

# Egypt's Islamist surprise

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TWO months after the elections and constitutional maneuvers by the armed forces, the dust has begun to settle in Egypt, revealing that the Muslim Brotherhood controls the levers of power. The clarifying moment came on August 11 when President Mohamed Morsi removed the two top military leaders, consolidating the Brotherhood's hold over the government.

Realization has sent tremors of concern across the region and to Washington, but all may be over-reading the change. Despite a change of tone and public embrace of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmaedinejad, indications are that a radical break is unlikely from Morsi's Egypt. Not only are the new military appointees

counting was due to begin, SCAF headed by Minister of Defense Mohamed Tantawi, issued a "complementary constitutional declaration" transferring legislative powers to SCAF. Tantawi clearly had little respect for Morsi.

A week prior to the latest reshuffling, on the heels of the terrorist attack in the Sinai that left 16 Egyptian security officers murdered, Morsi replaced the chief of intelligence services, appointing Mohamed Shehata, who had most recently acted as liaison with the Israelis on the release of soldier Gilad Shalit.

Even as Egypt is engaged in a wide military campaign in the Sinai, Gaza's government has sheepishly tried to maintain a presence on Egypt's radar. Many in Egypt are quick to point the finger towards Gaza in those attacks, and Hamas has vehe-

received ex-ante or ex-post Qatari blessing. Relations with the Gulf emirate could not be better. The Qatar-based broadcast news service, Al Jazeera, has been a stalwart supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood since the revolution, acting as its de facto channel when Egypt's national television was SCAF-dominated.

Relations with Saudi Arabia, with whom the Brotherhood has historically had tense relationships, are more complicated. There's undoubtedly some febrility in Riyadh regarding Morsi's consolidation of powers. Establishment newspaper Al-Shark Al-Awsat published an editorial warning that Morsi "enjoys limitless power, and is even more powerful than former president Hosni Mubarak, even at the height of his reign!"

Amid Morsi's visit to Mecca for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation summit in mid-August were muted signs of tension. For one, Saudis sent the relatively low-ranking governor of Jeddah to greet Morsi at the airport. During the summit, Morsi warmly embraced Ahmadinejad, and in a climate of possible Egyptian-Iranian rapprochement, Morsi is due to travel to Iran to attend the Non-Aligned Countries Movement summit at the end of August. Iranian media have hailed Morsi's rise, as the Muslim Brotherhood has been more indulgent towards Iranian nuclear brinkmanship than the Gulf countries a development not favored by the Saudis.

Yet Egypt under Morsi has also broken away from Iranian support for Syria. Also at the OIC summit, Morsi stated that it was time for regime change in Syria, a first for him. The president could be signaling the return of a more regionally involved, pan-Arab Egypt.

Economic conditions in Egypt and dependence on US foreign aid could dictate Morsi's outreach. Egypt under the Muslim Brotherhood may turn out to be more moderate and cautious than many had assumed.

Morsi's reshuffling of army leadership can't be viewed as a Muslim Brotherhood takeover. After all, he's Egypt's elected leader, and any reduction in SCAF's power is a step forward. The consolidation of power increases decision predictability, both politically and economically. Nevertheless, legislative powers should be restored to the parliament. Concentration of powers with the presidency is unsustainable and can be tolerated, at home and abroad, only for a brief period. Any international legitimacy Morsi acquires will rapidly dissipate if his hold on power transforms into attempt at totalitarian accumulation.

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well-known to the US and Israel, but Morsi has called for regime change in Syria, and conservative Gulf countries have stepped up with financial help for Egypt.

Such moderate reactions are surprising because it's widely believed that the latest changes in Egypt were orchestrated above Morsi, in the politburo of the Ikhwan Al-Muslimoon, the Muslim Brotherhood. Morsi's presidency, and with it Egypt's Ikhwani era, has just begun, and more surprises could be in store.

Since Morsi's election in June, Egypt has had two effective, opposing and undermining poles of power. One was the newly elected president; the second was the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which had ruled since February 2011 by direct appointment from former President Hosni Mubarak, his last official act. SCAF did not move to relinquish power since the election. On the contrary, in the midst of the second round, hours before vote

mentally defended itself. Nevertheless, Hamas, relatively content with consolidation of power in Morsi's favor, was noticeably quiet as a joint military-police campaign for eradicating pockets of extremists in the Sinai also targeted tunnels connecting Gaza to the Sinai, which for years have provided routes for goods, people and also weapons. On Sunday Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh called upon Egypt to coordinate its security arrangements with Gaza, excluding the Israelis a call Egypt can be expected to ignore.

