

Egypt



2016 Country Review

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Chapter 1

Country Overview

Country Overview

EGYPT

With a population exceeding 80 million, Egypt is the most populous country in the Arab world and one of the most populous countries in Africa (Nigeria and Ethiopia being some of the others). Its recorded history began in around 3100 B.C. when King Menes united the region, beginning a series of dynasties. The last dynasty fell to the Persians in 341 B.C., who in turn were replaced by the Greeks, Romans, and Byzantines. The Ottoman Turks controlled Egypt from 1517 until 1882 when Britain seized control of Egypt.

In deference to growing nationalism, the United Kingdom declared Egyptian independence in 1922, but British influence continued to dominate Egypt's political life. In 1952 Egypt acquired full sovereignty with the overthrow of the British-backed monarchy, and it became a republic in 1953. Egypt has played a central role in Middle East politics in modern times. Its three wars with Israel in 1948, 1967 and 1973, followed by peace with its adversary in 1979, have transitioned Egypt from being a warring nation to becoming a key representative in the peace process. However, peace with Israel led to Egypt being expelled from the Arab League until 1989, and in 1981 President Anwar Sadat was assassinated by Islamic extremists. Since then, President Hosni Mubarak took a more moderate line, but Islamic groups have continued their campaigns sporadically, forging deadly attacks that have often targeted tourists and resort areas.

The 2011 Arab Spring, manifest in Egypt by the Nile Revolution, radically changed the landscape in Egypt and resulted in the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak from power. The election of an Islamist president, Mohammed Morsi, followed by his removal from power at the hands of the military, further shifted the landscape. Elections in 2014 brought a more secular but military-backed president to power in the form of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. Now, the focus was to return the country to stable governance.

Egypt's economy is the second largest in the Arab world -- following only Saudi Arabia. The country is a significant producer of oil and is a rapidly growing gas producer. Its economy is highly dependent on tourism revenues, oil and gas exports, remittances from Egyptian workers abroad, and revenue from the Suez Canal tolls.

Editor's Note

Ultimately, it is to be determined if the democratic ambitions of the Egyptian people will be

realized. The "Nile Revolution" in 2011 -- a key development in the so-called "Arab Spring" -- had resulted in the exit of the key figure of the Mubarak "old guard," with possibilities ripe for a reformist agenda. This historic moment of change in Egypt was achieved by the people -- not with the typical weapons of conflict and confrontation, but with relentless determination, via the Internet and telecommunications devices, which were used as organizing mechanisms to advance grassroots transformation.

As the spirit of regional unrest transfixed the region, the final chapter in this story was yet to be written. That being said, the post-colonial structure of the Arab world in the Maghreb and the Middle East would be affected by the pro-democracy wave washing over the region. Ultimately, Egypt in 2011 had traversed a similar path as Tunisia and Libya, with regime change simply opening the door to further transformational action. Actual change, though, has been harder to accomplish due to the entrenched dynamics of power. The result has been a sense of anger and frustration by the people that the transformations sought have not yet been achieved, thus driving them back into the streets to register their discontent.

The people of the region have been explicit in expressing their high expectations that actual policy reforms will ensue, that greater freedom will win the day, and that rule by the prevailing political elites in Arab countries will end. Nevertheless, as has been seen by similar popular uprisings that brought down regimes in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan (notably out of the Middle East but still subject to post-uprising political discontent), celebration today can often be followed by disappointment and disillusionment tomorrow over the slow pace of change.

The important parliamentary elections and landmark presidential elections of 2012 offered Egypt a pathway to realizing its democratic ambitions. However, the autocratic and pro-Islamist stances taken by Egypt's new President Mohammed Morsi threatened to -- at best -- set up a power battle between the executive and judicial branches of government, and -- at worst -- reverse the democratic and progressive gains made in the immediate aftermath of the "Nile Revolution." The economic crisis in 2013 significantly pushed the country to the brink of default -- with deleterious effects in the offing as a result. Not surprisingly, a fresh "Rebellion," known as Tamarod, emerged in mid-2013, followed by the military takeover in which Morsi was ousted from office. It was clear that Egypt's revolutionary path was not yet over. Indeed, the events of 2013, initiated by the General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and the military, could be viewed either as a short-circuiting of the people-powered movement -- or -- another chapter in the same story of transformation in Egypt.

In 2014, a new constitution was ratified and Sisi garnered an overwhelming victory at the polls thanks to a citizenry weary of turbulence and turmoil. By the start of 2015, former President Hosni Mubarak was cleared of the charges against him. It was clear that the Egyptian citizenry was less interested in the Mubarak factor and much more concerned with stability and moving the country forward.

Key Data

Key Data	
Region:	Africa
Population:	88487392
Climate:	Desert; hot, dry summers with moderate winters.
Languages:	Arabic (official), English and French widely understood by educated classes
Currency:	1 Egyptian pound = 100 piasters
Holiday:	Anniversary of the Revolution is 23 July (1952), Sham al-Naseem is 21 March, Evacuation Day/Republic Day is 18 June
Area Total:	1001450
Area Land:	995450
Coast Line:	2450

Egypt

Country Map



Africa

Regional Map



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Chapter 2

Political Overview

History

Archeological findings show that primitive tribes lived along the Nile long before the dynastic history of the Pharaohs began. By 6000 before the common era, or B.C.E., organized agriculture had appeared. In about 3100 B.C.E., Egypt was united under a ruler known as Mena, or Menes, who inaugurated the 30 Pharaonic dynasties into which Egypt's ancient history is divided, the Old and the Middle Kingdoms and the New Empire. For the first time, the use and management of vital resources of the Nile River came under one authority.

Egypt's well-known landmark, the pyramids at Giza (near Cairo), were built in the fourth dynasty, demonstrating the power of the Pharaonic religion and state. The Great Pyramid, the tomb of Pharaoh Khufu (also known as Cheops), is the only one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World that has survived to the present day. Ancient Egypt reached the peak of its power, wealth and territorial extent in the period called the New Empire (1567-1085 B.C.E.). Authority was again centralized, and a number of military campaigns brought Palestine, Syria and northern Iraq under Egyptian control.

In 525 B.C.E., Cambyses, the son of Cyrus the Great, led a Persian invasion force that dethroned the last Pharaoh of the 26th Dynasty. The country remained a Persian province until the conquest of Alexander the Great in 332 B.C.E. The Macedonian king founded the city of Alexandria, which with its 500,000 volume library, its magnificent port and Egypt's second of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the Pharos Lighthouse, became the scientific, literary and commercial center of the Greek world. After the death of Alexander the Great, Macedonian General Ptolemy took control of Egypt and founded the Ptolemaic dynasty (305-30 B.C.E.) which would rule until Cleopatra's forces lost to Roman legions in the battle of Actium in 30 B.C.E. Cleopatra committed suicide, and the Roman/Byzantine rule of Egypt lasted for nearly 700 years.

Following a brief Persian re-conquest, Egypt was invaded and conquered by Arab forces in 642 B.C.E. A process of Arabization and Islamization ensued. Although a Coptic Christian minority remained, and still remains today, the Arab language inexorably supplanted the indigenous Coptic tongue. Ancient Egyptian ways, passed from Pharaonic times through the Persian, Greek, and Roman periods and Egypt's Christian era, were gradually melded with or supplanted by Islamic customs. For the next 1,300 years, a succession of Turkish, Arabic, Mameluke and Ottoman caliphs, beys and sultans ruled the country.

French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte arrived in Egypt in 1798. The three-year sojourn (1798-1801) of his army and a retinue of French scientists opened Egypt to direct Western influence. Napoleon's adventure awakened Great Britain to the importance of Egypt as a vital link with India and the Far East and launched 150 years of Anglo-French rivalry over the region.

An Anglo-Ottoman invasion force drove out the French in 1801, and, following a period of chaos, Mohammed Ali obtained control of the country and became the Ottoman Pasha in 1805. Ali reformed Egypt by importing European culture and technology, introducing state organization of Egypt's economic life, improving education, and fostering training in engineering and medicine. His authoritarian rule was also marked by a series of foreign military adventures. Ali ruled until 1849, and his successors retained at least nominal control of Egypt until 1952. Ali's successors granted a concession for the construction of the Suez Canal to the French Promoter, Ferdinand de Lesseps. Building on the canal began in 1859 and opened ten years later.

Financial mismanagement and personal extravagance characterized the regimes of Ali's successors and reduced Egypt to bankruptcy. These developments led to the rapid expansion of British and French financial oversight. This oversight produced popular resentment. In 1897 this ill will culminated in revolt.

In 1882, British expeditionary forces crushed this revolt, marking the beginning of British occupation and the virtual inclusion of Egypt within the British Empire. During the rule of three successive British High Commissioners between 1883 and 1914, the British agency subverted competing sources of authority. It established special courts to enforce more favorable foreign laws for foreigners residing in the country. These privileges for foreigners generated increasing Egyptian resentment.

To secure its interests during World War I, Britain declared a formal protectorate over Egypt on Dec. 18, 1914. This lasted until 1922, when, in deference to growing nationalism, Britain unilaterally declared Egyptian independence. British influence, however, continued to dominate Egypt's political life and fostered fiscal, administrative and governmental reforms.

Note on History: In certain entries, open source content from the State Department Background Notes and Country Guides have been used. A full listing of sources is available in the Bibliography.

Political Conditions

Post-Independence Period

In Egypt's post-independence period, three political forces competed with one another: the Wafd, a broadly based, nationalist political organization strongly opposed to British influence; King Fuad, whom the British had installed during the war; and the British themselves, who were determined to maintain control over the Suez Canal.

Although both the Wafd and the king wanted to achieve independence from the British, they competed for control of Egypt. Other political forces emerging in this period included the Communist Party (1925) and the Muslim Brotherhood (1928), with the Muslim Brotherhood eventually emerging as a potent political and religious force.

During World War II, British troops used Egypt as a base for Allied operations throughout the region. British troops were withdrawn to the Suez Canal area in 1947, but nationalist, anti-British feelings continued to grow after the war. Violence broke out in early 1952 between Egyptians and British in the canal area, and anti-Western rioting in Cairo followed.

On July 22-23, 1952, a group of disaffected army officers led by Lt. Col. Gamal Abdel Nasser overthrew King Farouk. Farouk's grasp on power had been weakened as the military blamed him for Egypt's poor performance in the 1948 war with Israel. Following a brief experiment with civilian rule, they abrogated the 1923 constitution and declared Egypt a republic on June 19, 1953. Nasser evolved into a charismatic leader, not only of Egypt, but also of the Arab world as a whole with his passionate advocacy for Pan-Arabism.

Nasser's roots were modest. He was born in Alexandria in 1918, the son of a postman who ran the local post office. Soon thereafter Nasser's father was transferred to al-Khatatibah, a small village in the Nile delta. Unhappy with his schooling, his parents then sent him to Cairo where he lived in a predominantly Jewish community house. It was in the Cairo schools that he learned to question British authority, ultimately becoming a leader in the Egyptian freedom movement. From there he went on to military school and into the army where he rapidly ascended the ranks. As a lieutenant colonel he had the opportunity to demonstrate his charismatic leadership. Continuing his fight against the British, he started the "free officers" movement.

Nasser and his free officers movement enjoyed almost instant legitimacy as liberators who had ended 2,500 years of foreign rule. They were motivated by numerous grievances and goals but wanted especially to break the economic and political power of the land-owning elite; to remove all vestiges of British control; and to improve the lot of the people, especially the peasants (fellahin).

Nasser's rule set the tenor for Egyptian rule valued to this day. He was a secular nationalist who developed a foreign policy characterized by the advocacy of pan-Arab socialism, leadership of the Third World non-aligned movement, and close ties with the Soviet Union. He sharply opposed the Western-sponsored Baghdad Pact which called for a security agreement between Iraq and Turkey

with the United Kingdom, Iran and Pakistan as further signatories. The pact created the Middle East Treaty Organization, later to become the Central Treaty Organization. To Nasser, however, it was a violation of the non-aligned movement.

As his avoidance of the Baghdad Pact indicates, Nasser was very successful at repelling foreign influence. He ardently sought neutrality in the Cold War. In reaction, when the United States held up military sales, Nasser concluded an arms deal with Czechoslovakia. This September 1955 agreement helped him circumvent United States (U.S.) influence.

When the U.S. and the World Bank withdrew their offer to help finance the Aswan High Dam in mid-1956, Nasser nationalized the privately owned Suez Canal Company, planning to finance the dam's construction with canal toll revenues. A crisis ensued, exacerbated by growing tensions with Israel over Palestinian guerrilla attacks from Gaza. As a result of these crises, France, Great Britain and Israel joined forces to invade Egypt that October. Yet, the invasion forces were quickly withdrawn under heavy pressure from the U.S. and the United Nations. The Suez crisis (or, as the Egyptians call it, the Tripartite Aggression) accelerated Nasser's emergence as an Egyptian and Arab hero.

Nasser soon came to terms with Moscow for the financing of the Aswan High Dam, a step that enormously increased Soviet involvement in Egypt and set Nasser's government on a policy of even closer ties with the Soviet Union.

In 1958, pursuant to his policy of pan-Arabism, Nasser succeeded in uniting Egypt and Syria into the United Arab Republic. Although this union failed by 1961, it was not officially dissolved until 1984.

Nasser's domestic policies were arbitrary and frequently oppressive. Yet, his success in controlling foreign influence and his charismatic leadership led to his general popularity. Under Nasser, all opposition was stamped out, and opponents of the regime frequently were imprisoned without trial. Nasser's foreign and military policies, among other things, helped provoke the Israeli attack of June 1967 that virtually destroyed Egypt's armed forces, along with those of Jordan and Syria. Israel also occupied the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and the Golan Heights. Nasser, nonetheless, was revered by the masses in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world until his death in 1970.

After Nasser's death, another of the original "free officers," Vice President Anwar Sadat, was elected president. In 1971, Sadat concluded a treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union; however, one year later, he ordered Soviet advisers to leave. In 1973, he launched the October War against Israel, in which Egypt's armed forces achieved initial successes but were defeated in Israeli counterattacks. Sadat's strong leadership led to Africa-wide support as most of the continent's countries broke ties with Israel.

Born in 1918 in the village of Mit Abul Kom 40 miles to the north of Cairo, Sadat was the same age as Nasser, and came from similarly humble roots. He followed a similar path into Egypt's then new military academy, ultimately being sent to an outpost where he and Nasser met as junior officers. At this outpost, Nasser and Sadat formed an alliance that turned into a revolutionary movement against British occupation. Sadat's military career was somewhat less distinguished than Nasser's as he was imprisoned twice for his anti-British actions. He was released in time to join Nasser for the July 1952 coup, becoming Nasser's second once again.

Yet even as Nasser and Sadat shared the same history, Sadat's views towards the West were considerably more positive after Egypt obtained independence. This was reflected in his foreign policy once in office. A short time after he came to power, in a momentous change from the Nasser era, President Sadat shifted Egypt from a policy of confrontation with Israel, to one of peaceful accommodation through negotiations. Following the Sinai Disengagement Agreements of 1974 and 1975, Sadat created a fresh opening for progress by his dramatic visit to Jerusalem in November 1977. This led to President Carter's invitation to President Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Begin to join him in trilateral negotiations at Camp David.

The outcome was the historic Camp David Accord, signed by Egypt and Israel and witnessed by the U.S. on Sept. 17, 1978. The accords led to the March 26, 1979, signing of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty, by which Egypt regained control of the Sinai in May 1982. This signing was momentous as it not only led to improved Egyptian-Israeli relations but the wide adoption of more conciliatory views toward Israel globally. Its 'land-for-peace' principle has become a model for Israeli peace negotiations with other Arab countries and entities, including Jordan, now at peace with Israel; the Palestine Liberation Organization; and potentially Syria. Under the Camp David Accord, U.S.-Egyptian relations steadily improved; however, Sadat's willingness to break ranks by making peace with Israel earned him hostility from many Arab leaders.

In domestic policy, Sadat introduced greater political freedom and a new economic policy, the most important aspect of which was the *infatih* or 'open door' policy. This program relaxed government controls over the economy and encouraged private investment. Sadat dismantled much of the government apparatus and brought to trial a number of former officials accused of criminal excesses during the Nasser era.

Liberalization also included the reinstitution of due process and the banning of torture. Sadat tried to expand participation in the political process in the mid-1970s but later abandoned this effort. In the last years of his life, Egypt was racked by violence arising from discontent with Sadat's rule and sectarian tensions, and the country experienced a renewed measure of repression.

Sadat's conciliatory attitude toward Israel and the West and his markedly secular leadership lead to his pariah status among the growing devout population. On Oct. 6, 1981, Islamic extremists assassinated President Sadat. Vice President Hosni Mubarak, holder of that office since 1975 and air force commander during the October 1973 war, was elected president later that month. He was

re-elected to a second term in October 1987 and to a third term in October 1993. Mubarak has maintained Egypt's commitment to the Camp David peace process, while at the same time re-establishing Egypt's position as an Arab leader. Egypt was removed from the Arab League under Sadat, but was re-admitted in 1989. Egypt has also played a critical moderating role in such international forums as the United Nations and the Non-aligned Movement.

Though 10 years younger than Nasser and Sadat, Mubarak followed a similar political path. He came from modest roots in the al-Menoufiyah governorate and later went to the Egyptian Military Academy, eventually becoming a base commander for the Egyptian Air Force. In 1964 he was launched into a political career as he was appointed head of the Egyptian military delegation to the U.S.S.R. and commander of the Western Air Force Base. In 1972 he became commander of the air force and deputy minister for military affairs. At the onset of the war with Israel in October 1973, he was promoted to air marshal. In this position he distinguished himself as a vibrant military leader and a worthy second to President Sadat. He was thus well prepared for the presidency, filling the void of power left by his charismatic predecessor's assassination in 1981.

Mubarak was elected chairman of the Organization of African Unity in 1989 and again at the OAU summit in Cairo in June 1993. Since 1991 Mubarak has undertaken an ambitious reform program to reduce the size of the public sector and expand the role of the private sector.

The November 1990 elections for the People's Assembly, Egypt's national legislature, saw 61 members of the opposition win seats in the 454-seat assembly despite a boycott by several opposition parties citing manipulation by Mubarak's National Democratic Party, also known as NDP.

The 1995 legislative elections took place on Dec. 6. The NDP won 71 percent of the 444 elected seats and gained further support with another 22 percent of the seats won by NDP-aligned independents. The National Delegation Party won 6 seats, the Progressive National Unionists 5 seats, and the Liberal Party and the Nasserists one seat each. Non-partisan politicians took the remaining 16 seats.

The Mubarak era in Egyptian politics has been conducted in an almost permanent state of emergency. Martial law has been in place almost continuously since 1981 and has been used by the government in its fight against Islamic fundamentalist and other opponents and critics of the regime. Some democratization has taken place, including increased participation in the political process by opposition groups, but political life in Egypt remains dominated by and under the control of the ruling National Democratic Party.

With the dominance of the NDP, it is not surprising that the People's Assembly re-elected President Mubarak in late 1999 by for a fourth term in office. Moreover, Mubarak has continued to demonstrate his popularity with some 94 percent of the population supporting him in the national electoral referendum. The 79 percent voter turnout made it clear that people found the elections to

be important. Such support has given Mubarak a strong executive as well as legislative mandate.

Political Scene

For several years, domestic political debate in Egypt has been concerned with the phenomenon of "Political Islam," a movement to establish a state and society governed strictly by Islamic doctrine. A wave of renewed interest in Islam has swept the Middle East and several Asian states. Fearing the loss of their identity, some Muslims react to an increasingly globalized, westernized and materialistic world, by emphasizing their unique religious and cultural heritage. The resurgence and radicalization of Islam in Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries is fueled by repressive governments and difficult economic conditions.

While nine out of ten Egyptians are Muslim, only a small, but vocal, percentage seem to support the Islamic Shariah code as state law. Some militant Islamists have violently fought the government, but have also resorted to killing their political opponents, often intellectuals and academics. The Muslim Brotherhood, founded in Egypt in 1928, is legally banned, but operates more or less openly. Egyptian law, however, prohibits the formation of religion-based political parties. Members of the Brotherhood have been elected to the People's Assembly as independents and have been elected to local councils as candidates on the Socialist Labor Party ticket.

In January 2003, a presidential decree making Christmas a national holiday brought attention to relations between Christians and Muslims; it represented the first time a Christian holiday has been officially recognized in modern Egypt. In the past, only Coptics, as Egyptian Christians are known, were allowed to take Christmas as a day off from work, while the rest of Egypt worked as usual. Several Islamic holidays have long been national holidays.

The process of gradual political liberalization begun by Sadat and continued under Mubarak is now on hold. Mubarak has cut back power in an attempt to maintain stability in light of the growing Islamic movement. A state of emergency declared in 1981 remains in force to date, giving the authorities extensive powers to arrest suspects at will and detain them without trial for prolonged periods. A terrorist campaign that the government has been battling since 1992 has slowed the progress of democracy. Egyptian security services and terrorist groups remain locked in a cycle of violence. Groups seeking to overthrow the government have bombed banks, and attacked and killed government officials, security forces, Egyptian Christians, secular intellectuals and foreign tourists.

