"Vote for the One You Hate Least": Media Campaigns and the 2012 Egyptian Presidential Elections

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Abstract—**Egypt has been through dramatic and complex political transitions since the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak by a popular revolution on January 25th, 2011. On February 11, 2011, Mubarak had handed power to the Supreme Council of the Army Forces, who ran the country until the 2012 presidential elections which were won by Mohamed Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood Candidate, who became the first democratically elected President. Morsi was overthrown by the military after only one year in office, following mass protests throughout Egypt demanding his resignation. In order to understand the rapid rise and fall of the Muslim Brotherhood, and ongoing political developments in Egypt, it is crucial to comprehend the political conditions and circumstances that led to Morsi's electoral victory. In this paper, I explore the political conditions and circumstances within which voters made their choice during the 2012 presidential elections, emphasizing the role of media as a political communication tool in campaigning and mobilizing support for or against presidential candidates.**

Index Terms—**2012 presidential elections, Egypt, media, post-mubarak.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Egypt underwent dramatic political transitions following the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak's regime by a popular revolution on January 25th, 2011. On February 11, 2011, then Vice-President, General Oman Suleiman, announced by televised address that Mubarak had resigned his office and handed power to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). The transitional period under SCAF rule witnessed the rise of Islamist parties which took control of both houses of parliament for the first time ever. This transitional period has also seen the first 'real' presidential elections which brought Mohamed Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) Candidate, to power. This triumph was short-lived, however. Under Morsi's rule, the Muslim Brotherhood was accused of seeking to institutionalize political domination and failing to lead an inclusive democratic transition representing the diversity of Egyptian society. As a result, the Muslim Brotherhood made enemies out of the revolutionary youth movements and following perceived policy failures, also lost the support of many other voters.

During June 2013, large-scale demonstrations demanding Morsi's resignation occurred, mirroring the scenes of the revolution against Mubarak in 2011. After a week of demonstrations, Morsi was overthrown by the military after only one year of his four-year term, an event known in Egypt as "the June 30th revolution," "the second revolution" or "the revolution of correction."

To understand both the rapid rise and fall of the Muslim Brotherhood and political developments in Egypt since Morsi's fall, it is crucial to comprehend the political conditions which enabled Morsi's 2012 presidential election victory. In this paper, I explore the political conditions and circumstances within which voters made their decisions during the 2012 presidential elections, emphasizing the role of media as a political communication tool in campaigning and mobilizing for or against presidential candidates.

A. Condition of the Media under SCAF

The role of new media during the transitional period under SCAF rule has attracted much less attention than its role before and during the January 25th Revolution. Moreover, although TV has long been considered the most important media outlet in Egypt, the popular emphasis on a "Facebook revolution" has resulted in fewer studies of TV, or the traditional media in general, during the revolutionary period in Egypt. Alexander and Aouragh [1] have examined the role of the Internet as a space of political activism in the post-Mubarak era, examining the ways different activist practices relate to the larger media ecology. Hassan, Kendall and Whitefield [2] have explored the significance of new media and cultural consumption in support of democracy in post-revolutionary Egypt. Srinivasan [3] has examined the use of technologies by political actors, ranging from liberals to the Muslim Brotherhood, to create diverse networks, building bridges between older and newer media in which each platform is recognized as being increasingly shaped by the other, and promoting campaigns of "misinformation and hacking the expense of others." Alkazemi [4] has examined both print and social media coverage of the "Maspero massacre" during the SCAF's rule, in which social media appeared effective in inducing social cohesion. Abdel-Sattar [5] has outlined changes in state media, which suffered a massive credibility crisis, as it shifted from being the organ for Mubarak regime to the voice of the SCAF.

When Mubarak transferred power to the SCAF, it had been a long time since Egyptians had seen Generals directly intervening in politics. Mubarak, despite his military background, has been widely seen as a civilian president and insofar as the army exercised power, it did so behind the scenes. Although, following Mubarak's fall, many Egyptians perceived SCAF as the "guardian of the revolution", the slow pace at which SCAF moved in meeting the demands of the revolutionaries led to escalation of tension between SCAF and the revolutionary movements.