News of Morsi's gambit with the military obfuscated another news item less than 24 hours earlier: Prince Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani of Qatar, on a visit to Egypt, deposited \$2 billion of US dollars in Egypt's Central Bank, a much needed injection for Egypt's foreign reserves. Once more, Qatar is proving to be the Brotherhood's greatest foreign ally, yet not necessarily Egypt's, and one might suspect that the move

# Small states' foreign policy formulation: Countering challenges

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SMALL state becomes an important feature of international society in the 21st century when a large number of states of the state centric international system belong to that group. The concept of small state suffers from definitional problem because of their variation in terms of territorial size, population density, market potential, administrative capacities, resource possession and mobilization, as well as degrees of geographical remoteness. David Vital tried to offer a comprehensive definition in his famous book titled *The Inequality of States -- a Study of the Small Power in International Relations*. He settled the definition via some upper limits: "(a) a population of 10-15 million in the case of economically advanced countries; and (b) a population of 20-30 million in the case of underdeveloped countries." (Vital 1967:8). A study produced by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research in 1971 quoted the UN Secretary-General's definition from 1966 which defined small states as "entities which are exceptionally small in area, population and human and economic resources." (UNITAR 1971:29) The report concluded that smallness "is a comparative and not an absolute idea." (UNITAR 1971:29)

Small states seem arrested in their foreign policy making and shaping. They prefer, sometimes they are obliged, to live under the shadow of big neighbours who are far ahead of them in each possible power rating scale. However, small states can play an influential role in global politics when they are aligned. "Lilliputians can tie up Gulliver, or make him do their fighting for them."

Small states' foreign policy strategy can be called pilot-fish behaviour -- staying close to the shark to avoid being eaten. This idea was used by Erling Bjol in the 70s when Finland considered itself as a small state and adopted this strategy in its foreign policy. Like pilot fish, small states want to live under the shadow of their big neighbours. But question is how long this strategy serves the aim and interest of those and what is the counter strategy of bigger neighbours. Are those large neighbors enjoy it or exploit it?

In realpolitik every strategy does not have same outcome. In case of Bangladesh, this pilot fish strategy did not work, but in case of Bhutan this strategy succeeded to protect her national interest. Small states generally want to use their geo-strategic position and

regional economic compatibility to allure neighbouring or global super power in friendly and cooperative relations.

In today's globalised world, small states play more proactive gamble of socio-economic politics to serve her national interests. They are getting more access in the decision making of the global leadership forums such as WTO, IMF, WHO, FAO, ILO and so on. Radovan Vukadinovic of the University of Zagreb finds a link between small status, military and economic weakness, and an aspiration to democratize international relations. Small countries can serve their national interests best when they join a caucus for peace and progress, and to do so in vindication of the principles of the UN. Former Irish Prime Minister Sean Lemass contributed the idea that small states played a crucial role in international organizations by virtue of the fact that voting blocs often needed mediators to soften extreme positions and promote *modus vivendi* in various resolutions. But it is not an easy matter as big powers always want to exploit those small states via pursuing their political or economical hegemony. In case of South Sudan and East Timor it is visible that how they are constrained by their big neighbours. A containment strategy is also common in the case of Haiti and Kosovo where hegemonic power tries to establish 'zone of privileged interest' to restrain small neighbours from entering alliance, and keep under its unilateral sphere of hegemony.

So it is imperative for small states to uphold customary international laws - including the contentious principles of sovereignty, independence and non-interference. Their most potent instrument is diplomacy amidst a balance of power situation. Scholars like Fox, Lemass, Nicolae and Alan Chong have argued, "Small state's foreign policy apparatus may possess among its human resources, intellectual and propagandistic skills that are disproportionate to its physical size. This can be termed as compensatory informational or symbolic power. It might even be regarded as a leveler between great and small powers, large states and their smaller neighbors." They have good opportunities in playing with 'soft power' and Diaspora also. These Diasporas try to secure the interests of their respective native countries through mobilising sympathetic groups of the big power.

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# The persecuted Rohingyas: India's role

GAUTAM SEN

THE Rohingyas, numbering nearly a million and thereby constituting a significant portion of the approximately 55 million population of Myanmar, are recognised by the UN as one of the most persecuted ethnic minorities in the world. The level of persecution has only varied over the past few years, and has worsened now. General Ne Win, former dictator Premier of erstwhile Burma (now Myanmar), caused the greatest misery to the Rohingyas and started the process of their deprivation by stripping them of Burmese citizenship in 1982. There has been no reversal of this trend by successive military junta leaders. Instead, further socio-economic isolation and persecution has been brought upon the Rohingyas by successive governments in Yangon. As per conditions presently prevailing in Myanmar, the Geneva Convention on Refugees of 1951 and its Protocol of 1967 are being grossly violated in respect of the Rohingyas.

