THE RISE OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD TO POWER IN EGYPT AND THE IMPACT ON FOREIGN POLICY

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is an effort to evaluate the changes on Egypt’s foreign policy after the rise to the power of the Muslim Brotherhood, a religious group founded in 1928, the leading religious exponent of the political Islam in the Middle East.

The Muslim Brotherhood was deepened in illegality since its foundation, but soon after the fall of the dictator Hosni Mubarak in February 2011 it has been searching some authenticity in Egyptian politics. A regular Party was created, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), even though there was an official separation between the two organizations - the Brotherhood and the FJP -, reality showed that both were inextricably linked, being considered almost impossible to differ each other in some cases.

The rise of the Muslim brothers developed from an important and international event, the so called “Arab Spring”. It started in Tunisia, along with a big wave of popular protests and it has arrived in Egypt bringing some hope towards democracy. Initially, the transition process was guided by the militaries, but the first free elections from Egypt history have put new political elite in power.

The new leadership had a world vision very distinct from the current one and they also sought to establish it through decision-making in foreign politics. By trying to do so the Muslim Brotherhood faced the two-level game theory brought by Putnam (1988:434). From one side it was needed to construct “coalitions among those groups” of interest, and from the other side it was necessary to try to obtain external enhancements in a way to “maximize their own ability to satisfy domestic pressures” while minimizing the adverse consequences of foreign developments”. As we may see, by the short amount of time it was in power (from June 30th 2012 to July 3rs 2013), the Muslim Brotherhood have experienced great instability, one that threated its continuity in power - as Hagan affirms about the needs to keep political power - “adjust it in order to impose less domestic costs”. It is this dynamics that will be analyzed on the text below.
MUBARAK’S FOREIGN POLICY

Hosni Mubarak assumed Egypt’s presidency in October 14th 1981 eight days after the murder of his predecessor Anwar al-Sadat. Mubarak has been Egypt’s vice President for six years, a period in which he had a prominent role at the policy of détente with Israel that was carried out by Sadat after the Yom Kipur War in 1973. The forthcoming with Israel was one of the many Sadat’s strategies to enshrine the most important trademark in his government: the Egypt deviation from the Soviet Union and the country’s entrance at the United States sphere of influence.

The peace treaty between Egypt and Israel signed in 1979 was a result of several intense negotiations led by the so United States President Jimmy Carter in Camp David, the country retreat of the North American presidency in Maryland. To Washington, the establishment of peace and diplomatic relations between the two countries was a valuable objective strategically. From then on Israel, the main United States ally in the area, would be safer and Egypt would also be a first order partner. A symbolic demonstration of Egypt’s important role to Washington was the presence of three former USA presidents alive by the time - Jimmy Carter, Gerald Ford, and Richard Nixon - at Sadat’s funeral.

The Camp David treaty was acclaimed at the West – Sadat and the so Israel premier, Menachem Begin were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1978 – but denounced as “treason” for several Egyptians and in many countries at the Middle East, since Egypt was the first Arab country to reach out to Israel after three wars between Jews and Muslims throughout the former decades. Internally, the resistance to the peace treaty put an end to Sadat’s government. In October 6th, the date in which Egypt celebrates the beginning of the attack against Israel in 1973, the former President was murdered by Muslim extremists during a military parade in Cairo. Externally, the the resistance to the peace treaty has provoked Egypt’s isolation from the Arab world - several capitals have broken off diplomatic relations with Cairo and the country was suspended from the Arab League as of 1979.

Once in power, Mubarak established as one of his main purposes the breaking of the “regional isolation that followed the Camp David Accords without endangering

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2 In 1948 there was the Arab–Israeli War; in 1967 the Six-Day War; and in 1973 the Yom Kippur War or Ramadan War.
peace with Israel and the special relationship with Washington” (SHAMA, 2013: 38). This strategy was successful when Mubarak’s Egypt started to give signs that had the purpose of keeping itself side by side amongst other Arab countries regarding important matters. As it is said by Shama (213 : 38) it has become quite clear at this became clear in defense of Palestinian rights made by Egypt, as well regarding the substantial military aid given by Cairo towards Saddam Hussein’s Iraq during the war against Iran (1980 - 1988).

