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EGYPT'S PRESIDENT ELECTION AND PUBLIC OPINION:
WHAT DO EGYPTIANS WANT?

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PARTICIPANTS:

Moderator:

DANIEL BYMAN
Senior Fellow and Director of Research, Center for Middle East Policy
The Brookings Institution

Panelists:

STEVEN COOK
Hasib J. Sabbagh Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies
Council on Foreign Relations

SHIBLEY TELHAMI
Nonresident Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution
Anwar Sadat Professor for Peace and Development,
University of Maryland

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ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. BYMAN: Good afternoon and welcome. I'm Daniel Byman. I'm the research director here at Brookings at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy and I'm delighted to have you with us on this somewhat gloomy but not as rainy as I feared afternoon.

Our talk today is on Egypt's presidential election and public opinion. This will probably be the shortest introduction I've ever given because I don't think I need to tell anyone in this room why this topic is important and why we're having this event at this particular time. What's been happening in Europe is truly dramatic and transformative, and in particular, it's been exceptionally difficult to predict and understand.

And that's why I'm delighted that we have our two panelists today. Professor Shibley Telhami will be presenting the results of his research and public polling research on Egyptian public opinion. This has been an ongoing project of Professor Telhami that he's done in his capacity at the University of Maryland, as well as we are delighted that he's also a non-resident fellow here at the Saban Center.

Commenting on the presentation will be Steven Cook, who is a senior fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Formulations. Steven Cook is also one of the senior America Egypt watchers. And so we really have a truly impressive duo to comment and to inform us on events today.

So without further adieu, let me ask Professor Telhami to kick us off.

(Applause)

MR. TELHAMI: It's always a pleasure to be here and to present results of the poll. Let me just give you a brief background on this before I start presenting the results. This is a poll that was done specifically for the presidential elections. We held it

May 4th to May 10th. May 10th, by the way, is the day of the first ever presidential debate in Egypt between Amr Moussa and Abdul Moneim About Fotouh. So this was completed before the debate. The debate was late in the evening, so we don't really have a sense of the impact of that particular debate, if any, on the poll. But it was, as you can see, a very recent poll.

In comparison, we've done a lot of polls in Egypt. I've been doing polling in Egypt for more than a decade now. The last one I've done, including about the parliamentary election, was October 2011. So we have some points of comparison on some of the questions. This was a sample of 773, all face-to-face interviews, in both cities and rural areas. And this is part of a research project that I conducted at the University of Maryland that is in part funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

So I want to say a couple of things before I give you the first slide, and that is about presidential elections. In my own view, we do not have a good model for presidential elections. No one does. For one thing, we don't know about voter turnout. Voter turnout is huge. During the parliamentary election people are expecting huge turnouts. Some people are estimating 80 percent. It ended up being less than 50 percent. In this particular case, in almost all the polls, including the ones that are being done in Egypt by Egyptians, people are saying we're going to turn out. Ninety percent of the people are saying we're going to turn out, including the one released by Al-Ahram yesterday. There's no way you're going to have 90 percent turnout. We know that doesn't work out.

And so, and you'll see for other reasons why it is very hard to have a predictive model. So for that reason we cannot possibly look at the polls with the same eye as we are, you know, in a western country with established norms and expectations

and a sense of how the public is going to behave when it comes to voting. So you have to look at it from that perspective.

The most interesting part therefore isn't really who's leading. And I will share that with you. The most interesting part is about what Egyptians want. What are they looking for? What's driving their choices? And how are they differentiated demographically in this political map? What do they want in terms of the country and the shape of the country, and particularly the role of religion in the country which is a huge issue, in the debate and in terms of the foreign policy outlook?

So that's what I'm presenting today. It is broader than just who is going to win or who the respondents are going to vote for. It's bigger than that but again, keep in mind that we don't have a very good predictive model.

Having said that, when we asked them for which presidential candidate they intend to vote, as of May 10th this is the result that we had. Thirty-two percent said Abdul Moneim Aboul Fotouh; 28 percent said Amr Moussa; 14 percent said Shafiq. And it's interesting that Mohammad Mursi, the candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood, is tied with the Nasserist candidate, Hamdin Sabbahi, who has been rising in the polls.

I have to again remind you that what's happening with the Muslim Brotherhood is in the past week alone they went all out in terms of mobilizing their support. Huge campaigns. They're using the machinery to get out the vote to invigorate their constituents. And it is, in my own opinion, it is very likely that Mursi will get higher than it is showing in the poll just by virtue of the fact that he has very important political machinery. Whether that would be enough to put him as one of the top two candidates, we don't know. Egyptian polls have been all over the map on this one. But he has been trailing in almost every single poll. Some people show him doing better than others, but

he has been trailing in almost every single poll and there is no poll that has come out in Egypt that shows him as one of the two top candidates.

And as you know, it's improbable that we're going to have one candidate win a majority. Most likely we're going to have two sub candidates and there will be a runoff election. Mursi in the polling and all the polls that I've seen, he doesn't show up in that.

Now, if you have been reading the press and following the story about Egypt, you notice that the Egyptians have already voted if they are living outside of the country. They voted here in the United States. They voted in Western Europe. They voted in the Middle Eastern countries where they reside. And the turnout has been pretty decent actually across the board. And the result -- and they revealed the results before the rest of the Egyptian population can vote, which is unusual. And so we know roughly what Egyptians in the Diaspora -- how they voted.

And by and large what we find is that in Western countries they tend to vote more for the secular's candidate, whether it's Ahmed Shafiq or Amr Moussa. Aboul Fotouh gets some support but less for Mursi, the Muslim Brotherhood candidate. Whereas, in Saudi Arabia where there is a huge Egyptian population, Mursi is actually doing quite well. Yesterday they released the results from Jeddah, where he was the number one, followed by Aboul Fotouh. So that gives you a little bit of a flavor of how turnout is going to matter because they are different constituencies and we know who is going to turn out.

Now, I also want to, before I give you more, I want to tell you how these broke down demographically because that, too, is an interesting story. Those who said the economy is the primary factor of selection tended to have a slight preference for Amr

Moussa as president, while those who emphasized personal trust as the most important factor generally favored Hamdin Sabbahi, the Nasserist candidate or former prime minister Ahmed Shafiq. Among Amr Moussa's supporters, the biggest factor for them -- their stated most important factor is foreign policy. So they rewarded him on that issue. Among Abdul Moneim Aboul Fotouh, the biggest factor among his supporters is the role of religion in politics.