The geographical proximity of the Rohingya-inhabited Rakhine state of Myanmar with Bangladesh has led a large number of Rohingyas to flee to Chittagong, Bandarban and Cox's Bazar districts of Bangladesh whenever there is political turbulence in Rakhine state. Though centuries ago the Rohingyas had settled down in what is today the Rakhine state of Myanmar, in British India, Rakhine province used to be administered from Chittagong and the Rohingyas moved freely between Bengal and Burma. Therefore, there was some historical affini-

ty between the Rohingyas of Rakhine state and the afore-mentioned adjoining area of Bangladesh. As a result of the June 2012 riots between the Rohingyas and local Buddhists in Rakhine state, nearly 100,000 Rohingyas were affected apart from a large number of local Buddhists; approximately 20,000 Rohingyas fled from the riot affected areas and tried to move into Bangladesh.

Some Rohingyas who had earlier left Myanmar are already housed in miserable conditions in makeshift camps in tentage accommodation in Bangladesh. The position in regard to refugee habitation in Bangladesh was aggravated when new Rohingya refugees started crossing into that country. The Sheikh Hasina Government, already saddled with popular discontent periodically fomented by its political rivals and with elections not too far off, and also under criticism from UN and Human Rights Watch for not allowing international NGOs like Medicines Sans Frontiers, Action Contra La Faim and Muslim Aid UK, did not want to take on the burden of more refugees and consequent strain on the regional economy with attendant local political ramifications. Border Guards

Bangladesh have consequently pushed back nearly 1200 of the recent lot of Rohingya refugees who had crossed over into Bangladesh.

While India is not immediately affected by the Rohingya refugee migration from Myanmar, it cannot be oblivious to the regional dimensions of such human migrations based on ethnic discontent.



Earlier, the Buddhist Chakmas of Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, who had felt discriminated in that country, had migrated to Mizoram state of India. The Chakma presence had been a source of considerable local tension in Mizoram. Any diversion of Rohingya refugees from camps in Bangladesh to adjoining north-eastern states of India would not be

acceptable to New Delhi.

The Government of India should therefore advise the Myanmar Government with a degree of sensitivity and without appearing to be overtly interfering in Myanmar's internal affairs to ensure a more effective administrative presence and even-handed developmental activity in Rakhine state. At the same time, an approach in concert with the Bangladesh Government may also be contemplated to induce the Myanmar Government to provide basic rights of livelihood with respect to employment, trade and educational opportunities to their Rohingya people, even if it has to be without conferring on them citizenship and voting rights. This would be in consonance with India's broad stance on refugee rehabilitation in the region. At present, the Rohingyas of Myanmar are not only stateless, but are also prevented from earning a proper livelihood and observing their culture and religion in their present places of domicile in the Rakhine state, except in a few towns like Marringdaw near the Myanmar-Bangladesh border.

The ethnic turbulence in the Rakhine state of Myanmar involving the Muslim Rohingyas and local ethnic Buddhists has also added an uncertain element in the

Myanmar Government's approach to its minorities, which also has future geopolitical ramifications for both Bangladesh and India. Such disturbances can not only be a cause of another home-grown insurgency, but also set off a chain reaction of ethnic demands and counter-demands among the different ethnic groups in Myanmar. Aung San Suu Kyi, despite her political ascendancy, seems to be playing a cautious role. She has not come out with appeals for ethnic accommodation after the Rakhine riots, nor taken any decisive public posture except for making some cursory remarks before the June 2012 riots about a more integrative approach vis-à-vis the minorities of Myanmar. It is obvious that she does not want to lose her constituency among the majority Burmans. Therefore, efforts perforce will have to be made by New Delhi through the Thein Sein Government at Naypidaw, which is still backed by the Myanmar military, to bring about more political accommodation in Myanmar, not only in the interest of political consolidation in that country but also to deny safe haven or a regrouping place for fissiparous elements or potential insurgents who may destabilise the areas encompassing Chittagong-Bandarban-Cox's Bazar and Rangamati districts of Bangladesh as well as Mizoram and southern Assam in India, apart from the western strip of Myanmar.

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