



[Al-Wafd newspaper shocked readers on 19 January 2012 with an over-the-banner headline declaring "The People Demand the Head of the Field Marshal"]

In April of 1954, less than two years after the military ousted Farouk's monarchy, it became apparent that the men in uniform would not be relinquishing power in Egypt. The "Free Officers" coup d'état paved the way for the constitution of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), a supra-legal body with executive, legislative and judicial power wielded over every branch of government including the media. Before the RCC decided to exercise its hegemony and muzzle any criticism in the media, there was a 20-month period where Egypt's press flourished. During this transition period, Gen. Mohammed Naguib, the most senior of the coup's leaders, had committed to surrendering power to civilian control, resigning Egypt's military to a non-sovereign role in the post-transition, and encouraging public deliberation over these issues in the press. This would not come to fruition. The wiggle room ceased abruptly as the RCC grew increasingly comfortable atop the food chain.

To silence dissent against their ascent to power, the RCC would have to reform Egypt's media once and for all. Such an abrupt action, clearly inconsistent with their original claims of press openness, would have to be justified politically. By elbowing Mohammed Naguib out of the picture, Gamal Abdul Nasser and the remaining officers turned to the renewed threat of Western imperialism and the neighboring adversary in Israel to explain the need for a centralized media system. The continued injustice of settler colonialism in Israel as well as a hardened Anglo-Franco-American stance to the new administration was treated as grounds to warrant vigilance, unanimity, commitment, and obedience from Egypt's press corps. Anwar Sadat would be tasked

with overseeing much of this process of “press rehabilitation.” He set up the self-proclaimed “revolution’s paper” *Al-Gomhouria*, created the protocols that made state media completely submissive to the military’s directives, seduced and coerced all of Egypt’s independent press into compliance, and used nepotism, intimidation, and competition to extinguish the flame of introspection and inquiry among journalists and opinion leaders.

The military had no time for self-professed heroes in the press. Ihsan Abdelkoudous, a prominent journalist and later editor with then-independent magazine *Rose El-Youssef*, had acquired respect, clout, and a substantial readership during the brief transition period. One of the press’ rising stars, he took the ultimate risk of “independently” reporting on the military. Following interviews with members of the RCC in an attempt to surmise a common vision, ideology, perspective, philosophy, or worldview between them, he concluded with surprise that such a discordantly unimaginative group could not be described as anything but a gang. He ran the article under the titled “The Gang that Rules Egypt.” Abdelkoudous had crossed the red line and tested the military’s limits. They felt inclined to act. Copies of *Rose El-Youssef* were pulled off the stands with only a few thousands circulating and Abdelkoudous was arrested for 3 months (and later pardoned). This incident would be the last time anyone from the press would break from military’s protocol.

For 55 years, the military has survived without having to give the media any unfettered access, let alone scrutiny. Any mention of the Egyptian Armed Forces in the media comes after a very rigid and paranoid vetting process and scrupulous attention to connotations. Interviews given to journalists by military officers were extremely infrequent and were limited to hyperbolic lofty statements about its discipline, power, patriotism, and heroism. However, the level of secrecy with which the institution operated, turned it into a black box for the media—a fourth branch of government beyond transparency, accountability, or criticism. Insulated by layers of inaccessibility, the military was able to deflect attention from its growing assets in virtually every sector of Egyptian society—from the economy and politics to security, governance, and industry.

So when the January 25 uprising began in Egypt, the military was forced into the spotlight, against its intention and better judgment. As the tanks and armored vehicles rolled into Tahrir Square on the Friday, January 28 (known now as the Day of Rage), Egyptian protesters had no reason to believe that this was an adversarial posture. With no negative sentiments or even the mildest of criticism ever expressed in the state or private media in Egypt about the military, they were greeted as protectors of the public and impartial intermediaries in a standoff with the “supposedly-civilian regime” of the NDP. With little more than their vocal chords before a heavily-armed force, protesters often chanted “the military and the people are one hand” whenever a face-off with the army seemed impending. The large number of protesters, their fervor, their determination forced the military to avoid confrontation with them—a position the ruling military council would use as a rhetorical tool to convince the public that they were in fact the “Guardians of the Revolution” despite their ardent attempts to empty Tahrir and curb further protests.