In February 2003, the Egyptian parliament approved a three-year extension to the emergency legislation, which has been renewed continuously since 1981. Egyptians have lived under emergency laws since 1967, except for an 18-month break in 1980. United States officials expressed "serious concerns" about the extension mainly because the emergency laws allow the country to detain suspects without charge and try civilians in military courts. Still, it is interesting

to note that since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the United States, the United States has itself made extensive use of emergency powers to detain without charge and hold military tribunals against civilians in its "war on terror." Regardless, Egyptian Prime Minister Atef Ebeid was quoted as saying the measures "aimed to protect the country against its enemies" but would "not be used against freedom of expression."

Political power in Egypt is concentrated in the hands of the president and his National Democratic Party (NDP) holds the majority in the People's Assembly. Opposition party organizations make their views public and represent their followers at various levels in the political system. Since 1990, the number of recognized parties has almost tripled from five to fourteen. In addition to the National Democratic Party, the primary political parties are the Socialist Workers' Party (the official opposition), the Liberal Socialist Party and the Unionist Progressive Party. The law prohibits the formation of parties along class lines, making it illegal for communist groups to organize formally as political parties.

Although the November 1990 legislative elections were generally considered to have been fair and free, there were significant restrictions on the political process and freedom of association for non-governmental organizations. In addition, opposition parties continued to make credible complaints about electoral manipulation by the government. For example, in the 1989 National Consultative Council elections, the ruling NDP won 100 percent of the seats.

In the People's Assembly elections held on Nov. 29 and Dec. 6, 1995, the NDP and independents that joined with the party combined for 415 out of the 444 elected seats (93 percent). Four opposition parties combined for 13 seats and non-partisans won 16 seats. The violent election campaign saw the deaths of at least 60 people and injured more than 1,500.

Terrorist activities continued to increase in 1995 with another failed assassination attempt on President Mubarak in June by Islamic militants, as well as an increased amount of terrorism targeting foreign tourists and Egypt's tourism industry. In order to combat terrorist attacks, the Egyptian government has taken bold steps toward isolating and weakening the power of many Muslim fundamentalist groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Jihad. During 1996, the government arrested thousands of people associated with the most violent of the militant Islamic groups in an attempt to curb political dissidence and Islamist violence.

In October 1997, a further setback occurred when 70 people, including 59 tourists, were killed in an attack outside the Temple of Hatshepsut, near the city of Luxor. Since then, President Mubarak has nearly doubled the number of visible security personnel. Egypt also tightened security at tourist sites and hotels and intensified its hunt for Muslim militants. In mid-December 1997, Egyptian security forces stormed the hideout of Munir Mustapha Mohammed Abdul-Hafiz, a leader in the militant Islamic Group, which had claimed responsibility for the Luxor attack. Abdul-Hafiz was killed and ten of his followers arrested in the raid.

In September 1999, President Mubarak was elected to a fourth six-year term in office. Egypt's constitution calls for the country's elected parliament to elect the president. The single candidate is then put to a popular referendum where he must garner a simple majority of the vote. While this process practically assured Mubarak continued rule, the people gave him a strong mandate with not only a 93.8 percent affirmation in the polls, but also a rather high voter turnout of 79 percent.

Opposition leaders have used this electoral structure as a rallying ground. This, they argue, is not democracy. Yet, despite the electoral shortcomings, Mubarak remains popular with the citizenry. The economy has improved dramatically since Mubarak took office. He has raised Egypt's stature both regionally and globally and, most importantly, he has continued to guide the country down a path of relative peace in a tumultuous period of fervent religion-based political activity and terrorism.

Mubarak has also demonstrated his prowess as a regional negotiator, meeting with Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on several occasions. Yet, even as Egypt's economy has been growing and Mubarak's important regional role has strengthened, the country's challenges have not diminished. At the root of the problem continues to lie the role of radical Islam in Egyptian politics. The Egyptian government has struggled to keep terrorism under control, and after the 1997 Luxor-massacre, Mubarak hardened his policy. Ironically, the banning of political Islamic organizations in general, and the Muslim Brotherhood in particular, might backfire. As the Egyptian state takes more repressive measures against its population, the anger increases and polarizes the parties, radicalizes the fundamentalists, and makes the state even more repressive.

In another effort to quell Islamic opposition to his secular state, in May 2000 Mubarak suspended the Labor Party, a staunch Islamic supporter. More importantly, he extended the suspension to the Labor Party's popular newspaper, the Al-Shaab. He defended his actions stating that the newspaper called for followers of faith to murder Syrian writer Haidar Haidar for his blasphemous Muslim treatise. The government press reported that it was this sort of incitement by the newspaper that led to a clash between students at Cairo's Al-Azhar University and police on May 8-10, 2000. Fifty students were injured in the clashes and at least one hundred were arrested. The Board of Egyptian Journalists condemned the suspension of Al-Shaab as a violation of constitutional articles 48 and 208 that forbid the suspension or closure of newspapers by administrative decisions. Indeed, his actions were at best violation of the spirit of the laws. This is yet another critical step by Mubarak down the road of political consolidation and toward greater suspension of personal freedoms. On September 23, the Higher Administrative Court lifted the ban. The court did not lift the ban on the party's activities, saying it was outside its jurisdiction, and that only the parties court could do so.

On the background of a rough political climate, parliamentary elections were held on Oct. 18 and 29, and Nov. 8, 2000. A June 2000 law stipulates that members of the judiciary must be present at

every polling station, and due to the lack of judicial agents, the election had to be held over three rounds. The ruling National Democratic Party and its supporters gained a large majority (388) of the 444 elected seats in the parliament. Opposition parties' candidates gained only 33 seats, but that constitutes a doubling of the seats won in the 1995 elections. Despite the presence of members of the judiciary, the process was marred by charges of massive irregularities and the killing of 10 people. Clashes took place in all three rounds and in several places in the country. Security forces were accused of trying to block access to polling stations to supporters of opposition and independent candidates. The government denied interfering in the election process, and blame the violence on rivalry between the candidates' supporters. Also, local and foreign journalists covering the elections complained of harassment and physical abuse by police, plainclothes security men as well as civilians, accused of acting on behalf of the ruling party.

Repressive policies and increasing intolerance from the Mubarak-regime does not only affect militant Islamists and their supporters, but also others critical of the government. In June 2000, the Egyptian-American sociologist Saad Eddin Ibrahim, a professor at the American University in Cairo, and the President of the Ibn Khaldoun Center for Social Development, was detained without charges for 45 days. Twenty-seven other activists and employees were also detained. Ibrahim, a human rights activist and vocal critic of the regime, believed his detention is connected with his monitoring of the 1995 elections, in which he documented widespread fraud. Ibrahim was finally charged with undermining state security, defaming Egypt's reputation, and for taking illegal funds from the European Commission.

The trial attracted international criticism from human rights organizations and governments alike. Surprisingly, therefore, in May 2001, Eddin was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. In February 2002, Eddin was released from jail, and awaiting a retrial. Worryingly, the Ibrahim case fits neatly into the deteriorating human rights situation in Egypt. While human rights groups for many years have reported widespread torture and ill-treatment in police stations, cruel and inhuman conditions in prisons, and harassment of human rights defenders, the government has over the last years increasingly also targeted less obvious threats to the regime such as homosexuals, Satanists, unlikely "spies" for foreign agencies and corrupt businessmen. Censorship is increasing and hundreds of books and novels are banned by the Ministry of Culture each year. Intellectuals are accusing the ministry of acceding to demands by Islamists, and in January 2001 several editors resigned in protest of the censorship.

By August 2002, the Ibrahim situation had begun to strain Egypt's relationship with a key ally - the United States. U.S. President George W Bush said he would seek to withhold additional aid from Egypt to protest the activist's prosecution. Ibrahim, who holds a United States as well as an Egyptian passport, was sentenced in July 2002 to seven years in jail after a judge found him guilty of embezzlement and "tarnishing" Egypt's image. The decision infuriated the Bush administration to the point that it declared it would not contemplate any additional funds for Egypt.

By early December 2002, the pressure from the United States and other international groups

seemed to have helped produce a victory in the area of civil rights: Egypt's highest appeal court freed Ibrahim after quashing his seven-year sentence on charges of defaming the country, and ordered a retrial. On Feb. 4, 2002, Egypt's Court of Cassation heard the final appeal of Dr. Saad Eddin Ibrahim and four Ibn Khaldun co-defendants. The court had twice overturned the sentences handed down by the State Security Court. After seven hours of testimony, the Court of Cassation adjourned, and by the spring of 2003, Ibrahim was finally released.

The Egyptian economy, under an International Monetary Fund structural reform program, improved vastly from 1990 until the end of the decade, by cutting budget deficits, reducing inflation, speeding economic growth and promoting privatization. However, red tape, widespread corruption and an overstaffed and inefficient bureaucracy have impeded the economic development. In September 2001, under pressure from international financial institutions, Egypt devaluated its currency for the second time in 2001. This increased export volumes, but the Egyptian economy remained in need for a painful restructuring. The government employs nearly one-third of the workforce, and the civil service is an abyss of underpaid, underemployed and unsackable people. Official statistics put unemployment around nine percent, while independent economists doubled that number.

By late January 2003, Egypt's pound had tumbled more than 15 percent on its first day as a freely traded currency to hit levels at which it had been trading on the black market. The currency traded between 5.395 and 5.28 against the United States dollar on its debut from its old trading band of three percent around a core rate of 4.51. In response, Egyptian Prime Minister Ebeid announced what amounted to a devaluation of the pound by abandoning its peg and allowing it to float to help jump start the troubled economy. The International Monetary Fund had long advocated that Egypt, once considered one of the region's economic 'tigers', liberalize its financial system.

Meanwhile, Islamist groups in the Middle East remain the main suspects of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington D.C. Egyptian authorities arrested nearly 40 members of Islamist organizations suspected of having connections to Osama bin Laden.

The Mubarak government has intensified its efforts to exercise control over civil society institutions, harassing and restricting the activities of political parties, human rights and other non-governmental organizations. The international campaign on terrorism is likely to give Mubarak's regime a freer domestic hand, and the authorities will take stronger actions in an effort to avert conflict between Islamic groups and secularists. Mubarak is likely to continue leading Egypt away from political liberalization even as he continues down the road of privatization and economic liberalization. The fear is that if the regime doesn't open up and achieve a kind of equity-politically, socially and economically-for young Egyptians, then the country could be in for another period of violence.

In February 2002, the worst train disaster in Egypt's history occurred when a fire on a train killed 364 passengers. An investigation revealed the train was filled with twice its capacity and not

equipped with adequate safety equipment. The public was outraged and two ministers resigned. The government then began the process of reforming and upgrading the transportation system while creating a new ministry to deal with aviation in an effort to free up the duties of the Ministry of Transportation.

Egypt's ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) announced in September 2002 the start of a congress billed by organizers as a key turning point in its history. The NDP was expected to adopt changes aimed at democratizing the party's structures and attracting new members. The changes were spearheaded by Gamal Mubarak, the son of President Hosni Mubarak. Although he has repeatedly denied that he wants to succeed his father as president, his activities fueled speculation; this was the first time in Egypt that an NDP congress has attracted so much attention.

NDP reform by itself would not have been enough to interest most Egyptians. But the country was in weeks prior dealing with a series of corruption scandals, involving the arrest of close associates of the three senior ministers who ran the NDP. The old guard, many said, was being undermined to make way for Gamal Mubarak. The speculation that the young Mubarak is being groomed to succeed his father was considered a hasty conclusion by many observers, though, who claimed it was the difficult regional situation and Egypt's faltering economy that had created a pressing need for political renewal.

Since the second Palestinian Intifada began in September 2000, Egypt has often been in the global news - loudly condemning Israeli policy while attempting to help create a more peaceful situation in the region. For more on this topic, please consult the "Foreign Relations" section of this Country Review.

Human rights concerns remained a major topic in Egypt during 2003. In early April 2003, a group of human rights and political activists in Egypt were calling for criminal charges against President Mubarak over his government's crackdown on protests against the United States-led war in Iraq.

The Hisham Mubarak Legal Center lodged a formal request with Egypt's prosecutor general based on claims that President Mubarak and government officials stopped a court-sanctioned anti-war protest, detained 50 people without any legal basis and arrested journalists. Government officials responded by saying that the use of force during anti-war rallies – which were reportedly especially fierce during the conflict's opening days - was necessary to prevent the protests from getting out of control.

This was not the last time that the Mubarak government was under fire over such incidents. In early November 2003, Human Rights Watch called on Egypt to investigate the alleged mistreatment and torture of people who protested against the United States-led war in Iraq the day after another large but relatively peaceful anti-war protest. Police allegedly made 800 arrests although most people were released within 24 hours. The New York-based group said police used excessive force to disperse the mass protest in Cairo that was held in March. Human Rights Watch also

alleged that following the arrest of hundreds, officers beat many detainees - some to the point of torture - and failed to give adequate medical care. The group also called on the Egyptian government to bring charges against those involved. "Plainclothes officers viciously attacked protesters with pipes and clubs, and arrested demonstrators and bystanders without cause," said Joe Stork, the group's Middle East and North Africa director. "Then the jailers beat those they considered to be the ringleaders."

(Note: President Mubarak exercises ultimate control in Egypt under the emergency laws passed in 1981 following the assassination of President Anwar Sadat. In January 2004, the president did announce the cancellation of seven important military orders issued under the emergency law. He defended the fact some orders were not annulled, citing them as necessary to the country's goal of protecting the homeland against terrorism.)

In late November 2003, Amnesty International issued a report that torture in Egyptian detention centers remained widespread and systematic despite appeals over the years to end torture. The report claimed there were at least seven cases in 2002 in which detainees were allegedly tortured to death. It also said that refugees and people held by the security services because of their sexual orientation were most at risk. Torture included electric shocks and beatings, as well as the suspension of detainees by the wrists or ankles, the group said.

Also, in November 2003, President Mubarak had to cut short a live televised speech and cancel two public appearances due to ill health. He was described as suffering from a "health crisis" while addressing parliament. His government claimed the crisis was due to severe flu and fever.

President Mubarak has no designated successor but, as mentioned above, is believed to be grooming his son to follow him as Egyptian leader. However, by January 2004, President Mubarak was dismissing reports that his youngest son, Gamal, may succeed him. Mubarak said that the republican system of government in Egypt did not allow for a succession. The fact that in more than 20 years in power, President Mubarak has never appointed a vice-president - the traditional route to the Egyptian presidency - has long caused concern over what might happen after his death.

In mid-February 2004, the Mubarak administration took another blow when some 15 human rights organizations said they would not cooperate with the new national council for human rights in Egypt established on Jan. 19, 2004. Former United Nations Secretary General Boutros Ghali was appointed to lead the council while the post of the deputy was assigned to former minister and legal expert Ahmad Kamal Abu al-Majd. The council itself was composed of university teachers and international law experts, and three activists in the area of human rights.

The non-governmental organizations explained they were not ready to cooperate with the council "as long as conditions depriving it from credibility continue," calling on the Egyptian government to lift the state of emergency imposed since 1981 and set the freedom of forming parties, trade

unions, and newspapers.

The decision for establishing this council was taken by the Egyptian parliament on June 15, 2003, under the condition that it would be affiliated to the parliament. Two-thirds of its members are elected while the other are appointed -- predominantly by the ruling democratic national party.

In October 2004, tourists -- most of them Israelis -- were the targets of bomb attacks at Taba on the Sinai peninsula. About 34 people were killed in the attack.

A month later in November 2004, Cairo, the capital city of Egypt, was the site of the funeral of longstanding Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat.

The first part of 2005 in Egypt was marked by protests and demonstrations throughout the capital of Cairo. Most of the protestors and demonstrators were either pro-reformists or opposition activists, often with a base of support among Muslim militants, who were determined to launch an anti-government movement against Mubarak's lock on power.

In February 2005, President Mubarak made the historic decision to open up the political process. In this regard, he called on parliament to craft changes to the constitution, which would allow multiple candidates to stand in direct democratic presidential elections.

By May 2005, Egypt's upper house of parliament had approved the blueprint for the constitutional changes, which would provide for the country's first multi-candidate presidential elections. The plan was yet to pass through the lower house for approval. Once approved, the blueprint would have to pass a public referendum ahead of the September 2005 election date.

Opposition figures criticized the plan, noting that the regulations set forth in the blueprint would exclude competitors to President Hosni Mubarak. Indeed, the regulations would prohibit religious groups from contesting elections. The religious base most strenuously opposes Mubarak's regime and has drawn support from anti-secular circles within Egypt. For his part, Mubarak had not announced his decision to run for another term.

At least 88 people were killed and over 200 injured in bomb attacks at the Egyptian resort of Sharm al-Sheikh on July 23, 2005. The first bomb attack took place at the Old Market, and was followed by two more in the area of Naama Bay. Although the majority of those killed were Egyptians, several foreigners were also among the victims.

At least two of the attacks were car bombings. The series of blasts occurred in succession, exploding only minutes apart. Occurring in the early hours of a Saturday morning when there was a lot of activity around the markets of the Red Sea resort area, they appeared intended to yield maximum devastation.

The worst hit area was apparently the Ghazala Gardens hotel in Naama Bay where a suicide car bomber apparently forced its way past the barrier at the hotel's entrance, even as security staff tried to stop him. A massive explosion followed, bringing down the front walls of the hotel, eventually leading to the building's collapse. Scores of people were trapped under the rubble. Another bomb went off at a parking area located near the Moevenpick Hotel and a number of nightclubs. In the Old Market area, the attacks killed a group of Egyptian workers gathered at a street cafe.

These terrorist attacks were regarded as the worst Egypt had experienced in decades. Taking place during the apex of the summer tourist season, they occurred on an extended holiday weekend that marks the anniversary of the 1952 Egyptian revolution.

There were early claims of responsibility on an Islamic website from a group called Abdullah Azzam Brigades, however, there was no verification of the veracity of the reports. An Egyptian Islamist group called Mujahideen also claimed responsibility for the attacks. In its statement, published on the Internet, it named five "martyrs" of "the blessed earthquake." It also claimed responsibility for previous attacks in Taba (mentioned above). Less than a year ago, as discussed above, other terrorist attacks took place at a resort to the north. Egyptian authorities have said that they could not confirm the claims of the group, but Egyptian Interior Minister Habib al-Adli noted that a connection between the two attacks had to be explored.

In the aftermath of the attacks at Sharm al-Sheikh, Egyptian security forces arrested 35 people. Among those detained were Bedouins who were to be questioned about their movement in the Sinai mountains. The area contains few paved roads, however, Bedouins use the desert routes between the mountainous terrain. Another possible lead was derived from reports about a group of Pakistanis who went missing from a hotel where they left their passports. Police were trying to locate the people whose passports remained in the custody of the hotel. Police also said they would investigate the details surrounding the recent purchase of explosives in a zone where quarrying and construction was ongoing.

The arrests followed a declaration by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to hunt down those responsible. Some political observers speculated that the violence was due to foreign policy, the Egyptian government's willingness to work with the West, and the secular government's estrangement from extremist Islamic elements. Others, however, suggested that the violence was intended to disrupt the upcoming elections.

On Sept. 7, 2005, Egyptians went to the polls for the country's first ever contested presidential election. Ten candidates were contesting the election, however, incumbent President Hosni Mubarak was expected to win. Despite this expectation, Mubarak was apparently campaigning hard for his election, using Egypt's economic progress as the main subject of his election platform.

Critics of Mubarak -- Egypt's leader for 24 years -- meanwhile accused him of putting forth a farce of an election, aimed at mitigating against pressure from the United States for democratic reforms. Yet even if the result of the election could easily be predicted in advance, the election process allowed Egyptians to themselves agitate for more democratic reforms, effectively evoking popular interest among the citizenry. Notably, weekly demonstrations by activists were ongoing during the election season. Protestors happily said that this was the first time they were allowed to freely demonstrate against those in power. Key among the activist groups was a young political movement called Kifaya - Arabic for "Enough" - which strongly campaigned against a new term for Mubarak. Other challenges to Mubarak's presidency came from the militant Islamic factions of Egyptian society, which eschew the president's moderate, globally integrative and secular stances on policy.

On Sept. 9, 2005, official reports concluded that Mubarak had won the election with 88.6 percent of the votes cast, thus propelling him to a sixth term in office. The low turnout of less than 25 percent of the electorate, however, dampened both the legitimacy of the election, and contradicted the assertions days earlier that the electorate was energized by the democratic process and the instituted reforms.

In November 2005, voters in Egypt again went to the polls to take part in the first round of a parliamentary election. In this round, voters chose between 1,500 candidates for around 180 of the 444 seats in the People's Assembly. Later rounds would decide the representation of the other 18 governorates. Final results were not expected until the close of the year. Overall, Mubarak's own National Democratic Party (NDP) was expected to win a string majority of the seats at stake. The election was also regarded as a measure of the government's promise of reforms geared toward increased democratization.

President Mubarak's government promised a free and fair election, but Mehdi Akef -- the leader of the opposition Muslim Brotherhood -- accused Mubarak's NDP of widespread fraud. Ibrahim Hamad, an Interior Ministry spokesman, dismissed the accusation, asserting that there had been no significant irregularities. Although the group, of the militant Islamic variety, has been banned in Egypt, it has fielded individual candidates with ties to their platform. The group opposes President Hosni Mubarak, whose National Democratic Party was expected to continue its dominant hold over parliament.

In the second phase of legislative elections in Egypt later in the month, the Islamic party Muslim Brotherhood claimed victory over about 13 seats. If this claim turned out to be correct, then the Brotherhood would have more than doubled its representation in parliament. That would make the group the biggest opposition force in the legislative branch. The November run-off elections in Egypt were marred by reports of attacks on voters and election workers, mass arrests and actions by police intended to block voters from entering polling stations in areas where opposition support ran high.

