

EGYPT'S POLICIES OF PRE AND POST- ARAB SPRING

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ABSTRACT

This article, in its few pages, highlights the main Egypt's politics by illustrating different successive governments especially in the recent political history. Great Britain's protectorate was set in 1882, and since then Egypt was under Great Britain; and in 1922, Egypt saw traditional monarchy. Free Officers Movement led by Muhammad Naguib and Gamal Abdel Nasser carried out a military coup in 1952 and they ousted King Farouk. The paper emphasizes how Egypt endured dictatorship since 1950s until the Arab Spring which toppled Muhammad Hosni Mubarak in February 2011. It also shows how political or economic interest can play a great role in keeping dictatorship in place by well known democratic country. The researcher highlights an example of the role played by the United States in the Middle East and keeps Egypt under different dictators because of the strong ties between two nations.

Keywords: Arab Spring, Egypt, Policy, U.S. Foreign Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

Egypt, a country in North Africa, its location links Africa with the Middle East. It is a country with millennia-old monuments, including Giza colossal Pyramids, Great Sphinx and many of kings tombs. Cairo, its capital, hosts various ancient monuments such as Muhammad Ali, Al-Az'har mosques and the Egyptian Museum. Egypt is known to have exercised political process since ancient times; in 1866 it had representative parliamentary as in 2016, Egypt celebrated 150 anniversary of parliamentary life in the country. In 1882, Egypt was under Great Britain's protectorate; and in 1922, Egypt saw traditional monarchy. In 1952, the so called Free Officers Movement carried out a military coup led by Muhammad Naguib and Gamal Abdel Nasser. Egypt was under dictatorship since both presidents, Muhammad Naguib [Egyptian Revolutionary leader 1952; and head of state 1953-1954] and Gamal Abdel Nasser [1954-1970] until the Arab Spring which toppled Muhammad Hosni Mubarak in February 2011.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

This paper highlights different policies that had been adopted and implemented by Egyptian leaders, even though the paper shows some policies during former presidents such as Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak, the main focus has been put in the post- Arab Spring, meaning

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President Mohammed Morsi of Muslim Brotherhood and the incumbent President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi.

3. METHOD

I employed a case study and comparative approaches to understand how Egypt under different leaders has been politically governed, and how these leaders used various policies to suppress freedoms: political rights, civil liberties and human rights abuse [discrimination of minorities and women], and how Egypt owned and dealt with Israeli-Arab conflict. With few examples of how the United States' foreign policy played, and still play its role in Egypt.

2.2 Egypt is a case study, as being said in the above paragraphs, the study focuses on the Egyptian policies of the post-Arab Spring.

Policy's definitions and concepts

Public policy (sometimes also **policy studies or policy science**) is defined as a discipline which elaborates and applies the interpretative frameworks of sociology, economics, political sciences, law, management theory, and other disciplines in analyzing and foresighting the processes of formation and assertion of public interests with respect to solving differentiated social problems. It primarily deals with the institutional mediation of those processes by the public sector, the civic sector and, to some extent, also the commercial sector, in a form that is useful for political practice, Potůček, M. and Rudolfová, V. (2017, p. 21).

Policy analysis is “an applied social science discipline which uses multiple methods of inquiry and argument to produce and transform policy-relevant information...” (Dunn 1981:35) “..., because policy-relevant information has the potential to improve policy making” (Dunn 2012: 53). Anderson (1975) defines public policy as “a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern”—a public interest. Sartori (1987) argues that a defining characteristic of public policy as social practice lies in collectivized decision making, whereby decision makers are simultaneously the makers and implementers of public policy. Such decisions are taken on behalf of communities (aggregates of individuals comprised of different types of organizations), no matter if by one, several or multiple individuals. Whoever decides does so for all. Thus, public policies are determined by the content and extent of the given decision and collective action.

Jenkins (1978) understands public policy as a “set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them” in a given situation and under given constraints.

Egypt under President Anwar Sadat (1970-1981)

President Anwar Sadat rose to power after Gamal Abdel Nasser's death in 1970; he was so close to President Gamal A. Nasser to the extent that he did not change as much as the country's political position that initiated by his predecessor(s), except the foreign policy regarding the Egyptian-Israeli Relations in the end of 1970s. Under presidential system, the constitution allowed Anwar Sadat to run for president for unlimited 6-year terms. His political era witnessed

an authoritarian regime; however, there was a greater tolerance of political pluralism with opposition parties, interest groups, and limited press freedom.

