

Backstage Governance

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Abstract Mubarak's regime was able to pursue political liberalisation without undermining the *status quo* through the role played by the State Security Investigations apparatus (SSI) in backstage governance. This article discusses mechanisms through which the SSI exercised public authority through the use of soft and hard power. It argues that the focus of good governance approaches on the level of government institutions formally mandated with public authority together with the international precedence given to geostrategic security interests over development policy enabled the SSI to instrumentalise Western-sponsored good governance programmes to advance its own mandate of safeguarding the power base of the regime.

1 Introduction

The fact that authoritarian regimes rely on the State Security Investigations apparatus (SSI) or the political police to exercise hard and soft power to rule is not new (Das Gupta 1978; Bruneau and Dombroski 2006; Matei 2007; Rathmell 1996; Zirker and Redinger 2003). However, what is argued here is that the SSI was more than that – authoritarian regimes were able to pursue political liberalisation without democratisation (or loss of their control) precisely through the backstage governance role of the SSI. By relying on the visible and invisible powers of the SSI to control political space and policy processes, regimes were able to commit to good governance that require changes in the institutional set-up of formal state agencies, without changing the underlying power structures. Donors supporting good governance in Egypt have sought to ignore the elephant in the room – the SSI, a formal institution playing an informal, unofficial and illegitimate role in governance. In some cases, this not only led to a facade of good governance in the making, but it also empowered the SSI to enlarge its powers. The SSI often created artificial political spaces for donor-led project implementation, but then used them instrumentally to infiltrate, control and co-opt processes of political and social reform.

Moreover, the security culture's impact on governance was so insidious that even after the removal of the authoritarian leader (Mubarak) and the formal disbandment of the SSI, civil servants still operated as if the SSI had a

governing role. This article will argue that this bears implications not only for the approaches to understanding and analysing governance, but also for policy interventions in authoritarian or semi-authoritarian countries more generally where actors perform public authority functions which they were not formally or legally mandated to assume.

The article is based on ethnographic field studies and semi-structured interviews undertaken between 2009 and 2011, a secondary literature review in scholarship produced in Arabic and English, and informal conversations with informants whose identities have been concealed for security reasons.

2 Frameworks of governance that ignore the 'elephant in the room'

Paradigmatically and programmatically, good governance as a normative framework has come to mean different things, depending on whose agenda is being advanced. In Egypt, as with many other countries in the South, the concept and practice of good governance was that endorsed by the World Bank (and funded by the World Bank, USAID, EU) and which took on different versions of it once adopted by other donors (such as UNDP). In effect, it characterised a minimalist approach to governance that focused on the rules and institutions, stability and predictability of the management of a country's economic resources for developmental purposes (defined in terms of an enabling environment for the private sector to

thrive). It is minimalist insofar as its primary focus is on the quality of institutions:

Governance consists of the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised. This includes the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them.

(World Bank 2011)

The dimensions of this definition can be gleaned from the indicators drawn by the World Bank, whereby good governance is conceived of as:

- i voice and accountability (measured in terms of the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media).
- ii political stability and absence of violence (assessed in terms of the perceptions of the likelihood that the government will be destabilised or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means, including domestic violence and terrorism).
- iii government effectiveness (perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies).
- iv regulatory quality (perceptions of the ability of the government to formulate and implement sound policies and regulations that permit and promote private sector development).
- v rule of law (perceptions of the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence).
- vi control of corruption (perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for

private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as 'capture' of the state by elites and private interests).
(Kaufmann *et al.* 2010)

The indicators (Kaufmann *et al.* 2010) show that if we compare Egypt's profile for 2000, 2005 and 2010, we note that for voice and accountability, Egypt has continuously been in the lowest 25th percentile world ranking, but has gone down in 2010 compared with 2005 and 2000. For political stability, there is also a decline in 2010 compared with the previous decade and a drop from being the 25–50th percentile, to the lowest percentile rank. For government effectiveness and regulatory quality, there is a slight drop in 2010 from 2000 and 2005; however, for the rule of law, the indicators suggest that it is more or less the same as 2000, although slightly lower than 2005 and for control of corruption, slightly better than 2005, although lower than 2000 (World Bank 2011). Yet, if we take into account the role of the SSI as substituting for the legal channels of pursuing and acquiring justice (as will be shown below), the situation for Egypt would indicate a drop in rule of law as well. It is highly significant that in measuring all of these dimensions of good governance in the country profile assessments, the SSI is never mentioned as a central actor assuming governance roles, despite its very conspicuous role.