In Egypt's second largest city of Alexandria, police close all the roads surrounding one polling station, and later only allowed a handful of people to get through each hour. In the village of Hayatim in the Nile Delta, a gang of more than 20 people used machetes, sticks and guns to threaten and attack those allied with the opposition group, Muslim Brotherhood, outside polling stations. In Bolqina, a stronghold of the Muslim Brotherhood, supporters of the ruling National Democrat Party (NDP) fired guns in the air and attacked voters, including women. People on the ground charged that the security forces did nothing to help voters who were being attacked, and the government-appointed mayor of the city placed the blame on the opposition group for being fanatics. Meanwhile, the Independent Committee on Election Monitoring (ICEM) said that both sides were responsible for the violence. Spokespersons for the Muslim Brotherhood said that up to 600 of its members were arrested in the latest phase of the elections, however, Egyptian authorities said that only 150 people had been detained.

A third phase of the elections was scheduled for December 2005. In those polls, the ruling NDP and its allies held on to their significant parliamentary majority. That said, the Muslim Brotherhood candidates won a stunning 20 percent of the parliamentary seats -- a record number for an opposition faction. The voting was again marred by violent clashes between police and supporters of the opposition Muslim Brotherhood.

In mid-April 2006, members of Egypt's Islamic and Coptic Christian populations were embroiled in violent clashes in the city of Alexandria over the course of several days. The funeral ceremonies for some of the victims of the clashes resulted in further violence. Egyptian officials placed the primary blame for the attacks on religious extremists. For their part, however, the minority Coptic Christian population said the government expended limited effort to ensure their protection from Muslim militants. They also complained of discrimination, abuse and a lack of accountability for those carrying out such acts. As a group, Coptic Christians trace their ancestry to ancient Egyptians and today are doctrinally fairly similar to the Eastern Orthodox rite although their denomination broke off from the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches in the 5th Century.

The month of April saw continued violence in Egypt. Triple attacks by suicide bombers in the resort town of Dahab in the Sinai left at least 23 people dead and over 60 people injured on April 24, 2006. Most of those who died were Egyptians although there were three foreigners among the list of those killed. The timing and location of the attacks appeared to have been specifically chosen for maximum impact. First, the targetted area on the coast of Aqaba was popular with tourists, while the timing of the attacks ensued in the early evening when people would be frequenting dining spots.

Two days later, two suicide bombers launched attacks against foreign peacekeepers and security forces in the region of Sinai Peninsula, although there were no casualties. In the first incident, the attack took place close to Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) headquarters in al-Goral. The

attacker detonated the bomb strapped to his body just as members of the MFO -- who have been stationed in Egypt since the establishment of the peace deal with Israel -- were passing by in a car. Inside the vehicle, there were two international observers from Norway and New Zealand respectively, as well as an Egyptian customs officer and an immigration officer. In the second incident, which took place about 45 minutes after the first one, the attacker attempted to detonate his bomb close to a police vehicle.

Note: As with other such attacks in Egypt, there was speculation that those responsible were likely to be Sinai-based militants who have had a record in recent years of bombing tourist resorts. Indeed, in July 2005, close to 60 people were killed in attacks at Sharm el-Sheikh. In the fall of 2004, a bombing at a resort at Taba left 34 people dead.

In the aftermath of the latest terrorist attacks in the Gulf of Aqaba, Egypt's parliament agreed to extend the country's emergency laws for another two years. The legislation provides security forces with broad powers to arrest and detain people without charge.

The decision made by parliament at the close of April 2006 to extend this legislation raised the ire of some opposition groups claiming that the legislation was used to violate civil and human rights. Several opposition parliamentarians protested the move in session by wearing black and white sashes emblazoned with the words, "No to the emergency law." Mohamed Habib -- the deputy head of Egypt's main opposition enclave, the Muslim Brotherhood -- complained, "They [the government] use it [the legislation] to silence and oppress the opposition."

In May 2006, the government also put back into effect the Law on Political Rights. This law introduced criminal penalties for journalists found guilty of publishing "false information" against the government.

Emergency legislation has been in existence in Egypt since the assassination of President Anwar Sadat in 1981. In 2005, President Hosni Mubarak promised the abolition of these law during his re-election campaign. Given the reality of the security situation in Egypt, the government has argued that such laws could not be fully abandoned. Indeed, Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif asserted that the laws were crucially important after the latest bout of terrorist violence. Nazif expressed his commitment that the legislation would not be used for any other purpose than to protect the citizenry, secure the nation, and combat terrorism.

In July 2006, several Egyptian newspapers suspended publication for a day in an act of protest. As well, journalists and editors took to the streets to participate in direct protests. These actions were intended to bring attention to a new law that could prevent journalists from investigating corruption. The matter came to the fore when new legislation was drafted making it a crime to challenge the financial integrity of individuals. Those doing so would be subject to imprisonment.

The new legislation appeared to contradict a commitment made by President Hosni Mubarak two years earlier that prison sentences for media offences would be abolished. That commitment had been regarded as a symbol of Egypt's movement toward democratization. However, the new draft legislation essentially reversed that move. Moreover, the actual law would serve to allow those in power to indulge in corrupt activities with impunity.

Although debate commenced in parliament as regards the law, there was little expectation that it could be defeated. The ruling party has commanded a strong majority in the legislative body and legislators have generally eschewed the intrusion of the investigative media into their activities. Also contributing to situation has been the fact that the West, and notably, the United States, has become increasingly silent about the notion of democratic reform in Egypt

In March 2007, more than 100 Islamist parliamentarians walked out of Egypt's legislative chambers to protest proposed constitutional changes. The legislators charged that the changes would both undermine basic rights and repress the opposition. On the other side of the equation, the government argued that the changes to the constitution would increase democratic practices and bolster the rule of law in the country.

At issue in the proposed changes to 34 article of the constitution were the following items: a prohibition on the formation of religiously-based political parties, the adoption of a new election law, the elimination of the need for judicial supervision of every ballot box, and the establishment of broad security powers, including the drafting of a new anti-terrorism law to replace the emergency legislation which has been in place since 1981.

Mohammed Saad al-Katatni, the head of the Muslim Brotherhood in parliament, explained the protest saying, "We have decided to boycott these sessions to clear out conscience... and let the National [Democratic] Party bear the responsibility before the people." The Muslim Brotherhood was reacting to the prospect that all their political advances would effectively be halted.

The changes, which were approved in principle on March 18, 2007, were successfully passed through the legislative branch, which has been predominantly composed of members of President Hosni Mubarak's governing party. The changes would become law only after being put to a referendum. Later in the month, Egyptians were set to vote in that referendum. At the close of the month, Egyptians voted in favor of the constitutional changed in a national referendum.

June 2007 saw elections to Egypt's upper parliamentary house. In those elections, the country's ruling NDP enjoyed a landslide victory. Indeed, Egyptian newspapers declared that the NDP won 77 seats in the Majlis al-Shura or Advisory Council. Although there are 264 seats in the Advisory Council, two thirds (176) are directly elected while the rest are appointed by the president. Elections take place on a rotational basis, with half the elected seats (88) up for grabs every three years. Observers said that the elections were marred by low voter turnout, some irregularities and

random violence. Later in the year, the NDP voted in favor of President Hosni Mubarak retaining his role as party leader.

Meanwhile, the issue of media freedom took center stage in October 2007 when seven journalists were jailed and one editor was placed on trial. Opposition and independent journalists loudly protested such action and accused the government of harassment. Nevertheless, in March 2008, Ibrahim Eissa, the editor of the Al-Dustur newspaper, was found guilty of reporting "false information" and was consequently sentenced to six months in jail. At issue was accusation that the newspaper reported unsubstantiated rumors about President Mubarak's health. Civil and human rights groups decried the ruling and urged that the media law be changed.

(Note: As noted above, in May 2006, the government renewed the Emergency Law # 162 of 1958. This law prohibits demonstrations and public rallies thus effectively limiting the freedoms of assembly, association, and expression. The government also put back into effect the Law on Political Rights. This law introduced criminal penalties for journalists found guilty of publishing "false information" against the government.)

In April 2008, 25 key members of the militant Muslim Brotherhood were sentenced to jail time by military courts in a case that centered on the group's finances and finding. The case appeared to be linked with a political crackdown in which 800 opposition activists were arrested.

Also around that time, a proposed nationwide strike intended to protest increasing inflation and low wages failed to gain much steam, to the consternation of unions. But some months later in November 2008, President Mubarak's governing NDP move to assuage citizens with a move aimed at helping Egyptians. At issue was the decision to privatize some state entities and provide shares in the companies freely to citizens. That said, the Egyptian government would nonetheless keep majority stakes in strategically important assets such as transportation, tourism and metals.

On Feb. 22, 2009, a bomb exploded at a open air café in Egyptian capital of Cairo, killing at least one French citizen and injuring several other foreigners -- most French and Germans. Some Egyptians were also among the victims. The attack took place in the Khan al-Khalili area of the capital, which has typically been popular with tourists. Police said that a crudely-made explosive device was thrown from either a balcony or a passing motorcycle but there was no word at the time of writing as to who was responsible.

Elections were held on June 1, 2010, in Egypt for a third of the seats in the legislative Shura council -- the upper house of the Egyptian parliament. The ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) was hoping to secure its majority, while the country's biggest opposition group, the Muslim Brotherhood, was hoping to gain a footing in the Shura Council upper house. Technically, the extremist militant Muslim Brotherhood had been barred from contesting elections and participating in Egypt's political scene; accordingly, candidates affiliated with it had to run in elections as

independents. Ahead of these elections, independents affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood held control over a fifth of the lower house seats, but none in the upper house. Thus, there was an impetus for a good performance at the polls in these elections.

Early indications were that the ruling party would have the advantage, largely due to the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood intended to field only 12 candidates, in an election with only a limited number of seats at stake, and which has been notorious for low voter turnout. Ultimately, the election results showed that none of the independent candidates affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood won seats. For its part, leaders from within the Muslim Brotherhood claimed that the election result had been rigged, while its supporters launched charges of irregularities, and complained that they had been blocked from the polls by backers of the NDP. Independent election monitors concurred that the vote went off in a flawed manner, with reports emerging about fraud, pre-filled ballots, invalid voting cards and vote-buying. There were also reports that the police prevented people from voting in certain areas. That being said, even with these allegations to consider, election officials said that the outcome was not impacted since there were so few independent candidates on the ballot in the first place in comparison to NDP candidates.

Ultimately, the Higher Election Commission of Egypt confirmed that the ruling NDP won 80 out of 88 seats contested in the Shura Council mid-term elections. Four seats were won by four opposition parties respectively -- al-Ghad, al-Geel, al-Tagammu and the Nasserist. Another four seats were won by independent candidates.

Parliamentary elections were scheduled to take place on November 28, 2010 in Egypt with the seats in the "Majlis ash-Shaab" or People's Assembly at stake. Once composed of 454 seats, with 444 elected by popular vote and ten appointed by the president, the People's Assembly was now expanded to 518 seats with 64 seats allocated for female candidates and ten seats appointed by the president. Since the previous elections in 2005, the People's Assembly has been dominated by the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP). While the Muslim Brotherhood has the distinction of being the largest opposition group in Egypt, it has been officially banned for decades. Its members contest elections as independents and won 88 seats in the 2005 elections.

As part of the 2010 election campaign, some candidates presented voters with slaughtered meat -- an apparent means of currying favor with prospective supporters at the polls. While such methods would be viewed as unorthodox by Western standards, as noted by Ali Hassan, a media spokesperson for the High Elections Commission, Egypt has no prohibitions against such promotional measures. Meat was not the only campaign strategy; written paraphernalia and megaphone messages were also part of the effort by candidates to get their message out and garner popular support. But not all such efforts were able to transpire without external interference. According to Human Rights Watch, there were incidences of arbitrary arrests and voter intimidation. Indeed, according to a statement by Joe Stark of the human rights group: "The combination of restrictive laws, intimidation and arbitrary arrests is making it extremely difficult for

citizens to choose freely the people they want to represent them in parliament." He continued, "Repression by the government makes free and fair elections extremely unlikely this weekend."

As early results came available, indications pointed to a poor performance by Egypt's most powerful opposition movement, the Islamic fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood. Leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood appeared to give credibility to reports that independent members of parliament aligned with the movement could well be voted out of office, in a virtual sweeping victory for the ruling party. With the Muslim Brotherhood claiming widespread fraud, protests began to break out across the country. Those aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood said that several people had died in these protests. Officials of the Egyptian government, however, dismissed claims of vote fraud and denied that there had been deaths as a result of the mass demonstrations.

On December 5, 2010, voters in Egypt cast votes in the run-off elections. With the two main opposition bloc now boycotting the vote, it was almost certain that the ruling NDP was poised for an overwhelming victory. The NDP was ahead having won an overwhelming 209 of the 222 seats already decided in the first round. Now with the opposition electing to stay out of the equation, the NDP would undoubtedly extend that lead with the rest of the seats to be determined. A day after the second round, with 508 of the elected parliamentary seats at stake (518 in total including the 10 seats appointed by the president), the result showed the ruling NDP now in control of 419 of the 508 elected seats -- an ultra-super majority in parliament. While the Independent Coalition for Elections' Observations warned that the legitimacy of the election result was at risk due to reports of violence, fraud and other irregularities, Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif dismissed these claims and maintained that there had been no interference into the integrity of the elections by the Egyptian authorities.

On December 31, 2010, Islamic extremist militants attacked a Christian Coptic Church in the Egyptian port city of Alexandria, killing 21 people and wounding at least 70 others. The apparent suicide bombing took place during a New Year's Eve church service at the al-Qiddissin church. The Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's Islamic opposition movement, decried the attack and said that no religion should sanction such bloodshed. Indeed, blame soon rested on al a-Qaida allied terror group, Islamic State of Iraq, which has demanded that Coptic Christians be exiled from Egypt. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak railed against global jihadist terrorists, and blamed the "foreign hands" seeking to destabilize Egypt in a televised address to the nation. The Egyptian president also called on his country's Muslim and Christian populations to stand united against the act of terrorism. President Mubarak said that the act of terrorism was aimed at sparking religious and sectarian strife saying, "This sinful act is part of a series of efforts to drive a wedge between Copts and Muslims." That being said, Coptic Christians in Egypt have complained of insufficient protection in a country -- and, indeed, a region of the world -- where attacks on minority religions and sects have increased. Perhaps not surprisingly, given the heightened level of tensions, clashes broke out between Christians and Muslims.

Special Report

"Nile Revolution" sweeps across Egypt

Summary:

Protesters took to the streets in Egypt in a furious display of anger, demanding the resignation of President Mubarak. After days of protests, President Mubarak named a deputy, instituted a new government, and said he would stay on as president but would not seek re-election in September 2011. That timeline did not satisfy the protesters and the demonstrations continued, ultimately going from peaceful demonstrations to violent clashes as fierce battles with pro-Mubarak factions ensued. Meanwhile, journalists were targeted for attacks and suspicion fell on governing authorities for trying to silence the media. Protesters eyed a "day of departure" for Mubarak but the Egyptian president, in an interview, made it clear that his exit would mean chaos for his country. Strikes and protests continued until on Feb. 11, 2011, Egyptian President Mubarak stepped down from office, one day after powers were transferred to Vice President Suleiman. But it was the military who claimed power and were now in charge of the affairs of the country. Indeed, the military of Egypt announced it would guarantee the democratic aspirations of the Egyptian people and turned their guns and tanks away from the crowd at the presidential palace. Protesters in the streets celebrated with joy and the military announced a plan for constitutional reform and a path towards democratic elections. See "Alert" below for details.

In Detail:

Since Jan. 25, 2011, Egypt has been gripped by anti-governmental demonstrations. On that first day of demonstrations, tens of thousands of angry protesters took to the streets in cities across Egypt in a stunning explosion of rage. The protesters railed against President Hosni Mubarak and called for "revolution," as they made their way to the parliament buildings. Several thousands of protesters held sway in Tahrir Square in the heart of the capital city of Cairo. Two people died in Suez while a policeman was reported to have been killed in Cairo at the start of the revolt. More than 10,000 protesters gathered in Alexandria, Ismailiya, and other towns and cities. Police dressed in riot gear used water cannons and tear gas in an attempt to disperse the Cairo crowds; however, the protesters in the streets did not halt the uprisings easily or immediately. Several protesters threw stones at police in a show of defiance. The state security apparatus was reported to have been caught flat-footed and unsure of how to deal with the popular revolt. It was just in the late hours of the night that the crowds had dwindled to only around 5,000 that police were able to subdue the demonstrators.

On Jan. 26, 2011, the popular revolt continued, albeit with a smaller number of protesters. Media footage showed infuriated protesters using knives to cut down posters of President Mubarak. The security forces were taking a harder line against the protesters than the previous day, breaking up

demonstrations in central Cairo and in Suez, sometimes using batons to beat protesters. The previous day, Egyptian police were on the scene and appeared unsure in their dealings with the protesters. Now, a day later, President Mubarak's state security service took the lead in trying to again subdue the protesters. The Interior Ministry also issued a directive saying that public gatherings would not be tolerated, and those participating in anti-government rallies would be prosecuted.

Protests in Egypt had been rare occurrences where President Mubarak -- who has ruled since 1981 -- has shown little patience for political dissent. To that end, reports had emerged from within Egypt that Twitter, a social networking website, and a number of mobile communications networks, had been shut down in Cairo. Suspicion quickly fell on the government as the likely cause of the communications blockade. For its part, the Egyptian government dismissed claims that it had curtailed telecommunications in that country amidst the apparent popular revolt. Meanwhile, hundreds of people were arrested across the country in a crackdown against the protests.

The anti-government demonstrations appeared to have been the result of an Internet campaign on the social networking website, Facebook, which for called a "day of revolt," to register discontent over torture, poverty, corruption and unemployment in Egypt. The "day of revolt" was itself inspired by events in Tunisia where a popular uprising drove long-serving President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali from office in that country. Since that time, anti-government protests have been emerging across the region -- in Jordan, Yemen, and Algeria -- as citizens of these countries protested the often-autocratic governance in Arab regimes, demanding that their voices be heard. As has been the case across the region, people have also shown their frustration with the social and economic problems plaguing their countries -- from rising food prices to corruption and unemployment. In the case of Egypt, about 40 percent of that country's population lives on US\$2 a day.

It should be noted that the core of Egyptian revolt appeared motivated not solely by these common social and economic problems affecting the region. There seemed to be a strong sentiment of frustration and anger over the political repression in Mubarak's Egypt, along with a sense of disillusionment over the lack of inspiration and vision of the type once offered by his political predecessors, such as Sadat and Nasser. Moreover, protesters were not members of the extremist Islamic ranks, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, which had typically been the main opposition force in Egypt. Indeed, the core of the Egyptian protesters were not people identifying with extremist Islam; rather, they seemed to be from the middle class of Egyptian society, often members of the intelligentsia, with access to computers and Internet -- not a common condition in a country mired by illiteracy and a higher level of poverty.

In these myriad regards, while the protesters in Egypt appeared to have much in common with Tunisia's anti-government protesters, there have been some notable differences, such as the fact that Tunisia is home to a wider, more educated middle class, compared to Egypt. Thus, it would appear that the anti-government protests were emanating from an upper echelon of educated Egyptian society, eager for the loosening of the autocratic reins from the political elite, inspired by

the winds of change blowing from Tunisia, and hopeful for increased freedom and a more democratic society. One key figure representing the intelligentsia at the heart of the revolt was Mohammed El Baradei, the former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency and a Nobel peace laureate. El Baradei has more recently taken on the role of opposition figure on the Egyptian political scene, and sanctioned the protests, while calling for a more progressive, open, Egyptian society.

Assuming that the political strife eventually gave way to calm, would Egypt return to the status quo? Would the power base, led by President Mubarak, continue to carry out a crackdown aimed at quelling the burst of protests? Could such a crackdown actually exterminate the burgeoning spirit of revolt gripping the country, and indeed, the region? Stated in colloquial terms, could the proverbial genie be returned to the bottle and capped?

As illustrated by the case of Tunisia, the Egyptian citizenry's mass discontent and rage against President Mubarak's regime, along with their demand for change, may well require real transformations in the future. The people of Egypt and the wider region have made it clear that they have high expectations that actual policy reforms will ensue, that greater freedom will win the day, and that rule by the prevailing political elites in Arab countries will end. Nevertheless, as has been seen by similar popular uprisings that brought down regimes in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan (notably out of the Middle East but still subject to post-uprising political discontent), celebration today can often be followed by disappointment and disillusionment tomorrow over the slow pace of change.

Change in a country such as Egypt may yet be elusive, as President Mubarak was unlikely to quickly or willingly step down from power, following in the footsteps of Ben Ali in Tunisia. Indeed, it was far more likely that President Mubarak would respond to the political crisis as if it were a security threat.

As the events in Egypt first transpired, United States Secretary of State Clinton warned that the whole Arab world should heed the call for reform. Certainly, the post-colonial structure of the Arab world in the Middle East and the Maghreb could well be affected by events that have transpired in once-stable Tunisia and Egypt. With a popular uprising yielding seeming transformational results in Tunisia, would that example inspire such an end in Egypt? The answer to that question could have serious geopolitical implications in the future, especially since Mubarak's regime in Egypt -- however unsavory to many at home -- has been a strong ally of the West. Should the Mubarak regime fall in Egypt, there have been fears that the power chasm could be filled by the likes of the Islamic extremist Muslim Brotherhood. While that group has not been involved in this revolt gripping Egypt, it could well take the opportunity in the future to seize the reins of power. It should be noted, though, that it would be quite challenging for an extremist enclave to find long-term common ground with the progress-oriented protest base in Egypt.