So you can see that there is a different breakdown of the constituencies. Demographically, Moussa received the highest support among Christians, 43 percent, followed by Sabbahi with 24 percent, and then Aboul Fotouh with 9 percent. Among university graduates, Aboul Fotouh led with 35 percent to Moussa's 23 percent. Aboul Fotouh also led among the youth, that is the under 25, with 36 percent to Moussa's 23 percent. Moussa led among respondents who lived outside the cities with 31 percent, followed by Mursi with 21 percent. Aboul Fotouh actually had lower support in the rural areas with only 16 percent. He has more support in the cities. That's just an indication by the way of how important the turnout is going to be, whether you have more turnout in the rural areas, more turnout in the cities. It's very clear that there is some kind of divide on this issue across the board.

Now, one of the things that I wanted to do was to see whether or not their criteria for selecting a president was different from their criteria of selecting the candidates for parliament because, you know, the parliamentary elections are still in their memory, they were recent, and I wanted to see whether -- what drove their parliamentary voting behavior and what drives their presidential elections behavior.

So I gave them these factors to see which of the following is the most important to you. Now, obviously a lot of them could be important, but just I wanted to

force them to make choices. Personal trust, position on the economy, candidate's personal record or experience, unemployment, position on the role of religion in politics, foreign policy issues, political parties, and we also had other. And you can see that on the presidential election the number one factor is actually personal trust, 31 percent; followed by the economy; followed by the candidate's experience; followed by unemployment. And interesting, the role of religion in politics, only 8 percent say it's the single most important issue to them.

It's not that it's not important. You'll see from other questions that it is an issue for them but it is not the driving force for their selection of the president. And this is interesting because it's a little bit different from the way they ranked issues in the parliamentary behavior. In parliament, the number one criterion was political party with 24 percent. And that tells you, you know, something for the Muslim Brotherhood. If they have to worry about something, you can see that on the presidential election they're making more of a personal judgment about trusting the candidate versus here party was very important, followed by the candidate's experience. The economy was still important. Religion was only marginally more important.

Now, this question also tells a picture, because while the Muslim Brotherhood clearly has the capacity still to do well, it is still an important force in Egypt, likely to remain a very important force in Egypt in the years to come, and will probably, as I said, do better in the elections than the polls show because of the machinery. There still are factors that are telling us that they're not in the same place they were just a few months ago. And this is one of them. I asked them whether they thought that fielding their own candidate was a mistake or not after they promised that they will not do so, and look at these results. Seventy-one percent say it was a mistake; 28 percent say they

made the right decision. But that's indicative of, you know, the attitudes anyway, that must include some of the people who voted for them obviously in the parliament given the numbers.

Do you support making Sharia as the basis of Egyptian law? Now, those of you who follow this issue, you know, Gallup has done a lot of work actually on the role. They do very good work and you can see that generally Egyptians are among the most religious populations around the world. You know, Dalia Mogahed talks about this a lot and very well because she's identified, you know, how important a role religion plays in Egyptian society. And we know it's not new that, you know, we have people who -- a lot of people, and again, various polls before have indicated that Egyptians support the idea of having Sharia law be a basis of Egyptian law. In this case we have basically two-thirds to one-third support this idea. It varies. Some polls have it even higher.

The real question wasn't this. This is not a surprise. This is, in fact, conventional wisdom. This is nothing striking here about this finding. But here's the interesting thing, which is where the public is, which is when you think about applying Sharia, what is your preference? Applying the spirit of Sharia with adaptation to modern times or applying Sharia literally, including to the penal code? That's really where the debate is, because if you look at people like Abdul Moneim Aboul Fotouh, the moderate Islamist who is getting more support than any other Islamist candidate, he's putting forth a much more liberal interpretation of the Sharia, more akin to applying the spirit of Sharia but not literally applying Sharia. And you can see, you know, how it is possible for people to be religious and want Sharia to be the basis of the land but not to be very literal about the interpretation. And that's where the space is. Eighty-three percent of Egyptians are in that category of people who want to apply the spirit of Sharia but not literally.

Which of the following models is closest to your aspiration in thinking about the role Islam should play in the Egyptian political system? And this I gave them six specific countries. And some questions, they're open. I don't name anything and I'll tell you when that's the case. In other questions, like this one, I gave them six specific models that I hear a lot when I talk to Egyptians. And that's why I put them in there as models of how Islam is being applied in the political system. They are Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Tunisia, and Morocco. And what you find here is Turkey, by far, is number one, followed by Saudi Arabia. And then Tunisia comes, you know, next. And Turkey, by the way, that finding also pretty much coincides with the finding we had in October 2011. We asked a slightly different question which is, which country in the world do you want Egypt to look most like? We didn't ask about the role of religion; it was about, you know, just imagining Egypt in the future. Which country do you want it to look most like? And a majority said Turkey actually. So the Turkish model clearly is the one that resonates the most so far among Egyptians.

Whom among world leaders do you admire most outside your own country? This question we also asked in October. Again Erdogan has been number one. He is number one. Remember, this is not allowing them to mention any Egyptian leader's name. And the reason for it is that, you know, we started doing this polling a decade ago when it was unfair to tell them do you like Mubarak or not in an authoritarian country or do you like King Abdullah or not? We just -- we didn't think we could get valuable information so we ruled out anybody within the country and went to the outside. Now we're in a position to do more and so we asked in an open question -- we don't name, we don't give them names -- which leader would you like the next Egyptian president to be most like? And that's an open question. We do not give them any names

at all. I actually was surprised by this answer. When you give them Egyptian leaders you find that actually Sadat and Nasser are ahead of Erdogan. Erdogan comes third. He is the best of international leaders.

Now, I thought about the Sadat thing, which a bit surprises me personally. I thought that Nasser would do better if you had asked me to put them head-to-head, in part because he has -- he's seen to be nationalist. Sadat is associated with peace with Israeli, which is not particularly popular. And yet actually in retrospect I think it does make a lot of sense because Nasser, and you can see, for example, Abdul Moneim Aboul Fotouh's position on Nasser and Sadat, it's critical of both. He admires Nasser but obviously he's the one who smashed the Brotherhood, too. And so Sadat was actually more friendly to religious organizations and you could tell from the parliamentary election the degree to which that's true.

Opinion of the Supreme Military Council. Do you think that they are trying to advance the aims of the revolution? Reverse the aims of the revolution? Or they are neutral? And you can see only about 18 percent say that the Military Council is actually trying to advance the aims of the revolution. So people are mostly split between those who think they're trying to slow it down or reverse it and those who are neutral with 44 percent. And you can hear a lot of suspicion in Egypt about the role of the military.

If Iran succeeds in developing a nuclear weapon, a nuclear weapons program, what should Egypt do? Build its own weapons program or push for a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East that includes Iran, Israel, and the Arabs? And it's interesting. Again, it's almost two to one you have Egypt should develop its own. And one-third say, you know, it should push for a nuclear-free zone.

