

Egypt in the 21st Century

Egypt: key ally in the middle east

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Carrollton/Carroll County League of Women Voters
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(Rotary Room)
7-9 PM
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About this talk

- Part 1:
 - Brief history of modern Egypt
 - Political & economical realities in Egypt
 - US-Egypt relationship & the region
 - The future of Egypt & what it may mean for US
- Part 2:
 - Q& A
 - Discussion

Egypt: a brief history!

- *“As Egypt goes, so go the Arabs”*
- Intellectual & cultural center of Arab world
- Birth place of modern Arab nationalism
- Largest Arab population (80+ million)
- Largest army in Arab world
- Second largest economy in Arab world
- Advantageous geographical location (Suez Canal, Nile, Mediterranean, etc.)
- Educational, political, cultural, etc. influence over the Arab world

Egypt: a brief history!

- 1952 dissatisfied Army Officers overthrew King Farouk (British Installed & supported)
- Gamal Abdel Nasser (President 1956-1970)
 - Charismatic leader
 - Champion of Arab nationalism & Arab Socialism
 - Suppressed all political oppositions (including the Muslim Brotherhood)
 - Kept a tight control on the economy and political life (nationalized most private businesses)
 - 1967 war with Israel
 - Economy went from bad to worse under Nasser
 - Now, Nasser is a cult figure through the Arab world & Africa

Egypt: a brief history!

- Anwar Al Sadat (1970-1981)
 - Lived in the shadows of Nasser
 - 1973 war with Israel
 - Peace agreement with Israel
 - Improved the economy slightly (“the opening”- open Egypt to private and international investments)
 - Lessen the strong hold on political life
 - Tolerated some political oppositions (such as Muslim Brotherhood)
 - Considered a friend of the US & the west.
 - Assassinated by a fringe group of the Muslim Brotherhood
 - One of the members who was jailed for the plot was Ayman Al Zawahiri (later to become the right-arm man of Bin Laden)

Egypt: a brief history!

- Hosni Mubarak (1981- Present)
 - Put a strong hold & control over political oppositions & the press
 - Supported the gulf war, but, opposed the Iraq war
 - Refrained from making major economic changes at the beginning
 - Worsening economic situation & failings of government functions & services has led to extreme poverty & dissatisfaction
 - Publically, Mubarak is critical of Israel and US policy in the region
 - Resistance to reform (especially political reform)- Egypt has been under emergency rule since 1981

Egypt: today

- Economic Life
 - Movement toward privatizations
 - High unemployment & lack of suitable jobs for workers made redundant due to privatization
 - Deterioration of state institutions & public services (e.g. education, health care, transportation, environment, etc.)
 - Declining Standards of living for the average citizen & extreme poverty
 - Egyptians remain uncertain about their future
 - *There is some hope, but, the window is closing...*

Egypt: today

- Political Life
 - Severely restricted
 - Voter Fraud & unfair regulations
 - Labor unions controlled & manipulated
 - Restriction on the press
 - Violations of human rights
 - *There is some hope as small and independent newspapers emerge, internet, satellite access to international TV/press, etc.*

Political Alternatives

- There can be no meaningful economic progress without political reform & independent judiciary
- The secular opposition
 - Government suppresses political oppositions & stifles political discourse
 - Emergence of Kifaya (“enough”) a popular political party
- The Judiciary
 - Has long & proud history
 - Played important roles in advocating limiting the power of the President & in monitoring elections
 - Has been limited by the government in its reach and scope (under attack by Mubarak government)

Political Alternatives

- Muslim Brotherhood (MB) 1.0
 - Founded in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna (Sayidd Qutb was the intellectual leader)
 - Carried attacks against the government & British interests
 - Aided Nasser (then fell out of favor with him very quickly as a result of a failed assassination)
 - Nasser jailed & killed many of its leaders and followers
 - Sadat tried to befriend the MB
 - Mubarak has outlawed the MB (later put severe constraints on the MB political activities)

Muslim Brotherhood 2.0

- The MB emerges with a conciliatory tune to:
 - Coptic Christians
 - Secular Egyptians
 - Advocating democracy & political engagement
- In contradiction to other declarations
 - Limiting rights of women and Copts
 - Hardline on social & economic issues
- Government crack down & ban
- The MB has popular support throughout Egypt

US & Egypt

- Egypt on Iraq
 - Opposes the war
 - Believes the war created more active radical movements in the region
- Egypt on Iran
 - Sees Iran as a real threat with a desire to expand
 - Wants to limit Iran's influence in the region
- Egypt on Israel
 - Supports an independent & viable Palestine state
 - Does not see the US as an honest broker in the conflict
 - Sees the conflict as a source of instability in the region

The Future is Uncertain

- After Mubarak
 - Who will be next? (Gamal Mubarak or Omar Suleiman or the army???)
 - Free speech & free press?
 - Economy- would reforms continue?
 - Politics- future of democracy in Egypt?
 - US- hands-off policy?
 - What would become of Egypt-US-Israel relationship?
 - Will the MB become even more popular?

Discussion

- How important to have Egypt as an ally in the middle east & to the success of the US policy in the region?
- How do you view the relationship between US-Egypt, & US-and other countries in the region?
- What should be on the priority list of the US when it comes to Egypt;
 - Democracy?
 - Human rights?
 - Economic reform?

Discussion

- Should the US support lifting of restrictions on opposition groups in Egypt?
- Should the US engage directly with opposition groups in Egypt (which may include the MB)?
- How should the US deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict in the light of the importance of Egypt to the US?
- How could the US address the raise of radical Islamic groups & terrorism?

Information

- The slides are found here:
 - <http://www.westga.edu/~adel/leagueofwomenvoters/>
- Contact information:
 - <http://www.cs.westga.edu/People/AdelAbunawass>