On Jan. 26, 2011, United States Secretary of State Clinton expressed the view that Egypt was

being faced with an opportunity. She said that Egypt should consider instituting policies aimed at improving the lives of the Egyptian people, and opening up the country to democratic reform. As well, the Obama administration in the United States urged the Egyptian government to end its prohibition on demonstrations. To these ends, Secretary of State Clinton said, "We urge the Egyptian authorities not to prevent peaceful protests or block communications including on social media sites." She continued, "We believe strongly that the Egyptian government has an important opportunity at this moment in time to implement political, economic and social reforms to respond to the legitimate needs and interests of the Egyptian people."

Speaking from an airport in Vienna, Austria, the aforementioned El Baradei echoed Secretary of State Clinton's call for political and social transformation in Egypt, saying that his country had "no other option" but to change. With the likely intent of quelling anxieties about a possible power chasm (discussed above), ElBaradei offered himself up as a potential transitional leader, should the revolt sweeping Egypt actually end in Mubarak's exit. In an interview with the media, ElBaradei said, "If [people] want me to lead the transition, I will not let them down."

Of course, such an outcome remained in the realm of the theoretical as protests continued to take place for another day, as more people were reported to have died, and as mass action was expected to take hold in Egypt following Friday prayers on Jan. 28, 2011, despite the prevailing prohibition against protests.

Cautioning the Egyptian government to act wisely, El Baradei warned that a violent crackdown by the Egyptian security apparatus would yield only further violence and potential bloodshed. ElBaradei continued, "I continue to call on the regime to understand that they better listen and listen quickly, not use violence and understand that change has to come. There's no other option." As Mohammed el Baradei prepared to make his way to Cairo, he was reported to have said in an interview with the British publication, *The Guardian*, "I'm sending a message to *The Guardian* and to the world that Egypt is being isolated by a regime on its last legs."

By Jan. 28, 2011, President Mubarak, who had not been seen in public since the start of the protests, had ordered an indefinite curfew and deployed elite security forces and the military to carry out a further crackdown on protesters as they prepared for a new round of demonstrations following Friday prayers. These efforts appeared to be ineffective; according to reports from Al-Jazeera on the ground in Egypt, the protesters managed to storm many government buildings, set fire to the Cairo headquarters of the ruling National Democratic Party, and had supposedly taken control of the state media company.

At the same time, the Internet, mobile phone, and social networking websites in particular were all experiencing widespread disruptions. However, those disruptions were having little effect on the protests since interested citizens were already in the streets of major towns and cities, defying the curfew and bans on public rallies, as they participated in the mass anti-government action.

In what could only be considered her strongest statement on behalf of the Obama administration, United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that the United States government was "deeply concerned" about the use of force against protesters. She called on all sides to avoid resorting to violence and demanded that telecommunications service be restored. Meanwhile, White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs reiterated the United States' support for Egypt while avoiding expressing support for the Mubarak regime. Gibbs also warned that the United States would be forced to reconsider aid to Egypt, should force be used against the people attempting to express their democratic aspirations.

Meanwhile, the death toll in Egypt was systematically rising and more than 100 people were reported to have died in the protests. In the late hours of Jan. 28, 2011, as noted above, the compound housing the headquarters of the ruling National Democratic Party was burning. As well, the headquarters of the ruling party in Luxor, Upper Egypt, was also on fire. Efforts to save the antiquities in the National Museum were initially thought to be successful; however, some of the Cairo museum's most historically valuable items were subsequently found damaged by looters. Eyewitnesses said that "thugs" associated with the Egyptian regime's security services were using government-issued weapons against people as they looted varied interests in Cairo. As well, thousands of prisoners escaped jails after overpowering their guards. Reports on the ground suggested there was no official police presence in Cairo anymore.

In the late hours of Jan. 28, 2011, President Hosni Mubarak had given a national address dealing with the revolt gripping Egypt. President Mubarak said he had called on his cabinet to resign and promised that reforms would be instituted in response to the call for change from the protesters. He said, "We aspire for more democracy, more effort to combat unemployment and poverty and combat corruption." President Mubarak additionally defended the crackdown by security forces.

In response to President Mubarak's address and the resignation of his entire cabinet, the crowds in the streets appeared unmoved and continued to call for his resignation, while defying yet another government-imposed curfew and as they took to the streets in droves. To be sure, it was clear that Mubarak's words did not satisfy the people in the streets audaciously demanding political and social transformation in Egypt.

At the same time, the Obama administration indicated that it was disappointed by the Egyptian leader's statements, which lacked a strong commitment to democratic reform, to dialogue, and to improving the lives of the Egyptian people. State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said via Twitter that the United States wanted to see Mubarak fulfill his pledges of reform rather than simply make symbolic changes. He noted, "The Egyptian government can't reshuffle the deck and then stand pat. President Mubarak's words pledging reform must be followed by action."

United States President Barack Obama himself weighed into the equation. Following a 30-minute conversation with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, President Obama described that exchange as follows: "I told him he has a responsibility to give meaning to those words; to take concrete steps

and actions that deliver on that promise." President Obama also called on President Mubarak to refrain from using violence against the protesters. President Obama said, "Violence will not address the grievances of the Egyptian people, and suppressing ideas never succeeds in making them go away." He continued, "All governments must maintain power through consent, not coercion." The United Kingdom, France, and Germany issued a joint statement echoing the United States' call for the Egyptian regime not to resort to a harsh crackdown, and urging democratic elections.

There had been some criticism that President Obama was only now taking a strong stand against Mubarak, however, the United States was situated in a difficult space. If President Mubarak felt entirely abandoned by the United States and the West, he could well decide that he has no reason not to order the military to open fire on protesters, in a bid to hold onto power. At the broader level, the geopolitical stakes were high. Despite his autocratic tendencies, President Mubarak has been a strong ally of the United States, the West, and Israel. A future Egyptian regime could be hostile to the United States, it could augur the end of Egypt's peace deal with Israel, and it could result in the loss of a key partner in the global effort to rid the world of the threat of Islamic Jihadist terrorism. Indeed, Egypt has been a vital ally in the volatile Middle East region even since the 1978 peace agreement with Israel was forged in 1978.

By Jan. 29, 2011, there was some further movement from President Mubarak's regime with the inauguration of the head of Egyptian intelligence, Omar Suleiman, as vice president. Suleiman was viewed as an acceptable option to take on the reins of power by power brokers in Egypt and internationally, given his professional credibility. However, to protesters in Egypt, he has nonetheless been viewed as a continuation of the "old guard" by people desperate for a substantial break with the past. In a related move, former Aviation Minister Ahmad Shafiq was appointed to be the new prime minister and was tasked with forming a new government. These two appointments opened the door for speculation that President Mubarak was facilitating a succession plan; the rumor circulating that his two sons, Gamal and Aala, had flown to London, only bolstered that view. On the other hand, the military credentials of both Suleiman and Shafiq -- in contrast to the technocratic credentials of the now-resigned cabinet -- could potentially indicate that the regime's priority had moved to security, and succession was not a consideration at all.

Former IAEA chief and opposition leader Mohamed El Baradei had in the interim maintained a low profile; earlier reports indicated that he had been placed under house arrest. That being said, ElBaradei did offer the following view: "We are seeking a change of regime. President Mubarak should step down. We should head towards a democratic state through a new government and free democratic elections...The whole world should realize that the Egyptians are not going home until their demands are realized...We are talking about taking down the Pharaonic dictatorship."

On Jan. 30, 2011, as crowds again gathered in Tahrir Square in Cairo, the Egyptian military had staged a demonstration of its strength as air force jets flew over the main gathering spot for the protesters, and tanks rolled through the streets. Mohamed ElBaradei -- now released from house arrest -- arrived at the venue to address the demonstrators. As reported by Reuters, he said, "You

have taken back your rights and what we have begun cannot go back. I bow to the people of Egypt in respect. I ask of you patience, change is coming in the next few days." Meanwhile, pressure was mounting on President Mubarak, as exemplified by United States Secretary of State Clinton's statements in an interview with ABC News that the Obama administration urged an "orderly transition" of power in Egypt and that the United States hoped that transformation in Egypt would bring a democratic government.

On Feb. 1, 2011, as the ranks of the Egyptian protesters increased to numbering in the millions, President Mubarak on state television said he would not stand for re-election in September, 2011. President Mubarak promised that Egypt would see constitutional reform. Still, President Mubarak indicated that he did not intend on stepping down immediately and would carry out the end of his current presidential term. He said that the rest of his time in power would be spent ensuring a peaceful transition of power from himself to his successor. To this end, the Egyptian leader said, "My first priority is to restore peace and stability in our country, to ensure the peaceful transition of leadership, and to ensure that the responsibility goes to whomever the people of Egypt choose in the next election. I do not intend to stand for election again." President Mubarak also touted his contributions to Egypt and said that he had no intention of seeking exile outside of his home country.

Reports emerged from the Associated Press that the Obama administration in the United States had urged President Mubarak to look toward an orderly transition of power and Egypt's transformation to genuine democracy. President Obama dispatched a special envoy, Frank Wisner, a former United States ambassador to Egypt, to deliver that message. According to the Associated Press, Wisner -- who had close ties with the Egyptian leader -- was instructed to use a "light touch," in pointing out that Mubarak had reached the end of his tenure as president of Egypt, and that he would not be wise to try to extend it further. President Obama was reportedly cognizant of the need for President Mubarak's graceful exit from the political scene. In a related development, the Obama administration was opening discussions with various opposition figures, including ElBaradei, with an eye on the future political playing field in Egypt.

Also on Feb. 1, 2011, President Obama gave a brief address on the situation in Egypt, primarily calling for President Mubarak to immediately begin the process of transitioning the country to a new, more democratic, government. President Obama said, "It is my belief that an orderly transition must be meaningful, it must be peaceful and it must begin now." The news network, Al-Jazeera, noted that President Obama's emphasis on the need for immediate movement in the process of transformation was significant, as it indicated that Mubarak was unlikely to be able to sustain his presidency for the eight to nine month period until scheduled elections in September 2011. That being said, President Obama stopped short of expressly calling for President Mubarak resign immediately, instead emphasizing the point that it was not up to the United States to select Egypt's leaders.

President Obama spoke about an inclusive and participatory process of change, saying, "Furthermore, the process must include a broad spectrum of Egyptian voices and opposition parties. It should lead to elections that are free and fair. And, it should result in a government that is not only grounded in democratic principles but is also responsive to the aspirations of the Egyptian people." The United States leader also lauded the "passion and dignity" of the protesters, characterizing them as an "inspiration" to international community. President Obama additionally issued what might be viewed as a strong statement in support of self-determination saying, "To the people of Egypt, particularly the young people of Egypt, I want to be clear. We hear your voices." He continued, "I have an unyielding belief that you will determine your own destiny and seize the promise of a better future for your children and grandchildren." President Obama's address signified his country's delicate balancing act of respecting the United States' long-standing alliance with Egypt, while also being responsive to the democratic aspirations of the Egyptian people.

On Feb. 2, 2011, clashes broke out between pro-Mubarak and pro-democracy demonstrators in the Egyptian capital city of Cairo. The arrival of pro-Mubarak supporters seemed to be the result of some planning since they were able to raise banners emblazoned with slogans such as, "Thirty Years of Stability, Nine Days of Anarchy." The situation turned violent as the respective cadres of protesters hurled stones at one another in Tahrir Square. Al-Jazeera reported that petrol bombs were also being thrown into the square from the surrounding buildings and gunshots were heard periodically in the downtown area of Cairo.

According to Al-Jazeera, the military did nothing to stop pro-Mubarak supporters from entering Tahrir Square with knives and other rough weapons as they advanced on anti-government protesters. In some cases, anti-government protesters were dragged from the center of the square and placed into the hands of security forces. Some of these pro-Mubarak factions arrived on the scene on top of horses and camels and stormed through the crowds of people. Opposition groups blamed the Mubarak regime for dispatching its supporters and some of its police dressed in plain clothes, which they characterized as "thugs." However, anti-government protesters were responsible for attacking some riders on horseback, at least one of whom was removed from the scene unconscious. One United States official said to CNN's John King that the Egyptian military's lack of intervention on the night of Feb. 2, 2011, could be interpreted either as the military's insistence on maintaining neutrality, or a disturbing signal that the military had sided with the regime.

Deaths and injuries were reported, according to the Egyptian Health Ministry, indicating an ever-rising list of casualties. A reporter for Al-Arabiya was among the victims of stabbings, while CNN correspondent Anderson Cooper and his crew were attacked en route to Tahrir Square. CNN correspondent Hala Gorani described a harrowing scene in Cairo from which she only escaped thanks to "the goodwill of strangers." On the scene, victims were being treated at a makeshift clinic at a nearby mosque.

Opposition leader El Baradei expressed grave concern about the chaotic scenario in Egypt as

follows: "I'm extremely concerned, I mean this is yet another symptom, or another indication, of a criminal regime using criminal acts. My fear is that it will turn into a bloodbath." Meanwhile, despite the disturbing turn of events from peaceful protests to chaos, anti-government protesters insisted that they would not waver on their goal to force President Mubarak to resign. They continued to demand that Mubarak step down from power, chanting "Erhal, Erhal" ("Leave, Leave").

In the late hours of Feb. 2, 2011, Al-Jazeera reported that a cadre of pro-Mubarak supporters crashed through a group of pro-democracy supporters on the famed "6th of October bridge." That bridge was turning into a site of conflict between the two sides as pro-regime supporters aimed to push back anti-government protesters.

The two sides continued to engage in confrontations well into the day on Feb. 3, 2011. The scene took a particularly ominous turn as journalists were now being expressly targeted for attack. Two Al-Jazeera reporters were attacked by a gang of thugs in Cairo; the vehicle of CNN's Anderson Cooper and Hala Gorani was also the target of attack; CBS' Katie Couric and ABC's Christiane Amanpour were respectively ambushed by pro-Mubarak protesters; ABC correspondents Brian Hartman and Akram Abi-Hanna were threatened with beheading; the BBC's crew in Cairo, led by Ian Pannell, was stripped of its equipment; the CBS team, led by Lara Logan, was detained at gunpoint; Fox News reporter Greg Palkot was blindfolded and severely beaten; Ashraf Khalil of Foreign Policy magazine was attacked on the street; a Greek journalist was stabbed; three Al-Jazeera reporters were arrested; separately, two reporters from the Washington Post, two reporters from the New York Times, and staffers from Amnesty International were also respectively detained.

In all cases, suspicion turned to the ruling regime as being behind the attacks on journalists and, certainly, the arrests of media personnel was attributed to Egyptian authorities. The objective appeared to be silencing the media's coverage of repression -- as evidenced by Vice President Suleiman's statements blaming the international media for being part of a "plot" aimed at inciting unrest in Egypt. Meanwhile, P.J. Crowley, the United States Assistant Secretary of State, said via Twitter: "There is a concerted campaign to intimidate international journalists in Cairo and interfere with their reporting. We condemn such actions." His claims were echoed by several reporters on the scene in Cairo, including CNN's Anderson Cooper, NBC/MSNBC's Richard Engel, and the New York Times' Nicolas Kristoff, all of whom made it clear that attacks on the media were coming from the pro-government factions and seemed to have been orchestrated from the power base in Egypt.

The regime's apparent desire to suppress the voice of the international media, while simultaneously advancing its own message, was brought into high relief when the United Kingdom-based mobile telecommunications company, Vodafone, said that it was forced to broadcast pro-government text messages during the protests. Vodafone said in an official statement that the text messages were

prepared by the Egyptian authorities and that it [Vodafone] had no ability to change them.

In reaction to these myriad developments, British Foreign Secretary William Hague said, "The scenes that we have witnessed over the last 24 hours are reprehensible." His American counterpart, United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, condemned the "shocking" violent clashes that plagued Tahrir Square in Cairo, as well as the attacks on journalists, human rights activists, and peaceful demonstrators.

For its part, it should be noted that the government of Egypt denied any and all culpability for the violence and intimidation that had occurred. Nevertheless, in an apparent attempt to assuage the deep concerns of the international community, Egyptian Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq on Feb. 3, 2011, apologized for the violence that had occurred and promised that an investigation would take place. Vice President Suleiman appeared to acknowledge the power of the people in the mass uprising, describing it as "the revolution of the youth." However, the vice president also intimated that the negative turn taken in the protests should be attributed to the likes of the international media (as noted above), in some measure stoking the fears of foreign players. The vice president's statements were reflective of a typical stance taken by the Mubarak regime for decades in which groups critical of the regime were blamed for undermining the stability of the country.

Also on Feb. 3, 2011, President Mubarak was interviewed by ABC's Christiane Amanpour and said he was pained by the sight of "Egyptian fighting Egyptian." President Mubarak said he was "fed up" and wanted to resign immediately; however, he expressed anxiety over the country's descent into chaos without him at the helm through the transitional period. For his part, it was apparent that President Mubarak was viewing the events transpiring in Egypt through the prism of security rather than politics. He was casting the scenario in Egypt in terms of a choice between chaos and stability, the latter of which was possible only with the guiding force of his presidency. President Mubarak also reiterated his intent never to flee the country and seek exile saying, "I would never run away from this country. I will die on this soil." It was apparent that he wanted to exit the political scene on his own terms.

Late on Feb. 3, 2011, reports emerged that the United States was in discussion with various parties in Egypt aimed at nudging President Mubarak out of office as quickly as possible. The New York Times published a story suggesting that Vice President Suleiman and the military would guide the country through a transitional period, and immediately begin a process of constitutional reform and planning for elections. A broad range of opposition forces would be invited to be involved in the reform process. However, other sources at CNN indicated that this plan was not yielding much success. There was no sign that the military was willing to abandon Mubarak, there was certainly no sign that Mubarak and/or Suleiman would go along with the transition scheme, and the plan itself was viewed as an American notion not likely to be embraced as an Egyptian plan. It should be noted that a study of Egypt's constitution suggested that the legal successor to the president would not be the vice president but the parliamentary speaker. It should also be noted that the

installation of Suleiman in conjunction with the military -- if even for an interim period -- would itself be a reconstitution of the existing power base in Egypt.

Egypt braced for more protests and uprisings on what was being billed as a "day of departure" for Mubarak. There was a high risk of clashes and potential for violence in the streets of Cairo. On Feb. 4, 2011, reports from Tahrir Square in Cairo indicated that the military was playing a key role in keeping the peace between the two sides. However, clashes were being reported in other parts of Cairo.

On the streets, anti-government demonstrators were reported as exhausted from more than a week of grueling and often dangerous mass rallies, but desperate to see their hopes for change realized. Veteran activist Hisham Kassem was reported to have said to the New York Times, "I can't face the idea of this failing." Some of that desperation was emanating from a place of fear, as exemplified by Dr. Murad Mohsen, who was treating those injured in Cairo, and feared that failure would yield prison terms for the pro-democracy protesters. In his interview with the New York Times, he said, "If we can't bring this to an end, we're going to all be in the slammer by June." But some of the pro-democracy/anti-government protesters seemed to believe that their efforts were yielding positive results, apparently encouraged by President Mubarak's expressed intent to exit the political scene, albeit not with the degree of immediacy as they might prefer.

On Feb. 5, 2011, perhaps with an eye of demonstrating that an exit strategy was being explored, the leadership of Egypt's ruling National Democratic Party stepped down from power. Among the leadership of the NDP stepping down were President Mubarak's son, Gamal Mubarak, as well as the party secretary-general, Safwat el-Sharif. President Mubarak was still president of the ruling party although Vice President Suleiman took on a more prominent role, even engaging in talks with some opposition groups. Those talks, though, were regarded only as a "first step" by the opposition groups, who did not think the government was willing to go far enough on the reform agenda.

The Obama administration in the United States appeared to offer a qualified endorsement of these moves, as illustrated by Secretary of State Clinton's statement, "It's important to support the transition process announced by the Egyptian government actually headed by now-Vice President Omar Suleiman." It was not likely that Secretary of State Clinton's characterization of Suleiman would be embraced by protesters, who have viewed him as part of the Mubarak regime's inner circle and not representative of reform at all.

Envoy and ambassador, Frank Wisner, who earlier met with President Mubarak was more forthright, saying that it was "crucial" that Mubarak maintain his position temporarily. He pointed to the fact that new elections would have to take place within two months of Mubarak's resignation, under the conditions of the constitution, giving little time for electoral reforms and preparation. It should be noted that the Obama administration said that Wisner's comments were unofficial as his diplomatic mission had been completed.

Days later, attention focused on Wael Ghonim -- a hitherto unknown name -- but a man who would soon become the "face" of the leaderless, popular uprising in Egypt. Ghonim -- a young, Egyptian-born, Google executive responsible for the company's Middle East and Africa marketing -- was being credited with inspiring Egypt's "Nile Revolution." The Internet activist anonymously launched a Facebook page commemorating a young businessman in Alexandria, Khaled Said, who was beaten to death by policemen in June 2010. The Facebook page gained attention as an online campaign against police brutality and torture in Egypt. In fact, the country was hit by small scale protests for several months after the story of Said became known to the public. That being said, it was the decision to schedule a rally in Cairo and other cities on Jan. 25, 2011 -- the day the country was to honor the state security forces -- that changed the path of Egyptian recent history. The rallies were likely given additional energy by the story unfolding in Tunisia, but Ghonim's Facebook page offered young, Internet-savvy, Egyptians a central place to plot strategy and organize their activities.

