



Eye On Egypt

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE 1
“STRATEGIC POSTURE REVIEW: EGYPT”
 World Politics Review

“EGYPT SHOULD LEARN FROM JORDAN AT THE POLLS”
 The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

PAGE 2
“WHILE BUCKING ISLAMISTS, EGYPT STEERS TOWARD INTOLERANCE”
 The Star

THE WASHINGTON POST: PUBLIC DEBATE ON DEMOCRATIC REFORM IN EGYPT
 The Washington Post

PAGE 3
“POLICY CHANGE IN EGYPT: A ROLE FOR THE UNITED STATES?”
 The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

“PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN EGYPT AND NEXT YEAR’S PRESIDENTIAL VOTE”
 The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

“SILENT ON EGYPT”
 The Washington Post

PAGE 4
“EGYPT WEEK IN WASHINGTON?”
 Council on Foreign Relations Blogs

“HEPATITIS C INFECTION REACHES ALARMING FIGURES”
 The Los Angeles Times

“EGYPT JUMPS 5 PLACES IN DOING BUSINESS RANKINGS”
 Zawya

“WILL INDEPENDENTS CHALLENGE HOSNI MUBARAK’S PARTY STALWARTS AGAIN?”
 The Los Angeles Times

PAGE 5
“THE MIDTERM ELECTIONS AND MIDEAST FOREIGN POLICY”
 Council on Foreign Relations Blogs

“OBAMA NSC MEETS WITH EGYPT DEMOCRACY ADVOCATES”
 Politico

“SURVEY SAYS 51% OF EGYPT ORGANIZATIONS LOOKING TO HIRE”
 Zawya

“THE ELUSIVE MYTH OF DEMOCRATIC EGYPTIAN ELECTIONS”
 The Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution

PAGE 6
“WHAT’S SO SCARY ABOUT EGYPT’S ISLAMISTS?”
 Time Magazine

This Digest...

is a monthly publication of Egypt’s International Economic Forum, offering a review of international analyses and opinions covering Egypt’s economy, society and polity. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Forum.

“Strategic Posture Review: Egypt”

World Politics Review
 November 2010

Author: Steven Cook is a Hasib J. Sabbagh Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations

Cook analyzes the history of Egypt’s foreign policy, defense policy, and strategic priorities from former President Gamal Abdel Nasser through current President Hosni Mubarak. Cook identifies stability as the primary impetus for Egyptian defense policy, and the three main objectives of the Egyptian military can be seen in this light. Egypt’s first concern is to promote the capabilities and cooperation of the military with western and American allies. A second priority centers on attack-readiness on the Eastern front, a reflection of anticipated security concerns about Israel. Lastly, and perhaps most crucial, Egyptian defense policy places a great deal of importance on Sudan due to its geographic ability to divert or dam the source of the Nile, thereby cutting off Egypt’s water supply.

While some in Egypt flirted with the notion of strengthening political and economic ties with China--particularly as U.S. power seemed to be waning during the Bush administration--the Egyptian government held steadfast in its commitment to its U.S. partners. With Egyptian presidential succession on the

horizon, Cook argues that a change in leadership--be it to Gamal Mubarak, NDP leaders, or military officers--is unlikely to alter Egypt’s strategic posture. Cook does, however, anticipate slight changes in U.S.-Egypt and Egypt-Israel relations and expects Egypt to assume a more active role with respect to the Israel-Palestine conflict, counterterrorism, and Sudan. Regardless, he argues that the new president will still face the same foreign policy challenges, and without a formidable alliance alternative to the U.S., Cook argues that Egypt’s policy and strategic priorities will likely remain in line with those pursued over the past 30 years.

[Read on](#)

“Egypt Should Learn From Jordan At The Polls”

The Washington Institute for Near East Policy
 November 24, 2010

Author: David Schenker is the Aufzien fellow and director of the Program on Arab Politics at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy

The article encourages Egypt to follow the example of Jordan, which welcomed international monitors of their parliamentary elections on November 9. Schenker, who actually participated as a monitor in Jordan, argues for the benefits of transparent elections, in terms of

international praise as well as domestic legitimacy and effectiveness. He implies that transparency in Egypt's November 28 parliamentary elections could assuage international criticism of the Mubarak regime, and the prospect of hereditary succession. It would also serve to stymie growing discontent and potential extremism, as evidenced by the escalation of protests and demonstrations in recent months.