What if Iran doesn't develop its nuclear weapons or reaches an

agreement with the international community but Israel maintains its weapons? You still have half of Egyptians say they want Egypt to develop its own weapons. And 45 percent say -- so they're basically divided. Divided between those half and half almost; between those who want Egypt to develop its own nuclear weapons and those who want Egypt to push for a nuclear-free zone.

Attitudes towards the U.S. Now, let me just start with a couple of interesting points here. One is that Egyptians are not closely following the American presidential candidates this time around. Sometimes they follow a little more closely. I mean, not too closely but more closely. But this time, as you can imagine, they're consumed with their stuff. Actually, what's interesting, those of us who follow Egypt very closely and read the press on a regular basis, how little coverage of international affairs there is in Egypt right now. I mean, understandably. I mean, they have twists and turns that are going to matter for their future every single hour almost. It's a developing story. You can hardly keep up with it. Those of us who are experts are going crazy just trying to have a sense of the big picture.

And so they don't know who Mitt Romney is per se. I bet you if you ask them, the overwhelming majority, if you ask them the name out of the blue they wouldn't even know who you're talking about. So you have to put that in perspective. But they do know who Obama is. They do know who Obama is. And I remind you that Obama started with very positive numbers in 2009. We did a poll in the spring of 2009, even before he delivered his Cairo speech where Obama had favorable Arab views. More favorable than unfavorable. The plurality of Arabs had favorable views of him. And in Egypt he had more favorable views than unfavorable views in 2009. By 2011, he had largely lost that. It was completely reversed even by 2010, but 2011 more people had

more negative views of him. And this happened almost entirely because of his position on the Israel-Palestine question. We measured that. We asked specific questions about it.

And to understand how this is kind of Israeli and Arab attitudes is zero sum, Israelis started off with negatives towards Obama and by February 2012, the poll that we did in Israel, Israeli Jews preferred Obama to every single republican candidate by February 2012, largely after his very important speech at the General Assembly of the U.N. when he went against the Palestinian push to be recognized at the U.N. and gave a speech that was seen to embrace the Israeli position. And Israeli public opinion improved of him. But of course, it's soured in the Arab world. So that's the perspective that you have to keep in mind here. And this is what you get.

It is essentially an anger with Obama indication. It's not embrace of Romney. They know nothing about him, but we see the backlash. This is an anti-Obama backlash mostly over his Israeli-Palestine question.

Views of the U.S., they remain highly unfavorable. Very comparable to October 2011. No surprise here.

This one I've already shown you. In a world where there's only one Super Power, which country outside your own would you like that superpower to be. I have to tell you that I ask this question every year, but the question normally when I ask it in my annual Arab public opinion poll I actually give them a specific list of seven countries. And typically, France used to emerge as number one. Turkey last year, emerged as number one. But no Arab countries were actually put in there because actually, we didn't present them in the list. This is an open question. We didn't give any names but here again, Turkey is number one but it's interesting. Saudi Arabia emerges.

Note: the U.S. is not there.

The crisis in Syria. Now, you know, that in all our polling, particularly in Egypt, but also in the Arab world, when we ask people when you look at the Syrian crisis are your sympathies mostly with the rebels or with the governments? We get roughly 90 percent with the rebels against the government. That is public opinion. In most of the Arab states -- not in Lebanon. Lebanon is divided half and half. But in Saudi Arabia, in Jordan, in the mostly Sunni Arab states. In Egypt, we get 90 percent roughly saying they're with the rebels against the government.

But as you know, this does not at all translate into support for military intervention in Syria. And we've seen that even on the Libya case. By the way, those of you who watched the 5.5 hours of debate -- actually, it was only 4 hours of debate but with the break it was 5.5 hours that the public had to sit in front of TV to watch the first presidential debate in Egypt on May 10th between Abdul Moneim Aboul Fotouh and Amr Moussa. One of the things that Aboul Fotouh tried to blame Amr Moussa for was the fact that as secretary general there are (inaudible @ 0:26:07). He authorized the "bombing of Libya," which Amr Moussa said, "No, I never authorized it. I authorized a different kind of thing. I was angry when it happened." But you could tell how even now after Libya had been settled, there is still anger with the use of Western force on Libya.

And so you can see here, despite the overwhelming support for the rebels in Egypt that you've got 43 percent say they don't want to see any external military intervention in Syria. And 18 percent say an international military intervention on behalf of the rebels, but only with the U.N. Security Council support. So if you add those two you could see how much you get.

There is some support for Turkish Arab military intervention. Fifteen

percent. And some report 14 percent for international or Arab arming of the rebels. But it is generally not, you know, the public is generally not supportive of military intervention in Syria. And that is really the dilemma that the Arab world faces, the international community faces, both the moral dilemma, the political dilemma, but there is and it's very telling.

What country do you think is playing the most constructive role in handling the Syrian crisis? Open question. I don't give them names. And you can see Turkey is number one; Saudi Arabia, but the U.S. doesn't get a bad score here as well, except when you start asking the question, okay, what country is playing the most detrimental role and then you get the U.S. is number one with 38 percent, followed by Iran at 21 percent, and then Russia at 18 percent. So what that tells you is how divided the Arab public is on Syria. It really does because they're just confused. They just don't know what they want on Syria. I mean, people who want intervention, people who don't want intervention. But by and large they're not hospitable to intervention.

What two steps by the United States would improve your views of the United States most? This is a question we asked every year. To just try to -- to just try to figure out what are the questions that matter in their evaluation of the U.S. and its foreign policy and look at the 66 percent say brokering Arab-Israeli peace with the Palestinian state with (inaudible @ 0:28:30) capital is number one. And followed by stopping economic aid to Israel with 46 percent. And you could tell those are the two issues that have to do with Israel-Palestine are the number one issues in forming their own opinion about the United States. Then follows by withdrawal of American forces from the Arabian Peninsula, which is also always very high in all the polling that we've been doing really since 2002, even before the Iraq War.

But note, interestingly, I don't have it here but you can see that economic assistance is 18 percent. Pushing to spread democracy in the Middle East, 12 percent. What is not showing because it didn't get a lot, it got I think maybe 7 or 8 percent, is America withdrawing from Afghanistan. A huge issue for us but it's not, you know, Arabs want America to withdraw from Afghanistan. I mean, by and large they don't like, you know, the American presence in Afghanistan. But it's not the central prism through which they are evaluating American foreign policy. That's not it. People are not paying as much attention to it.

Perception of threats. Name the two countries that you think pose the biggest threat to you. Again, this is a question I ask all the time. And consistently we get Israeli and the U.S. as the top two. We get that in every single country we pull. In every single country we pull. To varying degrees. And here you can see how telling it is.