These indicators suggest that governance is promoted as a means of improving economic performance rather than as a goal in itself.

Governance has instrumental value insofar as it provides producers and households with greater clarity on the rules of the game and investors with greater assurance that they can appropriate the returns to their efforts. That is the essential point that the institutions and growth literature has emphasized. It is also the main rationale for thinking of governance reform in the context of growth strategies.
(Rodrik 2008: 19)

What is argued here is that while institutions count, the focus in this good governance approach's conception, measurement and analysis of the formal relationships and state of government institutions is inadequate at exposing the situation on the ground accurately in a country like Egypt because it fails to capture

the dynamics of one of the most influential actors to shape the governance regime – the State Security Investigations apparatus (SSI). The SSI influences governance through mostly backstage mediation of relations, hierarchies and processes, whether it is within the government or outside. Before examining the role of the SSI in governing the country, a profile of the agency will be briefly described.

Since its establishment by the British colonial powers in 1910 as a secret service, the political police (or SSI) has experienced a series of waxing and waning in its function in society and relationship to the ruling regime (see Tadros 2011 for a brief history). During Mubarak's reign, the SSI was propped up by an Emergency Law, an instrument which has often been used by the authoritarian regime in Egypt (and commonly used in other countries as well for similar purpose) to enforce the *status quo* through undemocratic means. The Emergency Law was in effect in Egypt from 1981 until the demise of the Mubarak regime in February 2011 and was then reinstated by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) in September 2011. During Mubarak's reign, the law was used for incarcerating citizens without arrest warrant and without justification. The state security courts (run by state security investigations officers who have received legal training) served as a parallel system for administering the rule of law for cases seen as posing a threat to national security. As with all authoritarian regimes, national security was reduced to defending and protecting the interests of the ruling regime and in particular, the President. The SSI was dissolved in March 2011; however it was substituted with another apparatus, the National Security, also headed by SSI generals. The new apparatus vowed to limit its role to combating terrorism and not to encroach upon citizens' freedoms. However, there are already clear signals that this is not the direction it pursues on the ground. This article will focus on the period of SSI's heightened role in governance in the last decade of Mubarak's reign, although there will be spillover into the transition phase that followed.

During Mubarak's reign, the SSI was technically answerable to the Minister of Interior, yet in practice it often had open communication lines with the President himself. Nonetheless, as in other police states, it was also competing for

power with a variety of other security forces and in particular with the Intelligence Services of the Army (al-Mukhabarat al-'Askariyya). Up to the demise of Mubarak, it was led by General Hassan Abd el Rahman who also held the title of deputy to the Minister of Interior. SSI officers were selected along very discerning criteria. Unlike officers who joined the ranks of the general police and who may have greatly varying levels of education and class, their SSI counterparts tended to come from the well-to-do classes and were often highly educated, holding Masters degrees and above. They were often sent to Europe and the USA to be trained in the best universities and were far better paid than their counterparts in the police force. While the officers who were responsible for certain files (in particular political dissidents and the Islamists) were infamous for using torture and cruel means of information extraction, the SSI officers who engaged with political parties, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), intellectuals and others tended to be (often) very well spoken and seem very 'cultured'. However, they have also tended to work in an institutional culture which incentivised and rewarded allegiance to the regime and their promotion was often directly linked to identifying, subverting and eliminating political threats to the regime.

The shift in SSI's function in rule and governance took place around the mid-2000s. This was when the role of the SSI began to expand, infiltrate every space, and become more visible in its dealings. While no correlative relationship can be established between increased political liberalisation and the expansion of the SSI, it is highly significant that it was in the mid-2000s that the Egyptian government, pressed by the Bush administration's earlier drive to promote democratisation in the Arab world, witnessed a relaxation of the political inhibitions on public space. There was also a tangible widening of liberties associated with the media, the press, the NGO sector (in particular human rights organisations) and the emergence of political movements, such as *Kifaya* (Enough), directly contesting the President's leadership. The expansion of SSI's role also coincided with Gamal Mubarak's rise to political power in the ruling National Democratic Party and his assumption of more public roles. The SSI became Gamal Mubarak's right arm, advising him on strategic political steps forward and repressing his enemies.

