“Healing without amputating?”: security reform in Egypt

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Under Mubarak, state institutions underwent considerable strain, a consequence of the “vicious circle of legitimacy” described by Samer Soliman: a regime lacking in legitimacy cannot raise extra taxes nor can it begin to combat tax evasion, leading to increasing pressure on budgets. This in turn limits its capacity to modernise and maintain the quality public services, leading to an increased legitimacy gap, and further complicating the realisation of fiscal policy.

Against this backdrop, the regime pushed for the development of security services, which attained a hegemonic position in Egyptian society, clamped down on citizens’ daily lives, allowing for corruption to blossom and for their semantics to take over.

One attempt at reform of various non-security institutions, led by Gamal Mubarak, consisted in letting smaller, highly effective bodies circumvent the larger institutions, deemed impossible to reform. However in the case of the Interior Ministry, any such attempt would only threaten to disturb national peace and order. The only way to go about reform is therefore to confront the problem directly, even if solutions appear in no way evident. I will not suggest any at this point. Instead, I will attempt to show that drawing up a list of the problems and suggested solutions is necessary but not sufficient, and that calls for a total overhaul of security institutions are both adequate and unrealistic. I will also attempt to bring in some maxims from other experiences. I hope this paper would start a constructive foundational debate.

A few remarks

An inherent methodological challenge resides in the fact that reliable data on the subject of security services is by nature rare and subject to caution. However this should not deter us from trying to understand Arab regimes – as “securitocracies”, this would amounts to giving up understanding them. We have access to several sources of information, including accounts by army officers, the mukhabarat (intelligence officers) as well as security experts. To that must be added instructive facts disclosed by Habib el-Adly’s men, abandoned by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) after Mubarak’s fall, and all the testimonies and information given in various trials. Finally, interviews with former intelligence workers, high ranking officials, as well as human rights activists,
former political prisoners and journalists having come into contact with security services, constitute a third source.

At the end of the day we possess a good deal of information, but a lot remains too patchy to be entirely reliable.

Some useful historical considerations

The development of security services can be seen as a response to a number of political problems that emerged after the Second World War in Egypt: the country’s unfinished transition from agrarian to industrial modes of production, increasing the acuteness of social issues, the spread of violent political-religious organisations, including, but not limited to, the Muslim Brotherhood, and a general crisis of political legitimacy. All the while, several non-state actors had access to weapons left behind by Western occupying forces, and were better armed than even the police. The July 1952 coup, later christened Revolution, contributed to the situation’s volatility.

The “political police” and the military intelligence had existed under the monarchy. The mukhabarat (General Intelligence Service) was instituted in 1954. Military police’s importance increased, the army’s “criminal” police force was created. Both were instrumental in suppressing the Muslim Brotherhood in 1965. However from the last years of the Nasser regime onwards, military polices turned away from civilian matters, letting State Security and the police take over.

The 70s were characterised by controlled political liberalisation, the spread of radical Islam and the slow degradation of the legitimacy crisis which ensued after the death of Nasser and the regime’s abandon of socialist policies. This context saw the Interior Ministry increase its personnel (from 214,000 in 1970 to 1.5 million in 2011), and the creation of the “Mubarak Security Academy” to replace the “Police faculty”. From then on, the regime has primarily employed the ann markazi, a kind of riot control force, and State Security for protection.

The state of emergency was maintained during Mubarak’s entire time in office - most inside the police have thus never served under the rule of law. The nineties saw a change in the prevailing political situation, as one and a half million Egyptians returned from Iraq and the threat of jihadist violence increased. Jihadist cells became swifter to re-establish themselves, and started attacking tourism, a vital area in the economy. They were met with a fierce response by the regime.

From 1997, the regime regained control. Habib al Adly was Interior Minister from 1997 to 2011, from the Luxor attacks to the revolution. He became an ally of Gamal Mubarak. He anticipated the telecommunications revolution, the rise of satellite channels and of international civil society, responding with the following strategy:

a) promoting an evolution (a revision) in Jihadist doctrines;

b) improving conditions for detained political prisoners

c) out-sourcing many missions, including, sometimes, attack of demonstrators, to plain-clothed militias

d) maintaining an important police presence at demonstrations


2 This included death sentences (several pronounced in absentia), and the arrest of more than 20,000 Jihadists.
e) Improving the material situation of lower-rank officers and Interior Ministry personnel. If this was not possible, the remedy was turning a blind eye to their practices and providing cover to their errors. I believe this increased the risk for extortion and bribes, despite it being harder now to hide such practices, with the spread of technology.
f) Setting-up measures to “resist” potential military coups aimed at removing Gamal Mubarak, including, in worst-case scenarios, the liberation of criminal detainees, fostering public disorder, etc.