Ghonim was -- according to his own account -- grabbed off the streets by security forces only two days after the protests began and kept in secret detention. He was released after 12 days of detainment. By his own words, Ghonim said that he was not harmed during his detention; however, he was blindfolded and alone for most of that time. Addressing a crowd of hundreds of thousands of protesters in Cairo's Tahrir Square on Feb. 8, 2011, Ghonim called on the people to continue their efforts to change the political landscape of Egypt, saying, "We won't give up."

The timing of Ghonim's release was noteworthy. As analysts surmised that the protesters were growing exhausted and afraid (as discussed above), Ghonim's emergence on the political scene effectively invigorated the protest movement. Now, the tired protesters were energized and it was the government ranks who were saying that they were tiring of the opposition protests. Specifically, Vice President Suleiman expounded a warning to the protesters in Tahrir Square, sternly saying, "We can't bear this for a long time, and there must be an end to this crisis as soon as possible." Perhaps indicating what might [reluctantly] come in the future, Suleiman added in an ominous tone, "We don't want to deal with Egyptian society with police tools."

But the vice president's words went unheeded. In fact, the protesters seemed infuriated that the government was again resorting to fear tactics to control the people. As stated by Abdul-Rahman Samir, a spokesman for a coalition of youth protest groups, in an interview with the Associated Press, "He is threatening to impose martial law, which means everybody in the square will be smashed. But what would he do with the rest of 70 million Egyptians who will follow us afterward?"

Instead of going home, protesters made their way to the parliament building -- quite a distance from Tahrir Square -- and demanded that the People's Assembly be dissolved. This move symbolically registered discontent with the elections that took place in late 2010; those elections gave a resounding victory to the ruling party and were seen as fraudulent. Perhaps underscoring the symbolism of this action, someone had altered the road sign on People's Assembly Street to

"People's Street."

Elsewhere in Cairo, and in fact, across Egypt, demonstrations were extended to the industrial arenas in the form of labor strikes. On Feb. 9, 2011, according to the Associated Press, state electricity workers, transportation workers, service technicians, manufacturing workers, and museum staff went on strike and joined the protest movement in Cairo. In the southern province of Assiut, thousands of protesters used burning palm trees to block the main highway and railway to Cairo. In Port Said, hundreds of protesters set the governorate building on fire. Crucially, about thousands of state workers went on strike at the Suez Canal; it should be noted that the mass action did not disturb the passage of ships there. Protesters and strikers were joined in the streets by impoverished Egyptians as anti-government rallies rocked the country. The widening ranks of protesters appeared to be incensed by newspaper revelations that the Egyptian power elite -- particularly President Mubarak's family -- had amassed great wealth, even as 40 to 50 percent of the Egyptian population lived in poverty.

Across the world in the United States, the Obama administration took a stronger tone against the Egyptian government, indicating further movement away from the Mubarak regime. White House spokesman Robert Gibbs, said: "The government has not taken the necessary steps that the people of Egypt need to see. That's why more and more people come out to register their grievances." He also again reiterated an earlier claim that the United States would review its aid program to Egypt and that the Egyptian government's measures would determine the conclusion of the review process. But the Mubarak regime was not about to accept the United States' stance without comment. In an interview with PBS, long-serving Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit said he was "amazed" by United States Vice President Joe Biden's call for an immediate end to the 30-year long emergency law used by President Mubarak against the opposition. He said, "When you speak about prompt, immediate, now -- as if you are imposing on a great country like Egypt, a great friend that has always maintained the best of relationship with the United States -- you are imposing your will on him."

At the time of writing, the death toll since the start of the "Nile Revolution" stood at about 300, according to Human Rights Watch, based on ongoing analysis from hospitals in major Egyptian cities.

Alert:

On Feb. 10, 2011, reports from on the ground in Cairo suggested that President Mubarak would be responding to the demands of protesters in Egypt. Media reports across the globe were stating that it was quite possible that President Mubarak was stepping down from power with a national address to come later that night (Cairo time). Hossam Badrawi, a senior member of Egypt's governing party, said he did not expect President Mubarak to still be president in 24 hours.

President Mubarak and Vice President Suleiman were said to be in talks, while the high council of

the armed forces convened its own meetings without Mubarak and Suleiman. Conflicting accounts emerged from Cairo. Some reports were coming from the Egyptian capital indicating that the military was set to take a key role, with the military saying it would "support the legitimate demands of the people." But the Interior Ministry of Egypt was insisting that President Mubarak would remain in place. To that end, the news network, Al-Arabiya said that President Mubarak would announce constitutional procedures before handing over his executive powers.

Other Middle Eastern governments have been shaken by events unfolding in Egypt, while the Obama administration in the United States characterized the emerging situation as "fluid." In brief remarks referencing these developments, President Obama spoke from Michigan expressly saying, "We want the young people to know, and we want all Egyptians to know Americans will continue do everything that we can to support an orderly and genuine transition to democracy in Egypt." President Obama's remarks were broadcast in the Middle East on the Egyptian state television and on the regional network, Al-Jazeera.

President Mubarak's much anticipated address to the nation began with the Egyptian leader characterizing himself in paternalistic terms as "the father" and the youth protesters as "the children." This entry point did not suggest a resignation was in the offing and, in fact, the Egyptian leader went on to reaffirm the September 2011 timeline for elections, and made it clear that he was still in control of the country. Significantly, President Mubarak said, "I am determined to fulfill what I promised." He noted that there would be constitutional amendments to facilitate the transition of power and institute reforms in the future, and that he would delegate many presidential powers to the vice president. President Mubarak ended his speech by defiantly stating that he would not leave Egypt and that he intended to die in the country of his birth. Soon thereafter, Vice President Suleiman discouraged the protesters from watching cable news networks (a veiled reference to international media) and urged people to go home and return to their jobs.

Soon thereafter, the Egyptian ambassador to the United States sought to clarify President Mubarak's remarks, saying that the president held onto his position in official terms only, but the practical administration of the country would be carried out by Vice President Suleiman. It was highly unlikely that this measure would satisfy the desires of the Egyptian people in the streets, who were looking for significant transformation. They certainly were not likely to embrace Suleiman, who only days earlier asserted that Egypt was not ready for democracy.

Anderson Cooper of CNN noted that President Mubarak framed the dynamic in Egypt as if he [the president] was the essence of Egypt and the protesters in the streets constituted the "crisis" to be overcome. Stated differently, the Mubarak regime did not acknowledge the youth movement as genuine stakeholders of democracy, even going so far as to differentiate the youth from the rest of the citizenry, which was described as being interested in stability. For their part, some of the protesters in the streets that were interviewed by international media suggested that the Egyptian leader was "delusional" and "out of touch with reality." Many protesters interviewed by the international media said they were "willing to die for freedom." In this way, the scene in Tahrir

Square in Cairo was marked by shock, deflated hopes, and a furious eruption of anger. Reporters on the scene in Cairo said the protesters were leaving Tahrir Square en masse and were headed either for the state television station or the presidential palace.

All eyes were on the military, wondering if it would continue to exercise neutrality as the political climate intensified, or, if it would take a more active political role. Had the military split from the Mubarak regime or not?

Meanwhile, frustrated by the confusing and contradictory messaging of President Mubarak's announcement, President Obama released his own statement. It read as follows: "The Egyptian people have been told that there was a transition of authority, but it is not yet clear that this transition is immediate, meaningful or sufficient. Too many Egyptians remain unconvinced that the government is serious about a genuine transition to democracy, and it is the responsibility of the government to speak clearly to the Egyptian people and the world. The Egyptian government must put forward a credible, concrete and unequivocal path toward genuine democracy, and they have not yet seized that opportunity." President Obama also called on the Egyptian government to lift the emergency law, and he urged all sides to refrain from violence. These statements constituted an unprecedented and rapid rebuke of the Mubarak regime, and stood in contrast to former American presidents as they dealt with non-democratic allies. Former President Ronald Reagan was not eager to disavow Filipino strongman, Ferdinand Marcos, despite his being implicated in the assassination of Benigno Aquino Jr. Likewise, former President Bill Clinton did not quickly distance himself from Indonesian dictator, Suharto.

On Feb. 11, 2011, it was announced there would be a message to the nation. In the early evening hours of Feb. 11, 2011 (Cairo time), Egyptian President Mubarak stepped down from office, one day after powers were transferred to Vice President Suleiman. Now, Vice President Suleiman said that power had been transferred to the military to administer the affairs of the country. Mubarak departed Cairo for his home in Sharm-el-Sheikh.

Because power had been transferred to the military, in contravention to constitutional provisions, there were rumblings that Mubarak's refusal to fully stand down the day before may have precipitated a "soft coup" of sorts, backed by the armed forces of the country. For its part, the military released a communique referencing the delegation of presidential powers, promising to institute constitutional reforms, and vowing to end the controversial emergency laws. In effect, the military of Egypt announced it would guarantee the democratic aspirations of the Egyptian people. A statement released by the military command, headed by Defense Minister Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, seemed mindful of the extra-constitutional dimensions of the situation, and was therefore quick to limit its own power. It issued a statement that read: "There is no legitimacy other than that of the people."

In a significant move, the military turned their guns and tanks away from the crowd at the presidential palace. People in the streets celebrated with joy -- a complete contrast to the mood 24

hours before. Chants of "Egypt is Free" filled Tahrir (Liberation) Square. Members of the military joined the jubilation, draping the turrets of tanks with Egyptian flags.

United States President Obama addressed the new day dawning in Egypt by saying, "The people of Egypt have spoken, their voices have been heard. Egypt will never be the same again." He continued, "They have made it clear that nothing less than genuine democracy will carry the day." President Obama emphasized the fact that in Egypt, "it was the moral force of non-violence -- not terrorism and mindless killing" that has spurred democratic change. To that end, the United States leader also noted that Egypt must move toward civilian and democratic rule. United Kingdom Prime Minister David Cameron struck a similar tone, calling for a "move to civilian and democratic rule." He also noted that Egypt had a "really precious moment of opportunity to have a government that can bring the people together." German Chancellor Angela Merkel lauded the "historic change" in Egypt.

Post-Mubarak Transition

By Feb. 12, 2011, Egypt's military -- the transitional authority of the country -- affirmed its commitment to all international treaties. A senior military read the following statement on state television: "The Arab Republic of Egypt is committed to all regional and international obligations and treaties." The announcement was an implicit reference to Egypt's peace treaty with Israel, signed in 1979 between then-Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and then-Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin at Camp David in the United States. The situation in Egypt in 2011 raised anxieties in Israel about the fate of the peace deal and the concomitant stability of the region. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responded positively to the news, noting that the treaty was a cornerstone of Middle East peace and stability. He said, "The longstanding peace treaty between Israel and Egypt has greatly contributed to both countries and is the cornerstone for peace and stability in the entire Middle East."

In terms of everyday governance, the military said the current government had been asked to stay on until a new one could be formed, which would "pave the way for an elected civil authority to build a free democratic state." The military also asked people to work with the police on safety, also reminding the police to stay committed to its motto: "At the service of the people." That call could see complications since the police force has been viewed by the people as a repressive instrument of the Mubarak regime.

On Feb. 13, 2011, on state television, the transitional military authorities said that parliament was dissolved and the constitution was suspended. A committee would be established to draft a new constitution, which would be ratified via a popular referendum. Two days later on Feb. 15, 2011, the transitional military authorities of Egypt set a constitution reform deadline, saying that work on this effort would have to be completed in ten days, or roughly the close of February 2011. The constitutional committee, led by a retired judge, was given the task of formulating the amended constitution. It was tasked with amending, "...all articles as it sees fit to guarantee democracy and

the integrity of presidential and parliamentary elections." As well, the transitional military authorities also noted that they would remain in power only for six months, or, until fresh elections could be held. In this way, the military transitional authorities seemed to be committed to keeping its promise to move Egypt on the path of civilian democratic rule as quickly as possible.

Meanwhile, Swiss authorities said they temporarily froze Mubarak's assets until they could determine that no funds properly belong in the Egyptian coffers. As well, three members of the Mubarak coterie have been subject to travel bans pending an investigation. For his part, former President Mubarak was reported to be in declining health at his residence in Sharm el-Sheikh, but refusing to travel outside Egypt for treatment.

On Feb. 27, 2011, career diplomat Amr Moussa who served as the head of the Arab League and as foreign minister, made it clear that he would contest Egypt's presidential election later in the year to choose the successor to deposed Hosni Mubarak. Unlike Mubarak, Moussa has been known to hold a more antagonistic stance in regard to Israel, auguring a complicated foreign policy situation, should he ultimately win the presidency. Already, former International Atomic Energy Agency head and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, Mohammed El Baradei, indicated he wanted to contest the presidency. Unlike Moussa, El Baradei has had a closer relationship to the West, having spent much of his professional life serving in the nuclear watchdog agency in Vienna. Unlike Moussa, who was very much the Egyptian insider, El Baradei was viewed as an outsider to the Egyptian scene. Of course, independent or outsider status might play well politically in a climate clamoring for change and reform, and seemingly untouched by corruption. It was yet to be seen how El Baradei's stance calling for "compatible" Egyptian-Israeli relations (and not simply a treaty between governments) would be received among Egyptians. Other candidates were also expected to join the race, especially since a constitutional reform panel released its recommendations for a extensive political reforms, including liberal eligibility rules regulating the candidacy of presidential candidates, two-term limits on presidential tenure, and a far more competitive political system that would not have been allowed to exist under the regime of former President Mubarak. These recommendations would still have to be ratified by national referendum, but -- if ratified -- would change the political landscape in Egypt quite dramatically.

Despite these changes in the offing, Egypt was not without continuing instability. On the same day as Moussa's announcement, hundreds of protesters were in Tahrir Square demanding that Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq resign from office. Their complaint has been that Shafiq was simply a continuation of the Mubarak era, even though Shafiq himself only came to power weeks earlier when Mubarak -- still in power at the time -- enacted a cabinet shuffle aimed at calming the protesters in the streets at the earlier stages of the "Nile Revolution." By March 3, 2011, caretaker Prime Minister Shafiq had resigned with Esaam Sharaf -- a former cabinet minister and university professor -- to function as the head of a caretaker government until a new one could be formed. On March 4, 2011, Prime Minister Sharaf struck a populist note in his address to the nation, promising to meet the calls for democratic reform, saying his "will and determination" came from

the people, and vowing to resign if he failed to meet the objective of democratization.

It was also announced on that day that a referendum on constitutional reform would be held on March 19, 2011, with parliamentary and presidential elections scheduled to be held within six months. Tahrir Square was filled with celebration at the news. Two days later on March 6, 2011, a new political party composed of anti-government youth protesters was formed to contest the elections; the opposition group, the Muslim Brotherhood, had already said that it would create a political wing called "Freedom and Justice Party," presumably also with an eye on participating in the political process as well. On March 9, 2011, the aforementioned Mohamed El Baradei confirmed that he would be contesting the presidency, but specified that his candidacy would be based on whether or not a genuine democratic system was established. He criticized the proposed constitutional reform as "superficial," and urged a delay on the constitutional referendum saying in an interview with Egyptian media, "We are at a decisive period in Egypt's history. We shouldn't rush. Everything should be on a solid basis." El Baradei also noted that without changes to the laws regulating party formation in Egypt, a new parliament would likely be dominated by a mix of former President Mubarak's party faithful and the Muslim Brotherhood. El Baradei also pointed to the fact that there was no security plan to ensure safe voting for citizens on a future election day.

The election scene aside, Egypt was still seeing unrest by the second week of March 2011. In one case, at least a dozen people died and close to 150 were injured in clashes between Coptic Christians and Muslims in Cairo. As well, hundreds of people clashed in Tahrir Square. The two main groups of adversaries were pro-democracy activists still demanding a complete break with the Mubarak regime -- and -- what were described as armed gangs. The situation led to a fractious stand-off and compelled the army to dismantle demonstrators' tents and a call for people to leave "Ground Zero" of the Nile Revolution.

On March 19, 2011, Egyptian voters enthusiastically went to the polls to vote in the aforementioned constitutional referendum. Turnout was said to be massive, strengthening the possible legitimacy of the referendum results. Many voters said that they regarded this exercise as the first really democratic vote in the country. At stake was the ratification of constitutional changes that would set presidential term limits (two four-year terms) and establish a 100-seat unicameral constitutional congress. A day after the referendum on March 20, 2011, transitional Egyptian authorities said that results of the referendum indicated decisive ratification of the proposed constitutional changes. With initial reports pointing toward more than 75 percent of voters casting affirmative votes in the referendum, democratic presidential and parliamentary elections were expected to be held in Egypt sometime later in the year.

Conflict flares again:

On April 9, 2011, Tahrir Square -- "Ground Zero" in Egypt's "Nile Revolution" was again beset by the flare of violence as turmoil left at least one person dead and more than 70 others injured.

Several military vehicles were reported to have been set ablaze while buildings around the square were vandalized.

The upsurge in unrest was sparked by what was called "Purification Friday" -- a rally aimed at ensuring the immediate trial of former President Hosni Mubarak and officials from his regime. Despite the political reform process that had taken place in the months after Mubarak's resignation from power, Egyptians were apparently dissatisfied with the pace of change. Thousands of people defied the prevailing curfew and tried to re-establish tents in Tahrir Square in central Cairo; they demanded the formation of a civil presidential council to administer Egypt for a transitional period until the anticipated presidential and parliamentary elections could be held.

The Egyptian military, which has been a power center in post-Mubarak Egypt, said that security forces working with concerned citizens contained the outbreak of violence.

Update

Following a cabinet shuffle, the new Egyptian government was scheduled to be sworn into office on July 21, 2011 in front of Hussein Tantawi, the head of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which has functioned as the interim authority of Egypt ahead of much-anticipated democratic elections to be held later in the year. The cabinet shuffle was undertaken in response to a revived public uprising in Egypt, which was aimed at quickening the pace of democratic reform and legal accountability for those associated with the deposed Mubarak regime. Also at issue for protesters has been the continued tenure of Interior Minister Mansour el-Essawy, whom they said was responsible for an ongoing culture of impunity in the police force. It should be noted that even with the cabinet shuffle, Essawy was slated to retain his ministerial portfolio. Instead, the interim Egyptian authorities opted for an internal police inquiry and the sacking of more than 650 senior police officers who were accused of abusing protesters.

By the last week of July 2011, demonstrators marched from the Tahrir Square to the Ministry of Defense in a mass action intended to register discontent. The move did not garner full public support with many fellow Egyptians noting that the Egyptian military -- which embraced the revolution that ousted former President Mubarak from power -- should not be a target of unrest. Egyptian Prime Minister Essam Sharaf responded with the following statement delivered via the social networking website, Facebook, "Tahrir's honorable protesters have legitimate demands, and these demands must be reflected in the means they employ." The prime minister urged protesters to give the new cabinet a chance to do its work, with the ultimate intent of spurring the revolutionary goals of democracy, freedom, and social justice.

In this way, mid-2011 in Egypt was marked by a climate of discontent as demonstrators returned to the streets months after the Nile Revolution, which ousted former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak from power. As noted here, the renewed protests were aimed at quickening the pace of

democratic reform and legal accountability for those associated with the deposed Mubarak regime.

Accountability for former President Hosni Mubarak, though, was not expected to come quickly since reports were emerging that he was seriously ill, even temporarily slipping into a coma. Nevertheless, at the start of August 2011, Mubarak was wheeled on a hospital bed into court where he faced charges of corruption and ordering the killing of protesters. Speaking from within a caged enclosure, Mubarak audibly denied the charges from his hospital bed. Mubarak confirmed his presence in court saying, "Yes, I am here" and raised his hand in response to the judge's request for identification. Mubarak also entered a plea, saying, "I deny all these accusations completely." In September 2011, the trial of Mubarak continued, despite the eruption of fractious arguments between Mubarak's lawyers and civil plaintiffs in court. Outside, clashes ensued between pro-Mubarak supporters and anti-Mubarak protesters.

The reality of Mubarak, his two sons, and the former Interior Minister, facing justice was regarded as a significant -- even breathtaking -- milestone in the history of the region. Indeed, it was the first time an Arab country had voluntarily subjected a former ruler to trial (the obvious exception was Iraq, but the trial of Saddam Hussein came at a time of invasion and occupation by foreign powers).

At the start of September 2011, Egyptian rioters stormed the Israeli embassy in Cairo. The fracas yielded the deaths of three people as security forces clashed with the rioters. Egyptian authorities deployed security forces to disperse the protesters, even firing tear gas. They also placed the country on alert as a result.

The attack on the Israeli embassy occurred in the aftermath of the violence in Gaza in August 2011, which resulted in the deaths of five Egyptian policemen. In fact, Palestinian extremist militants had traveled via the Sinai in Egypt into Israeli territory to carry out an attack on a bus in southern Israel. As Israeli troops moved into pursuit mode, seven of the Palestinian gunmen and five Egyptian security personnel were killed in the exchange of fire.