At the initial stages of Mubarak government, the Egyptian relation with the United States was intense but no by far exclusive. The fact that Mubarak had worked to mend the alliances with the Soviet Union (SHAMA, 2013: 39) is a proof of that strained ties since the yaw promoted by Sadat at the 1970s. However by the end of the Cold War and with the Soviet Union out of the picture, Egypt was put up a way that would remain the same up until 2011, which was seen as an alignment almost automatic according to Washington’s interests.

The relation between Washington and Cairo has deepened since the Gulf War. The Kuwait invasion by Saddam Hussein has sealed the end of Pan-Arabism, one of the three ideologies that rose from the post colonization Middle East (DEMANT, 2008: 98). This ideology that through the Gamal Abdel Nasser (1956-1970) government had reached the top in Egypt had suddenly vanished, since the attack the first coming from an Arab country against each other had split the Arab world, straddling many divergences among States, States and their civil societies, and even amongst groups within civil society such as the Muslim Brotherhood that by that time had lived “the end of the heyday of the internacional tanzeem [organization]” (PARGETER, 2013: 128).

Saddam Hussein’s role was quite central towards this division, making him a Palestine cause hero by rejecting to make peace with Israel and by hosting several Palestine refugees in Iraq, sending money to the suicide bombers’ families that would try to attack Israel³. During the Gulf War Saddam has bombed Israeli cities and tried to peg the invasion of Kuwait to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, conditioning its withdrawal to the withdrawal of Israel from occupied territories (DOWTY, 2012: 151). Saddam then became to be seen publicly “as a hero who was standing up to the imperial forces of the West” (PARGETER, 2013: 125). On the other hand, the Gulf countries, especially the vast and sparsely Saudi Arabia, saw in Saddam a great threat. These

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countries have decided that by taking American support that at the top of their counteroffensive would reach 500 thousand soldiers at the area to free Kuwait.

Before engaging militarily against Saddam Hussein, Washington have tried to built some support in the Middle East and Egypt had a fundamental role in it. The former American president George H. Bush negotiated directly with Mubarak and got him to send five thousand Egyptian troops (the number would get to 35 thousand at the peak of the conflict\(^4\)), the authorization to use Egyptian airspace and the Suez Canal, in addition to aid in seeking for Arab support (CARLISLE, 2003: 57). Mubarak made these concessions by seeing in the West support a way to outline the deep economic crisis in which Egypt was facing, with the annual inflation and unemployment around the 20% and the external debit equivalent to 115% of the Gross Domestic Product (RUTHERFORD, 2008: 137). In the words of Rutherford (2008: 137/138), Egypt’s willingness to assume a leadership role in opposing the Iraqi invasion produced a bonanza of economic rewards”:

The United States forgave $6.7 billion in military debt, and the Gulf countries wrote off another $6.6 billion in loans. The Paris Club of private creditors agreed to write off another $10 billion in debt, and to reschedule and cut interest rates on the remaining $10 billion it administered. In total, roughly 50 percent of Egypt’s foreign debt was forgiven in the years following the Gulf War. At the same time, the Gulf, Europe, the United States, Japan, South Korea, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) combined to provide a dramatic increase in economic aid. The country received $7 billion in emergency assistance during the Gulf War, in order to ease the economic strains of the conflict. It received another $8 billion after the war.

Initially, Mubarak government’s position was supported by the Egyptians, shocked with an invasion that produced thousands of refugees amongst the 1.3 million Egyptians that worked in Iraq and Kuwait (CARLISLE, 2003: 57), but as the allied offensive against Saddam have begun, the winds have shifted. The brutality of the attacks against Iraqi cities added up to the perception that Egypt’s economic spoils were not enough, so it has made important parts of Egyptian society increasingly question the alliance with Israel and the West, represented by the U.S. against any another Arab country. Six days after the beginning of the allied offensive, Mubarak stopped his

propaganda campaign against Saddam Hussein and proceeded to take measures in order to contain protests in solidarity with Iraq that have been summoned by Muslim fundamentalists and secular leftists, measures such as expanding the school holidays in colleges and universities.

