



## Egypt Revolt Leading to Military Dictatorship

Egypt's ruling military junta is positioning itself to keep the reins of power even after elections take place, prompting outrage and criticism among Egyptians of all political persuasions. Critics, meanwhile, are being silenced by the regime. And talk of a "second revolution" is becoming more widespread. Among the most contentious issues is a proposal by the Egyptian cabinet — hand picked by the military — to ensure that civilian government cannot meddle in the affairs of the armed forces. Because the military regime would be recognized as the guarantor of "constitutional legitimacy," analysts said the junta would in effect continue to rule without any limits to its power. Even its budget would be secret.

The scheme would also give the military the ability to virtually exclude elected representatives from the process of drafting a new constitution, with 80 percent of the delegates being selected by the generals. And all it takes for the proposal to become binding is approval from the two dozen generals on the "Supreme Council of the Armed Forces."

Critics say the uprising that overthrew "President" Hosni Mubarak in February was aimed at ushering in real reforms — not cementing military rule. So far, however, with largely pointless "elections" tentatively scheduled for next year or 2013, not much has changed.

But the military power grab has united a disparate opposition, from establishment "democracy" advocates to hardcore Islamists. Some analysts speculated that the move by Egyptian military bosses was designed to minimize the influence of extreme Islamist factions — especially when it comes to drafting the nation's new constitution.

"The political players in Egypt, particularly the Islamists, want to win a majority in parliament to force the ruling military council away from political life," analyst Nabil Abdel Fattah with the Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies [told](#) the *Los Angeles Times*. "The military is in turn working on constitutional proposals to maintain their political and financial might and to rule the country from behind a curtain."

The Muslim Brotherhood, long suppressed by the Mubarak regime, has emerged in force since the revolution. And it refuses to accept the prospect of the same military chiefs remaining in charge.

"This route goes against the will of the people, and will lead to another revolution," spokesman Saad el-Katatni with the Muslim Brotherhood's "Freedom and Justice" party [told](#) the Associated Press. "We call on the people of Egypt to reject the document to protect their rights."

Another member of the Islamic group's political apparatus, Amr Darrag, [said](#) the implications of the military junta's efforts were frightening. "A full control by the military of the political arena would be catastrophic," he said.

The Islamists have found a seemingly unlikely ally in their quest to stop the scheme. Self-styled "reform" leader Mohamed ElBaradei, who served the United Nations and is widely recognized as a key "Insider," called the junta's proposal "distorted" and called for it to be scrapped.

"The military isn't a state above the state and never will be," tweeted Mohamed ElBaradei, a potential candidate for president who [served](#) on the board of the George Soros- and Ford Foundation-funded International Crisis Group. "There is a difference between a civil democratic state that includes basic rights for people and a military guardianship."

Other liberal political bosses and parties in Egypt have also blasted the military's plans. A spokesman



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for the Justice Party said the military “is trying to secure its future, but we do not see it like this.” Along with other delegates, he reportedly walked out of the conference after learning of the junta’s scheming. “We want to build a nation on democracy and institutions,” the spokesman was [quoted](#) as saying by the *Wall Street Journal*. “The army is a part of these institutions but no one is above the law.”

Still, some pro-reform leaders in Egypt did ask the ruling generals to create “guidelines” for the constitution – or even to write a constitution before elections. They are worried that if elected delegates are allowed to draft whatever sort of document they want, Islamists will dominate the process. That could easily leave minorities such as Coptic Christians in big trouble.

But others say the military should not be trusted, either. Earlier in the week, for example, the regime arrested an influential blogger. Military trials are the norm. Censorship is growing stronger. And last month, “security” forces mowed down hundreds of Christian protesters, dozens of whom were killed.

A spokesperson for the U.S. State Department said the Obama administration was concerned about recent developments. “We again urge the Egyptian government to handle these cases involving civilians in a civilian court, and with full transparency and due process of law,” the spokesperson told reporters.

The state-run media apparatus in Egypt, on the other hand, has been attempting to paint the military junta in a flattering light. But according to critics, the regime’s propaganda organs also contributed to the vicious attacks on Coptic protesters last month who were demonstrating against repeated Islamic terror attacks on their churches.

The military has largely ruled Egypt for more than five decades, with all of the nation’s “presidents” and key players since the early 1950s coming from the senior leadership of the armed forces. If the generals get their way, military rule will probably continue indefinitely and the façade of “democracy” will be used to legitimize it.

“I have serious doubts that the military will hand over power to civilians,” Egyptian activist Ahmed Imam told the AP. “They will most likely choreograph a scenario in which they will appear to hand over power but will in fact hold on to power.”

But according to some analysts, the other likely alternative — rule by elected Islamic extremists — might not be much better. In Tunisia, recent elections delivered a landslide victory to Islamists after the overthrow of strongman Ben Ali. Meanwhile, in neighboring Libya, Islamists and Gadhafi loyalists are still [battling it out](#) in the streets.

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*Photo: Egypt’s military ruler field marshal Mohammed Hussein Tantawi, left, and Sami Anan Egyptian chief of staff of the armed forces, are surrounded by military policemen in Cairo, Egypt, Sept. 16, 2011: AP Images*



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