On one hand, the situation showed that the border region between Israel and Egypt was relatively unprotected, and appeared to indicate that the new interim authorities in Egypt have not made cross-border security as much of a priority as the former Mubarak regime. But on the other hand, the violence in Gaza caused outrage among Egyptians, to some degree sparking latent hostilities felt by some Egyptians in regard to Israel. Now, a month later, those tensions were emerging in the form of the attack in September 2011 on the Israel embassy in Cairo.

It should be noted that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that his country would maintain its peace treaty with Egypt despite the assault on its embassy in Cairo. Speaking from Jerusalem, the Israeli prime minister said; "Israel will continue to hold fast to the peace accord with Egypt." He continued, "We are working together with the Egyptian government to return our

ambassador to Cairo soon." Prime Minister Netanyahu also thanked United States President Barack Obama for assistance in arranging the evacuation of the embassy's diplomatic staff. Some embassy security staff were reportedly trapped there but were ultimately rescued by Egyptian commandos.

Meanwhile, Egyptian authorities made it clear that they intended to try the culprits of the embassy attack in an emergency court. As well, Egyptian Prime Minister Essam Sharaf offered to step down from office but the country's interim military leader, Mohamad Hussain Tantawi, quickly rejected the offer of resignation. The scenario illuminated an uneasy balance that the Egyptian authorities would have to strike in being responsible to the cause of regional stability, while meeting the needs of people empowered by the ethos of liberation.

As the year 2011 went on, and as Egyptians prepared for landmark elections (discussed in the "Elections Primer" below), political tensions were on the rise.

In October 2011, more than two dozen people were killed and over 200 were injured in protests by Coptic Christians who were registering their outrage over an attack on a church in Aswan. Coptic Christians -- who make up about ten percent of the Egyptian population -- were blaming Muslim extremists for the attacks, and also blaming the governing military council for being ineffectual in addressing anti-Christian attacks. In this case, the mass action turned violent as the protesters became embroiled in clashes with security forces. Transitional Egyptian authorities imposed a curfew and convened emergency meetings aimed at forging a plan to deal with the sectarian unrest, which has periodically flared in the months since the Nile Revolution ousted former President Hosni Mubarak from power.

A month later in November 2011, disagreement over the legal decision to allow random members of the former ruling party to contest the forthcoming elections devolved into protests and a renewal of unrest ahead of the historic vote, scheduled to take place at the close of the month. At issue have been complaints about the eligibility of certain contingents on the political field, as well as the political structure itself, that favors the main opposition.

On the matter of political structure, secular elements of the Egyptian political scene have called for the postponement of the elections and the establishment of constitutional changes. They have argued that the current political structure would give an undue advantage to the already well established opposition parties, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Wafd Party. Fledgling political parties formed following in the post-Mubarak's ousting period said that they needed more time to organize themselves. Perhaps not surprisingly, the Muslim Brotherhood was not willing to relinquish its advantage and registered its opposition to the "constitution first" popular movement gripping the country. Ultimately, the matter was resolved by delaying the elections from September 2011 to late November 2011, offering limited time to get the country prepared for the vote.

Yet even with this agreement, grievances continued to arise. Notably, a coalition of Islamic political parties threatened to boycott the elections if members of the former ruling National Democratic Party were allowed to contest the elections. The Islamic coalition, which included the Muslim Brotherhood, was against a law that would allow former National Democratic Party members to run as independent candidates. By mid-November 2011, the transitional military authorities in Egypt had ruled that certain members of the disbanded National Democratic Party were in fact eligible to contest the parliamentary elections. The decision was met with a loud outcry from the Muslim Brotherhood. Nevertheless, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces concluded that members of the National Democratic Party were full Egyptian citizens, and therefore were guaranteed the same political rights as other citizens of the country without criminal records.

Complaints about the political structure were further punctuated by the release in early November 2011 of the new draft constitution, produced by the transitional military authorities. Included in that draft document were principles and guidelines for jurisprudence in the new Egypt as well as provisions for an exemption for the military from both civilian oversight and budget norms. The provisions enraged some Egyptian activists, who viewed them as signs that the institutionalized military authority was attempting to consolidate its grip on power.

Collectively, these conditions set the stage for a climate of anger and political frustration in Egypt. Perhaps not surprisingly, on Nov. 18, 2011, renewed protests broke out in Tahrir Square in Cairo - - the very epicenter of the "Nile Revolution" months earlier. Now, the emerging battle lines appeared to be on two fronts -- (1) between the military authorities and the emboldened Muslim Brotherhood who were furious that members of the now-disbanded National Democratic Party would be afforded equal political rights; and (2) between the military authorities and activists fearful that the military authorities were attempting to hold onto power despite the schedule for elections.

As tensions increased, police attempted to evict the protesters, using fire gas and truncheons to intimidate the crowd. The situation served only to further inflame hostilities and spur further violence. Indeed, the evicted protesters were soon returning to Tahrir Square, and reported to be in control of the flashpoint area. Protests were also spreading elsewhere in the country, with clashes and riots reported in Alexandria, Aswan, and Suez. Across Egypt, there was a sense of panic as the country devolved once more into instability.

By Nov. 20, 2011, reports had emerged that at least a dozen people had died and hundreds more injured in violent clashes between police and demonstrators. The situation marked a shift in the political landscape, as the military -- previously viewed as protectors of the Egyptian people during the uprising against Mubarak -- was now the target of the ire by the demonstrators in the streets. A common theme heard amongst the protesters was the call for the head of the military council-- Field Marshall Tantawi -- to step down from power. But there was a broader demand that was starting to take hold among the crowds of protesters -- that being a call for the end of the system of military rule.

A day later on Nov. 21, 2011, the crowds of protesters now numbered about 10,000 at Tahrir Square in Cairo, and the death toll had exceeded 30 in successive days of unrest. The scene on the ground was hostile after protesters threw a Molotov cocktail explosive at police close to the Interior Ministry, who responded by firing rubber bullets and tear gas at the crowds gathered in the area.

As political dissonance rocked the country, individuals with political aspirations in Egypt reacted to the latest developments. Mohammed El Baradei, the former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency and current opposition leader and presidential contender, said in an interview with The Guardian, that Egypt needed to be rescued from the precipice of crisis. He called on the government of Premier Sharaf to resign and be replaced by a "national salvation government" tasked with "saving" Egypt's Nile Revolution. Speaking of the hard line response by police to the protesters, he said, "I think what we've seen ... is an excessive use of force, bordering on a slaughterhouse, against innocent civilians exercising their inalienable rights to demonstrate." Arab League's former head, Amr Moussa, who earlier declared his intent to seek the presidency, struck a less fiery tone, and called for talks between stakeholders and a negotiated end to the crisis.

A less well-known presidential contender, Hesham Al-Bastawissy, announced his withdrawal from Egypt's presidential race, saying that the violent crackdown had "stripped legitimacy" from the interim ruling military council. Bastawissy said he would only remain in the presidential race if a presidential council took over from the military council. Hazem Salah Abu-Ismael, a favored presidential contender of the Salafists, was reported to be in Tahrir Square, where he claimed he would remain until the interim ruling military council declared an actual date for the presidential elections.

Abdel-Moneim Abul-Fotouh, an independent presidential aspirant formerly allied with the Muslim Brotherhood member, denounced "police brutality" and railed against the military authorities for failing to effectively handle the outbreak of violence. Independent Islamist, Mohamed Selim Al-Aawa, also criticized the military authorities for failing to respond appropriately to the renewed protest movement, but called on Egyptians to stay unified and focused on the forthcoming elections.

Amidst this background of political chaos, Egyptian officials insisted that the first phase of the parliamentary elections would be held on Nov. 28, 2011, as scheduled. Egyptian officials additionally accused elements of the protest movement of attempting to undermine the legitimacy of the elections and preventing the formation of new state institutions. In a statement, Egyptian authorities said that while Egyptians had the right to peacefully rally and to voice demands, the government could not allow Egypt's national security to be compromised. The Egyptian authorities also expressed regret for the violence that had erupted in the renewed unrest, but insisted that the country would adhere to the power transfer schedule.

Nevertheless, the calls for an end of the system of military rule appeared to be resonating a week ahead of those long-awaited elections. On Nov. 21, 2011, Egypt's interim civilian government of Prime Minister Essam Sharaf submitted its resignation to the country's ruling military council. The "en masse" resignation appeared to be a nod by the civilian government to the renewed protest movement and represented a crisis of legitimacy for the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. The head of Egypt's ruling military council, Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi, said the council had accepted the civilian government's resignation.

In an apparent bid to shore up its own legitimacy, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces quickly moved to issue a decree banning individuals viewed as damaging to the political life of Egypt from contesting the legislative elections. The move appeared to target former members of the now-disbanded National Democratic Party (NDP) of ousted Mubarak. Indeed, it was clearly intended to appease the Muslim Brotherhood and other opposition elements who opposed a recent ruling allowing members of the NDP without criminal records to contest the elections. That being said, the interim military authorities said the ban was not a blanket prohibition, but that there had to be evidence proving ruinous political life.

On the following day -- Nov. 22, 2011 -- Egypt's ruling military council met with representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups in a conference. Notably absent from that session were a number of other political parties that decided to boycott the event. Nevertheless, those present forged an agreement to ensure that the first phase of the elections to the national assembly would go forward, as scheduled, on Nov. 28, 2011. Field Marshall Tantawi insisted that the military did not "care about who will win" the elections, and observed that "it's up to the people to decide who will rule." The agreement also accelerated the pace of the transition to civilian rule. Specifically, it called for the formation of a new civilian cabinet, led by a "technocrat" prime minister rather than a politician. Finally, measures were to be implemented to ensure the adoption of a new constitution and the holding of a presidential election no later than June 2012 -- a significant shift from the formerly open-ended timetable.

These moves were clearly being made in response to the populist fervor opposing the continued yoke of military rule. It was yet to be seen if these measures would appease the protesters still gathered in Tahrir Square.

On Nov. 25, 2011, Dr. Kamal Ganzouri was named as the new prime minister of Egypt and charged with forming a "national salvation" government. A former prime minister who stood at the helm of government during the Mubarak regime from 1996 to 1999, Ganzouri also served as the planning minister in the Egyptian government in previous years. Notably, Ganzouri was not a member of the dissolved National Democratic Party (NDP) of ousted Mubarak, but a respected leader on the Egyptian political scene with a reputation for advocating anti-corruption policies. Despite the appearance of Ganzouri being something of a consensus figure, in fact, thousands of protesters continued to rally at Tahrir Square in Cairo. That being said, a counterprotest movement was also taking shape as thousands of demonstrators gathered at Abassya to show

support for the ruling military council. For its part, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces called on its supporters to go home and not add to the chaos erupting in Egypt.

On Dec. 16, 2011, pro-democracy activists clashed with Egyptian security forces in Cairo. Dozens of people were reported to have been injured in the flurry of Molotov cocktails, rocks, and bricks that were hurled during the fracas between the activists and the security forces out the parliament building. Warning shots were fired and water cannons were fired in an attempt to disperse the crowds. According to activist blogger, Walid Nada, the outbreak of violence was sparked when the military arrested one of the pro-democracy demonstrators who was subsequently found after being badly beaten.

Note that at the start of 2012, Egyptian prosecutors made it known that they would be seeking the death penalty against former President Mubarak. They argued that Mubarak had to have known the extent of the brutal crackdown against anti-government demonstrators at the height of the Nile Revolution, which led to the deaths of hundreds of unarmed people. But by mid-January 2012, the head of the United Nations, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, was making it clear that he objected to this move. As reported by the Arabic al-Hayat newspaper in the United Kingdom, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon urged Egypt not to seek the death penalty for former President Mubarak. He pointed to the fact that the United Nations has passed resolutions urging members to adopt moratoriums on executions and to refrain from the use of the death penalty. Several countries, including France, Germany and Russia, also joined the chorus urging Egypt to step back from the call for the execution of Mubarak.

Foreign relations evoked attention in February 2012 when approximately 40 aid workers were referred to a criminal court in Egypt on charges of illegally funding a civil society organization. The 40 aid workers were a multinational group including Europeans, Americans, Arabs, and Egyptians -- all of whom were non-governmental organization (NGO) workers affiliated with organizations that failed to properly register with the government and were now facing charges. Among the defendants was Sam LaHood -- the son of Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood, who has been serving in the Obama administration. The situation has sparked tensions between the United States and Egypt. Speaking on behalf of the Obama administration, State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said, "We are urging the government of Egypt to lift these restrictions immediately and allow folks to come home as soon as possible. Frankly, we don't know how this is going to come out yet." Note: There were provisions subsequently made for the exit of the foreign nationals on bond from Egypt.

On Feb. 29, 2012, a top al-Qaida militant was arrested in Egypt. Saif al-Adel, an Egyptian who achieved a high rank in the terrorist enclave, al-Qaida, following the death of Osama bin Ladin, was arrested when he arrived from Pakistan at the airport in the Egyptian capital of Cairo. Saif al-Adel -- who has used the alias, Mohammed Ibrahim Makkawi -- has been on the "most wanted" list of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for years since the 1998 bombings of the

American embassies in Tanzania and Kenya.

On March 21, 2012, an official from the Egyptian Interior Ministry said an alleged plot to attack ships in the Suez Canal had been thwarted. According to the official MENA news service in Egypt, the Interior Ministry official was cited as saying that there was a plot in the works to attack shipping lanes in the Suez Canal. It should be noted that the natural gas pipelines in that region have long been targeted by extremists.

Primer on Parliamentary Elections in Egypt

Parliamentary elections were originally scheduled to take place in Egypt in September 2011. These elections constituted a tangible and significant outcome of the anti-government uprising that took hold in Egypt earlier in the year, and resulted in the ousting of former President Hosni Mubarak from power.

In July 2011, there were some suggestions that the much-anticipated parliamentary elections might be delayed due to calls for the establishment of a new constitution ahead of the elections. Without constitutional changes, secular elements of the Egyptian political scene were afraid that the already well established Muslim Brotherhood and the Wafd Party would win the most votes. As well, the many fledgling political parties formed following in the post-Mubarak's ousting period were saying that they needed more time to organize themselves. Perhaps not surprisingly, the Muslim Brotherhood was not willing to relinquish its advantage and registered its opposition to the "constitution first" popular movement gripping the country. That being said, interim Egyptian Prime Minister Essam Sharaf indicated that the elections would go forward, as scheduled, at the end of September 2011. He said, "Until now it's business as usual, the dates will be determined by the referendum. The (parliamentary) election will be in late September and after that, presidential elections."

Only weeks after this assertion was made, though, Egypt's ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces announced that the elections would indeed be delayed from September 2011 to later in the year, with a likely date expected in October or November of 2011. According to the Egyptian newspaper, Al-Masry Al-Youm, General Mamdouh Shaheen, one of the leading figures in the military council, had confirmed that election preparations would begin in September 2011, with elections occurring about a month after that in October 2011.

In September 2011, Egypt's ruling Supreme Council, said that parliamentary elections to the People's Assembly and the Shura Council would be respectively held on Nov. 28, 2011, and Jan. 29, 2012. The Egyptian interim authorities also moved to amend the law on the parliamentary elections, changing the seats in the People's Assembly seats to 498, and those in the Shura council to 270 seats. Seventy percent of the parliamentary seats would be based on the party list

system, but the remaining thirty percent would be earmarked for individual candidate voting. As well, the country would be divided into 60 constituencies -- 30 for the party lists system, in which each list was mandated to include at least one woman candidate, and the other 30 for the individual candidate system in which the candidate would be prohibited from affiliations with any political party.

The changes were aimed at advancing as much participation from all elements of Egyptian society. Egyptians would be able to vote with their national identity cards. The council promised to protect the people's revolution that led to the ousting of the Mubarak regime and to facilitate the process that would lead to a democratically elected civilian government in Egypt before the end of 2011.

At the close of September 2011, a coalition of Islamic political parties was threatening to boycott the elections if members of the former ruling National Democratic Party were allowed to contest the elections. The coalition, which included the Muslim Brotherhood, was against a law that would allow former National Democratic Party members to run as independent candidates.

By mid-November 2011, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces in Egypt had ruled that certain members of the disbanded National Democratic Party were eligible to contest the parliamentary elections. The decision was sure to be met with a loud outcry from the Muslim Brotherhood; however, the court of the transitional authorities concluded that members of the National Democratic Party were full Egyptian citizens, and therefore, they were guaranteed the same political rights as other citizens of the country without criminal records.

Complaints about the political structure were further punctuated by the release in early November 2011 of the new draft constitution, produced by the transitional military authorities. Included in that draft document were principles or guidelines for jurisprudence in the new Egypt, but it also included its provisions was an exemption for the military from both civilian oversight and budget norms. These provisions enraged some Egyptian activists, who viewed them as signs that the institutionalized military authority was attempting to consolidate its grip on power.

Collectively, these conditions set the stage for a climate of anger and political frustration in Egypt. Indeed, ahead of these landmark elections, renewed protests broke out in Tahrir Square in Cairo, with deadly consequences. The situation marked a shift in the political landscape, as the military -- previously viewed as protectors of the Egyptian people during the uprising against Mubarak -- was now the target of the ire by the demonstrators in the streets. The climate of unrest surged as the crowds of protesters now numbered about 10,000 at Tahrir Square in Cairo, and the death toll had exceeded 30.

Amidst this backdrop of political chaos, Egyptian officials were insisting that the first phase of the parliamentary elections would be held on Nov. 28, 2011, as scheduled. Egyptian officials additionally accused elements of the protest movement of attempting to undermine the legitimacy of the elections and preventing the formation of new state institutions. In a statement, Egyptian

authorities said that while Egyptians had the right to peacefully rally and to voice demands, the government could not allow Egypt's national security to be compromised. The Egyptian authorities also expressed regret for the violence that had erupted in the renewed unrest, but insisted that the country would adhere to the power transfer schedule.

Meanwhile, as political dissonance rocked the country, individuals with political aspirations in Egypt reacted to the latest developments. The former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and a current opposition leader and presidential contender, Mohammed El Baradei, said in an interview with *The Guardian*, that Egypt needed to be rescued from the precipice of crisis. He called on the government of Premier Sharaf to resign and be replaced by a "national salvation government" tasked with "saving" Egypt's Nile Revolution. Speaking of the hard line response by police to the protesters, he said, "I think what we've seen ... is an excessive use of force, bordering on a slaughterhouse, against innocent civilians exercising their inalienable rights to demonstrate." Arab League's former head, Amr Moussa, who earlier declared his intent to seek the presidency, struck a less fiery tone, and called for talks between stakeholders and a negotiated end to the crisis.

A less well-known presidential contender, Hesham Al-Bastawissy, announced his withdrawal from Egypt's presidential race, saying that the violent crackdown had "stripped legitimacy" from the interim ruling military council. Bastawissy said he would only remain in the presidential race if a presidential council took over from the military council. Hazem Salah Abu-Ismael, a favored presidential contender of the Salafists, was reported to be in Tahrir Square, where he said he would remain until the interim ruling military council declared an actual date for the presidential elections.

Abdel-Moneim Abul-Fotouh, an independent presidential aspirant formerly allied with the Muslim Brotherhood member, denounced "police brutality" and railed against the military authorities for failing to effectively handle the outbreak of violence. Independent Islamist, Mohamed Selim Al-Aawa, also criticized the military authorities for failing to respond appropriately to the renewed protest movement, but called on Egyptians to stay unified and focused on the forthcoming elections.

That being said, the calls for an end of the system of military rule appeared to be resonating a week ahead of those long-awaited elections. On Nov. 21, 2011, Egypt's interim civilian government of Prime Minister Essam Sharaf submitted its resignation to the country's ruling military council. The en masse resignation appeared to be a nod by the civilian government to the renewed protest movement and represented a crisis of legitimacy for the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. Still, the head of Egypt's ruling military council, Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi, said that the council had accepted the civilian government's resignation.

In an apparent bid to shore up its own legitimacy, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces quickly moved to issue a decree banning individuals viewed as damaging to the political life of Egypt from contesting the legislative elections. The move appeared to target former members of

the now-disbanded National Democratic Party (NDP) of ousted Mubarak. Indeed, it was clearly intended to appease the Muslim Brotherhood and other opposition elements who opposed a recent ruling allowing members of the NDP without criminal records to contest the elections. That being said, the interim military authorities said that the ban was not a blanket prohibition, but that there had to be evidence proving ruinous political life.

On the following day -- Nov. 22, 2011 -- Egypt's ruling military council met with representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups in a conference. Notably absent from that session were a number of other political parties that decided to boycott the event. Nevertheless, those present forged an agreement to ensure that the first phase of the elections to the national assembly would go forward, as scheduled, on Nov. 28, 2011. Field Marshall Tantawi insisted that the military did not "care about who will win" the elections, and observed that "it's up to the people to decide who will rule." The agreement also accelerated the pace of the transition to civilian rule. Specifically, it called for the formation of a new civilian cabinet, led by a "technocrat" prime minister rather than a politician. Finally, measures were to be implemented to ensure the adoption of a new constitution and the holding of a presidential election no later than June 2012 -- a significant shift from the formerly open-ended timetable.

These moves were clearly being made in response to the populist fervor opposing the continued yoke of military rule. It was yet to be seen if these measures would appease the protesters still gathered in Tahrir Square.