In retrospect, Osman (2012: 187) summarizes the performance of Mubarak as a President who decided not to take up the “mantle of leadership” and chose, instead, to act as “subordinate” of Saudi Arabia in the USA as an Arab defender, showing “unable (or unwilling)” to explore the opportunity arose and failing “to formulate a lively, influential and purposeful policy”. This diagnosis is more accurate if assigned to Egypt as a State that has actually followed Saudi Arabia, instead of Mubarak. Unlike Jaber III, then Emir of Kuwait, Fahd and then King of Saudi Arabia, the Egyptian president made forceful speeches against Saddam Hussein, who turned against him when public opinion changed sides. By that time it has become quite clear what Mubarak has known for years: the regime international alignment went against the ideal foreign policy for most of the Egyptian population. Perhaps the Gulf War has been a landmark change in Mubarak’s position, who very rarely returned to be main character regarding news of international relations in the Middle East. Except for the Gulf War, its foreign policy was conducted, in the words of Droz-Vincent (2012) “below the radar” of the public opinion and was “characterized by secret agreements (...), warm relationships beyond the 'cold peace' with Israel official (...) and discrete mediation in the Israeli-Palestinian front to avoid protests in Egypt.”

The effect of this situation was that Egypt under Mubarak relinquished project Nasser and to a lesser extent, towards Sadat, to lead the Arab-Muslim world and now went on to have a strategic orientation that boiled down to be part of “the great Pax Americana in Middle East, in direct opposition to Iran, Syria and sometimes radical movements such as Hezbollah and Hamas “(OSMAN, 2012: 192). As a reward, Egypt has received billions of dollars in civilian aid, and especially military, investments and a prominent role as an U.S. ally. In order to hide weakness inside Egypt this pragmatism without a project was presented in positive lights as Osman (2012: 189) notes:

President Mubarak’s supporters repeatedly emphasized that the president’s ‘internal focus on Egypt’ was ‘courageous and pragmatic’:

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he was the first pharaoh to confront his country’s problems without as escapist embrace of unrealistic ambitions in the wider region; he did not seek glory and adulation by punching above Egypt’s weight; he was ‘wise’ in not dragging Egypt into struggles that it could ill afford even to win; and, crucially, unlike Nasser and Sadat, his calculated and methodical diplomacy, even if it had not led to dramatic successes, had not resulted in any grand failures.

The close proximity of Mubarak with the United States and Israel did not mean an unrestricted subservience of his government to Washington. In 2003, when the administration of George W. Bush decided to attack Iraq again, Mubarak was against it. Fearing a strengthening of Muslim terrorism (against which spent the entire 1990s dueling inside Egypt), Mubarak warned the U.S. about the emergence of “100 new Bin Ladens”\(^6\) if and when the occupation would be over. The boundary of the alliance between Washington and Cairo was the very maintenance of the Mubarak regime, and this goal became clear after 2003, when the White House began to advocate intensively towards the Middle East democratization, especially Egypt, the center of the Arab world.

One of the lessons taken from the terrorist attacks of September 11 to George W. Bush and his assistants was that Muslim terrorism was the result, among other things, to the lack of democracy in the Middle East. If the Saddam Hussein’s Iraq was possible to deploy a military alternative in order to implant a democracy in the ancient Arab allies of Washington offensive this was not the case. The U.S. then began to advocate the democratization for the countries of the region in an open, public pressure facet which began on November 6, 2003, in a Bush speech at the National Endowment for Democracy. That day, Bush said that military dictatorships were a straight, smooth highway to nowhere\(^7\) and called for the “great and proud nation of Egypt”, that had “shown the way toward peace in the Middle East”, to “show the way toward democracy in the Middle East.\(^8\) The pressure from the Bush administration under the Mubarak government was shown on the news on January 29, 2005, when Ayman Nour, a leading opposition to the Egyptian regime, was arrested and interrogated. On February 26, the then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice canceled a visit to Cairo after mentioning the


\(^7\) National Endowment for Democracy. Remarks by President George W. Bush at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy, Nov 6 2003. Available at: http://www.ned.org/george-w-bush/remarks-by-president-george-w-bush-at-the-20th-anniversary

\(^8\) Ibid
case to the former Foreign Minister of Egypt, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, in a “tense meeting”\(^9\). The next day, surprisingly, Mubarak gave a speech in which he asked the Egyptian Parliament a constitutional amendment that would allow the country to hold multiparty elections for the first time in its history\(^{10}\).

What seemed like a major concession by Mubarak was, in fact, a simply superficial measure, a clear example of what Dunne and Ottaway (2007: 5) call “Bahrain model” of cosmetic democratization promoted by authoritarian regimes in the Middle East, which “consists of reforming political institutions in a way that projects an image of change but does not entail a significant degree of power redistribution”. The Bush administration seemed to accept small and incomplete reforms promoted by Mubarak and believe that the actions of Washington it was even a supporting democratization, as reveals Condoleezza Rice speech at the American University in Cairo in June 2005\(^{11}\):

> For 60 years, my country, the United States, pursued stability at the expense of democracy in this region here in the Middle East -- and we achieved neither. Now, we are taking a different course. We are supporting the democratic aspirations of all people.