The SSI relied on a combination of strategies deploying hard and soft power to govern the expanded political space. In addition to the practice of torture, indefinite incarceration and disappearance, which had become standard practice, as well as the unaccountable administration of (in)justice of the State Security courts, the SSI also sought to legitimise its actions by assuming a patriotic image in the media and the press. For example, it launched via the press and media, sustained attacks on characters and organisations which it sought to repress, representing such actions as defending national interests against Western hidden agendas. In some cases, character assaults reached the point of shaming them as national traitors for associating with Western actors.

The SSI governed through influencing both agential and structural dynamics. In terms of agency, the SSI heavily influenced processes of rotation of power within the government, the media and parliament based on the recommendations of security reports. Ministers, deputy ministers and management staff were appointed or banished. Similarly, all heads of governmental newspapers and Egyptian broadcasting channels (television and radio), deans, heads of department and presidents of public universities were appointed through the recommendations of the SSI. During the elections of 2005 and 2010, the SSI played a key role at all levels of the process: people were given security clearances to nominate themselves, the SSI intimidated and harassed the candidates and their supporters from political forces and parties that it did not wish to see win. In the last parliamentary election during Mubarak's reign, November 2010, the SSI did not only govern the parliamentary outcome by supporting or undermining candidates, they took on a more proactive role by nominating themselves for office. One writer pointed out that this parliamentary round (that was supposed to be 2010–14) was one which had the highest representation from the security sector (Amin 2010).

Moreover, since SSI officers (forcibly) retired very young, they were often rewarded for their services through their appointment as governors. While the political clout of a former SSI governor was far less than that of an SSI officer in service, it was still one way to influence governance at the sub-national level. As with other police

states, the SSI did not only rely on its officers but also on a vast network of informers occupying within and outside all institutions.

From a structural or institutional point of view, the SSI governed by directly substituting the incompetent over-inflated bureaucracies of the various Ministries. Through parallel and informal management, the SSI was efficient, organised and lacking in the red tape that crippled citizens' access to services. In the civil society arena, it was able to establish its own human rights organisations or at least gently prod desirable candidates to set up their own foundations, with the promise that they would facilitate the process of registration, access to funds and freedom to work without harassment. Through its infiltration of opposition political parties, it was able to support and empower activists within to contest and challenge the leadership of the parties, and in the process cause fragmentation and internal dissent. Religious institutions, whether Muslim or Christian, were heavily regulated by the unspoken rules of providing the SSI engagement: in return for information sharing, the SSI was supposed to provide it with certain favours. For example, one renowned writer, Sayed el Qemmi, who critically questioned one of the prominent characters in Islamic history was summoned by the General Prosecutor of the State Security Investigations for questioning, because Al Azhar, Egypt's most prominent Sunni establishment was dissatisfied with his book and called upon the SSI to ban it. In the case of the Coptic Christian Orthodox church, to construct, renovate or even fix a toilet required SSI's permission (specific to non-Muslims). In return, the SSI was supposed to obstruct and prevent sectarian attacks against Christian places of worship and property, which it often failed or chose not to do (see Fawzy, this *IDS Bulletin*).

In essence, whatever the institution, the organisation or movement, the SSI applied a carrot and stick strategy of governing which had become the normative framework for governing relations between state and society, and within society itself.

3 Manifestations of the SSI assumption of public authority

The role of the SSI in governance was manifest in terms of control over actors (their political aggrandisement or marginalisation); policy process (policies could only be issued based on

the recommendation of 'security reports'); activities (elections, meetings and any activity involving collective congregation whether for the distribution of charitable hand-outs on feasts or for holding a workshop on sex education in school curricula needed prior security notification and permission) and spaces (public spaces were not open for collective citizen engagement and were subject to regulation). In effect, the SSI had assumed the core functions of governance to create public authority or 'protection from external threats, and managing external relations; peaceful resolution of internal conflicts; and providing or facilitating the provision of a range of collective goods and services (IDS 2010: 9). For example, the SSI was seen as the key actor protecting the Egyptian population from the external threat of terrorism. It also managed all external relations *vis-à-vis* donors and international actors, and directly provided a number of services to its allies in the form of repressing their opponents, while providing direct services that would have been the prerogative of national ministries such as the Ministry of Social Solidarity, Ministry of Manpower, Ministry of Education, etc.

The dynamics of the macro- and micro-manifestations of the role of the SSI in governance will be analysed here through four vignettes.

