



منتدى البديل العربي للبرلمان

Civil-Military Relations in Egypt

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This paper is a result of a closed round table discussion; it expresses the personal opinion of its writers and does not necessarily express the opinion of the Arab Forum for Alternatives or Global Partners Governance

Despite civil oversight of the military system being one of the cornerstones of democratic states, it does not spontaneously come about in transitional phases. In some cases, the military hands over the presidency but retains control of the various official and unofficial positions within the political sphere. According to the classic definition, one could say that there is civil oversight, when a military is in control of its internal structures and activities but answerable to a civil institution. Here, one draws a distinction between “institutional independence” and “political independence”. Institutional independence is when the military is an independent entity that enjoys the freedom to make all decisions pertaining to their activities and operations but is subordinate to a civil institution. Political independence is when the military becomes a political player and interferes in the political affairs of the state. The more entrenched the military is within the political as well the economic system, the more its interests increase, the more difficult it becomes to remove it from power. The Egyptian case is very complex, not because the military took over during the revolution, but because of the historical and economic significance of the institution itself. Not only has the military been entrenched in Egypt’s political sphere since the 1952 coup d’état as well as the 1973 war, but also its involvement in the state’s economy (contributes to 25-40% of the GDP) makes civil oversight very difficult. Furthermore, the 400 000 professionals working in and for the institution along with their respective families, compose 2 million people; a solid social foundation. To tackle the issue of civil oversight of the military, one must first understand the features of the civil-military relations in the past few decades. The author of this document begins to briefly summarize some of the aspects of this complex relationship. Not only has the military been entrenched in the system since 1952, but it has also enjoyed a distinctive relationship with the United States. Not only does it possess a strong social and economic base as mentioned above, but there’s also been consistent, popular support of the military, especially following the 1973 war. Despite, the political elite slowly being cleansed of players from military backgrounds, the ongoing strife between the so-called “Islamists” and “liberals” hinders the development of a much-needed united front in tackling the issue of the military. The document recommends that society take advantage of the mass mobilization and create a united front with distinct strategy to curb the influence of the military. It also suggests that state identify the various, still-unknown sphere of influence the military enjoys to limit its power in all political, socio-economic and cultural contexts.