Testimony given by Umar Soliman during Mubarak’s and other high dignitaries’ trials provides a picture of the former president’s last months in power. State Security and the mukhabarat were, as early as August-September, already advocating increased representation for opposition parties in Parliament, notably the Wafd party at the expense of the Muslim Brotherhood. General Hasan Abdal Rahman, head of State Security, established an agreement with this in mind, but was later disavowed by Gamal Mubarak. Security services anticipated riots following the disputed 2010 elections, and went on high alert after the fall of Ben Ali, right after having to deal with the attack on a Coptic church on New Year’s Eve. They were also aware of calls for demonstration on January 25th, the police’s anniversary, by youth groups on Facebook. Though they knew the demonstration would be much larger than usual, this did not represent any extra cause for worry. Demonstrations lasted several days, considerably straining the mass police presence on the ground, and leading to its ultimate collapse on January 28th - though not before many demonstrators were shot and killed. About a hundred police stations were attacked.

Security institutions (1): the Mukhabarat and Military Intelligence

The mukhabarat ‘ama now enjoy a good reputation, though this was not always the case, as in the 70s, during the so-called “de-nasserisation”. Their popularity trend improved in the 80s, thanks notably to several books and TV dramas glorifying them as patriots and recalling their role in the fight against Israel. In addition to the demystifying effect of a number of biographies and memoirs by officers, the name of its director, who enjoyed a reputation as an honest and competent man, was also made public. However, the scope of their activities is still largely unknown. Every now and then, some well-informed research will provide some insight into their internal debates, but this remains a rare occurrence.

Umar Soliman also stated that their mission primarily consisted in the gathering, abroad, of information, or proven facts (ma’lumat), which were destined to guide political decision-making in foreign policy. In particular, the mukhabarat thus supplanted the Foreign Affairs Ministry in the handling of border issues and the Nile river dispute.

In addition, the mukhabarat were also assigned missions relating to homeland security, even before the internationalisation of radical Islamism, in order to avoid one institution having a monopoly on the security dossier. The department assigned with homeland security, counter-espionage and the protection of information publishes a quarterly advisory report, which went to the President. This report included policy recommendations, and the president decided whether to translate these into political

3 Umar Soliman, in an interview in al-Âlam al-Yawm on March 28th, 2007, claimed to work from 6 AM (“one hour before Mubarak got up”) to 11 PM.
instructions – this was in general the case. Facebook and various strategic locations are kept under close watch, in cooperation with military police, military intelligence services and State Security. The disappearance of some incriminating videos during the revolution, recorded by mukhabarat-operated cameras, shows that they were closely monitoring Tahrir Square and the Egyptian museum. In the same way, they also promoted the careers of those journalists, diplomats and academics whom they favoured by facilitating their access to decision-makers. The mukhabarat’s direction reports directly to the president.

In fact, little is known of the Military Intelligence Directorate (MID), which is attached to the Defence Ministry. During the last Mubarak years, it started surveying the internal situation. It reported to the defense minister. In his testimony under the Mubarak trial, Tantawi asserted he did not transmit these reports to the presidency. “This is not my mission”, he stated.

Let us note, in addition, that following the collapse of the police, military police and elite forces, including paratroopers, were entrusted with law enforcement.

Security institutions (2): State Security

Alone or in cooperation with the mukhabarat, State Security helped keep a lid on social and religious conflicts and shaped the political sphere, negotiating with various political forces, while at the same time discreetly influencing the media. It also monitored religious activity and counselled the regime on the “dose” of repression to adopt.

In an interview with Al Shorouk, Hussein Hammuda, a former State Security officer, quotes former Interior Minister and prominent State Security official Abu Basha as saying: “thinking well of others and being content with what one has are considered as qualities in most people: for a State Security officer, they are great sins”. State Security was thus constantly being pushed to widen the scope of potential suspects. Hammuda’s explanations indicate that State Security was divided into branches, each of which was assigned a specific mission, such as crisis management, counter-terrorism, analysis, forecasting, etc., or target - a group of citizens, type of activity or institution. Telephone lines were systematically tapped.