3.1 International programmes for governance promotion and democracy

In the early 2000s, UNDP launched a human rights capacity-building project targeting what it called 'the Community of Human Rights Practitioners'. It prided itself on the fact that:

For the first time the Police Sector, the Law Enforcement Sector and the Judiciary Sector of the country have been exposed to systematic training in human rights. Furthermore Media and Civil Society Organizations have been targeted, including the crucial group of university students. The project so far reached more than 30,000 individuals in awareness and training activities and worked actively to reach out to the broader community through events, publication of books, newsletters and more. (Ministry of International Co-operation and UNDP n.d.)

The mid-term evaluation of the project concluded that 'the initiative helped increase the awareness

of human rights within all law enforcement agencies which led to establishing special human rights offices at the Office of Public Prosecutor as well as in all Security Directorates in all governorates' (Ahmed 2009). The programme may have increased awareness of human rights among the security sector; the question is what did they do with it? An informant that was familiar with the programme as well as with the SSI officers who attended, pointed out that the training on human rights served to strengthen the SSI's effectiveness in surveying the work of human rights in two critical ways: first, it provided them with an easy way to familiarise themselves with human rights culture and organisations without much effort; and second, it empowered them to put this knowledge into practice by propping up their own human rights organisations, led by cooperating human rights activists. In some instances, the SSI approached particular human rights activists, offered to facilitate the process of registering an organisation and the necessary permissions for acquiring foreign funding. In other words, the SSI was able to strategically capitalise on an international programme intended to improve governance by instrumentalising it for its own ends, while giving the donor the semblance that it had succeeded in achieving its goals.

3.2 Universities

The SSI controlled the state universities through an elaborate system of plain clothes officers, coordination with the university guards, the control of its faculty and student leaderships and the securitisation of the space itself. University presidents and deans were handpicked by the SSI, who retained the right (informal of course) to veto candidates of whom they did not approve. SSI reports served as a clearance or a bloc to the appointment and promotion of faculty members in universities or their election for leadership positions within the university. Without prior permission of the SSI, no university professor employed in a state-owned university could participate in an overseas conference or invite a guest speaker from outside the university to take part in a seminar (*El Fagr* 2006). It was on the basis of SSI reports that students were given the clearance to nominate themselves for student union elections or found their names mysteriously removed from the list of candidates. If they objected, they could face incarceration or worse. Consequently, when the Supreme

Administrative Court ruled in favour of the removal of the university guards inside the university premises, Wael Al Ibrashy, a political analyst, saw little reason to celebrate, arguing that more repressive than the power of the university guards is that of the SSI whose reports determine the fate of university professors and students alike (El Ibrashy 2010). The above represents a case in point of the limitation of an approach that establishes the quality of governance exclusively on the basis of reforming formal institutions and the formal determinants of the rule of law. University guards had been removed, but the informal, backstage hegemonic hold of the SSI to regulate and govern the university campus continued unchecked.

3.3 Governing labour force discontent

From 2005 onwards, Egypt witnessed a sustained stream of public protests from labour and citizen groups (see Ali, this *IDS Bulletin*). It was the SSI who played the critical role in mediating negotiations over their demands, not the formal Ministries which technically had the only prerogative to engage in the bargaining process. For example, the workers of a textile industry in Alexandria ended a three-day strike over their financial fringe benefits and holidays only when they negotiated a settlement with representatives of the SSI and Ministry of Manpower, although the latter did not play the decisive role (Abou Shal 2007). Despite the fact that the SSI had no legal capacity to respond to their demands, such a role became a publicly known and recognised one. In one instance, the railway workers whose demands had been accepted, thanks to the intervention of the SSI, put a huge cloth placard, no less than five metres by two metres in front of the main railway station in Ramsis Square ‘thanking the SSI’ (Abd el Fatah 2009). In effect, the SSI had come to perform the role of mediating labour relations to such an extent that both private and public sector employers came to regularly call upon its services when facing labour discontent (*Workers’ Talk* 2005).