The con Mubarak became cleared over time. The presidential election held in September 2005 was marked by repression, fraud, and irregularities; the legislative elections, in November, by mass arrests of members of the Muslim Brotherhood, whose candidates (officially registered as “independent”) had obtained a positive result in the first round of voting; Ayman Nour (who ran for president and won 7% of the vote against 88% of Mubarak) was arrested in November and convicted in December; and in the following years, Mubarak held reforms aimed to curtail further political participation (LIMA, 2010: 31).

The impetus of the United States for the Middle East democratization faltered with the positive outcome of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Egypt legislative elections

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(88 of 454 seats), but completely died in June 2006, when Hamas, a Islamic fundamentalist group emerged from the Brotherhood, won the legislative elections in the Palestinian Occupied Territories. These results made it clear that the Middle East democratization could lead to religious dictatorships, confirming the maximum prejudiced that democracy in the region would mean “one man, one vote, once.” At this point, and in the following years until his deposition in 2011, Mubarak, who expressed his discomfort with the campaign for democratization Americans\textsuperscript{12} sent, had made clear its proceedings in foreign policy: he was willing to maintain the alliance with the United States and Israel, most often against the wishes of the Egyptian society, provided this does not affect his grip on power.

THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS IN THE FOREIGN POLICY OF EGYPT

It is a tradition in Egypt that foreign policy is formulated directly in the Presidency and, often, by the Chief Executive himself. This feature was present in different intensities in the Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak regimes. An example of personalism was given in 1978, in what is the biggest achievement of foreign policy of modern Egypt, the peace negotiations with Israel. Reported the former U.S. president, Jimmy Carter, that while Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin relied heavily on his advisers and counselors, Sadat “wanted to make decisions for himself” and “did not like having his aides while he was meeting” with Carter\textsuperscript{13}.

The personalism of Egyptian foreign policy derives from the fact that the country live under an authoritarian regime. In these circumstances the decision process is not complex as a more democratic country in which Congress, bureaucracies and social forces may influence, but as seen in the first chapter the political elite is not always a homogeneous force. In the case of Egypt, as asserts Dessouki (2010: 182), there was an influence by different individuals and it depended “not from his cabinet position or bureaucracy, but personal relationships and access to the president.” Added to this the fact, explains Dessouki, that in comparison with other Arab, Egyptian society is more developed from the organizational point of view, and by its the intellectually


\textsuperscript{13} PBS. American Experience – Brokering Peace. Available at: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amERICANEXPERIENCE/flash_interactive_view/carter-peace/
diversification. Thus, despite its immense power, the leader “has to assume the various roles of arbiter, mediator and lobbyist at one time or another” (2010: 182).

In the case of the Mubarak government, there are no consensus regarding the size and composition of this small group. According to Osman (2011: 186), it included “various Interior ministers, army commanders, and heads of the ultra-influential intelligence services”. Dessouki (2010: 184) mentions all these figures and includes the Prime Minister, the President of Parliament, and Minister of Foreign Affairs, which, according to the author, his role had “significantly expanded” under Mubarak (2010: 185). It should be noted that at the end of the Mubarak government, amounted within the National Democratic Party figure of his younger son, Gamal Mubarak, who became the “external face” of the system (LIMA, 2014: 6).

Although one might speak of an internal dispute in the inner circle of the Egyptian presidency, the model of decision-making process of the country approaches, as stated Dessouki, two of the models set by Charles Hermann, the leader-staff group or presidential center, which are configured by the existence of “an authoritative decision maker, who can act alone, with little or no consultation with other people or institutions except for a small group of subordinate advisors” (2010: 182). A picture of this is the possibility, as stated by Shama (2012: 63), that the foreign policy of Egypt under Mubarak was a reflection of the major leader personality traits: caution, obsession with security, lack of strategic vision, pragmatism, and lack of charisma.

FOREIGN POLICY OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

A comprehensive study of the foreign policy of Mohamed Morsi, the Muslim Brother elected president of Egypt in June 2012, would require an analysis of the Muslim Brotherhood project as a social group and political party that, for being too long, would be beyond the scope of this research for the moment. Still, it is possible to assess how Morsi behaved in a year and three days in power regarding the external world.