Iran is number three, 20 percent. But it's noteworthy that in the Iran case this number has actually gone higher. In 2009, it was less than 10 percent and in October it had gone to roughly, I believe, 15 percent. And now it's at 20 percent. So basically, this is an increase of a perception that Iran is a threat but it's still in comparison to Israel and the U.S., it's not there.

Views of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Prospects of lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Again, in a way that is very similar to Israelis and very similar to Arabs elsewhere. A majority of Egyptians think that a two-state solution will never happen. That the two states between Israel and the Palestinians will never happen. This has been the pessimism that is pervasive in Israel itself. We found it in the Israeli poll. And also in every Arab country. And this is, again, reflective of that. Forty percent say it's inevitable but we'll take more time than five years and 5 percent think it'll happen in

the next five years. But, you know, all of this translates into a lot of pessimism.

With regard to the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty, would you like to see Egypt maintain the treaty, cancel the treaty, or amend the treaty? As you know, this is part of the debate. Those of you, again, who followed the presidential debate in Egypt between Aboul Fotouh and Moussa, it was an issue. Aboul Fotouh, in fact declared Israel "an enemy," and sort of pushed Amr Moussa to declare his position. Amr Moussa wouldn't use the term enemy but both of them agreed. Neither one of them called for abandoning the treaty, but both of them supported re-assessing the treaty. And you can see where the Egyptian public opinion is -- it's actually split. It really gives politicians tremendous leeway. This is not, to me, this tells me leadership here matters. This is not a, you know, an issue that is going to drive politics. It can be used by politicians one way or the other.

I'll end with that and then we can have a discussion. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MR. BYMAN: (audio interruption) an exceptionally informative presentation of your polling results. I think there is a tremendous amount to chew over on this. I'd like to begin by asking Steven Cook to offer his comments on the poll and the broader situation in Egypt. Please.

MR. COOK: Well, thanks very much, Dan. And thank you, Shibley. It's a great pleasure to be here with you, friend and mentor.

I think Shibley once again has outdone himself on the polling. I think there are a variety of issues that are raised in the polling that for those of us who are spending 24/7 are not entirely surprising us but to more casual observers it suggests

some things that are not quite consistent with some of the conventional wisdom that's going on.

Let me just say as a blanket statement, there has been over the course of the last 16 months, a tremendous amount of clothing rending (phonetic @ 0:34:05) going on about what's going on in Egypt. And I think the fact that Shibley did these polls as successfully as he's done and that we are heading into an actual presidential election and that we actually -- the two of us just watched the presidential debate which I think in terms of debate time it was actually three hours and 50 minutes of actual debate and the rest of it was just filler -- is enormously heartening. This is something that people never thought that they would see. There have been tremendous twists and turns and ups and downs over the course of the last 16 months. Egyptians though are going to the polls. I think there's every indication that, you know, there's manipulation going on but overall these polls will be likely -- the actual mechanics of them will be freer and fairer than some had expected, and the Egyptians, with some exceptions, have handled themselves with an enormous amount of dignity in the run-up to this election. So I think it's extraordinarily important.

I don't think, however, that this is the end of any kind of process. I think that the kind of struggles between the different camps that you have seen will continue into this post-election period. In fact, I would expect that some of the positions, depending on who wins, will be hardened going forward. And that is because Egyptians have elected a parliament and they're about to elect a president whose powers have yet to be enumerated. And we're going to move directly from this moment of presidential elections, as historic as they are, into an enormous fight over what the new constitution of Egypt will say. And there's no guarantee that you're going to get that anytime soon or

that you'll get one at all, but it will be an issue that will animate Egyptian politics over the course of the next 3, 6, 9, 12, or more months because Egyptians need to figure out how to settle on what their state looks like, what their society looks like. And this is the perfect forum to do it. And they don't all agree on these issues.

As far as the foreign policy issues go, I once quipped that Tayyip Erdogan was actually Gamal Abdel Erdogan. It shouldn't be a quip. Sixty-three percent of Egyptians look at Turkey and Turkey as a regional leader. I think we should take that very, very seriously. We should also take very, very seriously the standing of the United States in Egypt and recognize from a policy perspective there's actually very little that we can do either to change that perception which seems to be deeply embedded and it suggests that something that I've been saying perhaps to no effect but that the appropriate approach for our policymakers is actually less is more given the overwhelming anti-American sentiment in Egypt these days, which is likely to persist.

I was surprised that Anwar Sadat did as well as he did. My immediate reaction is, well, that's good for the Sadat chair. But I think that it's hard to make any kind of conclusions other than the fact that the overwhelming animosity towards the United States and Israel I think colors virtually every aspect of the way Egyptians are looking at foreign policy. Because although Sadat was seen as someone who was well-respected in the poll, the over-hostility at Israel was at 90-plus percent of people doesn't exactly square.

But in the end I think the thing that I want to leave everybody with is that we are not ending with this poll; we are in the midst of something that is going to unfold over the course of many months, if not years. And we will see a certain amount of political uncertainty in Egypt going forward. And as far as foreign policy goes, foreign

policy for the United States, this is very much a different -- this is very much a different Egypt and business as usual is not going to be possible. And what I find somewhat, I don't want to use the word disturbing but curious, is that I think that there is a recognition within the government how much things have changed but that we are continuing to do things in the same way that we have done over the course of 30, 35 years. That relationship was outmoded even before the uprising. Now is really a time to reassess the relationship given everything that's happened as well as Shibley's very interesting polls.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you. I'd like to use these remarks really as a springboard to open it up to the audience. And please wait for the microphone and please also identify yourself before you speak. Are microphones in the room? Here they come. Yes, in the back, sir.

MR. AFTANDILIAN: Hello. My name is Greg Aftandilian. I'm with the Center for National Policy.

My question maybe for Shibley is in terms of people who voted for say the Brotherhood or for the Salafi Al-Nour party in the parliamentary election and now they're equivocating, is it your sense that maybe they want, as we would call the United States, divided governments? In other words, do they want kind of an equilibrium where maybe a secularist would be president, the Islamist would be in charge of parliament, and then they can balance each other off. I was wondering if you could comment on that.

MR. TELHAMI: Yeah, perhaps, although we didn't obviously ask that specifically. I mean, part of what I was trying to do is try to figure out what's driving their choices for the president versus, you know, what drove their choices for parliament. But we do win the debate. Obviously, polls are just one measure. I mean, we have had, I mean, those of you who understand Arabic, I urge you to look at the Egyptian press

every day because it's become the most fascinating press in the Arab world. I used to read Egyptian media maybe a couple of times a month because I knew -- it was so predictable, I knew what they were going to pitch basically government policy. I'd read a couple of columns of people who send them to me. Now I look at it almost all day long because something is changing and there are a lot of interesting people.