[Read on](#)

“While Bucking Islamists, Egypt Steers Toward Intolerance”

The Star
November 21, 2010

Author: Haroon Siddiqui is a newspaper journalist, columnist, and former editor

In his editorial, Siddiqui discusses the heightened visibility of Islam in Egypt, as seen in greater numbers of the population wearing the niqab and in “myriad signs of Muslim intolerance, dressed up in Islamic terms.” He notes Egypt's signs of intolerance are relatively new, with the last generation being more cosmopolitan. The article suggests this shift is due to multiple reasons, including the influence of Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi theology, frustration with Egypt's inability to free Palestine from Israeli occupation, the American war on Iraq, and the Egyptian government, which he describes as “unrepresentative, authoritarian and repressive.”

The article argues that the Muslim Brotherhood and government fight on the same grounds, noting religious television has increased dramatically under Mubarak and the regime's obtaining favorable fatwas, with some coming from Al Azhar. The ruling government, it says, needs Al Azhar to bolster its legitimacy. Ironically, the more pro-government fatwas, the less credible

the government and the more attractive the Muslim Brotherhood becomes.

[Read on](#)

The Washington Post: Public Debate On Democratic Reform In Egypt

The Washington Post
November 2010

The Washington Post, Minister of Finance Youssef Boutros-Ghali, and the Egyptian Embassy in Washington, D.C. recently debated democratic reform in Egypt in a series of editorials and letters to the editor published in *The Washington Post*. The exchange began on October 29, when the newspaper criticized President Hosni Mubarak for silencing dissent, rather than promoting democratic reform, prior to the Parliamentary elections in November. The editorial, “Obama's Task on Egyptian Democracy,” calls the American public's attention to the government's rejection of election monitors, the arrest of more than 260 members of the Muslim Brotherhood, the dismissal of opposition journalist Ibrahim Eissa from his position as Editor of opposition weekly *Al Destour*, the shutting down of seventeen private television channels, and new restrictions on text messaging. The editorial criticizes these actions as part of Mubarak's latest political crackdown.

The Washington Post blamed not only Mubarak but also Obama for this crackdown: “Mr. Mubarak's actions reflect a common calculation across the Middle East: that this U.S. president, unlike his predecessor, is not particularly interested in democratic change.” The editorial claims Obama has pressed for democratic reform more forcefully in Israel than Egypt. It calls for the U.S. President to give democratic reform in Egypt “the same priority and personal attention.”

Karim Haggag, press counselor at the Egyptian Embassy in Washington D.C., responded on November 3 with a letter to the editor titled, “What The Post Got Wrong on Egyptian Politics.” Haggag believes that *The Washington Post* mislabeled the situation a crackdown, arguing that Egypt has the “most diverse and open media environment in the Arab world.”

Minister of Finance Youssef Boutros-Ghali criticized *The Washington Post's* editorial, in “Egypt: Trendsetter in the Middle East,” published on November 5. Boutros-Ghali calls the editorial yet another example of Westerners' “ritually” pointing out imperfections rather than progress in Egypt. He encourages Westerners to realize that economic reform, which affects Egyptians' daily lives, is paramount to democratic reform. He praises the Egyptian government for integrating Egypt into the world economy, increasing GDP and raising employment. He lauds Egypt for having one of the most open environments for journalists in the Arab world, while noting that the alternative to the secular authority of the NDP is fanaticism, which, he hints would threaten the West.

The same day *The Washington Post* published Boutros-Ghali's letter to the editor, it published another editorial titled, “Egypt's Mr. Mubarak moves to lawless repression.” The editorial describes Mubarak's increasing use of “police-state methods” as a problem not only for Egypt but also for the United States. According to the article, Mubarak's successors “will need to acquire political legitimacy; if they cannot do so through democracy they probably will resort to nationalism and anti-Americanism.”

[Read all the articles:](#)

- ♦ [The Washington Post, “Obama’s Task on Egyptian Democracy,” October 29, 2010](#)
- ♦ [Karim Haggag, “What The Post Got Wrong on Egyptian Politics,” November 3, 2010](#)
- ♦ [Youssef Boutros-Ghali, “Egypt: Trendsetter in the Mideast,” November 5, 2010](#)
- ♦ [The Washington Post, “Egypt’s Mr. Mubarak Moves to Lawless Repression,” November 5, 2010](#)

“Policy Change In Egypt: A Role For The United States?”

The Washington Institute for Near East Policy
November 18, 2010

Author: Dina Guirguis is a Keston Family research fellow with The Washington Institute for Near East Policy’s Project Fikra

The lead-up to Egypt’s 2010 parliamentary elections and 2011 presidential elections has again borne witness to antidemocratic government crackdowns on media and opponents. With segments of the opposition encouraging an electoral boycott, low voter-turnout expected, and likely hereditary succession to the office of the president, Guirguis argues that the latest round of elections merely provide further evidence of institutionalized political corruption and authoritarian constitutional tampering.