It was during the days that followed that some protesters began expressing skepticism about the military’s so-called neutrality as evidence on the ground was proving otherwise. For instance, on 2 February 2011, in the incident now infamously known as the “Battle of the Camel,” videos collected by civilians and citizen journalists clearly show military vehicles clearing the way for armed Mubarak supporters on horse and camelback as they descended onto Tahrir Square. Other videos collected by journalists documented visits by high level military officials where they disparaged the protesters, questioned their motives, dismissed their concerns and accused them of having destabilized the country. However, footage of this kind never ended up on the airwaves. With a media blackout on the military’s cold stance vis-à-vis the protesters and a dramatic shift in the public discourse after the resignation of Mubarak, it was entirely unclear how this institution would affect things on the ground.

Unseasoned Precedents

In the first major address, known as bulletin #3 by Gen. El-Fangary, a member of then-ruling Supreme Council for the Armed Forces (SCAF), in an attempt to sound strong-willed and decisive, ended up overstating his posturing suggesting hesitance and

lack of confidence. As he stuttered in an uncomposed fashion. Not only did El-Fangary commend and thank “President Mubarak” for his 30 years of service to the country, he offers the “martyrs” of the revolution a reassuring military salute. It was evident at this point that he had not received any media training and that the armed forces were not ready for prime time just yet. They had not understood that they cannot hold the stick in the middle between Mubarak, their commander-in-chief just weeks prior, and the protesters. Nevertheless, despite its unseasoned nature, the first address precipitated a sentiment of comfort among Egyptians who trusted that the military would defend the revolution’s goals and see it through to fruition. This fact of revolutionary framing was intended to signify a commitment by the military to the revolution and the memorialization of the fallen. From this point onwards, SCAF would employ a multi-prong and shifting strategy in their relationship with the media in the country.

Yet this was the opening salvo in what was to become a turbulent relationship between SCAF and the media over the next eighteen months. El-Fangary would become famous for a SCAF public statement he gave on 12 July 2011 where he spoke in an ominous Darth Vader-like tone which exuded power and resolve, either to intimidate, frighten, or calm those looking for comfort in safety. Most notable about the speech was its peculiar delivery where the general projected and changed the tone of his voice in an awkward and unpredictable manner which suggested either nervousness or inexperience. But the notoriety El-Fangary (whose name in Arabic sounds like the English word “finger”) acquired was a result of his seemingly reprimanding and threatening finger-waving throughout the speech. Since this speech, several Facebook groups were created in response, the most popular being “Fangary, You Cannot Threaten Us.”

Throughout the first year after the toppling of Mubarak, SCAF focused on celebrations of military accomplishments and success and deviate attention away from the celebration of the uprising. These included three festivities, one on the anniversary of the July 23, 1952 coup d’état and twice the celebration of the 1973 war with Israel, once on the Gregorian calendar date of October 6 and again on its Hijri date of Ramadan 10th, with SCAF-head Tantawi making public statements on both occasions.

The Supreme Council for the Armed Forces (SCAF) has had a short but extremely eventful time in power following Mubarak’s fall. It is worth examining given its contradictions and importance for future evaluations of civil-military relations in Egypt and beyond. While the council rose out of the remains of the Mubarak government—each of the 19 members served under his rule and benefitting greatly from their loyalty to the regime—they have nevertheless attempted to rebrand the council as an independent institution with no links to the NDP bureaucracy. Since I will be unable to cover the structure, politics, management, and economic viability of military power in Egypt in any depth here, my intention instead is to examine the manner in which the country’s executive board and surrogate president addresses, curbs, manages, cajoles and responds to the media.

