



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on August 15, 2012

After Arab Spring, Fears of Islamist Tyranny Grow in Egypt

With long-time strongman Hosni Mubarak out of power, Egypt appears to be descending into a fresh brand of totalitarianism led by its [newly elected president](#), the radical Muslim Brotherhood's Mohammed Morsi. Analysts say that on paper, at least, Morsi is now more powerful than even Mubarak: The new Islamist head of state has assumed legislative powers, attacked the media, installed his own supporters to lead the nation's powerful military after firing its previous leaders, and even seized more control over the process to draft a new constitution.



Before and during the elections, experts [warned](#) that Egypt was moving toward a military dictatorship — a regime similar to Mubarak's, with many of the same people in power, just without the dictator in charge. Indeed, after the fall of Mubarak precipitated by a wave of Western-backed protests, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) ruled the nation for over a year as preparations were made for elections. The military regime came under fierce criticism for its iron-fisted rule during that period, especially after soldiers [slaughtered Coptic Christians](#) who were protesting Islamist attacks on their churches.

During that time, observers feared that the military, which was seeking to preserve vast powers for itself under the new emerging system, might try to scuttle supposed plans to impose the Western-style "democracy" that U.S. and European government leaders said they hoped to see. Those concerns, however, appear to have waned in the wake of Morsi's controversial decision to dismiss much of Egypt's senior military leadership. Now there are new fears.

Over the weekend, the Islamist president, who rose to power with the backing of socialists in Egypt and abroad, sacked the defense minister, the chief of staff, and numerous other top officials. He promptly reclaimed a host of authorities and appointed more loyal officers to lead the armed forces. Morsi also claimed, despite being a civilian, to be in charge of ongoing military operations in the Sinai Peninsula. The armed forces, in what surprised many analysts, have not even openly objected to what some experts have [called](#) a "soft coup" — at least not yet.

Some commentators welcomed the development as part of a long-overdue transition to "civilian rule" after decades of authoritarianism backed up by the armed forces. Countless analysts who saw the powerful military as a potential check on the newly elected hardline Islamists, however, viewed the latest shake-up as troubling. Israel may become [particularly vulnerable](#) if Islamic extremists manage to take total control in Egypt.

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mohamed El-Baradei, a well-connected establishment "reform" leader who played a key role in the "revolution," declared this week that Morsi had now assumed "imperial powers." Multiple analysts inside Egypt and abroad expressed similar concerns. Many fear that the radical Islamists and their allies are now doing everything they can to consolidate power with an eye



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toward maintaining Muslim Brotherhood rule indefinitely.

The end goal, according to some analysts, is to impose the Brotherhood's totalitarian brand of Islamism on Egypt by force if necessary — campaign promises of “tolerance” and “democracy” notwithstanding. And recent developments do foreshadow a dangerous trend, especially the growing paranoia and official hysteria over alleged “counter-revolutionaries” engaged in supposed “subversion” against the Muslim Brotherhood's new regime. The attacks on critics have already started and are expected to keep getting worse.

“Courageous presidential decrees have foiled the counter-revolution plots,” claimed Muslim Brotherhood leader Essam el-Erian after Morsi fired Egypt's senior military brass, echoing recent statements by other Brotherhood figures calling for firm government efforts to crack down on enemies of the state. “The president performed his sovereign duty and realized the demands of the revolution. Every revolutionary must support the president to prevent any attempt against the revolution.”

Another development that has analysts concerned about growing totalitarian tendencies among the new regime is its blatant takeover of the press. Consider that just last week, the Muslim Brotherhood appointed 50 new editors to take over government-run newspapers. Despite protests by some journalists and commentators, opposition among the largely state-owned media is quickly being neutralized.

The independent press is being targeted as well. Recently, an independent, Christian-owned newspaper known as *Al-Dustour* became the latest victim of Brotherhood hysteria. After the paper published fierce criticism of Morsi as well as highlighting the Brotherhood's links to Hamas, the new regime responded by [accusing](#) the publication of “sedition.” And the agenda to achieve total domination of the media is expected to continue marching onward.

Meanwhile, the Associated Press [reported](#) this week, citing “insiders,” that Morsi planned to replace many of Egypt's 27 provincial governors with members or supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood. The judiciary branch is set to face a similar purge, with judges known to oppose the Brotherhood's policies firmly in the crosshairs of the new regime. Morsi himself already possesses legislative and executive powers after Parliament was dissolved, so the entire coercive apparatus in Egypt may soon be firmly entrenched in the hands of the Muslim Brotherhood and its backers.

The trend has critics and analysts deeply concerned. “Are we looking at a president determined to dismantle the machine of tyranny ... or one who is retooling the machine of tyranny to serve his interests, removing the military's hold on the state so he can lay the foundations for the authority of the Brotherhood?” well-known activist and author Alaa al-Aswani wondered in a piece published this week in an independent publication. “He must correct these mistakes and assure us through actions that he is a president of all Egyptians.” The people of Egypt, al-Aswani warned, will not allow Morsi to turn Egypt into a so-called “Brotherhood state.” How that might be prevented remains unclear.

It might already be too late, however. Radical Islam-focused analyst Daniel Greenfield [wrote](#) in *FrontPage* magazine that “barely two months after taking power, the Muslim Brotherhood has wasted no time in swiftly taking Egypt down the road to a totalitarian state.” Greenfield blasted, among other problems, the new regime's “assault” on the independent media, warning that the Brotherhood was exploiting developments to crack down on opposition forces under the guise of safe-guarding the “revolution” from supposed “counter-revolutionaries.”

Dictators throughout the 20th century, of course, frequently relied on similar language to justify



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exterminating critics and other appalling crimes. According to Greenfield and other opponents of radical Islamism, the Muslim Brotherhood appears to be employing the time-tested methods to secure total domination over Egypt. Greenfield even pointed to National Socialist (Nazi) false-flag attacks to make his case, speculating that there may be more than meets the eye behind recent terror attacks in Egypt.

“Three years ago Obama arrived in Cairo to open the door for the Muslim Brotherhood in the name of democracy and freedom. Now the Muslim Brotherhood is firmly shutting the door on democracy and freedom, while remilitarizing the Sinai and inching closer to dismantling the Camp David Accords,” Greenfield concluded. “As Egypt slumps into tyranny under the Muslim Brotherhood, the death of the hopes that stirred in Tahrir Square mark the final dying throes of Obama’s failed Middle East policy.”

Whether Egypt will eventually descend into big government-style radical Islamist tyranny remains to be seen. But analysts monitoring the situation largely agree that the risk is very real. The implications of such a development for the Egyptian people, the security of Israel, and even the broader region are still being debated. Either way, though, there could be a lot more trouble to come in the near future. And with billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars still flowing to Egyptian authorities, the American people may end up bankrolling tyranny in the Middle East yet again.

Photo of Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi: AP Images

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