Guirguis urges the Obama administration to take a stronger position on anti-democratic developments in Egypt, keeping in line with the administration’s foreign policy commitment to strategic partnerships with democratic nations. Given the USD 1.3 billion in annual aid allocated to Egypt, the U.S. is in a persuasive bargaining position to stimulate democratic transitions. Guirguis suggests the Obama administration increase dialogue with

opposition leaders, dispatch a special envoy to address these issues, and avail itself of the power of the Egyptian media to ensure that its message reach the ears of the Egyptian people.

[Read on](#)

“Parliamentary Elections In Egypt And Next Year’s Presidential Vote”

The Washington Institute for Near East Policy
November 16, 2010

Author: Dina Guirguis is a Keston Family research fellow with The Washington Institute for Near East Policy’s Project Fikra

Guirguis analyzes the developments around Egypt’s parliamentary elections and their implications for presidential elections in 2011. Despite rumors that Hosni Mubarak will run for reelection, there has been no official announcement of the presidential candidate for the NDP—a fact that Guirguis attributes to the division between the old and new guard within the party.

Regardless of the final choice of candidate, she outlines the significant legal changes that the NDP have put in place to assure its continued domination. With 34 constitutional amendments between May 2005 and May 2007, the NDP has been busy adapting laws to suit their electoral fancies. In particular, Guirguis points to the questionable practices of the Political Practices Committee (PPC), in effect controlled by the NDP, as evidence of the types of institutionalized electoral manipulation perpetuated by the ruling party, which ought to be more forcefully addressed by the Obama administration.

[Read on](#)

“Stability Or Rigidity? Egypt’s Use Of Constitutional And Executive Power”

The Washington Institute for Near East Policy
November 16, 2010

Author: Dina Guirguis is a Keston Family research fellow with The Washington Institute for Near East Policy’s Project Fikra

The article outlines the constitutional amendments and other forms of legal manipulation that the office of the Egyptian president has used to limit political opposition and ensure that legislative and executive power remain in the hands of the NDP. In particular, Guirguis highlights the corrupt role of the Electoral Commission and encroaching oversight of the Ministry of the Interior as obstacles to legitimate, democratic elections.

While many of the constitutional amendments pursued under President Mubarak have lead to the systematic undermining of both the judiciary and the legislature, Egypt’s 29-year-old emergency law remains a formidable challenge to the rights of Egypt’s citizenry. Guirguis explains that even if emergency law were to be revoked, one of President Mubarak’s constitutional amendments—Article 179—essentially institutionalizes the most draconian measures of emergency law, granting exceptional powers to the executive to act in response to behavior deemed to be a threat to national security. Seen as a *carte blanche* response to perceived terrorism, Article 179 undoubtedly guarantees continued government interference in any democratic processes.

[Read on](#)

“Silent On Egypt”

The Washington Post
November 12, 2010

The Washington Post criticizes U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton for failing to press for democratic reform in Egypt during her recent meeting with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit in Washington. The meeting addressed the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, the upcoming referendum in Sudan and the political situations in Lebanon and Iraq—all regional rather than domestic Egyptian issues. The *Washington Post* accuses Clinton of saying “not one word” about Mubarak’s recent escalation of political repression. *The Washington Post* argues her silence sends a message to Egyptians that Obama “either supports Mr. Mubarak’s autocracy or doesn’t much care one way or the other.”

The Washington Post writes Egypt’s upcoming election will unlikely be free or fair, regardless of America’s stance. However, it faults the Obama administration for not issuing more public statements which would support the “hundreds of thousands of brave Egyptians who have joined pro-democracy movements—and to those who quietly wait for the political transition that everyone in Cairo knows will come when the ailing president steps down or dies.”

[Read on](#)

“Egypt Week In Washington?”

Council on Foreign Relations Blogs
November 8, 2010

Author: Steven Cook is a Hasib J. Sabbagh Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations

In response to a week of meetings and a volley of op-eds in the *Washington Post*—all concerning Egypt—Cook investigates the underlying assumption that democracy promotion in the region is an inherently beneficial undertaking. Cook first points out the lack of concrete examples or data on democratic

transitions in the Middle East, and questions the validity of basing current democratic transitions theories on Latin American and Eastern European case studies. Cook likewise highlights the logical fallacy of those—“my neo-conservative friends”—who blindly advocate democratic reforms without considering the possible downsides or consequences of their platform. Using the example of Turkey, Cook counters neo-conservative criticism of Turkey’s stance on Iran, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the Balkan, poking fun at the fact that these same proponents of democratic reform have become gun-shy when faced with the realities of democracy in a predominantly Muslim country. For Egypt, he explains that there is certainly less at stake strategically than in Ankara, but reiterates his concern for an under-researched attachment to “democracy-or-bust” foreign policy in the Middle East.