On Nov. 25, 2011, Dr. Kamal Ganzouri was named as the new prime minister of Egypt and charged with forming a "national salvation" government. A former prime minister who stood at the helm of government during the Mubarak regime from 1996 to 1999, Ganzouri also served as the planning minister in the Egyptian government in previous years. Notably, Ganzouri was not a member of the dissolved National Democratic Party (NDP) of ousted Mubarak, but a respected leader on the Egyptian political scene with a reputation for advocating anti-corruption policies. Despite the appearance of Ganzouri being something of a consensus figure, in fact, thousands of protesters continued to rally at Tahrir Square in Cairo. That being said, a counter-protest movement was also taking shape as thousands of demonstrators gathered at Abassya to show support for the ruling military council. For its part, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces called on its supporters to go home and not add to the chaos erupting in Egypt.

Days later on Nov. 28, 2011, even as the political landscape continued to be turbulent, Egyptian voters began the process of voting in the first phase of democratic elections. Despite the spate of violence that rocked Egypt in the week leading up to the start of the phased elections, millions of Egyptians were not deterred from exercising the democratic right to vote. Long lines of voters at polling stations were reported across the country. Turnout was as high as 70 percent with participation expected to rise to 80 percent after elections were extended an additional day. Although there were sporadic reports of clashes, the elections appeared to be going off in a relatively calm manner and security forces were maintaining law and order.

The High Election Commission soon announced that the Islamic fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party garnered 36.6 percent of the votes cast; the Nour Party, representing the more hard-line and extremist Salafi Islamists, captured 24.4 percent; the secular Egyptian Bloc took 15 percent; the Al-Wafd Party secured 11 percent. These results gave a limited view of the composition of the new parliament since there were further rounds of voting to come. That said, it was apparent that the grip of the Islamists over the next parliament would be strong.

In response to this development, reformist political leader, Mohammed El Baradei, expressed some degree of angst, which he said was shared among the educated elites of Egypt. El Baradei -- a Nobel Prize laureate and possible presidential candidate -- said, "The outcome so far is not the greatest one." He therefore urged moderate Egyptians to issue a message at the polls in further rounds, and called on reformers and youth to make it clear that Egypt would not go down an ultraconservative religious path. El Baradei expressed concerns about the priorities of some Salafis, such as the censorship of Egypt's Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz's novels, and the banning of women from driving. He observed that such statements (by the Salafis) "will have tremendous economic and political implications." He added that moderate Islamists would have to "make clear that some of these voices ... are on the extreme fringes and they will not be the mainstream." He noted that the priorities of the new parliament should social problems such as poverty and illiteracy, rather than socio-cultural obsessions.

El Baradei particularly worried about the youth who took to the streets in the "Nile Revolution" that ousted Mubarak from power, noting that the aspirations of the liberal youth had been "decimated." He said in an interview with the Associated Press, "The youth feel let down. They don't feel that any of the revolution's goals have been achieved." El Baradei therefore called on reformists and activist youth to keep up fight for the principles of the "Nile Revolution." he said, "We'll have to keep fighting...the revolution is still a work in progress."

On Dec. 14, 2011, Egyptians went to the polls to vote in the second stage of the parliamentary elections. Election results from the first two stages of the elections indicated that the Muslim Brotherhood would control between 40 percent and 50 percent of the seats in the People's Assembly.

Meanwhile, pro-democracy activists clashed with Egyptian security forces in Cairo. Dozens of people were reported to have been injured in the flurry of Molotov cocktails, rocks, and bricks that were hurled during the fracas between the activists and the security forces out the parliament building. Warning shots were fired and water cannons were fired in an attempt to disperse the crowds. According to activist blogger, Walid Nada, the outbreak of violence was sparked when the military arrested one of the pro-democracy demonstrators who was subsequently found after being badly beaten.

The unrest aside, there remained an uproar over the possible domination in the new parliament of

regressive Islamists. With such concerns at hand, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces made it clear that the executive privileges handed to interim Egyptian Prime Minister Ganzouri were temporary. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces said that many of Ganzouri's powers would be in force only until the establishment of the new parliament (the military and judiciary being the exceptions). While this news could be regarded as a boon for the Islamists, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces also announced that the military -- and not the parliament -- would determine Egypt's new constitution. The rationale for this move, according to Egyptian officials, was derived from a desire to retain stability in Egypt, and to recognize that an Islamist-dominated parliament was not really representative of all the Egyptian people. It was yet to be seen how people would respond to this news.

For its part, the Muslim Brotherhood wasted no time in trying to shore up its moderate credentials with a spokesperson for the party, Mahmoud Ghazlan, saying, "We believe in a civil state rather than a military or theocratic state." He continued, "If we reform some things, it will be through persuasion and dialogue and an appropriate atmosphere for people to accept them without repression." Mahmoud Ghazlan did warn that there would be a review of the peace treaty with Israel in the National Assembly, but he indicated that the party would work toward reforming provisions while at the same time respecting the treaty. He said, "We respect the international treaties but if we find it's unfair we will amend it."

The official result of the elections showed that Islamist parties in Egypt captured about 70 percent of seats in the landmark parliamentary elections to the People's Assembly. According to Egypt's Supreme Electoral Commission, the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party took 127 seats, representing 38 percent of the 332 party list seats available. The Salafist Nour Party, an ultra-conservative Islamist party, took 29 percent of the list seats, and the moderate Islamist Al-Wasat Party secured 3 percent. The liberal New Wafd and the secular Egyptian Bloc, both non-Islamist parties, took 21 percent, or 69 seats, collectively. With the conclusion of the elections, the first session of the new People's Assembly was to be convened on March 17, 2012, while the new Shura Council would be convened on March 24, 2012. As discussed here, a presidential election was to be held no later than June 2012; see Primer below for details.

On March 24, 2012, the members of parliament of Egypt -- the Egyptian People's Assembly (lower house) and the Shura Council (upper house) -- convened a meeting to elect members of the Constituent Assembly. Members of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice party, the Salafists, as well as several independents, were elected to serve in the Constituent Assembly, which would be tasked with drafting the country's new constitution. It should be noted that the actual constitution-drafting committee was to include 50 members of parliament and another 50 chosen from syndicates, unions and public figures.

In mid-April 2012, the High Administrative Court of Egypt announced it had ruled in favor of a case challenging the composition of the country's new Constitutional panel. The challenge claimed

that it was illegal for members of parliament to appoint themselves to the Constituent Assembly, which would be responsible for drafting a new constitution. At issue for those putting forth the challenge was the fact that the actual constitution-drafting committee was to include 50 members of parliament and another 50 chosen from syndicates, unions and public figures. The result was a panel dominated by Islamists and Salafists to the great chagrin of liberals and reformists.

Earlier, the Egyptian Social Democratic Party announced it was withdrawing from the Constituent Assembly in protest of the 50-50 ratio of members of parliament to non-members of parliament in the 100-seat body. Soon thereafter, a number of liberal and leftist parties announced they were also withdrawing from the Constituent Assembly. Free Egyptians Party, National Progressive Unionist Party (Tagammu party), and Popular Alliance party joined the Egyptian Social Democratic Party, in objecting to the way of Constituent Assembly members were being chosen. They excoriated the Islamists, who dominate the parliament, for ignoring proposals for fair standards. Also protesting the method of choosing members to the Constituent Assembly were various political activists in Egypt.

In April 2012, with the High Administrative Court ruling in favor of those challenging the panel, the case was expected to advance to the Constitutional Court for review. Meanwhile, the constitutional panel was suspended.

The Case Against Mubarak

On June 2, 2012, former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was found guilty for his part in the deaths of protesters during the 2011 so-called "Nile Revolution" in that country. Mubarak was also sentenced to life in prison. Former Interior Minister Habib al-Adly was also found guilty and given a life sentence for failing to stop security forces from using deadly force against unarmed demonstrators. Several security officials and former interior ministry officials who were tried along with the former Egyptian leader on similar charges, were themselves acquitted of crimes associated with the deaths of protesters. Meanwhile, Mubarak and his two sons, Alaa and Gamal, were acquitted on separate charges of corruption.

In the aftermath of the verdict, protests broke out in Cairo's Tahrir Square, Alexandria, Suez, and Mansoura, presumably in anger over the acquittals for members of Mubarak's coterie. In a separate but related development, some protesters stormed the campaign headquarters of presidential candidate, Ahmed Shafiq, in Fayoum to the south of Cairo. Since Shafiq served as Mubarak's last prime minister, it was plausible that this action was related to the rise in anti-Mubarak passions surrounding the trial and verdict. Overall, it was clear that the verdict simply opened unhealed wounds.

By June 19, 2012, news was emerging from Egypt that former President Mubarak was critically ill and potentially very close to death. Mubarak was reported to have suffered a stroke, and was

transferred from prison to life support in an army hospital. The state of Mubarak's health caused international controversy with some reports even suggesting that he was "clinically dead." Further reports were eventually registered noting that the former leader was unconscious and on life support. Police were dispatched to patrol the outside of the hospital, presumably in the interests of security.

Primer on Presidential Election in Egypt

First round -- May 23-24, 2012; second round -- June

Summary

Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohamed Morsi won the Egyptian presidential election in the second round of voting in June 2012. The elections began a month earlier on May 23, 2012, as Egyptians began the two-day process of casting ballots in the country's landmark presidential elections. With no one candidate winning an outright majority, there was a runoff election set to take place. On June 16-17, 2012, that second round of voting took place to determine who would clinch the presidency. The elections came more than a year after the so-called "Nile Revolution" that toppled former President Hosni Mubarak's regime. Now, an Islamist -- Morsi -- was set to become the new president of a country where the Muslim Brotherhood has long been in a power struggle with the military establishment. Of concern has been the matter of what type of executive leadership would be produced at the end of this election process. Would the Muslim Brotherhood reign supreme at the executive level as it had in earlier parliamentary elections? What would be the nature of that political power given the fact that the courts had ruled a portion of the parliament to be unconstitutional, leading to its dissolution? How much influence remained in the hands of the military council? What would the implications be for the realm of foreign policy and particularly with regard to relations with Israel? Would the democratic ambitions of the Egyptian people be met more than a year after the uprising? The answers to these questions were yet to be determined. See below for the full "Elections Primer."

Background

In mid-January 2012, Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces announced that candidates hoping to contest the forthcoming presidential election could commence the process of registering their candidacies. While there was no actual date finalized for the presidential contest, there had been suggestions that the vote might be held in April 2012. That being said, Egyptian officials soon were indicating that the vote might take place two months later - in June 2012 instead.

One of the most well-known contenders was the former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency and a current opposition leader and presidential contender, Mohammed El Baradei. A vociferous voice for reform, El Baradei warned against the ascendancy of the Muslim Brotherhood

and other Islamists in the recent parliamentary elections and said that Egypt needed to be rescued from the precipice of crisis. By January 2012, though, El Baradei was making it known that he was withdrawing from the field of presidential contenders. Citing the lack of real democratic reform since the Nile Revolution a year earlier, El Baradei said, "My conscience does not permit me to run for the presidency or any other official position unless it is within a democratic framework." He also accused the remnants of the previous regime of continuing to control the country and continuing the rein of repression.

A less well-known presidential contender, Hesham Al-Bastawissy, had already announced his withdrawal from Egypt's presidential race, saying that a violent crackdown by transitional authorities had "stripped legitimacy" from the interim ruling military council. Bastawissy said he would only remain in the race if a presidential council took over from the military council.

As February 2012 came to a close, Egypt's transitional authorities firmed up the dates for the presidential contest, announcing that the first presidential election after the fall of former President Hosni Mubarak would be held from May 23 to May 24, 2012. Final nominations for candidates would be submitted in the period between March 10, 2012, and April 8, 2012.

The Candidates:

Abdel-Moneim Abul-Fotouh, an independent presidential aspirant formerly allied with the Muslim Brotherhood member but now regarded as something of a moderate, was one of the main contenders in the presidential race. He was quickly becoming regarded as a frontrunner.

Other hopefuls included Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa, former Prime Minister Ahmed Shafik, and Egypt's first female presidential candidate -- former talk show host Bothaina Kamel.

Note that in March 2012, more than 70,000 signatures were collected across the country in support of nominating Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi -- head of the interim authorities -- as Egyptian president. Supporters said the country was in need of a military leader to ensure the stability of the nation. The entity drafting signatures in favor of a Tantawi bid for the presidency said that if he (the leader of the transitional Supreme Council of the Armed Forces leading Egypt) was not amenable to contesting the election, they would seek another military figure for the job.

As March 2012 came to a close, Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood reneged on its stated vow not to contest the presidential race by offering its own candidate -- the party's deputy chairman, Khairat al-Shatir. The entry of Shatir into the presidential contest raised anxieties by political liberals as well as the military that the Muslim Brotherhood (already the biggest force in the new parliament and the constitutional assembly) was growing into a dominating political base in Egypt. The entry of a Muslim Brotherhood candidate effectively crowded out other options -- many of whom advocated on behalf of the 2011 Nile Revolution that swept the Mubarak regime from power. But Shatir's

candidacy was becoming a controversial issue since he had been jailed several times during the rule of former President Hosni Mubarak for terrorism and money laundering charges. This background could prevent him from contesting the presidency. Accordingly, a second candidate from the Muslim Brotherhood -- Mohamed Morsi -- reportedly submitted papers intended to formalize his intent to contest the presidency.

Also in the presidential race was Hazem Salah Abu-Ismaïl -- the presidential contender of the Salafists, who was active during various flare-ups of activism in Tahrir Square. Ismaïl's candidacy became embroiled in controversy when it was revealed that his late mother obtained United States citizenship in 2006. Under the country's election rules, the presidential candidates, as well as their parents and wives, can only have Egyptian nationality.

By the start of April 2012, former President Hosni Mubarak's former intelligence chief and vice president, Omar Suleiman, entered the fray. Suleiman announced his bid for the presidency even as Islamist detractors decried his presidential ambitions. Suleiman said that soon after becoming a candidate for president, he received death threats from the Muslim Brotherhood and others.

It should be noted that by mid-April 2012, a presidential election commission ruled that a number of key presidential candidates were ineligible to contest the election. Specifically, the commission ruled that Omar Suleiman would not be permitted to enter the presidential race because he lacked the requisite number of signatures to get on the ballot. As well, Khairat al-Shatir of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hazem Salah Abu-Ismaïl, the presidential contender of the Salafists, were respectively blocked from contesting the election. Shatir was disqualified because of his 2006 prison sentence handed down by a military court while Hazem Abu Ismaïl was disqualified due to the citizenship status of his mother. A handful of other candidates were additionally barred from running in the presidential race for various reasons. Abu-Ismaïl, responded to the disqualification by calling on supporters to protest his exclusion from the presidential race.

Polling data in April 2012 showed that former Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa was leading the pack of presidential contenders. The poll by al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies showed Moussa in the lead with 30.7 percent. Although the Salafist candidate, Abu-Ismaïl, was posting a close second with 28.8 percent, his political prospects were suspect given the news of his disqualification. Former Muslim Brotherhood member Abdel-Moneim Abul-Fotouh -- once regarded as a frontrunner for the presidency -- was in third place with 8.5 percent. Former vice president Omar Suleiman followed closely with 8.2 percent, but was also subject to disqualification.

At the start of May 2012, this trend appeared to be continuing as Moussa was still posting a lead (now rising to 39 percent), and Fotouh was now the favored alternative (with 24 percent). By the middle of the month (May 2012), Moussa was holding a lead, with Fotouh in a competitive position. They were followed former Prime Minister Ahmed Shafik and Mohamed Morsi, the new presidential candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood. No one candidate was expected to secure the

requisite 50 percent vote share for an outright majority, likely necessitating a second round of voting on June 16-17, 2012, to decide the presidency of Egypt.

The Election

On May 23, 2012, Egyptians began the process of casting ballots in the country's landmark presidential elections. Voter turnout was said to be high in the first round, which was set to go on for two days, with a second round scheduled for June 16-17, 2012, if no one candidate won an outright majority.

Security was tight with military police, national police, armed soldiers, and other security forces patrolling the streets of major cities, and judges monitoring the vote process at polling stations. International election monitors, including former United States President Jimmy Carter, were in Egypt to witness the landmark elections. News from the ground in Egypt also suggested there were long lines at polling stations across the country. There were also some complaints about the lack of access to actually carry out the observation process, as well as some procedural problems for voters at the polls. That being said, voting generally went off in an orderly fashion, with only isolated allegations of irregularities. Polling stations remained open for an extra hour on both nights of the first round to ensure that as many people as possible would have the opportunity to vote.

With all eyes on the election outcome, it was fair to say that the first round would come down to two electoral bloc contests -- one between Morsi and Foutouh for the Islamist vote, and another between Moussa and Shafiq for secular support. Hamdeen Sabahi, a Nasserist nationalist, could prove to be something of a "wild card" if he would consolidate the liberal and leftist factions.

At first, the ballots were being counted. Early indications, however, were that no candidate had secured the 50 percent needed to win an outright majority and, therefore, the second or "runoff" round would take place in June 2012. The likely candidates in that second round would be Muslim Brotherhood candidate Morsi and former Prime Minister Shafiq. Morsi appeared to be in the lead with 26 percent and Shafiq with 22.5 percent, with partial votes counted. That said, Sabahi (described above as a Nasserist nationalist) was running closely behind Shafiq with 20.5 percent and could yet pull off an upset that would propel him to the second round. It should be noted that Foutouh and Moussa -- the two candidates viewed as favorites, according to pre-election polling data and analysis -- were trailing in fourth and fifth place with 10 percent and 12 percent, respectively.

The second round would thus pit Islamist Morsi against either Shafiq or Sabahi. Both a Morsi-Shafiq race and a Morsi-Sabahi race in the second round would constitute contests between Islamists and secularists. Morsi-Shafiq would present a stark choice between the Islamic fundamentalists who now dominated the new Egyptian parliament and the old guard that has been aligned with the military and the former Mubarak regime. Morsi-Sabahi would be a more nuanced choice between the new dominant forces of the Islamic fundamentalists and the liberals and leftists

who made up a significant base of the "Nile Revolution."

Of concern has been the matter of what type of executive leadership would be produced at the end of the election process. Would the Muslim Brotherhood reign supreme at the executive level as it had in earlier parliamentary elections? What would the implications be for the realm of foreign policy and particularly with regard to relations with Israel? Would the democratic ambitions of the Egyptian people in the aftermath of the so-called "Nile Revolution" of 2012 be realized?

With the votes counted, it was Shafiq who managed to secure the second-place finish and an opportunity to contest the second round against Morsi. But only hours after this news broke, protests broke out and the campaign headquarters of Shafiq was subject to attack in Cairo. The building was set ablaze although there were no injuries reported. The protests were divided into various camps -- pro-Sabahi supporters upset over the election results, as well as incensed pro-Shafiq supporters angered by the attack, in addition to other discontented types who were upset that the elections were unlikely to bring about the goals of the "Nile Revolution" more than a year ago.

Shafiq's credentials included a strong military background as a former fighter pilot, and commander of the Egyptian air force from 1996 to 2002. As well, Shafiq had political governing credentials as the country's first civil aviation minister, where he earned a reputation for administrative competence, and as the former prime minister under Mubarak, although he ultimately resigned from office. One of Shafiq's campaign positions is that he was the only person capable of ensuring a successful handover of power in post-Nile Revolution Egypt. His Achilles' heel, though, is his association with the former Mubarak regime, which could repel young, pro-reformist voters.

On the other side of the equation, Morsi has a background as an engineer promising to bring "stability, security, justice and prosperity" to Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood candidate said he would put into practice the Islamist entity's slogan, "Islam is the solution." That stance could itself repel secularists, and so he has advanced the notion that his policies would have "a moderate Islamic reference."

The President, the Parliament, the Constitution, and Political Power

Ahead of the second round of the presidential vote in Egypt between an Islamist, Mohamed Morsi, and a former regime official, Ahmed Shafiq, regional experts began to speculate about the future of Egypt. Of concern has been the matter of what type of executive leadership would be produced at the end of this election process. Would the Muslim Brotherhood reign supreme at the executive level as it had in earlier parliamentary elections? What would be the nature of that political power; how much influence remained in the hands of the military council? Of particular concern among regional leaders has been the future Egyptian foreign policy and the stability of the region. What would the implications be for the realm of foreign policy and particularly with regard to relations with Israel?

Adding to the anxieties was the court ruling on June 14, 2012, which declared about a third of Egypt's new parliament unconstitutional. It was a move that essentially invalidated the existing parliament and returned power to the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF), which was tasked with overseeing Egypt's transition after the toppling of President Hosni Mubarak in 2011, and set the path for fresh elections. While the court ruling thrust Egyptian legislative governance into the sphere of uncertainty, it nonetheless validated the forthcoming runoff vote between Mohamed Morsi and Ahmed Shafiq for the presidency.

On June 16, 2012, Egypt's transitional military leadership -- (SCAF) -- was dispatching letters informing parliamentary officials that the People's Assembly had been dissolved. There were also reports that soldiers were stationed around the parliament with orders not to let members of parliament enter the premises. The Muslim Brotherhood said the move was a "coup against the whole democratic process."

With no permanent constitution in place and the parliament no longer functioning, SCAF soon advanced a supplementary constitutional declaration that constrained the powers of a future president, while preserving certain powers for itself, even after a new president was in place. The supplementary constitutional declaration granted SCAF legislative powers, reinforced the military leadership's role in the drafting of a permanent constitution, exempted the military from civilian oversight, and establishment a National Defense Council ensuring that the military would direct Egypt's national security policy.

