

The dangerous gamble

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Posted by AD Brown

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak is currently dealing a last-ditch, risky hand in response to ongoing protests. He is calling the police away from most streets, announcing that prisoners have “somehow” [escaped from four prisons](#) and, as [some have suggested](#), is possibly using thugs and cronies loyal to the regime to create an even further sense of disorder through acts of looting.



This gamble can be seen as a means to try and show the Egyptian people they need Mubarak and his regime in order to have governance and state stability. Without him, of course, chaos, anarchy and the potential for violence will take the reigns. But this is a hand Mubarak will more than likely lose, and President Obama and the West should call for him to step down (at the very least privately, as commentator Fareed Zakaria [recently suggested](#)).

Yes, even the concept of democratization certainly does not destroy the threat of terrorism or even sectarian violence, but it can provide steps for the transition from using bombs as the only vocal chords available to actually using words for real change.

A central Western fear is what exactly the Egyptian army and the Muslim Brotherhood are capable of doing if a political vacuum does indeed emerge. The military has benefitted tremendously throughout Mubarak’s rule from business ventures to weapons advancements (thanks in large part to US assistance). The Muslim Brotherhood, a conservative Islamist group widely known in Egypt as being the [largest and most organized opposition movement](#), did not start the protests but could certainly try and utilize them to their advantage.

The military hasn’t been vocal with supporting [Mohamed ElBaradei](#) (at least not directly), but the Muslim Brotherhood has, despite the former International Atomic Energy Agency chief’s secular nature. Combine this with how he recently [criticized current US foreign policy in Egypt as backwards](#), and a question emerges: is it wise to continue favoring despotic stability over what the Larry Diamonds of the world would call the “[Spirit of Democracy](#)“?

Regardless of the outcome, the US should seek to drop its own gamble and better align itself with the growing movement, as whatever could potentially emerge will undoubtedly need the support of the military. If the military appears aligned with the people, the US could find solace joining the ranks.

Change may be coming, and although the threat of terrorism might not diminish if Egypt sees democratic gains, it would certainly help in enhancing the credibility of the cause to counter it. If the West leans more toward the side of history in the making and less on the side of stability, a position that sometimes comes at a cost of the very fight itself (see [alleged Saudi support for extremist movements](#)), it could successfully navigate a new and very important alliance following what appears to be an inevitable loss with President Mubarak.

After all, the adage remains the same: So goes Egypt, so goes the region.

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