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Many SCAF decisions, such as dissolving Mubarak's government, appointing a new pro-revolution prime minister and putting Mubarak and his sons on trial, were taken in response to the pressure of online campaigns and mass protests.

During this transitionary phase, Egyptians became avid media-watchers and consumers, closely following every political development. Because about one third of the population remains illiterate, TV has long been the most important media outlet in Egypt. According to The Global Media Intelligence Report, media penetration in Egypt in the years 2011 and 2012 was as follows: TV viewers constituted 93.1% of the population in 2011 and 97% in 2012; Satellite TV viewers 77.1% in 2011 and 97% in 2012; newspaper readers 16.4% in 2011 and 32.1% in 2012; Internet users 12.5 % in 2011 and 26.9% in 2012; radio listeners 22.5% in 2011 and 24.6% 2012; magazine readers 15.6% in 2011 and 12.3% in 2012 [6]. These figures show significant increases in the consumption of all types of media over a single year, with only magazines, unlikely to deal with rapid political developments, showing a decline.

After the revolution, new talk shows were propagated, sparking fierce competition between presenters and channels, providing news as well as offering lively forums for debate. Because the new breed of shows presented their content in an informal, easily accessible style, they appealed to audiences, although they rarely managed to report from the field or produce serious investigative reporting [7].

Following the 2011 revolution, the Supreme Council of the Press approved the issuance of 56 daily and weekly newspapers. The number of daily or weekly newspapers aligned with political Islam increased from 3 to 26. During the same period, companies affiliated to the Ministry of Investment issued licenses to 24 media companies which launched 48 new satellite channels. Satellite channels reflecting the ideas of the political Islamist movement increased from 6 to 23 [8].

Many official state institutions in Egypt, including SCAF and the Interior Ministry, launched Facebook pages, as a step to open issues of concern to discussion with the public, and to enable direct interaction with young Egyptians, by using their own tool and language. During this phase, however, media in general, and social media in particular, lacked professionalism. Citizen journalism had become very powerful, and whilst this enabled the free sharing of information, and rapid mobilization around issues, it also led to many stories being spread with few checks regarding the credibility of the content. This was true even of mainstream media. There were many incidences of TV talk shows and newspapers broadcasting or republishing material from social media, without first checking its credibility.

This transitional phase also saw the emergence of a new form of political humour. The 'Asa7be Sarcasm Society' [9] became a highly popular Facebook page, which created a famous meme, *Asahby* (my friend) (Fig. 1), which it uses to generate political and social content. The page has over 14 million followers today.

Fig. 1. Asa7be sarcasm society [9].

Another representation of *Asahby* has also emerged, (Fig. 2), based on a photograph of a Chinese basketball player, Yao Ming, captured during a post-game press conference in May 2009. Interestingly, the drawing was presented and accepted by many Egyptians as representing a typical Egyptian.

Fig. 2. Yao Ming.

Such Facebook pages present a broad range of political and cultural narratives, often using the folkloric to inform the contemporary. As a result, many are difficult for non-Egyptians to understand. Popular memes such as *Asahby* bring together humor and biting critique [10].

The post-revolution period also saw the emergence of another new online phenomenon: *El-legan Electroniyya* (electronic committees), sometimes referred to as "E-militia", widely believed to be organized by the Muslim Brotherhood, in order to propagandize their organization and shape public opinion through social media. These E-militia foot soldiers "using both real and fake profiles—interject in Facebook discussions to influence opinion towards the Brotherhood position" [11]. Some young members of the Muslim Brotherhood explained to Srinivasan that their attention has increasingly turned to tactics of misinformation, hacking, and leaking [3]. These MB members described ways in which they would leak damaging information that would negatively influence the status of their competitors. These leaks would often be first introduced through social media networks such as Twitter, providing journalists the opportunity to amplify this coverage via traditional media.

B. The Emergence of a New Political Term: 'Feloul'

During and after the 2011 revolution, a number of new political terms entered public discourse. One of these was, *"Feloul",* derived from an Arabic word meaning defeated, broken or bankrupt, which referred to remnants of Mubarak's regime: those who had benefitted from the previous regime or who had supported Mubarak against the revolution.