[Read on](#)

“Hepatitis C Infection Reaches Alarming Figures”

The Los Angeles Times
November 8, 2010

Author: Amro Hassan writes for The Los Angeles Times.

Egypt currently has the world’s highest incidence rate of hepatitis C, with more than half a million new cases occurring each year. The article attributes the high incidence rate to poor healthcare oversight and erratic medical hygiene. It argues the Egyptian government’s reported prevalence of HCV (9.8 percent) is significantly lower than those reported by medical sources, which range between 15 and 20 percent.

[Read on](#)

“Egypt Jumps 5 Places In Doing Business Rankings”

Zawya
November 7, 2010

Author: Amr Ramadan is a reporter for the Daily News Egypt/International Herald Tribune.

According to a report released by the IFC and the World Bank, titled “Doing Business 2011: Making a Difference for Entrepreneurs,” Egypt jumped five spots in reforming business regulations, from 99 in 2010 to 94 in 2011. This jump is the result of Egypt’s economic reforms, which have made it easier to start a business.

Despite advancements, Egypt ranks low in significant regulatory areas, rated 154th out of 183 economies in “dealing with construction permits”; 136th in ease of “paying taxes”; 143rd in “enforcing contracts” and 131st in “closing a business”. Although Egypt ranks 8th out of 18 countries in the MENA region, it ranks 17th in the region for “dealing with construction permits” and 16th in “paying taxes” and “enforcing contracts”. These regional rankings remain unchanged from last year.

[Read on](#)

“Will Independents Challenge Hosni Mubarak’s Party Stalwarts Again?”

The Los Angeles Times
November 5, 2010

Author: Amr Hamzawy is the Research Director and Senior Associate of the Middle East Center at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Michele Dunne is a Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and editor of the Arab Reform Bulletin

Dunne and Hamzawy address a major challenge the NDP faces in the November 28 race: preventing NDP members from leaving the party and

running as independents, as occurred in the 2000 and 2005 elections. During both elections, victories of NDP members who ran as independents prevented the party from winning a two-thirds majority. Consequently, the NDP was forced to welcome back renegade members.

The last two parliamentary elections weakened the NDP to the extent that it could not even change election laws to make a repeat harder. The party attempted to prevent independent candidates from running, but those who ran as independents blocked the legislation. Dunne and Hamzawy write the 2010 elections will be a sign of how much the NDP has or has not consolidated power since 2005.

[Read on](#)

“The Midterm Elections and Mideast Foreign Policy”

Council on Foreign Relations Blogs
November 2, 2010

Author: Dr. James M. Lindsay is Senior Vice President, Director of Studies, and Maurice R. Greenberg Chair at the Council on Foreign Relations

Guest posting on Steven Cook's usual blog, Dr. Lindsay offers his analysis of the impact of the Republican victory in the 2010 midterm elections on U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. Dr. Lindsay explains that the actual foreign policy ramifications will be minimal for two main reasons. First, the elections were based solely on domestic issues—i.e. unemployment, the federal deficit, and bailouts—and as long as the economy continues to be the primary source of concern for the American public, the political agenda in Washington will center on domestic policy.

Second, despite the Republican party's sweeping victory—the largest for either

party in 60 years—Dr. Lindsay explains that the balance of power still heavily favors the President in the realm of foreign policy. The Republican majority in the House of Representatives does allow for a realignment of committee chairs and agendas, which will likely result in reprimands for Syria and sanctions for Iran. However, any concrete policy initiatives originating in the House would still require the seal-of-approval of the Democratically-controlled Senate, not to mention the signature of President Barack Obama. Dr. Lindsay underscores the real likelihood that President Obama would veto any such measure.

[Read on](#)

“Obama NSC Meets With Egypt Democracy Advocates”

Politico
November 2, 2010

Author: Laura Rozen is a foreign policy reporter for Politico

The White House National Security Council (NSC) recently met with a bipartisan group of foreign policy experts calling for the United States to push for fair elections in Egypt. Analysts have interpreted the participation of key NSC regional officials in the meeting as an indication Obama is intensifying his focus on the issue of democracy and human rights in Egypt. Participants in the meeting recognized the proximity of Egypt's parliamentary elections precludes effective pressure on Egypt to accept international elections monitors. Discussions consequently focused on ensuring fair and transparent presidential elections next year.