According to Hammuda, State Security officers were highest-profile officers (“anzaf”, literally, the “clearest”), in terms of their education, training and social origins. Officers were recruited not only after IQ tests, but also with the help of connections and, crucially, secret assessment reports. These stated a preference for officers having served in the General Security Division (criminal affairs), which implies experience of beatings, or even torture, and excellent practical knowledge of the field of duty. Unfortunately, this experience rendered many of them incapable of distinguishing a delinquent or criminal from a political dissident, the latter of which required more than just a beating. Still according to Hammuda, working for State Security was not necessarily a well-paid job, with the exception of high ranking officials, but provided influence and prestige, including a great deal of power over appointments.

Hammuda regrets the generalisation of beatings by the police. However, he now believes that things have gone too far to an opposite extreme, with people capable of

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4 Al Shorouk, April 11th, 2011

5 Hammuda recently took part in a joint publication on Interior Ministry reform and reorganisation (as indicated by Ammar Ali Hasan in http://elwatannews.com/news/details/10534)
anything with the police - though not with State Security. He has a series of reforms in mind, including inscribing officers’ names on their uniforms, in order to make it easier to file a complaint, increasing the number of female police officers to manage the treatment of women, and implementing parliamentary oversight.

In the meantime, State Security has, in theory, been dissolved and replaced by “National Security”, an institution meant to avoid the excesses of its predecessor. Several officers have been transferred or made to retire, and the organisation pretends to have changed its way of operating, though militants have criticised the changes as merely superficial.

**General considerations on reform**

Any attempt to reform an institution, whichever it is, will inevitably be met with a number of generic difficulties.

a. Timing: when to reform?

- In theory, a time of political stability is better suited for reform than periods of crisis. In practice however, reforms tend to create unpredictable consequences, and are inevitably criticised. So political leaders tend to avoid undertaking reforms when things are fairly ok, as the stakes are quite high for them if the process derails. In the case of the Interior Ministry, actors can put forward the argument that the security situation is now worse than it ever has been, with the proliferation of various *baltaguis* (thugs) and henchmen, along with heavy weaponry. Though it is usually brought up by opponents to reform, the argument of the primacy of security over the imperative for reform can still be made.

- In addition, any reform's funding plan often requires a temporary but big increase in spending, plus a number of financial adjustments and choices. New, costly investigative techniques and improvements in the quality of education and training are necessary in order to democratize the police force.

b. Actors: who is to implement the reforms?

- The task of reforming an institution can be assigned either to an actor emanating from the target organisation, or to an external actor. A “child of the institution” has more legitimacy, better knowledge of its functioning and of its personnel, and is therefore capable of making informed decisions, particularly in organisations lacking in transparency. An external actor, on the other hand, has symbolic potency and is able to provide a brand new outlook.

- In order to be successful, a reform needs to be given enough impetus and support by the relevant legitimate political actors. Unfortunately, the two main political forces in Egypt at the moment, the army and the Muslim Brotherhood, have expressed reserves in light of the current security situation. Only precious few can be said to have in mind both the revolutionary process and the transition towards democracy. Both the army and the Muslim Brothers are more interested in retaining control over the Interior Ministry than reforming it, which would deprive them of a useful tool against the still angry streets. Despite public opinion, the main political forces with access to power seem thereby ambivalent with regards to the question of reforming the ministry of interior.
c. Manner: how to reform?

- Reforms can be carried out according to a general principle, or on a case-by-case basis. Following a general rule runs the risk of creating injustices, while handling situations one by one is conducive to clientelism and favouritism.

- Another issue, especially relevant for centralised countries: should the reform be implemented throughout the whole territory, in accordance with the principle of equal rights? If planned reforms turn out badly, this may prove to be riskier and quite costly. On the other hand, incremental implementation through use of pilot projects in inconvenient, as experiences are often hard to replicate. However the situation in Egypt is such that the second solution is preferable, despite its drawbacks.

- Free officers whom I spoke to pointed out that “too much consultation gives opponents to reform time to mobilise against it”. In their opinion, it would be best to impose changes, even if it means having to compromise aspects of the reform at a later point in time. Though free officers cannot be said to have always been great upholders of democratic principles, this objection might still be relevant to us. Let there be no misunderstanding: I do believe the broadest popular consultations to be necessary. All the while, some inextricable situations, in which political debate is gridlocked, political differences irreconcilable and the status quo unbearable, undoubtedly call for reforms to be pushed through no matter what.

d. Content: what to reform?