During this time, there were widespread campaigns calling for the boycotting of *'feloul',* who has been perceived as players in the "counter-revolution". Scores of Facebook pages were launched, targeting well-known media personalities, singers and movie-stars who had spoken out against the revolution when it began, now denounced as *feloul*. Other Facebook pages targeted *'feloul'* companies and industries, which previously had ties with Mubarak's regime.

A number of alleged *'feloul'* have defended themselves through both new and traditional media, claiming that it was

not logical to classify all those who worked under Mubarak's regime as *'feloul'*. They claimed that working under Mubarak's regime was not the same as supporting it, asserting that they had to work under conditions that they had no power to change. Others reacted defiantly to such campaigns, announcing publicly that if their relations with the previous regime or their position against the January 25th revolution when it started led people to call them *'feloul'*, then they were proud to be called *'feloul'*. Some of Mubarak's supporters, including some young Egyptians, stated on their Facebook cover picture: "Yes I'm *'feloul'* and I'm proud of being so".

II. IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT AND THE RISE OF ISLAMISM

The January 25th Revolution was widely perceived, both by participants and observers, as being secular and unconnected to any specific ideology. The protesters included Muslims and Christians who rebelled together against Mubarak's regime, chanting together the slogan of the revolution, the "three demands" for "Bread, Freedom and Social Justice". The revolution was famously "leaderless," had no affiliations to political parties, or personal ties to prominent politicians. The Muslim Brotherhood's initial role between January 25 and 28, 2011, was ambiguous. They did not declare support for the revolution, but they did allow the organization's young members to individually participate, if they wanted to, in demonstrations organized by the liberal/ nationalist/ pro-democracy movement [12]. Their support of the revolution was not visible until it was clear that Mubarak was on his way out [13]. Consequently, "the Egyptian revolution was marked by a paradox: those who revolted were not the ones who seized power nor were they able to organize so as to be the leading civilian actor in the post-revolutionary transitional phase" [14].

A. The Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood (a*l-Ikhwan al-Muslimun)*, is one of the most influential Islamist organizations today, founded in 1928 by Hassan Al-Banna (1906–1949). It started as a movement dedicated to free Egypt from British imperial control and its domestic enablers. Since its establishment, it has advocated radical social and political change, pursuing its preference for an Islamist state that is economically strong and independent from foreign cultural and political encroachments [15].

The organization was banned under the Mubarak regime, but the regime tolerated MB candidates running for parliamentary elections as independents. In 2005, the MB managed to win 88 of the 444 contested seats in parliament [16]. This success gave the organization a greater degree of political experience than other Islamist organizations and parties.

On February 21, 2011, the MB announced the creation of its political arm, the Freedom and Justice Party. The organization has been strongly backed by the al-Jazeera satellite channel [17], and it has launched its own independent TV channel, Misr25 [7].

B. Salafism

Salafism is an Islamic trend that self-consciously tries to follow as closely as possible the teaching and practice of the Prophet Mohamed and the first generation of Muslims [18]. Prior to the Arab Spring of 2010, the general public in Egypt was barely aware of the existence of Salafist organizations. Many Salafists belong to a Wahabi-inspired segment of a larger fundamentalist Sunni Muslim bloc and many have been supported politically and financially by Saudi Arabia [12]. The Mubarak regime tolerated Salafists preaching in mosques, *dawah*, as a counterweight to the Muslim Brotherhood. Salafists therefore enjoyed a measure of freedom not allowed to other Islamists [19].

When the revolution first erupted, some Salafi leaders condemned it, maintaining that opposing any Muslim ruler is contrary to Islam [20]. This was a position that was very acceptable to the Saudi funders of Salafist movements. In addition, according to Salafi leader, Ahmed Farid, Salafi leaders agreed not to participate in the revolution "because it allows the mix between men and women," and it will include unacceptable slogans such as "the rise of the cross" [21]. Since the revolution, Salafists have been active on the streets, distributing flyers urging people to support a religious state and to reject any state model based on democracy or liberalism [22]. At the same time, however, in apparent contradiction, many Salafis have entered political debates and associated themselves with one of the largest political parties in Egypt, the *Al-Nour* party.