They had accepted the need for the state and private media to criticize the old regime but to maintain the immunity of the military from such scrutiny. To their advantage, there was already a legal doctrine in place to insulate them from public criticism. This is the law number 313 from 1956 which was passed down as presidential decree and amended in 1967 and heavily restricts coverage of the military. The law reads as follow:

This decree prohibits publishing or broadcasting any information or news on the armed forces and its formations, movements, equipment and personnel. In other words, all matters related to strategic and military aspects, can’t be published or broadcasted by any means without obtaining the written consent of the Director of Military Intelligence, or his deputy in his absence. The decree also identifies the penalty for violating its provisions.

In the first case of its kind since SCAF took over, a military court sentenced blogger Mickael Nabil to five years in jail in a swift tribunal for criticizing the military in his blog post entitled “The Military and the People are Not One Hand.” Under such conditions, and with SCAF formally administering the country, it would have been practically impossible to meet the demands of the decree as the military now had a hand in every aspect of governance. But the existence of the law resulted in a significant

reluctance by the media to discuss matters related to the military. Instead, the private media sought commentary from the military regarding various developments on political, economic, security, and social matters.

The first few months of SCAF rule can be characterized as a period of media shyness. Officials and members of SCAF were very reluctant to go on air, many avoided interviews and preferred private conversations with television producers, journalists over formal interviews. Statements could not be released without permission from superiors and given the growing burden on SCAF, there was a genuine concern that messages would not corroborate one another. Instead, the military attempted to position itself in relation to the inner circuit of the private media professional, to befriend them, build rapport and offer support to ensure favorable treatment. This was a rather successful period for the military as confrontations with protester demands had not reached a high point and they were able to maintain a low profile, thereby scapegoating to the interim government.

When it became evident by the summer of 2011 that little progress had been made on many fronts, from continued military trials of civilians to the reluctance to try Mubarak and other NDP officials for crimes committed during the January uprising, the media sensed that the government of PM Sharaf was actually incapable of addressing any concerns and may not have had the authority to execute on the demands of the revolution. This was when the military became the subject of much curiosity and inquiry by journalists and reporters. Additionally, questionable actions by the military became more frequent with little redress, raising more questions about their conduct, thereby putting more pressure on the media to pose poignant questions.

The performance of SCAF and its media arm during the first year of the transition (with every blunder between 11 February 2011 and 23 January 2012 including Maspero attacks, Balloon theater, both Mohammed Mahmoud battles, the Cabinet sit-in battles, and several rounds of confrontation in Abbaseya) was totally catastrophic. Not only was the cost in lives in the hundreds and injuries in the thousands, with every public statement from SCAF, their image in front of the public was deteriorating swiftly. By dismissing what would otherwise be observable realities documented extensively through videographic evidence, SCAF's press conferences looked amateurish, one-sided, overly scripted and rehearsed, and completely one-sided. This has a significant impact on their believability in each of incidents. This was akin to an ostrich burying its head in the sand to avoid the public wrath.

Shaky Hands, Quivering Voices

Prior to the public disappearance of SCAF from the public eye, Field Marshal Tantawi had always maintained a very low-profile, with other members of the council given permission to communicate on behalf of the armed forces on Egyptian state and private media. On the government networks, their interviews went smoothly and without tumult. On the private networks, they were met with difficult questions that they often either overreacted to or dismissed entirely or answered clumsily. Examples of media blunders abound including one program where SCAF member El-Ruweini accidentally admitted on a private network that he was responsible for spreading rumors during the 18 day protest in January to encourage demonstrators from leaving Tahrir. On another occasion, SCAF member Gen. Shahin gave conflicting accounts of the constitutional principles and the conduct of elections for different channels and at different times. These interviews exposed SCAF as an institution incapable of asserting its clear unequivocal message and ill-equipped to handle a free and independent media environment. This was extremely obvious when two SCAF members gave a lengthy interview following the Maspero clashes in mid-October where they were hardly capable of deflecting criticism.