- In Security issues, the division of labor is a very relative principle. The most rational thing to do, from both a political and security perspective, is to avoid “putting all one’s eggs in one basket”. This implied, during Mubarak years, assigning the same task to two - or even eight - different bodies, in order to avoid becoming dependent on a single source of information. Distinctions should be drawn, between issues where division of labor is counter productive, risky, even impossible, and others. In any case, cooperation across different departments is a thorny issue that will need addressing, in Egypt as is other countries.

- In the past few months, the Egyptian press has been publishing lists of names, officers purported to be “al Adly’s men”. There appears to be more than a thousand. Unfortunately, it will not be possible to get rid of all of them, depriving the Ministry of its experienced staff, without it simply collapsing in on itself. A balance between restructuration and cleansing should be found and action should be taken incrementally. One might consider, for instance, the setting up of a “truth against forgiveness” programme and of a pluralistic committee to straighten out issues of responsibility, distinguishing decision-makers from subordinates, and those amongst them who were in position to disobey.

- Another issue needing to be addressed is that of compensation and benefits policy. The current system has entrenched huge differences between the lowest and the highest earning
police officers. In addition to bonuses making it possible for officers to earn ten times - sometimes even a hundred times - their monthly salary, land can be made available to them on advantageous terms. Officials at all levels of power seem to tolerate the notion that civil servants are entitled to supplement their monthly income through bribes and extortion. When bribes enable a civil servant or a state agent to earn 25 times more than his salary, it is not clear whether a substantial increase in pay would help eliminate corruption. Should persisting, residual corruption be tolerated, at least during a first phase? Another complex issue appears when one considers high ranking officials, who point to how expensive access to decent education and health care is in Egypt, arguing the cost of living to be thus higher than in Europe - though no such argument justifies salaries over € 10,000 a month.

**NGOs’ proposals and policy statements provide a good overview of the extent of reforms needed.** Most of them, whether they want to or not, end up pointing the finger at the Interior Ministry. Officials from within the Ministry itself, however, experienced the revolution as a crushing defeat. Those amongst them who followed orders to open fire on protesters are now looked upon as criminals. All the while, the NGOs’ suggested reforms cannot all be implemented simultaneously. It makes sense, for example, to argue that the Interior Ministry ought to be relieved of its supervision of the civil registry - but ought that to be made a priority? A certain number of necessarily unsatisfactory trade-offs will have to be made, with the Interior Ministry involved as a partner rather than a delinquent. However undemocratic its hegemonic status in Egyptian society is, it might prove necessary to ease its abrupt fall from power through negotiation.

**Reform in education, training and careers**

We have three sources of information at our disposal on the subject of police training at the Mubarak Academy.

In his study on the “psychological traits of police officers”, Dr. Ihab Milîha informs us that the Mubarak Academy included three faculties (police, higher education and training) and a research centre at the time of its creation in 1998.

Competition for entry is tough, with an initial pre-selection based on an application form, eliminatory aptitude tests, a medical examination, physical and psychological tests as well as height and weight measurements. Candidates who do not meet up to physical standards are allowed to retake the tests. Finally, the infamous kashf al hay’a examines candidates’ social origins and family connections. Crucial importance is given to appearances. The candidate’s ranking then determines his position in the police hierarchy. Given two candidates with equal ranking, the oldest is given preference.

There are three types of police officers: a) graduates from the Police Academy’s general curriculum, a four-year program delivering a degree in police studies and law; b) graduates from the faculty’s specialist departments, with degrees in various areas useful to the police, after a one-year program for which women

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are also eligible; c) sub-officers, the so-called *amin shurta* and *musa’ids*, who may achieve the rank of officer if they are in possession of a law degree after having served for eight (for an *amin*) or thirteen years.

Another source of information at hand is police General Abdal Hadi Badawi’s account of the degradation of the security apparatus⁷, which, according to him, no longer functions as well as it did during the 60s and first half of the 70s.

He notably points to the selection process as having lost its original rigor, impartiality and efficiency through the practice of favoritism, which increased throughout the years. This tended to push down the number of cadets from the middle classes, providing an advantage to candidates from the wealthier spheres of Egyptian society. The academic programme was closely linked to the courses taught at the ‘Ayn Shams law faculty – Same exams and same correcting criteria. This situation changed in the nineties with the creation of Mubarak Academy (1998). The Academy ceased to follow closely ‘Ayn Shams law faculty. Standards of teaching and grading fell, as did officers’ legal proficiency.