C. Other Islamists' factions

The growth in Salafism in the 1970s gave birth to a third trend, characterized by its violent approach. The most important representative of this trend is *al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya*, inspired by the radical Muslim Brotherhood Islamic theorist, Sayyid Qutb. Together with a splinter militant group, Islamic *Jihad*, it waged a violent struggle against the Egyptian regime, and it was accused of implication in the assassination of President Sadat at the hands of Islamic *Jihad* in 1981 [18].

The decision of both al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya and Islamic *Jihad* to participate in the political process after the 2011 uprising was mostly based on these groups' understanding of the new political opportunities available to them, informed by the nationwide change in Egypt. Prior to 2011, neither group had put forward any political program, nor had they accepted that party politics or democracy were compatible with Islamic law [23].

D. Ideological Conflict (Islamists vs. non-Islamists)

The population of Egypt is ethnically and religiously homogenous. Egypt's 97,041,072 residents are nearly all ethnic Egyptians (99.6% of the population). 90% of the population are Sunni Muslims, and 10% follow other recognized religions, primarily Coptic Christianity [24].

However, the year following the revolution posed a new question of identity, stemming from the rise of political Islamism. Egyptian society suddenly appeared divided into two major blocs groups: Islamists (includes the Muslim Brotherhood, the Salafists and smaller groupings); and non-Islamists, including followers of Islam and Christianity, as well as a range of different political ideologies such as

liberalism, secularism, leftism and Nasserism.

Conflicts soon rose between the two major blocs, the first calling for an "Islamic state" while the second demanded a "civil state". On many occasions during and after the revolution, protesters had chanted: "A Muslim, a Christian, we're all Egyptians," or "a Muslim and a Christian are one hand." However, in July 2011, tens of thousands of Islamists, largely Salafist supporters, jammed Tahrir Square, chanting: "Islamic, Islamic, neither secular nor liberal." During such critical moments, secularists frequently found their claims overwhelmed by Islamist voices [13].

Consequently, the overthrow of the Mubarak regime ushered in a period of high tension among Copts, a section of society that had always felt discriminated against. Widespread fear of the electoral success of the Muslim Brotherhood and the rising influence of the Salafist movements in Egypt appeared to be justified amid the acceleration of attacks on churches in Egypt over the following months of mid-2011 [25].

Sectarian attacks against Copts were not new, and the ousted regime has been blamed for making little efforts to stop them. On the contrary, during the last years of the Mubarak's rule, some radical Islamist TV channels had promoted extreme ideologies. Both *El-Nas* TV (the People TV) and *Al-Hafez* TV (the Protector TV) have proven to be very influential [26]. Some of their preachers have used offensive language that has been seen as incitement against Christians, liberals, or anyone ideologically different to Islamists. Both channels have included *fatwa* fabricators who deliver interpretations of the 'Holy Quran' which are seen as twisted and convoluted by mainstream religious authorities [27].

Since the revolution, many politicians have attempted to alleviate fear among Christians and liberal Egyptians by opposing what they see as medieval Salafi politics, but in so doing, have "clashed with the theologian's demand for doctrinal purity." Such clashes appeared regularly in the Egyptian media [18]. At the same time, some media that supported the army, such as *Masr Al-Youm* TV Talk show program hosted by Tawfiq Okasha, fueled fear amongst Islamists by calling for the army to maintain power to prevent Islamist expansion: a logic to which many Egyptians fearful of Islamism appeared to be receptive.

On February 13, 2011, the 1971 Constitution was suspended by SCAF. On February 26, the Egyptian Constitutional Reform Committee announced a number of proposed revisions to the suspended constitution. SCAF then decreed a constitutional referendum to be held on March 19, in which proposed amendments must be approved or refused as a block. Islamists campaigned for a "Yes" vote, using mosques and religious slogans to convince people that voting "yes" was a religious duty. The majority of the pro-democracy forces used a range of media to campaign for a "No" vote, demanding instead a new constitution which would meet the revolutionaries' ambitions.