The head of SCAF, Tantawi has been camera shy throughout. He has only given three speeches since assuming leadership of the country. Other videos are very carefully chosen and are often orchestrated. One video released some months ago shows him in civilian clothes walking in downtown Cairo and being greeted by passersby and was meant to illustrate his popularity and accessibility. The other two were taken at various ceremonies and events each showing him speaking candidly about the state of the country and calling for an end to protests, sit-ins, strikes and other acts of civil disobedience. The clumsiness of these

videos is evident from their inability to present him as a coherent interlocutor. In one of these videos, SCAF member and the Chief of Staff for the Armed Forces, Sami Anan, is seen dictating to Tantawi and completing his sentences for him. In another video, Tantawi is visibly hesitant and disfluent. And in yet another video dated October 2, he is seen as a more authoritative figure verbally reprimanding any Egyptians who continue “destabilizing” the country with protests. He speaks to his subordinates with a paternalistic voice, turning often to then-PM Essam Sharaf whose head hangs in a dejected fashion as he stares at the ground. When Tantawi asks Sharaf if he agrees with him, Sharaf responds compliantly with muted head-nods. Otherwise, it is often other members of SCAF tasked with addressing the media.

Few members of the SCAF seem to have survived the barrage of criticism due to media incompetency. The most notable of the few is the second man after Tantawi, Gen. Sami Anan. By avoiding the media entirely and serving only as an interlocutor on behalf of the Field Marshall in meetings with political actors and public opinion heavyweights, he has effectively avoided any scrutiny and remains a mirage, beyond incrimination. He has no faults on the record and is walking away from the transition with a seemingly pristine slate, which may position him to not only survive the transition but withstand any calls for justice against SCAF in the immediate or long-term future. With Tantawi at the center of most SCAF criticism, in addition to his subpar public displays, his long tenure under Mubarak, and his advanced age, Sami Anan’s media invisibility may be serving him well as the man-in-waiting.

In many instances, their interactions with reporters and journalists angered the media professionals because they were expected to comply with the military’s rules when that was considered occupationally unacceptable. There are plenty of accounts and testimonies from journalists regarding inappropriate correspondences or phone calls from military agencies with differing tones, from appeasement to blanketed threats. As time has gone on, SCAF has gone from using the carrot to win over the private media to the stick in attempts subduing their will to proceed.

As the conflict between the protest movements and SCAF escalated, so did the military’s desire to control negative messages broadcast locally, regionally and internationally. This meant that in cases where there is significant violence and loss of life (a frequent occurrence since September 2011) involving the military, the SCAF turns from benevolent to malevolent. In such occurrence, SCAF often publicly criticizes the private media, holds press conferences where all accusations against them are completely dismissed against credible photographic and videographic evidence.

Wired Junta

On 17 December 2011 SCAF entered the new era in its media messaging—the online video/citizen journalism realm. There is evidence that the military had infiltrated the protester campsites and collected content. In many instances, plainclothes military recruits are sent into protester ranks to shoot footage that can then be used to incriminate them. This video was disseminated widely online and sent to the television networks for broadcast to “counter” propaganda against the military. The state media presented it as fact, while most private media subjected it to close examination and scrutiny.

This “head in the sand” technique, akin to Mubarak’s approach for at least a decade, has so far served SCAF well as they capitalize a growing public distraught at unrest in the country. They have also effectively raised the Egyptian public’s desensitization towards violence committed against protesters by the military. While in the summer of 2010 there was public outrage at the death of Khaled Said at the hands of the police simply through the image of his contorted face, the regular circulation of gruesome photos and videos of protesters killed with live ammunition, crushed under military vehicles, stripped and beaten, and sexually violated women are aplenty enough that the public threshold for outrage has increased dramatically. Coupled with what looks to the average Egyptian as a military shepherding the country towards free elections and democratic civilian rule, the plight of the protesters, while just, has become far less sustainable in the eyes of the majority of Egyptians.