A policeman usually began learning the rudiments of the job by working in a police station, the first step in his career. However an increasing number of privileged individuals were permitted to skip this stage and directly access the higher, better-paid echelon of the *amn markazi*. Long years of irreproachable service were no longer necessary in order to be appointed to the “investigation and research” departments (*bahth*), leading to a markedly poorer performance on their part.

Our third source is an article on the social background of police officers, published in Sawt al-Umma on August 8th, 2009. Individuals from certain social and political groups, it seems, are barred access to the Police Academy: these include candidates with social origins deemed inappropriate or whose parents’ professions are not clearly identified, those with external affiliations, those whose families are linked to Islamists or the Muslim Brotherhood, or those who simply underwent a religious school curriculum. No graduate from Al-Azhar was ever admitted. In addition Coptic Christians represent no more than 2% of graduates, and are never assigned any significant postings - the point being to ward off any religious interference, rather than defend Muslim sectarianism.

Opening up access to the Academy to the nation’s disadvantaged is an issue that needs to be addressed. Though affirmative action measures often lead to uncalled for consequences, they are sometimes necessary, in the absence of any other alternative. Any attempt at reform is likely to be met with harsh criticism from opponents. Some will point to candidates’ physical condition or cultural assets; others, such as General Allam hereinbefore, will put forward irrelevant, groundless arguments presupposing their lack of honesty. Widening admissions would certainly be perceived as a humiliating experience for certain officers, and would provide political actors with a means of getting their militants inside the police force.

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Reforming the Ministry

A certain number of measures were put forward in Abdal Khaliq Fârûq’s joint publication. Rather than listing them all, I have decided to group them into several categories:

- **weakening the Ministry’s influence on everyday life**, by removing some of its prerogatives, including the right to veto appointments and the administration of work permits, and submitting lists of individuals banned from travelling and leaving the Egypt to jurisdictional control.

- **weakening the Ministry’s influence on public prosecutors**

- **reviewing current legislation on the advancement of officers**, whose careers now depend in large parts on confidential assessment reports. This also includes reviewing the 1998 legal changes introduced by al Adly, which enable the termination, at any moment, of high-ranking officer’s career, and removing them from the scope of military law. All officers involved deemed that the institution had become too “militarised”, or rather “de-civilised” under Mubarak.

- **reviewing its missions**, by focusing less men and resources on the protection of public places and monuments (embassies, museums, churches, etc.), in cooperation with other bodies, such as the tourism police. Instead, more attention can be afforded to the fight against crime and corruption, areas which suffered from the regime’s focus on anti-terrorism and its own protection.

- **reviewing its modi operandi**, including its manner of acquiring information and its relationship with baltaguis and other informants. Its manner of operating during demonstrations and managing protesters is another important issue, in the light of which the whole amn markazi will need to be reorganised. One study calls for a total overhaul of police education and training. Crucially, the police will have to stop collaborating with criminals and baltaguis. In addition, too many officers are currently being assigned to administrative tasks in so-called “services to citizens”. These tasks ought to be assigned to legal experts and put under the scope of another ministry.

In some governorates, both customary and positive law exist side by side, a fact the police need to take into consideration. According to Al Shoubaki, customary law should not stand in contradiction to the body of positive law; in theory, it exists only to supplement the existing legislation if the latter is found lacking. However this is not the case in practice; for instance, the entire families of guilty individuals have been known to be thrown out of their home villages or neighbourhoods.

In an article in the daily Al Shorouk, dated January 17th, 2012, Muhammad Abul Ghayt points to the specific case of Upper Egypt, where a higher proportion of people bear arms. This paradoxically leads to smoother relations with the police: deaths occurring in

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8 Badawî, in Fârûq, op. cit., p 70.

9 In Nahdat Misr (Feb. 23-24, 2011), one general suggests assigning officers to other tasks and outsourcing the task of securing banks and tourist sites to private firms, under police supervision.

10 Study by General Hasan Abdal Hamîd, mentioned in Nahdat Misr, Feb. 23-24, 2012
police stations from beatings or torture are very rare, and the *amin shurta* do not practice extortion. During the events of the revolution, the police did not dare shoot at protesters. According to the author, the threat of terrorism in the *Saïd* disappeared when powerful families entered into cooperation with the Interior Ministry, in exchange for its turning a blind eye on trafficking. Police stations are not as symbolically potent in Upper Egypt: therefore, only few of them were attacked and burned during the revolution, with policemen resorting only to tear gas and batons. In one case, the chief of police actually asked some of the powerful families to serve as mediators.

