more repressive, the opposition grew more Islamist and obstinate, sometimes violent. Arab lands have been trapped between repressive regimes and illiberal political movements, with little prospect than that from within these two forces, liberal democracy might break through.

Morsi and the Brotherhood had the opportunity to break this vicious cycle — to be the force for democracy and for a liberal order with a separation of powers and a constitutional government. That was the basis of the Justice and Development Party's success in Turkey, until recently, when 10 years of success and three electoral victories went to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's head. But for that, Morsi would have needed to be a different kind of leader.

There is such a leader in the world today, lying barely alive in a hospital bed in Pretoria, South Africa. Nelson Mandela has many claims to greatness. But perhaps chief among them was the fact that when he took control of the country, he did everything in his power to accommodate and reassure the Afrikaners that they had an important place in the new South Africa. Imagine the pressures on Mandela from newly empowered blacks to treat these people, who had created apartheid, very differently. And yet he resisted and did what was right for his country and history.

The United States has tried to chart a middle course, supporting the democratic process, working with the elected president, and yet urging him toward moderation. It's not enough to satisfy either side — and where once Washington was blamed for supporting the military, it is now blamed for supporting the Brotherhood.

The reality is that leadership from Washington is largely irrelevant. What matters is leadership in Cairo. Morsi is not Mandela, nor, most probably, is his successor. Because of that difference, Egypt will follow a more difficult democratic course than did South Africa.

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