A basis for doing this is the article published by Amr Darrag, the former president of the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), the political arm of the Brotherhood Foreign Relations Committee in the Foreign Policy magazine website on October 16, 2012. Entitled *A Revolutionary Foreign Policy* the article provides indications that the Muslim Brotherhood, at least in the field of intentions, was promising to do when they would come to power.
Darrag begins his argumentation criticizing the Mubarak regime, a period in which Egypt “completely lost its cultural, religious, and political leadership positions” and in which foreign policy was the “sole responsibility of one individual”. Thus says Darrag, all state institutions and social groups should have an active role in “shaping and implementing Egypt's foreign policy”, which in turn “should reflect the views of as many of Egypt's parties and stakeholders as possible”.

Without mentioning the U.S., Darrag criticizes the automatic alignment of Cairo with Washington. The politician says that relations with “all countries” should be based on “a foundation of equality and mutual interests -- not dependency and domination” and states that Egypt must go through “a gradual transition from its permanent, single-alliance approach to a balanced international relations policy that emphasizes ties with all parties”.

The FJP member also talks about a sensitive issue for the Muslim Brotherhood, the State of Israel. The Palestinian question is “central political agenda” of the Muslim brothers since the 1930s (Pargeter, 2013: 199) and even their more reformist elements remain a dubious discourse regarding the existence of Israel (Pargeter, 2013: 202), which raises suspicions about the renunciation of violence made by the Brotherhood in the 1970s. In the 2012 article Darrag did not mention Israel, but recalls the peace treaty between the two countries by stating that “Egypt will continue to respect the conventions and treaties it has signed with all other nations” and that the new Egyptian foreign policy should “also respect the principles and norms developed by the international community to resolve and settle conflicts among nations”. Darrag, however, recalls that treaties must be strictly complied with (at Camp David, Egypt and Israel treated the Palestinian issue, but this part of the agreement was never put into practice) and emphasizes “the need to support the Palestinian people to obtain all their legitimate rights.”

Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood remained in power in Egypt for exactly one year and three days. The period of analysis is short, however, it was possible to observe some changes in the Egyptian foreign policy as well as the limitations imposed on the performance of the new president by endogenous and exogenous variables to Egypt. We will review here briefly three aspects of Egyptian foreign policy: relations with the U.S., Iran and Israel.
The United States and Egypt

In the article that outlined the plans of the Muslim Brotherhood to Egyptian foreign policy, Amr Darrag established as a priority the end of the “unique alliance” with Mubarak maintained by the United States. At the time he was in power, Morsi actually sought to expand the range of partners from Egypt. This becomes clear when looking at international trips made by him. Morsi visited Europe twice (September/2012 and January/2013) and was in all the five countries of the BRIC group, and on more than one occasion expressed the interest to integrate this heterogeneous group and form the E-Brics. This action, which was intended to make it plural agenda allies of Egypt, did not confront the USA. Much more important for Washington is to have Egypt as a regional ally, albeit not exclusively, a condition that depends on the relations between Cairo and Tehran and between Cairo and Tel Aviv, as discussed below.

Israel and Egypt

One criticism towards Morsi government claims that its foreign policy “was disastrous and threatened the country’s most vital national security interests” because although Morsi have not taken “any major steps that directly affected relations with the United States or Israel in the immediate term”, the Egyptian president was “planting the seeds for a drastic shift in the country's foreign policy orientation and operation” (El-Adawy, 2013). There is little evidence, however, that this was the case.

In the relationship with Israel, the government of the Muslim Brotherhood was indeed restrained. On July 31, 2012, days after Morsi taking office, the Israeli newspaper Haaretz published a story stating that the Egyptian President had sent a letter to the President of Israel, Shimon Peres, which promised to make “best efforts” to place the process peace in the Middle East “back on track” and get “security and stability for all peoples of the region”, including the Israeli14. On the same day, the spokesman Morsi denied the existence of the letter15. In October 2012, the situation repeated. This time, The Times of Israel published a letter in which Morsi Peres called the “great and

good friend” and expressed “a mais alta estima e consideração” by the Israeli president. This time, the spokesman Morsi confirmed the veracity of the document. The act caused outrage among members of the Muslim Brotherhood, who called the news “manufacturing of the Zionist media,” and caused the shutdown of one of them, according to whom the treatment of Peres was a “national and religious treason” and had “destroyed the history of the Muslim Brotherhood and all they believe in.”