The referendum returned a "Yes" vote of 77.2% with 41.19 % of eligible voters voting [28]. This was the highest turnout for a referendum or election ever recorded in Egypt. All sections of the political spectrum saw the high turnout as a victory for the revolution, constituting proof that Egyptians now believed their votes mattered, and were determined to shape their future themselves in a democratic way.

Some Islamists, however, interpreted the results in a more triumphalist vein. In a video widely spread on both social and traditional media, Sheikh Hussein Yaqoub, a well-known Salafist cleric, declared that the referendum results were a victory for Islam over non-Muslim voters, and described the ballot boxes as '*ghazwa*' (a term used during the era of the Prophet Mohamed to describe a battle) and described anyone (including Muslims) who voted "No" as a *kafir* (infidel). The video shocked many Egyptians, increasing fear of the Islamist movements [29].

The results of the March referendum suggested that the Imam's microphone inside a mosque was more powerful than any other medium.

Between November 2011 and January 2012, elections were held for the 498-seat People's Assembly: the lower house of parliament. Whilst the newborn liberal parties and independents were ill-prepared to mobilize people on the street, the newborn Islamist parties were well-organized and well-financed, and had built a street-presence through long-term involvement in mosques and charities, particularly in rural areas [30]. Again, Islamists used religious slogans to mobilize supporters; regardless of the criticism they received for this in a range of media.

Consequently, the first parliamentary election in the post-Mubarak era resulted in a political victory for the Islamists. The Islamist parties gained 70 percent of the national vote, with the Freedom and Justice Party winning 47% of the seats, and the *Al-Nour* Party winning 24% of the seats, whilst all the liberal and secular parties put together took less than 30% of the seats [31].

Elections for the Shura Council, the upper parliamentary chamber, followed in February 2012, with the Islamists winning more than 80 percent of the seats on a disappointingly low voter turnout. The results of both elections showed a tightening of the Islamists' grasp over parliamentary and political life, while providing evidence of the marginalization of revolutionary and other political forces [32].

III. THE FIRST ROUND

The majority of Egyptians were impatient to transfer power to the right president. In June 2011, this mood was captured by the song *Matloob Zaeem* [33] (A Leader Wanted), released by the rock band, Cairokee, who had made their name in the wake of the January 25th Revolution with songs such as *Sout El-Horiyya* (the Voice of Freedom), one of the earliest songs filmed during the protests in Tahrir Square. *Matloob Zaeem,* which was shared millions of times on social media, emphasized the qualifications required in Egypt's next leader, as understood by its young producers and by many young Egyptians:

A leader is wanted for people who are always great,
A leader is wanted for people who were betrayed,
misled and abandoned by their rulers.
A leader is wanted to protect the rights and bring
justice among people.

And be kind to the poor…and hard on the corrupt,
And listens to the pulse of our hearts
And is among us and never lives in palaces,
And consults and takes our opinion.
Shape is not a requirement,
Age is not a requirement,
And religion is not a requirement.
The only requirement is to be human [34].

Out of the 23 Egyptian citizens who initially registered as candidates, 13 proceeded to the first round of the election, held on May 23 and 24. Out of those 13, only five candidates were considered competitive. Abdel-Moneim Aboul-Fotouh, an independent who had been expelled from the Muslim Brotherhood in 2011 after he refused to give up his independent political campaign, was seen as "courting the ultraconservative vote" after the Salafi *al-Nour* Party announced its support for him [35]. Amr Moussa, an independent, had been Foreign Minister for 10 years and had also served as Arab League Secretary General. Moussa was positioned as appealing to liberal and mainstream Egyptians [35]. Hamdeen Sabahi was the representative of the Dignity Party, inspired by the former president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, appealing to many liberals and Nasserists. Ahmad Shafik, an independent, had been Mubarak's last Prime Minister, and was widely described as a candidate of the old regime. Mohamad Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood candidate, was the Freedom and Justice Party's reserve candidate, not its first choice. Therefore, he was the last to enter the fray, after the MB leader Khairat el-Shater, the MB's first choice was disqualified on the grounds of his recent release from prison.