Hence, SCAF effectively created enough discord between political parties, movements, youth, and revolutionaries, effectively demoralizing the public about the revolution. In the end, the Egyptian public may have accepted military rule in the face of what looks like “protest-sponsored chaos.” Yet SCAF’s greatest hurdle besides a growing social justice-oriented protest movement in factories, industries, and labor groups and syndicates, remains the private media who have yet to relent under the growing pressure to accept the military’s directives. In one decree, newspapers whose were licensed before the law were asked to reapply in the Morale Affairs Directorate of the Military and acquire approval. Furthermore, all topics, news, statements, complaints, advertisements, pictures pertaining to the Armed forces must be approved before publication. Committee to Protect Journalists described it as the single most serious setback to the freedom of the press since the fall of Mubarak. Few publications complied. So in the face of the appointment of a military censor for the press, many columnist responded rejectingly. Some independent newspapers have violated it entirely, thereby blatantly calling SCAF bluff and taunting the military to take action against them.

The phenomenon that SCAF used from December 2011 onwards was the growing cult of expertise. SCAF deployed, and continue to deploy, what are called the Strategic Expert---members of the military usually come out to the defense of SCAF. This is an attempt to distance and insulate SCAF from criticism, as a result of consecutive failures of the council at explaining itself on air. It is also an attempt at sounding impartial and objective as professionals. Also allows a margin of error whereby the failure of the expert to communicate convincingly or in the event of confrontation or scandalous gaffes, the outcomes do not backfire on SCAF. A good example of this is Gen. Kato’s now-infamous case regarding military’s treatment of protesters and the interview with Al-Sharq Al-Awsat. When Gen. Kato spoke to the media he was speaking from a position of close proximity to SCAF and the council encouraged him to be an interlocutor for the military. This is not a haphazard process. The military is extremely cautious and paranoid about who represents it. Kato began communicating on behalf of the military as early as January 28th, 2011 where he encouraged protesters to return to their homes. At no point was he considered persona non grata until he stumbled publicly, which led to SCAF abandoning him as a spokesperson and openly denying any affiliation with him. Even SCAF’s representative in the US, Gen. Mohammed Keshky declared that Gen Kato did not represent SCAF in any way or at any time.

Both SCAF and the government have made marked progress in this online arena. Both have adopted social media to relay announcements, gauge public opinion in the form of polls, press releases, bulletins, and experimental decrees. In many instances, SCAF has released announcements on their Facebook page before delivery to the state media. Most recently, in the recent clashes with protesters at the Cabinet buildings, SCAF has even released edited videos of the clashes taken from among the ranks of civilians that they claim were protesters. So the military has itself recruited “amateur military journalist” brigades and social media teams to counter online activists.

When the page first appeared, most of the comments on it were very complimentary of the military and there was genuine fear that any contrarian message would pose a threat to one who posts it. As SCAF’s popularity waned (especially within Egypt’s cyber-community) due to consecutive acts of mismanagement and miscommunication, more critical voices have used the page to express their anger, frustration, and disdain for the military’s actions. This is a marked transformation in the page’s traffic. Much like SCAF’s traditional media approach which focuses on misdirection and ignoring criticism, the Facebook page also rarely engages with critics. Instead, postings are confined to bulletins from the highest ranks of SCAF. The absence of any nimbleness and the seemingly hierarchical approach to information dissemination, forcing every expression to be vetted by the higher ranks, has left page woefully anachronistic and out of touch with contemporary online discourses. Furthermore, its usage of classical Arabic, compared to colloquial and slang Egyptian dialect on many activist pages, has made it uninviting and extremely old-fashioned. Yet SCAF seems to have successfully recruited using the Facebook page as was described by one of the administrators in a status posting.

Despite this, SCAF's greatest challenge both online and offline came courtesy of an activist campaign known as Kazeboon whose objective was to transfer evidence against SCAF from the online social media echo chamber to the 75% who do not use the internet. On hundreds of occasions, activists and volunteers took videos gathered by citizen journalists and protesters detailing violence committed by the military and held flashmob-style street screenings using mobile projectors in heavy traffic areas in Cairo and Alexandria. On at least a handful of occasions they were met with violence by SCAF supporters, both organized and spontaneous. In every such incident of attack (in most instances, these are attacks against the equipment rather than persons), the commotion drew more attention to the Kazeboon campaign and turned the settings into impromptu anti-SCAF rallies. For this reason, it was important for SCAF to go from denying said accusation to complete disappearance.