3.4 Civil society organisations

Technically, NGOs were supposed to be governed according to Law 84 of 2001, which empowers the Ministry of Social Affairs with overseeing (and intervening) in the affairs of NGOs. The law has come under extreme attack for its inhibitive nature in both governance and human

rights grey literature and scholarship (Tadros 2009). In practice, it was mainly the SSI, not the Ministry or the law that governed NGOs. Research undertaken with human rights, women’s rights, religious (Muslim, Islamist and Christian) and labour organisations all spoke of very similar manifestations of the SSI’s increasing visibility and expansion of power in governance. A pattern emerged, which can be summarised as follows (Tadros 2011):

- Every NGO activist/leader was now in contact with a particular SSI officer, with whom they liaised in the day-to-day management of its affairs through direct contact on their cell numbers. With the greater visibility of the SSI from mid-2000 onwards, NGOs also spoke of a closer working relationship with the SSI officers. Whereas before, the SSI was the hidden agency whose presence was irregularly felt (but not seen or heard), it became a case of the SSI officer being in regular contact with the NGO through visits and phone calls, sometimes on a weekly basis.
- Processes that were previously hidden became visible and institutionalised. For example, if an organisation wished to organise an event in a hotel or any other public place, the hotel would covertly call the SSI to be given the go-ahead. In the last five or six years of the Mubarak regime, the hotel would blatantly ask the civil society representative: did you get the permission of the SSI? Whether the event was on the discussion of Egypt’s constitution or the incorporation of sex education in high school curriculums, it became standard practice for the civil society organisation to follow the unwritten rule of calling the SSI directly for permission to hold the event.
- All NGOs pointed to the SSI substitution for the Ministry of Social Solidarity in governing and managing their affairs. The SSI became responsible for providing the services that would have conventionally been the domain of the Ministry, such as approving registrations of NGOs, their requests for funding, as well as being the agency empowered to give instructions for their closures. For example, according to the NGO law, if the organisation did not receive a reply to its application within 60 days, it could consider itself registered. In reality, the decision was primarily in the hands of the state security apparatus, which may ignore the 60-day limit altogether, as it

conducted a security check on each individual member of the founding board and assembly (El Borai 2003: 516). In the end, the security forces might arrive at a decision to reject the registration of the NGO after the 60-day period expired, subjecting the Ministry of Social Solidarity to the embarrassing position of having a lawsuit waged against it without it being the responsible party for the decision (El Borai 2003: 513).¹

Despite the SSI's thorough and comprehensive system of surveillance, service provision and suppression of dissent, dissidents still found innovative ways to circumvent SSI powers through engaging in unruly – or unconventional ways – of doing politics. For example, when the security apparatus threatened to incarcerate anyone who responded to the call for a general protest on 6 April 2008, the organisers called upon all citizens 'to stay at home' as a way of protesting instead. In effect, hundreds of private and public employees stayed at home that day. Moreover, despite the intelligence information that the SSI systematically collected, the fact that it deemed political activism via Facebook as too inconsequential for regime stability proved a bad judgement, in retrospect (see Ezbawy, this *IDS Bulletin*).

Yet, even after the ousting of President Mubarak and the dismantlement of the apparatus in March 2011, the modes of operation that they have instituted continue to dominate governance relationships. For example, two months after the dismantlement of the SSI, one NGO activist recounted that when she approached the civil servant in the Ministry of Social Solidarity requesting permission to accept a foreign grant she had received for her organisation, the latter informed her that she was unable to process her application because in the absence of the SSI, she would not know who to send it to. The activist informed her that given the illegality of the SSI's role in overseeing NGOs' applications in the first place, she should follow the law (which stipulates that if the NGO does not receive a response within 60 days of applying for a grant, it should consider the application for receiving foreign funding accepted); however, the ministry employee was entirely unconvinced and refused to accept the application. In the end, SCAF decided to take matters into their own hands, and enforced a new regulation: any

application for foreign funding would have to be approved by them.

Similarly, in the Truth and Investigations Committee that was established to inquire into an incident when a church under construction was torched by a mob in Al Marinab, a village in Aswan, Upper Egypt, in September 2011, the committee met with a local official, Abd el Fattah Zaghlool and asked him: did the church have a legal licence? And Zaghlool answered 'the licence was one hundred per cent authentic *but it was granted without obtaining prior permission from the State Security Investigations*' (*Al Youm al Sab'i* 2011). The fact that seven months after the dismantlement of the SSI civil servants are still acting as if it existed, is highly significant.

4 Implications for the governance paradigm

The above depiction of the role of the SSI flags the limitations of existing governance analytical frameworks that focus on the institutions that are formally mandated to govern. Clearly the actors and relationships that influence processes and outcomes are neither captured in such a framework, nor accounted for. Four key implications for rethinking the governance paradigm are put forward:

- An institutional reform approach offers limited scope for altering the power configurations in contexts such as the ones described above where government institutions can be reformed but the possibility that power relations may be altered are minimal.
- Ignoring backstage governance makes it possible for highly predatory forces such as the SSI to capture the initiatives made for improving governance while giving the semblance of progress towards good governance (such as the example of the UNDP initiative).
- Power analysis seems critical to analysing governance. Essentially, it means that examining visible, invisible and hidden forms of power can complement political economy analysis to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the relationships and processes, both formal and informal, on the ground.
- The impact of the SSI on governance is not one that desists once it is removed from power, partly because while there has been a removal of an authoritarian leader, the military regime continues to rule. However, it is also about the pervasive and insidious nature of these

relations and consequently, the challenges to 'undo' or deconstruct this culture.