President Sadat, in the modern Egyptian politics, and in changing his foreign policy towards Israel, he is remembered as a peace-maker, as he left a peace record in the United States, Egypt and Israel's archives by his speech to Israeli lawmakers when he declared to the whole world that 'we [Egyptians] accept to live with you in a permanent peace based on justice.' Months later, on March 16th, 1979, Sadat and then-Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin shook hands on the White House lawn after signing a formal treaty brokered by former US president Jimmy Carter².

To understand how this was crucial political position to undertake, the former top Israeli envoy to Cairo, described the Sadat's move as if "the Messiah was coming" acknowledging the risk that Sadat was taking as later on he faced a lot of antagonism within Egypt and in the Arab world; and ultimately he was assassinated by Islamic extremists in 1981. There were two ministers who resigned and Muslim Brotherhood was against the move. The Sadat peace legacy is of paramount importance, although it is considered a "persistent cold peace". Despite the absence of meaningful co-existence between Jewish state and the Arab world, it does appear currently to be a renewed thawing in ties driven by a confluence of interests as they share desire to curb Shi'ite Iran expansionism.

Egypt under President Muhammad Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011)

Israeli-Egyptian relations were not bad during Mubarak era, as President Hosni Mubarak continued to apply the same policies of his predecessor President Sadat. This was to implement US-Foreign policy towards Israel in the Middle East, specifically that relates to Egyptian-Israeli Camp David accords of September 1978. After Sadat's death, the peace process continued under President Mubarak. In 1982 Israel fulfilled the peace treaty by returning the last segment of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt.

The Mubarak regime had already capitalized on the management and clientelist redistribution of foreign aid since the 1990s. Even before that period, Egypt relied heavily on foreign aid especially the military aid of 1.3. Billion that it receives from United States as results of the Camp David agreement.

When the Arab Spring erupted in Tunisia in the late 2010, it did not spare the Arab Republic of Egypt, even though Tunisia is not its direct neighbor. Egypt saw this protest's contagion, and President Mubarak faced internal mass demonstration since then. This was a big problem to the U.S administration, as Pres. Mubarak was considered as the key ally in the Middle East region. President Barack Obama administration hesitated since the protests started in Egypt to clearly criticize Mubarak's regime; rather the U.S. administration wanted Mubarak government to still resolve the situation by implementing reforms. As events continued to unfold in Egypt, the United States expressed concern for Egypt's people and their demand for social justice, human rights, political voice, and economic well-being and safety. This official discourse contradicted

Charles Bybelezer, Media line: <https://www.ipost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/sadats-visit-the-peace-process-and-the-future-of-israeli-arab-relations-5>²

the reality of the actions taken while the United States was ostensibly supporting Mubarak and then Morsi (Victoria E. and Dawn L., 2014). This U.S foreign policy towards Egypt continued to apply until Mubarak stepped down in February 2011.

Egypt under President Muhammad Morsi of Muslim Brotherhood (2012-2013)

5.1 Morsi and Muslim Brotherhood political position

Mohamed Morsi was a member of Muslim Brotherhood, a Radical Islamist organization founded in 1928 during a period of unrest and anger against colonialism. In 2012, Morsi won the first, fair, transparent and non corrupt election in the Egyptian electoral history.

According to Marc Lynch (2016:1) Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood had the most spectacular rise and fall. I did as it ascended on power in 2012, after successful Egyptian mass demonstration following the Arab Spring from Tunisia which started end 2010.

In November, 2012, Morsi issued a Presidential decree to temporarily give himself powers beyond the reach of any court or judge, in order to make sure that an Islamist-dominated committee could complete a new constitution.

When peaceful protesters gathered around the Presidential palace, a number of Brothers and their supporters attacked the crowd violently, in what turned out to be the final straw for many Egyptians. Morsi hung on for another six months, but, at the end of his first year in office, millions of Egyptians gathered to protest his rule, and a coup seemed inevitable. On July 3, 2013, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who had been appointed minister of defense by Morsi himself, led the military takeover.