Yet a crucial turning point for SCAF's public image came after the swearing in of the newly elected parliament on 23 January 2012. On this date, with the parliament garnering all the attention especially its surprising composition of 75% Islamist, much of the limelight was drawn away from the ruling council. Around the same time, public criticism of SCAF began to drop drastically as both media and public attention diverted to the elected body. Even SCAF-related hashtags on Twitter dropped significantly. The ostrich had gone from having its head in the sand to camouflaging its body as well. This was confirmed when on 31 January 2012, it was announced that Gen. Ismail Etman, SCAF member and Head of Morale Affairs in the military (a task that makes him the chief intermediary with the media), was relieved of his job in a public statement that claimed he had reached retirement age. Despite this, for the following days Etman appeared to continue serving as a SCAF spokesperson to the media, giving several interviews and releasing statements on the Port Said Massacre and ensuing violence. But this was the beginning of a phasing out of SCAF media presence.

The commencement of the Parliament's operations in January 2012 ushered in a new period in SCAF's management of their public image during the transition. The ruling council has effectively disappeared from the public eye. More reluctant than ever to make public statements and avoiding the limelight at all cost, they were able to defer attention to the interim government on issues of mismanagement and violations by the security apparatus, thereby insulating themselves from public criticism. Simultaneously, the parliament, dominated by the Islamist camps of the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) and Al-Nour Party, turned into an arena for cacophonous deliberation and combative interaction. The spectacle of discord and competition in the Parliament shifted the public eye away from the government and SCAF and towards the elected body in an attempt to obfuscate what had quickly begun looking like a junta unable to manage the country. Furthermore, there seemed to be a genuine effort to resuscitate in Egypt a deep state that is insulated from public purview and admonishment. The parliament's extremely explosive sessions in its first few weeks illustrated the growing polarization between political forces critical of SCAF and those who are willing to excuse them.

In the end, while SCAF had begun its tenure with significant tremors as they improvised their way through the first few months, slowly discovering their weakness in utilizing the media and working towards rectifying this. Rather than investing in improving their public image, SCAF expedited their public disappearance. It should be no surprise to anyone if the military council tried to orchestrate a weakened presidency, a crippled parliament, and a loyal judiciary all of whom can serve as the façade of legitimacy concealing the same military power that has ruled the country since 1952 and to reseal Pandora's box.

Wrench in the Wheel

Despite having seemingly orchestrated a slow and gradual recession into the background of Egyptian politics, thereby avoiding the media public attention and subsequently the blame for a deteriorating economic situation in the country, then-ruling SCAF committed some major blunders shortly after the ascendancy of the parliament. By offering the Islamists (the Muslim Brotherhood and Al-Nour) a defanged parliament that withholds administrative and legislative power from them, the facade of legitimacy of the elected body angered these parties. With a rapidly declining public image following the

palpable mismanagement of the country, frequent attacks on protesters, their own clunky and contradictory rhetoric, and successful anti-SCAF campaigns, then ruling military junta were facing their greatest challenge just as they were becoming more opaque. So when the Brotherhood and the Salafis ratcheted up their anti-SCAF rhetoric ahead of the presidential elections, the top generals' ostrich strategy had already cost them their position atop the food chain.

Their ambiguous dealings and opacity with the competing political groups, not to mention the absence of media savviness, cost SCAF their once revered position in the Egyptian polity. One cannot overstate the impact of negative press on the image of the junta internationally who were becoming scandalized on a near-weekly basis by the end of 2011. This reached a crescendo and led the U.S. administration to accept and encourage a swift deferral of powers to the Brotherhood or any civilian government to manage the country in the post-Mubarak period. In a last gasp attempt to ensure they have a horse in the race, SCAF pushed the late VP and intelligence chief Omar Suleiman into the presidential nominees pool only to see him disqualified once the chorus of opposition to his candidacy became too loud. Nevertheless, their top contender, SCAF-favorite and Mubarak's last PM Ahmed Shafik, a man who has committed more media gaffes than a slapstick comedian, became their front-runner against the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohammed Morsy. He went on to lose by a narrow margin in a contest that effectively ended the military's time atop Egypt's political pyramid.