Attacking Israel is a behavior that is part of the rhetoric of Muslim brothers. What happened was that during the administration Morsi, a tactic used by him was exactly the same as employed by Mubarak. Publicly, Israel served as a scapegoat for many of the problems in Egypt, but this criticism was made by the Muslim Brotherhood and not the Presidency of Egypt. Meanwhile, behind the scenes cooperation was intense. In August 2012, for example, the Muslim Brotherhood blamed the Mossad foreign intelligence service of Israel for an attack against Egyptian soldiers in Sinai. In the same period, the security cooperation between Israel and Egypt was considered by members of both governments, as at “highest level it has been since the peace agreement was forged by the two nations.”

A major challenge for Morsi was the conflict occurred in Gaza in October 2012 between Israel and Hamas, the Palestinian organization whose origin and inspiration is the Muslim Brotherhood. A evaluation of his performance in that episode says Morsi could “show sufficient support for the Palestinians” but without jeopardising ties with Israel or the US. Morsi, according to the analysis, “reverted to the pragmatism for which the Brotherhood is known” and acted “more as a realist than an ideologue”.

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21 HAREL, Amos & ISSACHAROFF, Avi. Israel-Egypt security cooperation at one of highest levels since peace deal, say officials on both sides. Haaretz, 9 ago 2012. Available at: http://www.haaretz.com/blogs/east-side-story/israel-egypt-security-cooperation-at-one-of-highest-levels-since-peace-deal-say-officials-on-both-sides-1.457085 
22 KHALAF, Roula & SALEH, Heba. Morsi praised for role in Gaza crisis. Financial Times, 22 nov de 2012. Available at: http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/db1c443a-34c1-11e2-99df-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2mvQiz91d
importantly, Morsi could, at least in the eyes of the Egyptian public, differentiate the Mubarak regime while standing next to the Palestinian cause, unlike the predecessor, perceived as “subservient to the US and Israel”.

**Iran and Egypt**

A noticeable difference between Mubarak and Morsi governments occurred in the relationship with Iran. The two countries have no diplomatic ties since 1979, when Cairo received the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi after the Iranian Revolution, and during the Mubarak regime the relationship was marked by hostility. The Egyptian dictator saw Iran as a “primary strategic threat” and classified the Iranian support for Hamas, their public attacks by the media, arms smuggling and illicit funds, and attempt to influence events in Gaza, Lebanon, Iraq and Sudan as evidence that “Iranian influence” was “spreading like a cancer from the GCC to Morocco.” For Mubarak, Iran had a plan of “pan-Shiism” and sought to “dominate the Middle East”.

The Morsi arrival to power has changed the relations between states, as the new President tried to normalize the relationship between Cairo and Tehran. Some nods in this direction were made in August 2012. The first, and most important, was the launch of a peace proposal for Syria that would include negotiations, as well as Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia (both contrary to the government of Bashar al-Assad) and Iran, Turkey and Saudi rival and principal supporter of Assad. The idea did not become anything other than mere words, but indicated the desire of Egypt to legitimize the role of Iran in the Middle East. Secondly, Morsi decided to visit Tehran, the first trip of an Egyptian president to Iran in 30 years, for a conference of the Non-Aligned Movement.

O ensaio de um realinhamento entre Irã e Egito provocou apreensão nos Estados Unidos e também em seus principais aliados na região: Israel e as monarquias sunitas do Golfo, com destaque para a Arábia Saudita, que consideram o Irã uma ameaça existencial e o Egito uma peça fundamental na contenção do poder iraniano. O flerte com o Irã, entretanto, pode ter sido também um sinal de pragmatismo. Nas palavras do analista Ronen A. Cohen, “Cairo ganha [com a aproximação] sem dar nada em troca a Teerā”, pois consegue se postar como mediador “sem abrir mão de qualquer coisa significativa que prejudique sua relação com o Ocidente ou Israel” (BEN SOLOMON,

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24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
It is interesting to note that with Iran also had endogenous resistance. In February 2013, the former president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was in Cairo and visited two mosques important for Shiites, causing outrage sectors Salafists, ultraconservative Sunni radicals in the post-Mubarak period, began to engage in politics and gained great importance to obtain about 25% of the vote for the Egyptian Parliament (LIMAA, 2013: 19). In April 2013, the weight of the Salafists Morsi was felt when the government decided to suspend the Cairo-Tehran flight path established after 30 years in the previous week. There was no official explanation, but the action was interpreted as having been taken after the pressure of the Egyptian Salafi groups.