However, despite the unquestionable influence of the Muslim Brotherhood, foreign policy under Morsi was not so much Islamist beyond some symbolic gestures. In reality, there were few substantial changes with respect to the Mubarak period due, fundamentally, to economic factors. Just as under Mubarak during his final years, the ministry of foreign affairs did not occupy a central position in the decision-making process and Morsi was front and centre in the attempt to promote Egypt as a regional leader on the international stage.

The military intelligence services continued to play a key role in dialogue with Israel, while Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood leaders talked with Hamas. This division of labor made it possible to reinforce the country's international image and calm the fears of the American and Israeli administrations. In this respect, the role played by Morsi in negotiating the Gaza crisis in November 2012 – when he sent his prime minister, Hisham Qandil, to Gaza in a historical gesture – was decisive. Additionally, because Morsi could show that cooperation with Israel regarding security had not sustained any damage, the impact of critics in his own party, the Muslim Brotherhood and public opinion was limited. Despite his verbal boycott of Israel –Morsi did not mention the country in any of his speeches – and the withdrawal of the Egyptian ambassador from Tel Aviv, Morsi did allow the tunnels connecting Rafah with Gaza to be demolished and they remained closed. In October 2012 Morsi rejected a proposal from Hamas to create a free trade zone between Egypt and Gaza, fearing that free circulation between the two sides would intensify insecurity in the Sinai (Azaola, B. 2018, 10-11).

Once Morsi became president, the US discourse on Egypt continued to support the economic and political transition, despite initial concern before his election that the change in leadership may result "in anti-Western³ or anti-Israel policies".

Financial support after Mubarak's fall from power

During the first 18 months after the fall of Mubarak, during which the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) took control of the country – a period that also witnessed an asymmetrical cohabitation between the army and the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt received a total of 2300 million dollars from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait. This financial and political support from the Gulf monarchies was nothing new. In fact, financial assistance from these countries – particularly Saudi Arabia – to preserve Egypt's economic stability in exchange for containing Islamist forces and maintaining stability in the region had steady during previous decades, even under the regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser despite the latter's ideological differences with the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies. Considering that Egypt is a middle-income country, official financial assistance from these states has been traditionally offered in the form of loans. The only real novelty concerned the case of Qatar, which only became a leading economic player in the Egyptian market after Mubarak's ouster and the Muslim Brotherhood's arrival to power in 2012 (Aziola, B., 3-4).

The initial promise from the Arab Gulf countries of 10 billion dollars was welcome, according to the first provisional government appointed by the army and presided over by Essam Sharaf, as a regional alternative with fewer conditions than the 3 billion dollar loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that was refused in June 2011. This rejection was seen as a symbolic rupture with the unpopular economic policies of the earlier period (Hernando de Larramendi and Fernández-Molina 2016, 247).

The fall of Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood

The failures of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt have often been taken as emblematic of a wider pathology in Islamist politics. But the Brothers' dysfunction and dishonesty, and the incompetence of their President, turned public opinion against them.

Despite the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood was the largest social movement in Egypt with the highest number of professionals (doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, etc.), it failed to govern Egypt effectively. While it is difficult to judge the Brotherhood's performance in power because of its short tenure, it is safe to say that the movement's cadres and leaders lacked the basic governance skills and tactics that would have enabled them to deal with Egypt's daunting social and economic (Khalil al Anan, 2015 , 539).

Egypt under President Abdel Fatah el-Sisi

³ Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event." Office of the Press Secretary, November 30, 2011. At

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/>.

6.1 Legitimization of Military coup

Military officials who ousted Morsi attempted to legitimize their actions as hundreds of thousands of Egyptians took to the streets in July 2013. They stated that the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated president "did not achieve the goals of the people" and "failed to meet the generals' demands that he share power with his opposition" (El-Sisi 2013). Military violence also increased. Morsi's supporters and the Muslim Brotherhood members who opposed the new military-appointed interim leadership were met with violence. Initially, there were 51 dead and over 400 more injured. The army denied responsibility, but evidence and witness statements suggest the contrary (Kingsley 2013).

The elections after a military coup of 2013, post-Morsi era

In May 2014, President Abdel Fatah al-Asisi won elections. Basis of his legitimacy was: love the military, and fear Islamic extremists. Since he came to power, he faced political challengers especially from the Muslim Brotherhood ranks and reacted harshly by authorizing military and security forces to carry out inhuman actions against population.