And what we see in there is yes, some of that was aired. I think one of the things that may have scared people a lot was even before the Muslim Brotherhood decided to field its own candidate, remember, they said that from the outset, before the parliamentary election. They had let it out that they will never -- they will not run their own presidential candidate. And conventional wisdom was actually that they were actually going to endorse most likely a liberal candidate and maybe somebody like ElBaradei. Those of you who heard the Muslim Brotherhood delegation that came to Washington just a few weeks ago and actually came here to Brookings, they were very, you know, specific in saying their initial vision was to back a liberal candidate that they could live with to create this balance.

Two things happened. One is they fielded their candidate but even before that there was a sense that they were trying to dominate the constitutional committee and to essentially, you know, put in place a constitution that will limit choices. And I think that scared a lot of people. I think the fact that the Salafis have acted independently is very telling. Obviously, the Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood are competitive with each other, even though they're both Islamist and ultimately if there's an Islamist candidate and a secular candidate in the runoff election, it is more probable that both are going to come together behind the Islamist candidate who, you know, regardless of who it may be.

But in the short-term there was a little bit of discomfort among the Sarafis as well and led them to support About Fotouh. So I think, you know, from the debate you can sense that there's a little bit of that fear of domination. People want something a little bit, you know, more democratic and I think they were being punished clearly for fielding their own candidate.

MR. COOK: Let me underline something that Shibley said. And by the way, Greg, I owe you a phone call. I know that.

The decision to field a candidate after I think has had a devastating effect. I think Mursi will do a lot better than the polls suggest, if only because they have the machine that Shibley talked about. But this, after decades of holding themselves out, of being kind of politically pure or in contrast to the hypocrisy of the state to -- and the leaders and defenders of the state, to then go back on what seemed like a promise I think has turned any number of people, regardless of what camp they were in -- when I was there during the elections there were a lot of people who said I'm going to vote FJP. At least they have some semblance of a plan, who are not members of the Brotherhood. I think that this then turned people off and you get the fear that Shibley was talking about. I think it was absolutely devastating. They were forced into doing it by circumstance. They certainly didn't plan on doing it but the way in which the political dynamics worked out in the month or so leading up to their nomination or failed nomination of Khairat al-Shater was clearly moving them in that direction despite what they actually really wanted to do.

MR. BYMAN: In the very back.

SPEAKER: Hello. I'm (inaudible @ 0:44:11) from the Egyptian Embassy, actually.

Thank you very much for the survey and your findings. And while there are a couple of notes which I couldn't really escape, basically some differences between the results that you gladly showed and other more recent surveys, especially with regard to the percentages of candidates. Somebody like Shafiq, for instance, was not really there in most of the polls when it comes to how people perceive SCAF or like other institutions within the political Egyptian arena. And I was wondering about the methodology and the samples, especially when it comes to the demographics because based on some other research basically, these results will coincide more or less with the demographics within the city. Within Cairo itself. Within, more or less, a young populous. And quite active actually populous. So can you please elaborate a little bit on that? Thank you.

MR. TELHAMI: Sure. This is a nationally representative stratified sample from both cities and rural areas. So it is selected randomly and it is stratified to be represented. And their demographics are balanced in terms of age, education, income, gender, and religion. We made sure we had 10 percent cops in the sample as well. They were all face-to-face interviewed, professional with supervision. Now, the ones that you were referring to, there's Al-Ahram. Al-Ahram has been doing this weekly survey and I haven't really seen their methodology. I don't know. Al-Ahram people tend to be professional so I don't question their methodology.

But I want to tell you that as I stated earlier, our poll ended May 10th. The latest Al-Ahram poll was released just yesterday. In the poll that they had in the period prior to May 10, they also showed Amr Moussa and Abdul Moneim Aboul Fotouh as leading, followed by Ahmed Shafiq, just like we did. So they may have had Moussa a little bit ahead of Aboul Fotouh but this is roughly within the margin of error. So they

didn't have a substantially different finding.

Now, the one that they released yesterday is interesting because according to their poll you now have both Amr Moussa and Ahmed Shafiq leading all Islamist candidates, including Aboul Fotouh who dropped and Mursi is up to third but he's behind the first two. So if that poll stands, you're going to have two roughly secular candidates be the ones who are contending for the presidency of Egypt in a runoff election with none of the Islamists if that poll holds of yesterday. That would be very surprising and it would be kind of interesting to how it would be -- how the public would react to it.

A lot of the polls, like the one that is being published by Armasa Leom (phonetic @ 0:47:24) are not -- they're not scientific polls. Right? They are online polls of readers. So you have a lot of people who are, like Al-Jazeera has one, too. This is any, you know, there is no scientific sample. These are not face-to-face interviews. These are people calling. They have -- Armasa Leom had thousands of respondents. They broke them down and they had a different -- I think it was actually Sabbahi who emerged; the Nasserist candidate was the number one in Armasa Leom's poll. Al-Jazeera is running the same type of, you know, you vote. In fact, I went out there to check to see how it works because I wanted to put my own selection to see how it's all working out.

So there are a lot of people doing it. Some are doing good polls. Some are, you know, just doing these informal polls that you can't look at as being scientific. And it's fluid. It's changing, by the way. We don't know. So since May 10th, as I said, it's conceivable that the debate had an impact. Some people think that Aboul Fotouh did well on Armasa Leom's own poll among readers showed that Aboul Fotouh who was "the

winner of the debate," but a lot of the discourse said that no, you know, Amr Moussa labeled him effectively as a more hard-line Islamist than he's letting on and his support among liberals declined particularly after the endorsement by the Salafis.

And so it's a fluid situation. We don't really know. And it is conceivable that in the past, you know, 10 days there has been also change in these numbers. But keep in mind, don't look at everything as being reported as a poll because it's really, these are mostly informal measures of readers or specific constituents.

MR. BYMAN: Please, up in the front. Garrett.

MR. MITCHELL: Shibley and Steven, thank you both.

I'm Garrett Mitchell. I write the Mitchell Report. And I want to pose the question this way. Polls of this sort often -- all answers do not have equal significance in terms of giving us insight into what's going on. So my question is are there, from both perspectives, are there findings in this poll that you would say have more salience than some others and that may have some element of suggesting to us sort of -- not necessarily where the duck is but where the duck is headed in Egyptian politics. I'm thinking, for example, of the ranking of Sadat and Nasser or the responses to yes to Sharia but, you know, modernized version of the old version. So overall, just a sense to Egypt-watchers and experts, are there things that sort of set off a blinking light for you?

MR. TELHAMI: Well, let me give you three things. And it's not the Nasser and Sadat one. By the way, I actually thought maybe I shouldn't report it because I am the Sadat chair. And even though I didn't give them names and they know it was quoted as the Sadat chair. It was a University of Maryland poll. Not specifically Sadat chair. That I was -- I felt a little uncomfortable because it's kind of like, you know, the Sadat chair.