It could be argued that none of the candidates was a real representative of the revolutionary forces; but all identified themselves as pro-revolution and claimed to speak on behalf of it. Many viewed this as an indication that the revolution had already been hijacked. Cartoonist El-Tony in his cartoon (*Al-Ahram,* 12 May 2012) drew the revolution as a horse, which the rider (the revolution hijacker) struggled to control.

The atmosphere before and during the elections, which I experienced personally, was intense. There were constant heated political dialogues everywhere: at home, work, in transportation and cafes. People constantly monitored news, minute by minute, no matter where they were: taxi-drivers turned on their radio while driving; customers were seated around the TV in local cafes. Heated debates dominated Facebook and Twitter in Egypt. Both new and traditional media became platforms for campaigning for or against candidates.

A number of campaign songs emerged online, trying to sell candidates as ordinary people in touch with the working-class [34]. Moreover, Egyptians, for the first time in their history, watched a televised debate between two candidates: Moussa and Aboul-Fotouh [36]. This experience did not encourage other candidates to participate in such an event, however. The debate was widely seen as catastrophic for both candidates. The attacks each launched on each other resulted in both losing support.

When the results of the first round were announced, Egyptians were shocked to see that Ahmad Shafiq and Mohamed Morsi, the two candidates characterized by the media as being most unlikely and most undeserving, had reached the final round [27]. Morsi had the highest number of votes in the first round, with about 200,000 votes more than Shafiq's, Sabbahi came in third place, while Aboul-Fotouh came fourth, followed by Moussa.

The progression of Shafiq to the final round, however, seemed to provoke more outrage than Morsi's success. Political satirists had a field day at the expense of those who had voted for Shafiq. One of the widely spread memes (involving *Asahbi*) said: "When we overthrew the regime, we impressed the whole world … We thought to impress the whole world again, so we brought the regime back!" (fig. 3).

Fig 3. The First Round!
"When we overthrew the regime, we impressed the whole world … We thought to impress the whole world again, so we brought the regime back!"
(Online, 2012).

VI. THE FINAL ROUND

The second round was a nightmare scenario for many Egyptians, who found themselves having to choose between: a pro-state candidate and an Islamist.

Because he was not the Freedom and Justice Party's first choice, Morsi had been characterized by his opponents as '*stebn*' (the spare tire), a term that was used heavily in anti-MB media and cartoons, as well as being used as a hashtag (*#stebn*) in Arabic on Twitter. Tires were held in the air among the crowd at his campaign speeches. Many online memes featuring Morsi along with a tire were shared relentlessly on social media outlets. Just as Mubarak was mocked by many Egyptians as not being smart enough for the job, so Morsi, "the spare tire", was characterized as simply not the man for the job [37].

Because Shafiq appeared in almost the TV talk shows wearing a pullover, he was nicknamed "pullover", by his opponents, and this term was used heavily in social media when referring to him. He was also subject to a tsunami of humorous memes mocking him as unfit to be President.

A. *'Squeezing the Lemon' Campaign*

The final round witnessed a great division among Egyptians on who to vote for: the '*stebn*' or the '*pullover*'. The controversy was reflected in all types of media.

The Islamist forces, whether the new Salafi parties and organizations or the traditional Islamist groups, all sided with Morsi. His campaign also received support from a wide range of youth activists that had worked for Aboul-Fotouh's campaign as well as a relatively smaller number of those who had worked for Sabbahi's campaign [38].

As Egyptians wrestled with this dilemma, the 6 April Youth Movement along with other activists launched the 'Squeezing the Lemon' campaign. The term 'squeezing lemon' from an Egyptian expression –when you are forced

to do something unpleasant, you then say: "I squeezed lemon all over it first," to be able to swallow. The Squeezing the Lemon activists campaigned in all types of media, aiming to convince people to vote for Morsi and not to fear the Muslim Brotherhood taking power. This opened the door for more heated debates through media between the "Lemon" campaigners and other non-Islamists who strongly opposed the campaign, claiming that helping the Islamists to reach power was not a wise idea.