The implications of the above for the governance paradigm is that a return to a strictly institutional approach that relies on either the reform of the ministries officially mandated with governance or the reform of the security sector (as part of the security agenda) will be inadequate. Since the ouster of Mubarak, the SSI has assumed a new name, however there are concerns that it adopts informal roles in governance under different pretexts. The promotion of a governance agenda in a post-SSI setting still requires that we broaden its parameters conceptually and programmatically by examining how the deeply embedded understandings of governance inform daily practice – even when they are coming from actors who are not supposed to assume such roles.

5 Conclusion

This article has argued that while the good governance paradigm has conventionally focused on the reform of a government's institutions assumed to be exclusively responsible for governing, and has assessed the quality of governance in terms of mostly formal relations and dynamics, this approach is limited conceptually and policy wise in its ability to capture the actors and processes that represent another layer of governance, one does not necessarily have the legal mandate to do so, is less institutional and sometimes less visible. The SSI's role in governance has enabled Mubarak's regime to give semblance to Western powers that there is a commitment to good governance and democratisation, while circumventing the possibility that such political openings will represent a genuine threat to the *status quo*. This article has argued that the SSI played a critical role in governance through its exercise of power over public authority, even if it was not legally or officially empowered to do so. The SSI substituted for a bloated and inefficient bureaucracy and in the process, came to weaken it. Often civil servants automatically referred

their work to the SSI rather than assume any responsibility for it, sometimes out of ease, sometimes crippled by fear that they may be inadvertently sidestepping the security. This substitution of the SSI by various ministries became a public secret; for example NGOs circumvented the formal channels of engaging with Ministry of Social Solidarity employees and addressed the SSI directly, thereby saving them time and red tape. Yet the SSI never engaged in a completely visible way; it continued to engage through invisible and hidden strategies. Under all circumstances, since it was bestowed with the right to engage secretly and since technically it was not supposed to be governing the country, citizens were neither empowered to demand its transparency nor accountability. The SSI's exercise of public authority had capacity but lacked legitimacy and consequently attempts from different quarters to circumvent, subvert and resist its authority never ceased, even when it had become deeply embedded in civil society.

The governance role for the SSI was not hidden from international policymakers and donors. They themselves commented on the heavy-handedness of undue intervention when they were allocated funding, and who they were and were not allowed to engage with – and the parameters of their space. Why did the SSI interference in governance not become one of the issues featuring in research reports and public policy recommendations? The fact that security interests supersede international development policies may have much to do with it. The SSI was the main organ empowered by the regime to counter terrorism, and its officers often received training in the very countries which poured in millions for good governance promotion. Hence, what is argued here is that the limitation lies not only in the good governance paradigm, its frameworks of analysis and approaches to reform, but also in the conflict of supporting politically oriented good governance that may clash with wider and more important geostrategic priorities.

Notes

- * The author is very grateful to Diana Conyers for her helpful feedback on an earlier draft of this paper.
- 1 For example, the Foundation for the Awlad al Ard for Human Rights presented an application for registration as an NGO to the Ministry of Social Solidarity on 12 March 2003. After the 60 days had expired, on 10 June 2003, they received a letter from the Ministry of Social Solidarity confirming the state security investigation authority rejection of the registration of the NGO. The NGO founders took the Ministry to court and won, obliging it to accept its registration. In a similar incident, the New Woman Foundation applied for

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- registration on 6 April 2003 and again, after the expiry of the 60-day period, they received a letter from the Ministry of Social Affairs on 8 June claiming that security objected to their registration. Again, the administrative court overruled this decision, recognising the right of the organisation to be established. The same applies to the foundation for the Egyptian Center for the Right to Housing, which sought registration with the Ministry of Social Solidarity on 14 May 2003. After the expiration of the 60 days, on 3 September, it received a letter stating the security's rejection of its registration, again a decision which was overruled by the administrative court (El Borai 2003: 518).
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