The assay of a realignment between Iran and Egypt raised some concern in the United States, and also in its key allies in the region: Israel and the Sunni monarchies of the Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia, which considers Iran an existential threat and Egypt a fundamental part containment of Iranian power. The flirtation with Iran, however, may also have been a sign of pragmatism. In the words of analyst Ronen A. Cohen, “Cairo gains from [the warming relations] without giving Tehran anything because it can post as a mediator “without giving up anything significant that would harm its relationship with the West or Israel” (BEN SOLOMON, 2013). It is interesting to note that with Iran also had endogenous resistance. In February 2013, the former president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was in Cairo and visited two mosques important for Shiites, causing outrage sectors Salafists, ultraconservative Sunni radicals in the post-Mubarak period, began to engage in politics and gained great importance to obtain about 25% of the vote for the Egyptian Parliament (LIMAA 2013: 19). In April 2013, the weight of the Salafists Morsi was felt when the government decided to suspend the Cairo-Tehran flight path established after 30 years in the previous week. There was no official explanation, but the action was interpreted as having been taken after the pressure of the Egyptian Salafi groups.

CONCLUSION

As we saw, in THE Morsi government Egypt remained with Israel the same relationship type of the Mubarak era: public criticism, made by allies of the President,
but a lot of cooperation in terms of security backstage. In the relationship with Iran, there was a major shift, but it was shallow. Morsi also sought to disrupt the “unique alliance” with the U.S., approaching Egypt to the E.U and emerging countries, but at no point it brought the country on a collision course with the US-Israeli-Sunni monarchies axis duels with Iran by influence and power in the Middle East (LIMAB 2013). Basically, in the short period he was in power the Brotherhood kept Mubarak's foreign policy by just expanding the plurality of decision-making, which remained very restricted, but made small adjustments, sometimes symbolic. The explanations for this are largely defined by the interactions of endogenous and exogenous factors, in line with the two-level games, mentioned by Putnam (1988).

Illegal for decades, the Muslim Brotherhood had to be accepted both within Egypt and the international community, knocking out accusations that political rise of religious fundamentalist group would cause instability in the Middle East. So, Morsi first sought to “boost popular support through foreign policy activism” and thus compensate “for lack of success in economic and social policy” (GRIMM & ROLL, 2012). On the other hand, he tried to portray himself as a “worthy international statesman” and prove to the U.S. and the West that the Muslim Brotherhood was a “worthy, responsible and reliable political group” (EL-DIN, 2012). Despite deep ideological differences with the Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, the Muslim Brotherhood wanted to demonstrate that it did not sought to “break away from American hegemony in the region” (Ibid). According to an Egyptian diplomat, the priority was the good relationship with Washington, not because of aid, “but about the political support promised to Morsi in return for a particular set of American demands”28, namely peace with Israel, containment of Iran and support for dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis.

Besides the political issue (the need to be accepted as a legitimate actor in and out of Egypt), the Muslim Brotherhood had to deal with economic problems to make their own foreign policy decisions. The decrease in foreign currency reserves, the risk of devaluation of the Egyptian pound, and the consequent high price of food has always haunted the Morsi government. To maintain the solvency of Egypt, Morsi needed to be pragmatic, since much of the funding would come from the United States, multilateral

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28 EZZAT, Dina. Morsi’s foreign policy failures. Al-Ahram, 21 jul 2012. Available at: http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/152/76837/Egypt/Morsi,-one-year-on/Morsis-foreign-policy-failures.aspx
institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the Gulf countries. Displease these actors would jeopardize the government’s ability to pay their bills and stay in power. The same logic used to understand the approach to emerging nations. If carried out, the diversification of external support would give more financial independence to Egypt and more flexibility to foreign policy Morsi.

Finally, another internal factor was crucial to constrain the foreign policy of Muslim brothers: the military preponderance in the Egyptian society. Always seen as guarantors of security, a kind of moderating power of the State, the military took advantage of this condition to interfere in politics in order to preserve its huge economic interests (LIMA, 2014), a process that necessarily involves the maintenance of peace with Israel and the United States alliance. There was no time to check what the future foreign policy of Egypt under the rule of Morsi would be, overthrown by a civilian-military coup in July 2013, but the events that occurred during his short administration indicate that the radical ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood eventually framed by pragmatism was generated by the need for the group to survive politically.
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