But regardless, it's not particularly telling. I mean, it might tell you something but there are three things that are interesting. Number one is that you know, people are really looking at the overall system and they are differentiating between parliamentary and presidential elections. To me that tells you what Greg was alluding to, is that there is something going on here in their assessment of the big political picture of how they want to define Egypt. It's broader than just, you know, I want to vote for a party or the party affiliation doesn't seem to be driving everything. That's number one.

Number two, I think something happened where the Muslim Brotherhood has suffered over the past six months. There is no question in my mind. Now, as I said, don't underestimate them. They're powerful. They will stay with us. They will remain powerful in a big flair. But the power has been somewhat discounted over the past six months. We see that, you know, in the backlash to their fielding of a president. We see that in attitude that says religion is not -- the role of religion an policy is not the principal, you know, point of selection. And we also see it in terms of discourse, not just necessarily captured in the poll where people seem to be punishing them for not being effective in the parliament even though they have no power and they don't run the government. But then somehow that kind of -- it worked against them. The fact that they were in power but not in power and they have nothing to show for it has discounted their effectiveness. That's important obviously for Egypt.

And the third is the Sharia issue where I think that we have to keep in mind that while Islam is very important in Egypt, Sharia is important psychologically for most Muslims and certainly most Egyptians. The way they interpret it is flexible. And you don't have to be the most conservative Islamist to still be okay with the public on Sharia. And again, look at the way Aboul Fotouh is running and he's the leading Islamist.

So that tells me something that is very optimistic about Egypt. And whatever happens in the next few weeks and months, I'm one of the people who is very optimistic about the future of Egypt. I'm certainly worried that we might have a turbulent period in the next few weeks, both because the results of the elections could be contentious and there are still suspicions in the Egyptian public. That could obviously, you know, raise issues. The constitutional debate, which is going to be even a bigger debate, is going to activate Egyptians and there will be periods of tension but if you look at what happened in Egypt over -- it's been less than a year and a half since the revolution. A country of 80 million, contentious issues. It's been mostly peaceful. Yes, there's been violence, unfortunate violence, but nothing on the scale of what we see -- what we saw in Libya or what we see in Syria. What we see in Yemen. Most political parties are really behind peaceful mobilization. None of them have advocated violence. They have a reasonably successful parliamentary election. I think they'll pull it off with the presidential election. They'll have a tougher time with the constitution. That's pretty optimistic stuff, I think.

MR. COOK: Two very quick things. First, the Sharia thing, when I -- when Shibley gave me an emerged copy of the poll last week -- I know I was taking a look at it and just digesting it -- the Sharia issue and the 70 percent or so that supported, interpretation of Sharia, not the actual application, was important to me because that's where one's gut tells me many Egyptians are. And two, that's where Abdul Moneim Aboul Fotouh's people say he is. And I think that gives him a significant political advantage going into this poll.

Also, tie that to the results on Turkey. Abdul Moneim Aboul Fotouh has said to people, well, I want to be Egypt's Erdogan. And I think that's not actually a bad

trajectory at all but I think that that point on the way in which people are looking at today is I think very important and very telling.

The other thing is on the SCAF. There was the quick thing about results there that people thought that they weren't so neutral on the transition, that they were trying to manipulate it. It's clear that the military has wasted a tremendous amount of goodwill. And it at least opens the possibility that the military, as it retreats from day-to-day governance of the country, may not be able to fulfill its objectives of retaining that place that it has had in Egypt over the course of six years. I'm not saying it's going to happen but it at least opens the possibility given how much goodwill they've actually wasted.

I was saying to both Dan and Shibley before, these guys are kind of incompetent Machiavellians and so they, you know, clearly have been overwhelmed by much of what's happening. And I think you can imagine a scenario in which they are, by their own actions and public opinion and the rise of all these new actors that they're not going to be able to manage the transition in the way that they imagined.

MR. BYMAN: Sir.

MR. SACHS: Thanks. I'm Nathan Sachs from Saban.

These elections seem very odd in the sense that we have an election for president but we don't know what the presidency is yet because we don't have a constitution. And I wanted to ask if your sense -- I imagine you don't have data on this but what is your sense on the answer? What kind of president are they thinking of? And does it actually maybe affect what it is? You gave us very interesting data on what affects their choice. What kind of characteristics they're looking for. Would this be quite different? I imagine if they were electing a prime minister they'd want someone with

more of an economic plan. If they're looking for a president that's more of a symbol, then they want the personality more. You know, we could theorize. So I was curious about both your opinions on what they're actually voting about.

MR. TELHAMI: Well, first of all, we haven't polled on what kind of presidency they want, whether they want the presidency to be, you know, a powerful presidency with weak parliament or the other way around, which is obviously where much of the debate is. The way it's structured now and the presidency, even with the constitutional amendments that were approved, it's still a very strong presidency. And you can make appointments and still very strong.

The whole debate initially was about trying to have a constitutional change before the presidential election. A lot of people who argued for that, ElBaradei when he withdrew from running for presidency said, "Look, I don't even know what I'm running for. And therefore, I can't do it." So there's ambiguity. As it is now, you know, the council is likely to announce its own amendments until the change that occurs on the constitution. That tells me that the minute the president is elected and if, in fact, the council, the military council fulfills its obligation to shift the power to civilian government, you're going to have a very strong president. And I think that also is making the Islamists uncomfortable when you talk about that, the balance of power.

MR. COOK: Two quick points on this. I think the fact that they're electing both a parliament -- they've elected a parliament and electing a president whose powers nobody knows, speaks to the backwards nature of the transition. And it also speaks to the fact that the SCAF really did not want to be responsible for the day-to-day governance of Egypt. Remember these elections are supposed to happen first in June and then October of 2011. It just goes to show that they did not really want to be directly

responsible in that way.

I think to your answer what kind of president we'll get, what kind of powers will be enumerated, it depends on who the winners are. I think, you know, you can win and take a look at the existing arrangements and say, "Hey, this is pretty good for me." The losers will fight to alter those arrangements because they're clearly on the weak parliament. Unless they think strategically that in the next round, for example, the Muslim Brotherhood may be able to win.

So I think you have to look at it in those terms. Who the winners are, who the losers are, and what their incentives and how strategic they're looking at the situation. But it's very hard to tell. And as Shibley pointed out, there's no real polling data to suggest one way or another.

MS. SLAVEN: Hi, Barbara Slaven from the Atlantic Council.

Following on those questions, can you just walk us through what the procedure is supposed to be for changing the constitution? You mentioned that the SCAF will offers its own amendments. Is there a procedure that is already agreed to? I note that the previous constitutional committee was disbanded because it was seen as not being representative enough. Thanks.