Mr. el-Sisi was re-elected president in 2018 following a flawed vote in which he faced no serious opposition. Two al-Sisi's presidential elections results were over 90 per cent; a sign known within authoritarian regimes in the world.

U.S Foreign Policy

Following Morsi's ouster, US policy in the region remained unchanged, highlighting the US interest in protecting Israel. By declining to call it a coup (and considering it instead as a response to the demands of the Egyptian people), the White House skirted a US law forbidding the provision aid to countries in which an elected official has been removed in a coup Victoria E. and Dawn L. (2014, 18).

The United states relations with Egypt, as I said earlier did not also undergo deep change because of new government. We have seen how the U.S. foreign policy stood firmly in the successive Egyptian regimes from Sadat until the recent political change in Egypt under Abdel Fatah al-Sisi. Political Interests of the United States needs a dependent ally in Egypt, and US military aid is a tool that ensures compliance. Friendly dictators are preferred over a democratically elected but unfriendly regime, regardless of the stated support for democracy and human rights found in formal and public discourse, Victoria and Dawn (2014, 16).

State of Emergency, Women and media status, and discrimination of minorities

President Morsi has declared state of emergency in April 2017. His government adopted a law in May 2017 that threatens criminal prosecution for non-governmental organizations that fail to comply with government control⁴. And human rights organizations have drawn alarm for human rights abuse in the country.

Egyptian women and minorities [especially, Coptic Christians, Shiite Muslims, and others] in the Arab Republic of Egypt face indirect forms of discrimination that limit their political

participation to varying degrees⁵, despite the constitutional protection that grants political rights [to all citizens regardless of religion, gender, race, ethnicity, or other distinction]; this guarantee, of course remains in theory. Journalists face arrest & increased government efforts to censor online media. Some scholars have noted that no country can declare a faith denomination as a state’s official religion and pretends to treat its citizens with equality.

In Egypt where society is segregated by class barriers, 45-55% poverty, and economic inequalities – putting the country in the top 25 most economically unequal countries in the world, according to the World Bank, even women’s rights can be a privilege that only money can afford. As male superiority became enshrined in Egyptian law, women’s role in society began to shrink. In Upper Egypt, girls are denied education, inheritance, employment, and are subject to barbaric bodily integrity violations such as female genital mutilation and marital rape, with no legal recourse. Over time, female subjugation became accepted by Egyptian women; most of them acquiesced to concede their basic freedoms for the sake of social conformity which necessitates piousness and modesty⁶.

Freedoms: political rights and civil liberties, and Economic Freedoms in Egypt

Figure 1: Political rights and civil liberties

Name of the country	Score(s)	Observation
Egypt	21%	
Not Free		
Political rights	7/40	
Civil Liberties	14/60	

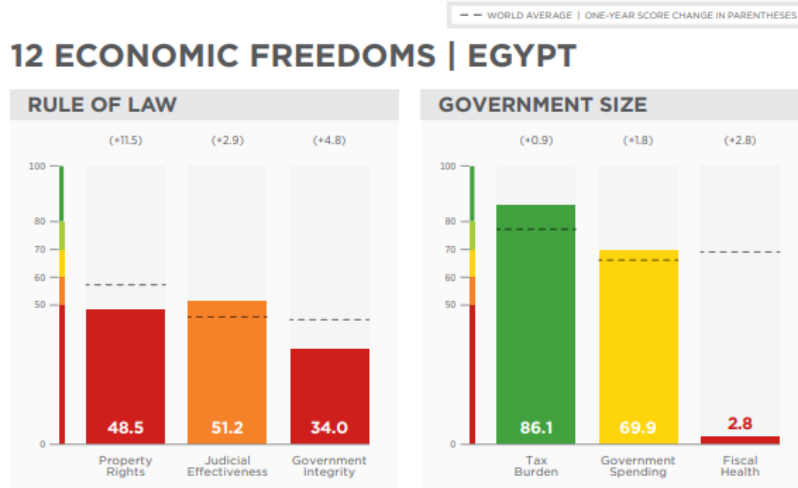
Source: Freedom House: Freedom in the World, 2020