In support of the 'Squeezing the Lemon' campaign, many of *al-nokhba* (a term used to refer to Egyptian elites) appeared on TV talk shows, encouraging people to vote for Morsi. Consultant Psychiatrist Manal Omar appeared as a guest on *Al-Nahar* TV talk show program, arguing that people should vote for Morsi not Shafiq, because dealing with a party that was selfish (the Muslim Brotherhood was described as selfish because in many incidents they were perceived as focusing only on party interests) was much easier than dealing with a killer (Shafiq was described as a killer because a number of protesters were killed when he was a prime minister) [39].

The "e-militia" was active on social media in support of Morsi. They deployed sophisticated tactics, for example, users denying any affiliation with the MB posted messages such as "Muslim Brotherhood might be selfish but not corrupt", or "Do not let your hatred of MB make you blind to the right choice", which were clearly aimed at uncommitted voters [11]. As in previous elections, the Muslim Brotherhood and their Islamists allies also used religious propaganda to discredit any opposing party or candidate [17].

B. Pro-Shafiq Campaigns

Almost all state media outlets and privately-owned television stations took Shafiq's side. He also received significant support from the "*feloul*": those circles of wealth and power, including influential members of the dissolved ruling National Democratic Party, and businessmen known for their close relations with the old regime [38]. Shafiq also received support from wider segments of society, who do had not supported the revolution and felt nostalgic for the perceived stability of old order.

At the same time, Shafiq received support from some sections of the revolutionaries, including a number of '*nokhba*' and liberal political party leaders, including the leaders of the *Wafd* party and the leftist *Tagamu* party. These parties believed that the most important issue was to keep the future of Egypt out of the hands of the Islamists. Those revolutionary voices who backed Shafiq, however, were vulnerable to accusations that they had become anti-revolutionary traitors.

Unsurprisingly, when the choice came down to Morsi or Shafiq, the majority of Copts, who feared becoming an oppressed minority under Islamist rule chose the latter. Consequently, they were also accused of being anti-revolutionary and traitors. Some Copts, and indeed many Muslim voters, responded to this dilemma of choosing between an Islamist and a representative of the old regime by refusing to vote in the final round [40].

When news circulated that Copts would definitely vote for Shafiq, as reported by the Ibn Khaldun Center for Developmental Studies (ICDS), which closely monitored the elections, "the Islamists surrounded whole Christian villages in Upper Egypt and prevented them from reaching the ballot stations, with the result that more than 600,000 voters were… prevented from voting" [41].

C. 'Mobteloon' and 'Moqateaoon' Campaigns

Another group of activists launched a campaign called "*Mobteloon*" (Voiders), using the hashtag #mobetloon, calling on Egyptians to spoil their ballot papers in the final round. They presented their campaign under the slogans: "Spoil your votes, spoil their legitimacy" and "NO to military fascism, NO to religious fascism" [42]. These groups campaigned heavily in both social and traditional media. Activist Mohamed Ghoneim, one of the campaigners observed that: "If it happened that the turnout of spoiled votes is close enough to the votes of the winning candidate, it would be a vivid sign of the size of opposition that awaits" the winner [42].

Another boycott campaign entitled '*Moqateaoon*' was embraced by a number of revolutionaries, calling on Egyptians to boycott the election. The campaign faced criticism that a boycott could actually play into the hands of the candidates. Anti-MB campaigners claimed that a boycott would help Morsi to win the election, while anti-Shafiq campaigners claimed that a boycott might increase the chances for Shafiq. Therefore, the '*Mobteloon*' and '*Moqateaoon*' campaigns were also accused of being anti-revolutionary traitors.

D. 'Hater' Election Day

As the widespread accusations of treachery suggest, the final round of the election was extremely divisive, creating hostility even between those who had previously considered themselves allies. Debates became increasingly polarized, with little attempt to understand opposing points of view. Family members and friends became opponents and enemies [27].

Many cartoonists depicted the divisive effects of the election. Cartoonist Makhouf (*Al-Masry Al-Youm,* 1 June 2012) depicted a father telling a man who proposed marriage to his daughter: "I will never accept your proposal unless I know for whom you're going to vote". Another cartoon by Abdullah (*Al-Masry Al-Youm,* 23 June 2012), showed a man, confused as to who to vote for, picking petals off a flower as in the game, "he loves me; he loves me not". As he picked each petal, he alternately said the names of the two candidates: Shafiq, Morsi, Shafiq, Morsi until with the last petal, he unintentionally spoke the name "Mohamed Hosni Mubarak". The cartoon suggested that neither candidate was likely to bring real change. Doaa El-Adl offered a similar message in her cartoon (*Al-Masry Al-Youm,* 18 June 2012) depicting shocked voters discovering Mubarak sitting in the bottom of a ballot box waiting for their votes.