MR. TELHAMI: I mean, right now obviously initially it was through the parliament. And what happened was there was a huge backlash and ultimately against it. When it was stacked mostly with parliamentary and mostly representative of the winning parties. And so you had societal backlash. You had the military backlash. You had some legal challenges. And now it's really -- it's not clear how this new committee that is going to, you know, rewrite the constitution. There's so much uncertainty in all of this. Which is, you know, again, why a lot of people have been frustrated with the

process. And the focus on the presidency has anyway shifted the attention from what was the big story of the day, which is the constitutional amendment. It's going to come back right after.

MR. COOK: There is no constituent assembly now. It's under negotiation how they're going to choose it. That was one of the problems if you go back to March 2011 when they set this transition and process and the legal underpinnings of it. There was no clear delineation of who gets to pick the 100 members of this constituent assembly to write the new constitution. And that's what we've run up against. And so now there's a negotiation going on within the parliament with the military about who gets to pick what and when they'll be able to do it. And that's why the military is now offering these constitutional principles on the powers of the presidency because it was their expectation. I think it was a bizarre expectation that there would be a constitution by now.

MR. HUSSEIN: My name is Abraham Hussein. I am an Egyptian-American living here in Washington, D.C.

First of all, I would like to commend Dr. Telhami for the excellent survey, not just who will win and who will lose, but the values. The one area in your research that impressed me in kind of affirms to me what I know about Egypt is their choice of relationship between state and religion. Religion, as you said, is very respected in Egypt but at the same time, and not in the same way like in Iran or in Saudi Arabia, which is very commendable and appreciated.

I've been going to Egypt every two years. Last January I was there and it was almost like a total Egyptian different people. When I used to talk about human rights and democracy they say, oh, that is not for us. Now everybody in Egypt is talking about freedom and human rights. My question is -- it's not a question. Did you publish

your information? These valuable findings, in the Egyptian media? And what kind of a response to it?

MR. TELHAMI: This is the release. We haven't released it until now, but I did send it to a number of people in Egypt already embargoed until today, including a couple of the major media personalities. By the way, with whom -- let's put it this way. As a student of Egypt and Arab politics, as I said, the poll is only one aspect. I go to Egypt. I talk to people in Egypt on the phone. I consult with people regularly. When I got the results I talked with a half dozen people I respect, including someone at Al-Ahram, by the way, talking about Al-Ahram, just to get the feedback to have a sense of what's going on because we're all trying to learn.

And, you know, and everybody is trying, I mean, most of them were not surprised by the results. The issue about who is winning and losing, again, at that time, you know, 10 days ago, this was not particularly controversial. The question was whether Aboul Fotouh, who was leading Amr Moussa by a few points or the other way around. That was not particularly surprising. So I think most of these results don't surprise people. This is the way they sense it. I think it matches the general perception.

MR. BYMAN: Zach.

SPEAKER: Thanks so much. Thank you, Shibley.

You were talking about the oddity of releasing expat numbers before the election. Obviously, other than the Westerners tended to vote for secular candidates and in the Gulf and Arab states it was much more for Mursi, could either of you gauge anything for what we can expect this week from those results? Thank you.

MR. COOK: From the release?

MR. TELHAMI: Of the expat.

MR. COOK: Yeah. I mean, I watched. I saw a few of them. I mean, the gentleman from the Egyptian Embassy may actually have more numbers but we noticed that there were actually differences even within each country like in the west. Like Washington was not identical to Los Angeles, was not identical to Chicago and Houston. I think there were differences even here.

In the Gulf, we generally found, the ones that have been announced, interesting, the results in the west were announced before the results in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. They have not fully been announced as of this morning. In all of Saudi Arabia. Jeddah was only announced. I haven't even seen the results from Riyadh. And I haven't seen them from other parts of the Gulf yet. So we know that the Jeddah numbers, you know, Mursi was with 40 -- I believe it was something like 43 percent. I mean, I'm remembering this so don't quote me on the number. But over 40 percent. And Aboul Fotouh, who has something like 28 percent in Jeddah, whereas here in the U.S. and in much of Europe, Ahmed Shafiq did well, Amr Moussa did well in some places, but also, you know, Sabbahi was doing well, the Nasserist candidate in parts of it. So that's been the trend more or less, I think.

MR. TELHAMI: I don't think you can draw any serious conclusions about what you have in different countries around the world through the expat voting. And you know, I know that, you know, Hamdin Sabbahi became, you know, a factor in this race on Twitter and I know you're very well aware of but I'm not sure that we can draw too much of a conclusion about what we've seen and what we will see.

MR. BYMAN: In the very back. Yes.

SPEAKER: Good day. My name is (inaudible @ 1:07:19). Thank you very much on this presentation.

My question is related to the Supreme Constitutional Court and its current disagreement with the parliament. The Supreme Constitutional Court in Egypt has been staffed with presidential and appointees. And recently the parliament has tried to push forward to minimize its power. One of the things that they hold, as I'm sure you're aware of, is the fact that they did indeed interpret the article 2, which is a point of contention. I would very much appreciate your comment regarding this and how well the new presidential candidates deal with this in the future. It seems to be avoided in the conversations and it was not really addressed directly in the debate, rather than just discussing who the principals who or what the rules are or which one they want to put in place. So, thank you.

MR. COOK: I just think this issue, which has come up recently; I think speaks to the importance of a new constitution. And what that says about the separation of powers and the role of the president in selecting justices to the Supreme Constitutional Court. And the entire judiciary system which, you know, since the Nasser period has been under extraordinary amount of pressure and politicized. Egypt is -- and I share Shibley's optimism overall -- Egypt has state institutions that are functioning but there is a long way to go and a lot of work to do in order to change these so that the government functions in a way that many Egyptians would like. In a way, let me just put it diplomatically, that is not rigged in the way in which you describe the Supreme Constitutional Court has been set up and the way it's been working over the course of all these years. That is a long-term process.

I think that people are concerned about who the next president is in terms of the constitution writing process, if that person has the kind of prestige and influence with the constituent assembly should it come into existence and what kind of

influence it will have and what kind of influence subsequently the president will have on the new institutions of the Egyptian state. But there's no way of knowing how that struggle is going to work itself out. But you can see how important -- we're all focused on this presidential election -- the really big story here is going to be the constitution.

MR. BYMAN: Great. Sir.

SPEAKER: Hi. My name is (inaudible @ 1:09:59). Thank you for the presentation one more time.

Can I get the speculation of the panel about when we have round two of the elections and most likely -- or it's likely to have one sector and one Islamist. Have you gone that far to see what the Islamist voice might incline to and how does it look like? Like they will unite after the Islamist candidate or how will it be?