Last year Freedom status: 22% Not Free

Freedom House 2018⁵

<https://www.cairoscene.com/In-Depth/Why-Women-s-Rights-in-Egypt-Are-a-Class-Issue>⁶

Figure 2: Economic Freedoms



Source: 2020 Index of Economic Freedom⁷

Under al-Sisi, the crackdown on Islamists and other political opponents has been far more severe than anything that had happened during the days of Mubarak. On August 14, 2013, security forces in Cairo massacred as many as a thousand Morsi supporters, the vast majority of whom were unarmed. The country now has tens of thousands of political prisoners, and Morsi [who died last year] and other prominent Islamists have been marched regularly into courtrooms, where they've been tried on trumped-up charges.

In the end, the Brotherhood has already suffered its worst possible punishment. Most Egyptians, even those who voted for Morsi, seem to have concluded that the organization had its chance at power and failed. The Brotherhood's long history means that it will survive in some way, but if it ever reemerges with legal status in Egypt, it will probably take the form of a religious and social group, rather than a political force.

The Egyptian legal system provides protection for real and personal property, but complicated real estate laws make it difficult to establish and trace property titles, causing enforcement to be delayed. The judiciary has a proud history of independence, but the system's slowness and dependence on paper processes hurt its overall competence and reliability. Corruption remains pervasive at all levels of government.

The top individual income tax rate is 25 percent, and the top corporate tax rate is 23 percent. Other taxes include property and general sales taxes. The overall tax burden equals 15.2 percent of total domestic income. Government spending has amounted to 31.7 percent of the country's output (GDP) over the past three years, and budget deficits have averaged 10.8 percent of GDP. Public debt is equivalent to 92.6 percent of GDP.

Rare protests against new leader

<https://www.heritage.org/index/country/egypt?version=175>⁷

Anti-government protests against President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt erupted late Friday night on September 20th, 2019, calling for his removal as he traveled for the United Nations General Assembly meeting the following week. Mr. el-Sisi, who came to power in a 2013 military takeover, has cemented his hold through harsh repression that has silenced critics, curtailed free speech and ended any semblance of democratic politics; even the mildest dissent has been met with harsh punishments and long prison sentences (Declan Walsh, 2019)⁸.

Egypt and Iran used a heavy security presence to snuff out protests in September and November, respectively, but politics in both countries remain unsteady⁹.

Egypt’s coronavirus infections and deaths:

Despite more than a dozen tourists and crew catching the virus on a Nile cruise ship, Egypt has defiantly stated that it has fewer than 200 cases and revoked the press credentials of a journalist who reported a Canadian’s estimate of 19,000. Whatever number is correct now, Egypt is a country of 100 million with a poor public health record. Approximately 10 percent of Egypt’s population carries hepatitis C because of bad hygiene in a decades-long injection campaign to protect Egyptians from bilharzia.

Egypt’s status as of July 19th, 2020¹⁰ Johns Hopkins –Coronavirus Resource Center

Confirmed infections	Recovered	Deaths	Active
87,172	-	4251	-

4. CONCLUSION

In concluding this piece of political processes during past and present Egyptian governments policies, it is of paramount importance to note that the paper talked about the Egyptian successive regimes especially from president Anwar Sadat [*who engineered peace processes’ meetings with Israel which is considered by most of the Arab and Middle Eastern countries as the primary enemy in the region; and because of that, he was killed by Muslim extremists in 1981*] to the current regime of president Abdel Fatah al-Sisi whose regime is regarded as a brutal because of its crackdown of oppositions and abuse of human rights and banning the freedoms: political rights, civil liberties, and press, etc. The propagated patriarchy and phallocentrism in Egyptian society caused gender equality to be a privilege rather than being right that women have to enjoy as their brothers ‘men’.

This paper has shown how Egypt depends on the foreign financial aid from international financial institutions [IMF/World Bank] and Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, and Oman; and during president Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood, Qatar offered financial aid which was not accustomed before and during previous regime. It was

⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/20/world/middleeast/anti-government-protests-egypt.html>

<https://thehill.com/opinion/international/488843-add-coronavirus-to-other-crises-and-the-middle-east-faces-a-catastrophe>⁹
<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>¹⁰

also highlighted the importance of the United States' foreign policy in the region which was kept steady in 4 decades since Camp David Accords.

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