What Egyptians experienced during the final round was described in some media as "negative" voting, in which people voted not for a candidate they strongly supported but to prevent the election of a candidate they strongly opposed. Cartoonist Amr Selim described it as 'the hater elections'. In his cartoon, a woman justifies her choice at the ballot box by saying: "I voted for Shafiq because I hate Morsi", while

a man responds: "I voted for Morsi because I hate Shafiq" (fig 4). More subtly that simply "haters", some people seemed to be voting for the candidate they believed would be most easily ousted if they did not like his policies.

Finally, more than 51 percent of eligible voters (about 26 out of 51 million) voted in the second round, while Invalidated votes (voiders) numbered more than 800,000. Muslim Brotherhood candidate, Mohamed Morsi, emerged as the first democratically elected president of Egypt and the country's first Islamist president, winning 51.7 percent of the votes with a narrow margin over Shafiq [43].

Fig 4. Hater (Presidential) Elections!
(*Al-Shorouk,* 22 June 2012, reprinted with the cartoonist's permission).

V. CONCLUSION

The post-Mubarak period saw dramatic political transitions that continue to shape the future of Egypt. During this period, new political parties emerged, and political Islamists proved their ability to mobilize supporters towards political domination.

In this paper, I highlighted the political conditions and circumstances before and during the 2012 presidential elections that have influenced voters' choices, emphasizing the role of media as a political communication tool in campaigning in support of or against presidential candidates.

I have shown the significant role played by both new and traditional media in transmitting and sharing information, attempting to shape public opinion, and mobilizing people toward certain actions, noting that TV talk-shows remain the most accessible form of political debate, especially for the large proportion of the population which is illiterate, whilst social media is more important for the young and well-educated. I have also noted that media in general was characterized by a lack of professionalism, resulting in many news stories being shared, published or aired with few checks of their credibility, creating an environment well-suited for disseminating rumors and false information. Indeed, it could be argued that the hackers and propagandists of the "e-militia" were significantly more professional than the mainstream media who sometimes picked up their stories.

Both the March referendum and the parliamentary elections were real tests for the revolutionary political forces and new born liberal parties, showing that social media was not enough to mobilize people on the street and could not compensate for lack of political experience. Conversely, Islamist organizations and their new-born parties showed that a combination of very traditional media: religious discourses and slogans; online activism in new media; and a well-financed and experienced organization in the street; was effective in mobilizing mass support, despite the fact that the organization had been outlawed for a long period.

Finally, I showed the divisive nature of the dilemma faced by Egyptians in the final round, when faced with two candidates many found objectionable, voters faced the choice between "squeezing the lemon", '*Mobteloon*' (voiding their vote), or '*Moqateaoon*' (boycotting the election). Morsi's victory on a 51% turnout shows that a majority of eligible voters chose to squeeze one lemon or the other, although the high level of spoiled ballots were indicative of problems to come.

After the election results were announced, one political joke was widely circulated, particularly during the High School exam period: '*Thanaweya Amma*'. The joke goes like this: if your exam score is 95 percent, this will lead you to the school of medicine, 85 percent will lead you to the school of accounting, but 51 percent will lead you to become president of Egypt. The joke indicates that the number of those who voted for Morsi did not in fact reflect the "majority". From the results, one can understand that the situation Morsi faced in government was very challenging. The majority of Egyptians were convinced that the majority did not consist of his supporters, but rather, those who "squeezed the lemon" before voting for him; those who decided to boycott the election or void their ballot cards in protest; and those who voted for Shafiq, including those who voted for Shafiq just to prevent Egypt from falling into the hands of Islamists. The course Morsi followed in power suggests that he and the Muslim Brotherhood neither grasped this arithmetic nor "got the joke".

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