**The hard task of fighting corruption’s many facets**

- In provincial areas, local dignitaries and police officers often stem from the very same families, and act in collusion. Should officers be forbidden from working in their home governorate? This might prove too radical, but clear rules on “conflict of interest” should be defined.

- From the 80s onwards, Interior Ministry officials have been acquiring lands and holiday homes cheaply and pursuing private businesses on the side.

- The police is equipped with an “economic arm”.

The high levels of corruption represent the chief argument in favor of a massive overhaul of Interior Ministry personnel, particularly in the higher echelons. As mentioned earlier however, there are important problems linked to this strategy. One useful approach might be to distinguish between different types of corruption:

a) corruption as a means of redistribution of wealth,

b) as a foundation for networks and

c) as an instrument of government. Efforts ought to be made to prioritise the fight against the third type.

In the long run, only the establishment of the rule of law and of an independent judiciary can permanently overcome corruption. Such things, however, cannot be ordered into existence. The same goes for torture and abuse. Case by case improvements, a daily fight over bad behavior, years of slow improvement will be necessary. Serious thought should be given to the modification of the criteria for professional promotion.

**The issue of police personnel**

In an article in *Al Masri Al Youm* dated February 6th, 2007, Khayri Ramadan, a journalist with connections to the former regime, pointed to the “problem” of the *amin shurta* (deputy police officer, a sort of corporal or sergeant), who could be seen as the security equivalent of Crozier and Friedberg’s maintenance worker: despite his lowly position in the organisation’s hierarchy, he performs a key task which gives him the power to block everything. Ramadan claims the sub-officers are resentful of being condemned to subordinate positions, when only two years of study separates them from the officers. He (implausibly) blames most human rights abuses on them, arguing the Interior Ministry was forced to turn a blind eye because of their crucial role. Indeed, they are the ones doing the questioning, canvassing neighbourhoods and transmitting their conclusions to the relevant officer, working fourteen hours a day on a meagre pay. They are even more important as professional informers (*mukhbirin*) are now scarce, though their numbers are decreasing. They probably do not deserve to take all the blame. For the
situation to improve, their involvement will have to be sought and their demands heard.

There is strong opposition to the idea of facilitating promotions from *amin shurta* to the rank of officer. This resistance is accentuated by the belief that it will not encourage a change in attitudes. Officers\(^\text{11}\) believe the goal of this reform is to encourage the rising of a new, low-skilled class of subordinates devoted to the cause of the Muslim Brothers, who have taken up this issue. Currently, the *amin shurta* can be promoted to lieutenant only after 24 years of services, and can end up as commander (*ra’id*). An *amin shurta* mumtaz’s salary (LE 7,823) will be higher than that of a brigadier (LE 7,440). This may prompt many officers to retire.

Another proposal has been to allow for retiring army officers between the ages of 40 and 45 to join the police. This would help limit the potential political impact; unfortunately, they cannot be said to excel at law enforcement and their defense of public order’s practices can lack subtlety.

Finally, there needs to be a review of the use of conscripts with little or no education.

### CONCLUSION

Mubarak’s regime was more of a police state than a military one: reforming the Interior Ministry is an attempt to reform the very foundation of the whole edifice. This needs to be done without bringing the whole thing down, with irretrievable consequences.

The task ahead is already challenging enough as it is. In addition, the two major political players, the army and Muslim Brotherhood, are more interested in maintaining control over the Interior Ministry, rather than risking a costly and dangerous overhaul, the benefits of which will only become apparent in the long run. Here, as in other places, changes have been largely superficial in nature. It is also hard to bring about any change in Egypt’s bureaucratic middle class. Nothing will be done unless public opinion is mobilised on this issue.

State Security has been taking a lot of blame until now for its unwarranted methods. However tempting it may be for politicians to ignore the other branches of the police, regular abuses in daily life have been as wearisome for the population as State Security’s practices. Sustainable reform cannot be achieved without an overall improvement of the relationship between police and society. That being said, things will take time, and hard choices will have to be made.

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\(^{11}\) _Al Shorouk_, May 19\(^{\text{th}}\), 2012