Upon his assumption to the presidency, and in an historic move, Morsy retired both Field Marshal Tantawi and the Chief of Staff Sami Anan, to effectively ensure the military is at least on par with or even subservient to civilian rule, and his dominion, particularly. From this point forth, the military has essentially disappeared from the media except in ceremonial processions, securing officials and establishments, and in military communiqués such as press conferences on the conflict in Sinai. It is perhaps easy to assume that under the current configuration, the military establishment has become completely professionalized and incorporated into the architecture of the state which is currently governed by the Muslim Brotherhood. This assumption implies that the civil-military relations between the armed forces and the state infrastructure is one of concert, common interests, and synergy. I would argue otherwise.

Camouflaged Generals and Islamist Limelight

Instead, it is clear that the military establishment does not see eye-to-eye with the Muslim Brotherhood. Not only do they have competing economic interests, they also have different long-term visions for the country. With the military establishment, both directly and indirectly, investing in at least 40% of the Egyptian economy, the Brotherhood, themselves venture capitalists par excellence, are vying for a larger stake in this domain. And while there is currently a laissez-faire attitude towards the military's control over this segment, the armed forces are weary of the Brotherhood's intentions. On an international strategic foreign policy front, the Brotherhood, currently overseeing a country in decline, are forced to succumb (against their popular doctrine) to a regional policy of peace and cooperation, especially with Israel. Their chummy discourse towards the United States, is also exceptional for an organization that has spent decades demonizing the great hegemon. So on face value, it appears the two poles of Egyptian power (not politics), the military and the Brotherhood, are in unison. Yet with growing discontent in the country on almost every level, it is in the interest of the military that the Brotherhood bear the brunt of people's anger and inherit the blame for its mismanagement. The Brotherhood understand that and have accepted this predicament as a concession to monopolize power at a unique historic juncture and to draft Egypt path forward economically and politically (not to mention constitutionally). So this period is very much a marriage of inconvenience.

In less than two years, both the military and the Brotherhood are bruised. While yesterday's protest chants were "Down down with military rule" and "The people want the fall of the Field Marshal," today most opposition protests shout "Down down with the rule of the Supreme Guide [of the Muslim Brotherhood]." At a time when Egypt's media are deeply empowered, fearless, and playing the watchdog role as never before, SCAF passed on the baton to the Brotherhood in the most opportune moment.

Today, Morsy, the Brotherhood, and the FJP are the new media pariahs. Caught in the same struggle as their predecessors in SCAF, they are neither able to manage the message or control it. Armed with a complex arsenal of media devices, from their government control of the state media, their party media platform (Misr25 for television and FJP newspaper for print), a plethora of online portals (ikhwanonline and ikhwanweb), as well as legions of online footsoldiers and sympathizers, the Brotherhood will certainly fair better than did the disjointed, hierarchical, and exclusivist media experiment of SCAF. Nevertheless, the tidal wave is against them as they are unable to deflect or silence widespread criticism.

What was once the Brotherhood and military's greatest asset, secrecy, has now become a liability in Egypt's changing media landscape. For decades, the Brotherhood has been vilified by the press, which led the organization into near-absolute media insularity. Just like the military establishment, the Brotherhood wore camouflage over the past 60 years. The armed forces did so to conceal their privileged role in power and the Brotherhood to obfuscate their adversarial position to power. In the end, both have been burnt by the media spotlight, a predicament not so unfavorable for a revolutionary Egypt and a promising sign of the awakening of Egypt's fourth estate.

[\[Click here for a detailed timeline of Egyptian media between 25 January 2011 and February 2012\]](#)