MR. TELHAMI: Well, I would venture a little bit myself. I mean, we obviously don't know for sure because we haven't polled that and I'm not even sure the public has thought about it yet. And as I said, you know, if you look at it, their key criteria that they say are the criteria that's important for the selection of a president, do not appear to include in the first place the role of religion. So in theory, you know, it's possible. Let's say you have Ahmed Shafiq or Amr Moussa running against Abdul Moneim Aboul Fotouh or Mursi. Let's assume that's a possibility. I think it's going to depend who the Islamist candidate is. Aboul Fotouh has shown, for example, that he's capable of getting Salafi and Brotherhood support and he's capable of attracting a good number of the liberals. And so his chances would be better than Mursi, obviously, if he were the candidate that the Islamists would rally behind.

On the secular side, I'm not sure whether the other way is true. For example, had ElBaradei been there as a secularist, I think many Islamists were

comfortable with ElBaradei. I'm not sure the Islamists are comfortable with Shafiq. Initially, they were somewhat comfortable with Amr Moussa but not entirely comfortable with Amr Moussa. And now they've gone to war against Amr Moussa. If you look at the (inaudible @ 1:12:01) website or what their slogans, you know, (inaudible @ 1:12:10), the candidates, basically the remnants of the regime, they have both Amr Moussa and Ahmed Shafiq together. So they will label them together. I'm not sure that they're able to attract many of the Islamists. It depends on the voter turnout.

But I would speculate, just speculate that if Aboul Fotouh were one of the two finalists he will have an advantage over whoever the secular candidate will be. If Mursi is the Islamist candidate running against -- it doesn't matter who the secularist is -- the secularist would have a better shot.

MR. FRAYNE: Hi. Phil Frayne, Middle East Institute. Question for either Steve or Shibley.

I read somewhere that the monitors are not going to be allowed to observe the vote counting. So does that open up any possibility for rigging of this election? I mean, is there any possibility that the SCAF might play a few tricks to try to get their preferred candidate in, at least into the second round?

MR. TELHAMI: Well, let's start with the role of SCAF in general. I actually am not as critical as a lot of people have been of SCAF. I mean, obviously they are like every constituency, trying to hold onto maximum power. And they have had, you know, a certain advantage. But if you look at how they handled the process of change, they've given in quite a bit. They managed to limit the amount of violence. People can still blame them. It doesn't mean that they haven't made huge mistakes. But overall, actually, they haven't done as badly as people are labeling them, you know, even with all

the suspicion going on.

Having said that, you understand that their interests obviously to maintain the influence of the institution they are going to be hospitable to particular candidates that are going to be more hospitable to them. They obviously would be far more comfortable with Ahmed Shafiq than they would be with Mursi. It's not a hidden agenda. Whether that would, you know, give them incentive or would lead them to rig elections, whether they're capable in this environment to do so is another question. I think probably they would be shooting themselves in the foot because it's very hard to cover these stories right now.

Personally, I think that there will be suspicions if, for example, given that there are already suspicions of the intent of the SCAF and the Egyptian public that you saw, we see constantly, given their known preferences. If you end up having a result where none of the Islamist candidates is one of the top two, I think you're going to find a lot of people who are going to be accusing them of rigging the elections, whether they've done it or not. And it's in their interest to have observers because if you end up having a result like that, you need it to be legitimate. And international observers legitimize that. They've limited the number of observers. The Carter Center sent 22 observers. It is actually in SCAF's interest to give them full access. There is -- Egyptians, like everybody else in the Arab world, are worried about the sovereignty issue and so forth. But a lot of people have been saying welcome. You know, the public is not worried about the sovereignty issue and having, you know, transparency of the election. So I'm puzzled a little bit by that. I think that they need to have more access because they could end up with a result that people will not trust unless they have more transparency.

MR. COOK: Let me just pick up on something that Shibley said about

intentions and capability. First, I don't think they have the capability to do it. I think this is a very different environment. I think without foreign observers, there are NGOs, there is a press that is extraordinarily active. I don't think anybody is going to take rigging or the attempt at rigging lying down. And I think the entire society is watching out for this kind of thing.

But I'd also -- I don't think that they have an intention to rig this election because if it doesn't work and there's an explosion once again of street violence and demonstrations, they're stuck where they are and they don't want to be there. The only way you buy though this argument that they don't have an intention to do it is if you believe me in saying that they're counting down the days till they can hand this thing off, the day-to-day governance of this thing off to someone else. If you buy that argument, they really don't have the intention to do it because if it backfires they're stuck with it until they can put the system back together and figure out some other type of transition. They certainly don't want to be responsible on a day-to-day basis any longer. I don't believe in the evil genius theory of the SCAF. Like I said before, I think their Machiavellians but not quite competent Machiavellians.

MR. BYMAN: With apologies to the fair number of you with questions I want to take our remaining time to ask the last question. One thing here at Brookings and the Saban Center, while we are focused on events in the region, we're also focused on how that plays back in Washington.

You both have been emphasizing that the U.S., you know, interference would be a mistake and backfire. But that said, who would you recommend the United States should root for? And what would be a good outcome for the United States in all this beyond a stable, peaceful election?

MR. TELHAMI: Let me just give you my rule of thumb, which is stay out of it. I mean, we can't engineer it and it's usually the kiss of death when we embrace someone. And I think, you know, the will of the Egyptian people will be the will of the Egyptian people. And we will be able to work with whoever the Egyptians select because they have an interest in it. And even the Brotherhood, if you remember, sending their delegation here saying we want to work with you. We need the international support for economics. But, you know, certainly the other candidates are going to be in that position. So I think don't root for anyone; just stay out of it.

MR. COOK: I agree with that. I think if you polled those responsible when it's dark at night and they pull the covers over their head, who they might be interested in supporting, would probably by default, Amr Moussa, if only because he's a known quantity to people. You know, and he's popular enough in Egypt to make it look like it's legitimate. But I agree with Shibley 100 percent and this is what I've been saying. Stay out of it. Don't get involved. Don't even send anybody to the polling places. Just let -- Egyptians are smart enough; they know how to handle themselves.

Where I disagree slightly with Shibley is I think it is actually going to be a tougher road ahead in U.S.-Egypt relations and I think that that's across the board no matter who wins because I think the political incentives, or given what the polls show, is that we are a big fat target and to the extent that public opinion now matters in foreign policy, in all kinds of policymaking and the fact that there is going to be an incentive either on the part of someone who is (inaudible @ 1:19:44) or someone else, to show distance between them and the previous leadership, we are an easy place to go and there's going to be divergence there.

MR. BYMAN: Well, on that suitably depressing note for what was

otherwise an optimistic set of remarks, thank you both very much. And before everyone leaves, please join me in thanking our speakers for an excellent presentation.

(Applause)

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706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190