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**“Inside the Egyptian Revolution,  
Reflections and Provocations One Year On”  
New America Foundation  
Wednesday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012, 12:15 p.m. – 13:45 p.m.  
1899 L Street NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20036.**

On Wednesday, the New America Foundation hosted a panel event to discuss a within approach of the upheaval in Egypt and the perspective that can be expected by the newly-elected Parliament. The panel was organized in the framework of the launch of **Ashraf Khalil**'s book *Liberation Square: Inside the Egyptian Revolution and the Rebirth of a Nation*. The panel included Ashraf Khalil, Cairo-based independent journalist, *Foreign Policy* and **Rob Malley**, director of the Middle East and North Africa Program. The panel was moderated by **Leila Hilal**, Co-director of the Middle East Task Force for New America Foundation.

Hilal introduced the conversation with a question to Khalil on the reasons that led the Egyptian upheaval. Khalil wanted to remind the audience that Egyptians before the revolution were pessimistic about their capacity “to do what Tunisians did.” Khalil insisted that former Egyptian President **Hosni Mubarak** “killed their spirit.” However, with the uprising going on, the activists encouraged the feeling that the events that occurred in Tunisia could spread. However Khalil reckoned that it would not have happened without Tunisia setting the example. Hilal asked if the protesters were now marginalized despite the need of changes and reforms. Khalil pointed out the current division among the youth who have protested: some stopped while others continued in the streets. The journalist pointed out the contradiction when, in November and December of 2011, mass pro-democratic demonstrations went on, while a few days later a polling office opened and Egyptian citizens lined up to vote. The journalist said that these demonstrations were unpopular. However demonstrators knew better, as they always have been the minority of the country, whereas the majority remained silent.

Malley compared Syria and Egypt regarding their security forces' attitude. Malley said that what happened in Egypt was both a “military and a political coup,” with an army, making a clear distinction from President Mubarak. In Syria, the fall of President **Bashar al-Assad** would lead the step down of the whole power structure, including the army. Malley considered that observing the relationship of the military apparatus with a regime helps to understand the evolution of the different revolution scenarios in the Arab world. Malley noticed that the Egyptian revolution was not driven by an ideology or a clear leadership, which made a reaction from the regime even more difficult, as it was not prepared for this kind of uprising. But this strength became a weakness when Mubarak was toppled, as there was not a structured organization with a political agenda. Malley assessed the current power of these protesters. The Egyptian citizens observe an ongoing democratic process

with the recent elections of the parliament, and believe that the SCAF (Supreme Council of Armed Forces) will leave power at some point. Malley foresees that the legitimacy of the protesters will erode but may revive if the current government does not respond to the economic needs and does not implement the transitional process as it has been agreed on. Malley stated that the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) managed successfully to form a triangular relationship between the SCAF, the protesters and themselves. However, so far it is difficult to predict how each actor, the SCAF, the protesters and the MB will act.

Khalil discussed demonstrators' capacity to act on the Egyptian political scene. Each concession from the SCAF was a result of street actions such as the promise to leave power in June 2012. However, the Egyptian majority can wait for the SCAF to leave on June 2012 and not on February like the protesters want. Khalil and Malley agree that the MB have taken advantage of the current political situation, they represent stability and are not associated with the protesters, meanwhile they also benefit from the street actions pressure on the SCAF, which forced it to make concessions.

Khalil and Malley agreed that the parliament will meet difficulties. Malley made a comparison with Tunisia and predicted that the Islamists will be certainly observed with suspicion. Malley also warned that the army will have some prerogatives, such as immunity for its exactions during the revolution, secrecy of the budget, maintaining large control on the economy and keeping leadership on foreign policy and national security. Nevertheless Malley believed that MB can cope with these requirements, in the long-term, and the army's role will become less significant as it happened in Turkey.

The moderator drove the discussion to the possibility of the fragmentation of the MB. Khalil said that the MB had faced fragmentation; the youth wing left the Movement to create the current Egyptian party. He predicted that the split will go on but the MB will remain a main actor of the Egyptian political scene. However Malley noticed that the MB may meet contradictions once in power. On one hand they may cope with Western demands on foreign affairs, but in the Assembly, members of the Salafists may try to embarrass the MB on social issues.

Khalil insisted that the U.S should push for internal reform of the Interior Ministry. He also suggested that the U.S. should favor "the civil society to grow," protecting it from harassment. Khalil expressed his concern about the recent attack on NGOs. He remarked that the authorities may not give back the files to the Egyptian NGOs. Malley pointed out that Egyptian citizens and SCAF members believed that the U.S. backed the revolution in Egypt to weaken the country, because the "U.S. has the legacy of a terrible reputation."

A question from the audience addressed the role of Egypt in the region. Malley reckoned that since the turmoil, Egypt was weakened on international affairs but should "recover its natural role, but it might take a while." Khalil believed that Egypt will have a positive role in the region. The Camp David Treaty is not under threat. However there might be some more pressure on the treatment of Gaza. He bolded the shift occurring in the relation between Egypt and Israel and found "healthy" that now Israel has to worry about the opinion of Egyptian people before taking an action. Finally, Malley argued that the army leadership tries "to protect its interests" and the civilian transition, but the army hopes that the process will give "the power that it wants and leave the responsibility that it fears." Khalil did not expect Field Marshall **Mohamed Hussein Tantawi Soliman** to keep power, as he is too symbolic of the former regime.