[Read on](#)

“Survey Says 51 Percent Of Egypt Organizations Looking To Hire”

Zawya
November 2010

Author: Christopher Le Coq is a business reporter at Daily News Egypt and the International Herald Tribune

The data used in this article comes from an October 2010 Jobs Index, conducted with executive managers, human resources managers and senior officials from fourteen countries in the region. The survey bases results on the Hiring Expectancy Index (HEI), which overall concluded 69 percent of the region's organizations expect to hire in the long-term.

Le Coq reports good news for the private sector. Twenty-two percent of employers in Egypt surveyed said they would “definitely” hire during the last quarter of 2010. Another 29 percent said they would “probably” hire new staff. Across the Middle East, students with business management backgrounds are best-positioned to find employment. According to results, organizations in the Middle East prefer employees with educational backgrounds in business, or graduate or postgraduate backgrounds in commerce or administration, who are proficient both in Arabic and English. However, a gap between demand for and supply of such employees leaves jobs unfilled and people unemployed.

[Read on](#)

“The Elusive Myth Of Democratic Egyptian Elections”

Brookings Institution
November 2010

Author: Mirette F. Mabrouk is a non-resident fellow in the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution and founding publisher of The Daily News Egypt

Mabrouk explains that elections in Egypt are never truly democratic, but that it should not necessarily discourage opposition parties from campaigning and participating in the electoral process. While any success on the part of the opposition candidates is sure to cause consequences—notably in the form of constitutional amendments, as was the case after the Muslim Brotherhood's success in 2005—boycotting elections foolishly cedes what little visibility or influence opposition parties have. Regardless of the outcome, which will inevitably favor NDP candidates, the media attention and international responses provoked by the involvement of opposition parties should undercut much of the cynicism associated with participation.

The article chronicles the various electoral, constitutional, and strategic reforms that the government has enacted to minimize the success of opposition candidates. However, it also discusses the various citizen mobilization campaigns of the past, suggesting that the government's friendlier response in recent years can be viewed as a political repackaging of sorts. Eager to reform its public image, Mabrouk suggests that the 2010 elections may bare witness to tacit cooperation between the NDP and the Wafd Party, arguing that opposition to the government need not only come in the form of the Islamic platform of the Muslim Brotherhood or Mohamed El Baradei's tweets.

Lastly, Mabrouk analyzes the role of the United States in promoting democratic elections in Egypt. She suggests that the fact that U.S. involvement has remained primarily rhetorical could be evidence of U.S. concerns over possible Muslim Brotherhood domination should elections ever become truly democratic.

Dismissing this likelihood, Mabrouk urges the U.S. to increase support of democratization efforts by increasing funding to Egyptian civil society and encourage dialogue with all the opposition parties—not just El Baradei's NAC.

[Read on](#)

“What’s So Scary About Egypt’s Islamists?”

Time Magazine
November 2010

Author: Aryn Baker is Time Magazine's bureau chief for Pakistan and Afghanistan; Abigail Hauslohner is a freelance reporter and producer

The article chronicles conditions facing the Muslim Brotherhood going into the parliamentary elections of November 28. Ongoing challenges include their inability to run as a political party (representatives run as independents) and the ruling party's crackdown on media and political dissent. Despite these government efforts, Egypt's public increasingly perceives the Muslim Brotherhood as less of a threat to the country and more of a threat to the ruling regime. ■

[Read on](#)



About Us

Egypt's International Economic Forum is a non-governmental, non-partisan business organization founded in 1998 by a group of prominent Egyptians committed to the comprehensiveness, sustainability and consistency of Egypt's reform efforts. The Forum aims to promote a favorable economic and business environment that allows Egyptian businesses to prosper while also contributing to the progress and well-being of Egyptian society at large.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Mohamed Shafik Gabr
Chairman

Khaled Raafat
Secretary General

Shahira Zeid
Treasurer

Hossam Badrawi
Taher Helmy
Hassan Abdalla
Tahy El-Sebai Mansour
Samar El Molla
Farid El Chiati

Loula Zaklama
Ashraf Gohar
Emad Taymour
Magued Gobran
Nabil Ibrahim
Mahmoud Badran

DIRECTOR GENERAL

Ashraf Swelam

EYE ON EGYPT DIGEST TEAM

Jessie Sobrino
Lara Tumeh
Laura Nelson



For more information, please contact us at:

509 Road 10, off Road 9

Mokattam, Cairo

Tel: + (202) 2508-6873/4

Fax: + (202) 2508-6859

E-mail: eief@eieforum.org