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## **The 100-Day Program and the "MorsiMeter": Egyptian Discourse on the Social Networks, October 2012**

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Before the announcement on June 24, 2012 of his election as Egypt's fifth president, Mohamed Morsi's campaign staff published a 64-goal program on five selected categories: personal security, traffic, bread, environmental cleanliness, and fuel. The program was to be completed in Morsi's first 100 days in office. In order to follow the extent to which the President kept his promises, an independent group of students established a mechanism called the "MorsiMeter," a quantitative measurement system using graphs, data, statistics, and charts to follow implementation of the program and obligate the President to account for his performance.<sup>1</sup>

The program was very ambitious; it was obvious to most, even before it was launched in practice, that it was undoable in the allotted time frame. And indeed, at the end of the President's 100-day grace period, it appears that only five of the 64 goals were fully achieved. Twenty-three goals are still in the implementation process, and 36 of the goals have yet to be tackled. Interestingly, three meta-goals selected by Morsi for his presidency – social justice, economic development, and stability and national security – were not a focus of the 100-day program.

In his October 6 speech to commemorate Egypt's victory in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, in a stadium filled with 70,000 members of the Muslim Brotherhood, army officers, policemen, and military personnel, Morsi chose to devote his two-hour speech entirely to the success of his program, completely ignoring the day's celebrations. For its part, the Egyptian public has responded to the challenge undertaken by Morsi, and has appointed itself judge and overseer of the President's performance. In this vein, and in tandem with the "MorsiMeter," a heated debate is evident on the Egyptian social networks (Twitter, Facebook, and blogs) about the 100-day program. What follows is a review of some main themes of this debate.

### **From Freedom and Social Justice to Bread and Fuel**

Despite the revolution's demands and Morsi's promises for freedom and social justice, the President chose to focus his first period on goals identified as Muslim Brotherhood



issues, namely, bread, fuel, and gas for household purposes. These issues, along with the issues of street cleanliness and parking tickets, appeal to a wide and low class of the population, especially Muslim Brotherhood voters. Consequently, however, much concern is sounded on the social networks regarding the revolution's goals of human rights, equality, and social justice, which along with foreign policy and security are of secondary attention at best.

The President's choice to advance goals identified with the Muslim Brotherhood raises the question whether Morsi represents his movement only or serves as the president for all Egyptians. Without a permanent constitution and an elected parliament, the President has concentrated – indefinitely – all the executive and legislative powers in his own hands. With the curtailment of the authority of the Supreme Military Council, there is no mechanism to curb the President's power.

### **It's All about the Economy**

Given Egypt's economic situation ("subzero condition") after the outbreak of the revolution, any action Morsi takes to stabilize the situation and improve the lot of the common citizen will be considered a success by the public. Egypt is a poor country with a very low level of personal security and standard of living. Therefore, the expectations of Morsi in the short term focus on his improving the living conditions of the population at large.

In addition, many on the net say that "as long as Egypt is in survival mode, the Muslim Brotherhood and Morsi as president cannot fail ...His failure would mean the collapse of the country." Thus criticism of Morsi in the new media is often complemented by the argument that his economic policy should not be actively opposed. Similarly, social network users estimate that neighboring countries and foreign powers will stand by Egypt's side because of a shared interest in Egypt's stability.

### **As Long as it Looks Good**

Much of the discourse concerns the implementation of Morsi's program. Doubting that the President and his advisors ever thought the program was doable in the allotted time, particularly without the required mechanisms, functional state institutions, or appropriate regulatory mechanisms, many believe the program was designed as an outward show.

According to the "MorsiMeter," the President failed to implement even 10 percent of the program's goals. However, by the end of the 100 days, a public opinion survey showed that 42 percent of the public is satisfied with the President's performance. Still, many social network users feel that the honeymoon period between Morsi and the public will



soon be over. On the one hand the expectations are high, and on the other hand there is a gap between good intentions and unsuccessful execution.

### **New Politics or a Honey Trap?**

Some feel that the 100-day program and the "MorsiMeter" are creating a new, democratic, direct discourse between the elected president and the Egyptian public, whereby there is ongoing communication between the president and the public. A new system with new rules of the game – different from those prevailing in Mubarak's time – is coming into being, which even if not perfect is interactive in nature and turns the players, willingly or not, into participants. The president announces his intentions and policies and allocates time frames and tools to measure success and failure. Responding to the challenge, the public assumes the role of overseer and judge.

At the same time, some call the new mechanism a honey trap: the role of judge is attractive because it confers power. Power leads to responsibility. The moment the public chooses to play the game and judge Morsi on the basis of his achievements, the public becomes a part of the system instead of standing in opposition to it.

### **Assessment**

Morsi's 100-day program and the "MorsiMeter" reflect the complex approach embodied by the Muslim Brotherhood regime in Egypt: it is possible to live with contradictions and benefit from all worlds. On the one hand, President Morsi repeatedly stresses the three meta-goals of the new Egyptian regime – social justice, economic development, and national security and stability. On the other hand, the 100-day program essentially ignores advancement of these meta-goals.

Morsi is sensitive to public criticism, but has agreed to cooperate with the "MorsiMeter" mechanism designed to examine his performance. Yet while he appears willing to be subject to public criticism, President Morsi maintains that speaking of economic failures by the new regime is liable to lead to Egypt's collapse.

<sup>1</sup> See <http://morsimeter.com/en>.