The transitional military leadership explained that the supplementary constitutional declaration was a necessary measure at a time of political uncertainty in Egypt. But coming as it did after the dissolution of parliament and ahead of the second round of the presidential vote, the move appeared to be an attempt by the military to earmark political power and influence for itself, and hold some measure of the Mubarak military-security nation state paradigm in place. Not surprisingly, it raised the ire of Islamists who were hoping that their candidate -- Morsi -- would win the presidency.

On June 17, 2012, with the voting complete, all eyes were now fixed on the election outcome. There were no official election results immediately available for the presidential contest, although both Shafiq and Morsi were claiming victory. These competing claims on the presidency -- illustrative of a divide between Islamist loyalists and military stalwarts -- would likely do little to abate the sense of turbulence plaguing the country.

That turbulence was manifested by the sight of tens of thousands of people who returned to Cairo's Tahrir Square to protest the ruling military council assumption of new powers following the dissolution of the parliament. The rally, which was organized by the Muslim Brotherhood, was also intended to show support for Morsi, who they claimed was the election winner. Of course,

Shafiq -- a figure of the old guard with close ties to the military -- was also insisting that he won that election. Accordingly, as Egyptians awaited the official vote results, it was apparent that more than a year after the Nile Revolution, the political scene in Egypt remained divided between militarists and Islamists.

The result of the election was delayed until June 24, 2012, and on that day, Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood was declared to be the winner of the Egyptian presidential contest. According to Egypt's Higher Presidential Election Commission (HPEC), Morsi secured 51.73 percent of the votes in the runoff round, defeating his rival, Shafiq, who garnered 48.27 percent.

Morsi hailed his election via Twitter saying: "An appreciative and respectful greeting to the integral, honest, and fair Egypt's judiciary and brave army and police officers who protected the democratic process with honesty and congratulations for all Egyptians." Recognizing that he was not a leader of only Egyptian Islamists and, instead, the president of the Egyptian nation state, Morsi soon resigned from his positions within the Muslim Brotherhood, including his role as chairman of its Freedom and Justice Party (FJP). In an address to the nation, Morsi appeared to strike a tone of national unity as he declared: "Today I am a president for all Egyptians, wherever they may be. Thanks to our unity and our love for each other, we will able to make a respectable future for ourselves."

In Tahrir Square in Cairo, which has recently been the scene of renewed political demonstrations by supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, the scene turned to a venue of celebration over the news that Morsi had been officially declared to be the election winner. Meanwhile, the head of the transitional military council, known as SCAF, Hussein Tantawi, along with Prime Minister Kamal el-Ganzouri, respectively conveyed their congratulations to Morsi.

The transitional military leadership of Egypt has said it would transfer power to the new president by the end of the month, however, with the parliament dissolved, and without a permanent constitution in place, the actual powers of the new Egyptian president remained undefined. The sense of political uncertainty (referenced above) was not helped by news of former President Mubarak's deteriorating health and rumors that he was either "clinically dead" or dying.

At the start of July 2012, newly-elected President Mohamed Morsi ordered the dissolved parliament to resume its functions. In a presidential decree, it was announced that new parliamentary elections would be held within 60 days after the ratification of the country's new constitution via public referendum. But on July 9, 2012, Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court reaffirmed its decision to dissolve parliament -- effectively vitiating President Morsi's order that the legislative body reconvene. The competing orders from the executive and judicial branches of government plunged the country into a constitutional crisis and, concomitantly, a state of political chaos. By mid-July 2012, Morsi was calling for "consultations among all political forces, institutions and the supreme council of judicial authorities to find the best way out of this

situation."

As July 2012 came to a close, President Morsi appointed Hesham Qandil as the country's new prime minister and called on the former cabinet minister to form a new government as soon as possible. For his part, Qandil said that he intended to form a technocrat government. At the start of August 2012, that government formation process was underway.

On Aug. 12, 2012, Egypt's newly-elected President Mohamed Morsi dismissed the country's two top generals -- Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi, who headed the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) that held transitional power when former President Hosni Mubarak was deposed, and General Sami Enan, 64, the military chief of staff. Both men were placed on forced retirement. Morsi additionally nullified a military order that curtailed his executive powers. The moves appeared to be geared towards removing the strictures placed upon the presidency during the transitional time of military rule, and effectively recalibrating the power balance in his favor. Morsi, a moderate Islamist who won the second round of the presidential election in Egypt months prior in June 2012, also appointed Mahmoud Mekky -- a judge -- as his vice president.

It was not known how this assertion of Morsi's authority would affect the political landscape in Egypt, or, the relationships with other countries at the wider level. For its part, Israel has been anxious to see how the new Egyptian power base would treat its long-standing peace treaty between the two countries. For his part, Morsi has said the agreements forged with Israel would stand -- a position likely to calm fears in Israel -- and emphasized the fact that his Muslim Brotherhood renounced violence many years ago.

Morsi has also shown signs that he intended to take security concerns seriously in Egypt given his response to an episode of violence in the Sinai that affected Israel and the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip in the first week of the month (August 2012). At issue was an attack by Islamic militants at an Egyptian-Israeli border crossing that left 16 Egyptian border guards dead as the militants attempted to storm the border into Israeli territory. Morsi wasted little time in sacking his intelligence chief after the incident. Still, this was an issue that promised to reoccur and Egyptian authorities thus commenced a security sweep intended to find those responsible for this incident. Note that on Aug. 12, 2012, another five Islamic militants again attempted to launch an attack close to the border with Israel; this time, Egyptian troops were able to eliminate the militants.

Further Developments

On Sept. 11, 2012, protests erupted in the Egyptian capital city of Cairo with the United States embassy being the main target. The unrest was sparked by a film of amateur quality, which was produced by a United States citizen, and which some Muslims have determined to be insulting to

the Islamic Prophet Muhammad. The protests soon spread to embassies of Western countries located in various other Muslim countries including Lebanon, Bangladesh, Tunisia, Sudan, Nigeria, as well as the Palestinian territory of Gaza, while unrest persisted in Egypt and Yemen. German and British embassies were attacked in Tunisia and Sudan; in Lebanon, at least one person died. The government of Yemen, like the government of Libya, was quick to express condemnation over the attacks on the United States' embassies. However, there has been concern over the weakness of the new Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi's response, prompting United States President Obama to characterize Egypt as neither an ally nor an enemy, effectively placing relations with post-Nile Revolution Egypt in the category of "to be determined." Egyptian authorities soon stepped up their efforts to repel the protesters in that country.

Presidential decree by Morsi in Egypt sparks protests and accusations of new dictatorship

Summary

Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi issued a presidential decree bestowing upon himself sweeping executive powers. The decree stipulated that the president's decisions, declarations, and laws could not be revoked by any authority, including the judiciary. The decree also foreclosed the possibility that the courts would dissolve the constituent assembly, which has the task of crafting a new constitution. For his part, Morsi argued that the measure was actually intended to protect the democratizing thrust of the Nile Revolution -- Egypt's answer to the 2011 so-called Arab Spring. But detractors issued the counter-argument that Morsi had made himself Egypt's "new pharaoh" and his actions undermined the democracy agenda of the Nile Revolution. The move sparked mass protests, drove the Judiciary into revolt, set up a power battle between the executive and judicial branches of government, threatened to reverse the democratic gains made in Egypt since 2011.

In Detail

On Nov. 22, 2012, Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi issued a presidential decree bestowing upon himself sweeping executive powers. The decree stipulated that the president's decisions, declarations, and laws could not be revoked by any authority, including the judiciary. The decree also foreclosed the possibility that the courts would dissolve the constituent assembly, which has the task of crafting a new constitution.

For his part, Morsi argued that the measure was actually intended to protect the democratizing thrust of the Nile Revolution -- Egypt's answer to the 2011 so-called Arab Spring. As explained by presidential spokesperson, Yasser Ali, during a televised broadcast: "The president can issue any decision or measure to protect the revolution. The constitutional declarations, decisions and laws issued by the president are final and not subject to appeal."

Morsi's supporters gathered by the thousands in front of the Egyptian High Court in Cairo to celebrate the institution of these measures. However, leading opposition figures on the Egyptian political landscape reacted with condemnation. Indeed, the move sparked mass protests and accusations that he was appointing himself Egypt's "new pharaoh." Critics also accused Morsi of reversing the democratic gains made less than two years after Egypt's Nile Revolution swept former President Hosni Mubarak from power. To that end, they further accused Morsi of carrying out a "coup against legitimacy."

Former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Nobel Peace Prize winner, and pro-democracy politician Mohammed ElBaradei said: "Morsi today usurped all state powers and appointed himself Egypt's new pharaoh." Via the social media venue, Twitter, he wrote: "A major blow to the revolution that could have dire consequences."

At a news conference with ElBaradei, Sameh Ashour -- the head of a lawyers' syndicate -- declared: "This is a coup against legitimacy." He further called on the Egyptian citizenry to take to the streets to register their discontent, just as they had in 2011 in the mass action that gave rise to the historic wave of political change in Egypt. Ashour urged, "We are calling on all Egyptians to protest in all of Egypt's squares."

Meanwhile, Wael Ghonim, a leader of the 2011 Arab Spring uprising against President Mubarak, said the revolution had not been launched to find a new "benign dictator." He noted, "There is a difference between revolutionary decisions and dictatorial decisions. God is the only one whose decisions are not questioned."

It should be noted that in addition to issuing the aforementioned presidential decree, President Morsi also dismissed Egypt's chief prosecutor -- Abdel Maguid Mahmoud. Morsi had initially attempted to move Mahmoud from the role of chief prosecutor by appointing him envoy to the Vatican. Mahmoud reacted by ignoring that appointment and returning to work with the support of a number of judges and lawyers. Now, Morsi was replacing Mahmoud with a new chief prosecutor, Talaat Ibrahim, whom he ordered to re-open the investigations and legal rulings into the deaths of protesters in Cairo's Tahrir Square. It seemed that Morsi was attempting to vitiate Mahmoud's acquittal of the security personnel involved in the crackdown on protesters in Cairo's Tahrir Square during the uprisings against the old guard.

With a large swath of the public outraged at those rulings and acquittals by Mahmoud and demanding political reforms, Morsi appeared to be trying to unilaterally rectify the situation to the satisfaction of certain segments of society. Indeed, Morsi himself said that he was "cleansing state institutions" and "destroying the infrastructure of the old regime."

Morsi's critics pointed out that his presidential decree and associated dictates constituted a major

blow to judicial independence. In fact, Egyptian Supreme Council of Justice issued a statement in which it accused Morsi of carrying out an "unprecedented attack" on judicial independence. Furthermore, on Nov. 24, 2012, Egypt's Club of Judges called for a nationwide strike of all the courts and members of prosecutorial bodies in protest against Morsi and his presidential decree. The current scenario was facilitating a power chasm between the executive and judicial branches of government in Egypt. Accordingly, there were suggestions that Justice Minister Ahmed Mekky might attempt to mediate between the president and the judiciary.

Meanwhile, the Egyptian capital of Cairo was being rocked by ongoing violent protests, prompting the American University to close its doors. Outside on the streets and in Tahrir Square, angry demonstrators hurled Molotov cocktails at police, sparking angry confrontations between security personnel and protesters. Protests were also ongoing in the city of Alexandria and the governorates of Suez and Ismaelia. At the time of writing, hundreds of people in Egypt were injured in the clashes while hundreds more were detained and taken into police custody.

With the situation growing more chaotic, Morsi attempted to soften his stance by suggesting that the provisions set forth in his presidential decree were only "temporary." Morsi's office released a statement that read as follows: "The presidency reiterates the temporary nature of those measures, which are not intended to concentrate power, but to avoid ... attempts to undermine democratically-elected bodies and preserve the impartiality of the judiciary." As well, Morsi convened a meeting with the Supreme Council of the Judiciary, the highest council overseeing the Egyptian judiciary, presumably with an eye on easing tensions. Following that meeting, a deal was reached to scale back the scope of the sweeping decree that by-passed judicial review. The new deal would preserve judicial review in most cases, although it would leave intact certain key powers, such as executive authority to prevent the constitutional council from being dissolved by the courts before it finished forging a new constitution. It was yet to be seen how these overtures would be received by the public.

These overtures appeared not to have yielded much positive effect. At the start of December 2012, Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court said it was ceasing all its work indefinitely in protest of the "psychological pressure" it has faced. The court condemned the actions of the protesters seeking to block an unfavorable ruling on the constitution, saying that they were undermining the integrity of the Egyptian judiciary. A statement by the court read as follows: "[The judges] announce the suspension of the court sessions until the time when they can continue their message and rulings in cases without any psychological and material pressures...The court registers its deep regret and pain at the methods of psychological assassination of its judges."

At issue for the court were mass protests by Islamists attempting to prevent judges from meeting to rule on whether to dissolve both the Constituent Assembly that passed the draft constitution, as well as the Islamist-dominated upper house of parliament known as the Shura Council. The court had already dissolved the Islamist-dominated lower house of parliament earlier in the year. The

passage of Morsi's decree (discussed above) would eliminate the court's power to deliver such rulings.

With an eye on preserving their political primacy, the Islamists were seeking to foreclose a legal ruling that would challenge Morsi's authority. Indeed, such a decision by the court would create an imprimatur of sorts for the secular opposition. Thus, it was apparent that there was a growing rift in Egypt between President Morsi and Islamists of the Muslim Brotherhood on one side of the chasm, and, the judiciary and secularists on the other side.

Meanwhile, the drafting of the new constitution was complete at the start of December 2012. That document was drawn up by a body dominated by Morsi-supporting Islamists. It was then approved in a marathon vote that lasted several hours, but which excluded participation by liberal and Coptic members of the Constitutional Assembly due to a boycott. Many opposition activists and secularists cast the document as undesirable, and pointed to the provision that would establish "principles of Sharia" or Islamic law as the fulcrum of legislation. Of particular concern were the effects on the freedom of the press, freedom of religion, and the rights of women.

For his part, President Morsi announced that a popular referendum would be held on Dec. 15, 2012, to ratify the new draft constitution. During this announcement, Morsi said: "The world is looking at how Egyptians will build their institutions to establish their democratic system." Supporters of the president cheered him on as anti-government activists held their ground at Cairo's Tahrir Square. Opposition politician, Mohamed ElBaradei, dismissed Morsi's claim of burgeoning democracy in Egypt, saying "Morsi put to referendum a draft constitution that undermines basic freedoms and violates universal values. The struggle will continue." At the same time, the gap between the executive and judicial branches of government widened when Egypt's Club of Judges announced its refusal to oversee the referendum.

On Dec. 4, 2012, several Egyptian newspapers entered the fray, either refusing to go to press or printing blank pages, in order to register their protest over the contraction of constitutional freedom. Morsi's case was not helped when a number of his own internal advisers resigned over the events unfolding in late 2012.

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of people had gathered outside the presidential palace in the Cairo suburb of Heliopolis to protest against Morsi's recent actions, ranging from his presidential decree to rushing through the drafting of a new constitution. The demonstrations sparked clashes between protesters and pro-Morsi supporters, spurring police to fire tear gas into the crowds. The scene grew so chaotic, with protesters hurling rocks and petrol bombs on the streets, that Morsi was forced to leave the palace and Egyptian security forces took to the national airwaves to appeal for calm. Protests were also reported in Alexandria. With a number of people reported to have died and hundreds injured, this protest movement was starting to result in a death toll.

Presumably with an eye on cooling the heated furor among large swaths of the Egyptian public, by Dec. 6, 2012, President Morsi began calling for dialogue and initiating talks with opposition politicians. Taking to the air waves, President Morsi also conveyed his sorrow over the deaths of people but reiterated his intent to go forward with the referendum on the increasingly controversial new constitution.

Morsi's promise to relinquish the new presidential powers once the new constitution was ratified left few of his antagonists satisfied. Instead, by Dec. 7, 2012, another round of mass protests was gaining steam as tens of thousands of people gathered once again outside the presidential palace in Cairo. Opposition politicians were rejecting his overtures, noting that in Morsi's national address he offered few concessions on his plans to expand his power, curb the judiciary, and force through the new constitution. But pro-Morsi supporters were also taking to the streets, and declaring that there was no secular or liberal future for Egypt, which they said was to be an Islamic country. Now the showdown between the pro-Morsi and anti-Morsi camps was expanding beyond the executive versus judicial divide, to a broader socio-cultural chasm between hard line conservative Islamists and the coalition of reformers, liberals, and secularists.

On Dec. 8, 2012, with an eye on quelling tensions, protests, and violence, President Morsi unveiled a package of concessions. These concessions included measures that would effectively rescind most of the weight of his presidential decree that placed presidential powers on a collision course with judicial review; however, the changes stopped short of delaying or annulling the constitutional referendum. Since the constitutional referendum was emerging as the most significant concern of the opposition movement, and since it was still set to go forward, it was not likely that Morsi had nullified the ire and outrage of the protesters in the streets.

These latest moves occurred amidst rumors that Morsi might be imposing martial law in order to stabilize the country. On Dec. 10, 2012, Morsi ordered the military to maintain security in the period leading up to the controversial constitutional referendum. Included in the order was a provision allowing the military to arrest civilians.

On Dec. 15, 2012, voters went to the polls to vote in the aforementioned constitutional referendum. Turnout was reported to be high in this initial phase, and indications were that Egyptians were voting narrowly in favor of ratification of the controversial constitution. A second phase of voting took place a week later with a lower turnout rate. Results indicated that Egyptians voted in favor of the new constitution with the Supreme Electoral Commission saying it was approved by 63.8 percent of voters in two phases of ballot casting.

On Dec. 25, 2012, Morsi signed the new constitution into law just hours after it was declared approved by voters. Then, by the start of January 2013, the Egyptian government was working frantically to impose electoral regulations, based on the new constitution, ahead of fresh parliamentary elections. Opposition forces were displeased about the pace of work, noting that

there was no time for disparate political forces to reach any consensus on the matter.

The ratification of the new constitution, and its signature into law, constituted a clear political victory for Morsi. However, it could well augur negative political ramifications since the constitution was likely intensify the cleavages and divisions among political factions in Egypt. Nevertheless, Egyptians would return to the polls in only months to vote in parliamentary elections.

Morsi declares state of emergency in response to unrest --

On Jan. 28, 2013, Egyptian President Morsi declared a state of emergency in the cities of Port Said, Suez, and Ismalia along the Suez Canal, in response to a wave of unrest rocking the country, which left more than 30 people dead. As part of the measure, a daily curfew would be in place for a period of a month. President Morsi noted that further security steps might be in the offing, "for the sake of Egypt." But protesters seemed undeterred by the president's warning. On the same day that Morsi announced the state of emergency, Egyptian protesters took to the streets after midnight in defiance of the curfew. In fact, some cadres of protesters (some calling themselves the youth coalition of Suez) promised they would be continuing their rallies in protest of the emergency curfew itself. This declaration indicated their widening opposition to all moves by Morsi.

It should be noted that the initial spate of rioting in January 2013 was sparked in Port Said following a court ruling that sentenced 21 people to death over an outbreak of violence that killed 74 people following a football game in 2012. Now, in 2013, people were again taking to the streets in angry protests as a result of the court ruling. But the riots soon expanded in their scope from a reaction to the legal judgment in Port Said into mass anti-Morsi demonstrations across the country, including Tahrir Square in Cairo -- "ground zero" of the 2011 "Arab Spring" in Egypt that resulted in the end of rule by former President Hosni Mubarak. With youth protesters across the country intent on even defying Morsi's emergency orders, as noted above, it was apparent that Morsi's antagonists were widening their scope to oppose him and his regime.

At issue was the ongoing outrage by liberal, reformist, and secular elements of the opposition and Arab Spring movement who have branded Morsi as an autocratic. At a more specific level, they have condemned him for forcing through a constitution they view as undesirable, due to provisions that would establish "principles of Sharia" or Islamic law as the fulcrum of legislation. Of particular concern was the effects on the freedom of the press, freedom of religion, and the rights of women. Also at issue were the dire economic challenges facing a country highly dependent on tourism for revenue.

This outbreak of violence was the latest manifestation of the intensifying cleavages and divisions among political factions in Egypt. Indeed, even with his political victories, such as the ratification of the controversial constitution, Morsi was being faced with an increasingly divided populace and a broader socio-cultural chasm with hard-line conservative Islamists on one side and the coalition

of reformers, liberals, and secularists on the other side.

Note that at the start of February 2013, there were efforts to address the rising tide of tensions and violence by convening various political and interest groups at the negotiating table for talks. At issue was a draft agreement, known as Azhar's document, which was aimed at bringing an end to the unrest. There was limited hope that this overture would set the path for stability since revolutionary groups in Egypt rejected the document, on the grounds that it would make protests illegal. Intensifying the tensions was the fact that Egypt's main opposition bloc, the National Salvation Front (NSF), reverse its earlier stance to participate in the national dialogue. Now, instead, it was shifting its position and calling for the overthrow of the government led by Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood. Note that violent protests continued to rock the country by the second week of February 2013 with participants railing against the Muslim Brotherhood.

Meanwhile, at the start of February 2013, the Egyptian Constitutional Court was considering whether or not to annul the Constituent Assembly, which was responsible for writing the country's new and controversial constitution, which itself led to division and strife in Egypt, as discussed above. A decision from the court was delayed until March 3, 2013.

2013 Update

In February 2013, Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi issued a presidential decree declaring that parliamentary elections would be held in April 2013. At stake would be the composition of the House of Representatives.

The president soon rescheduled the parliamentary elections date, with the first phase occurring on April 22-23, 2013, instead of April 27-28, 2013, as he initially said. The change in schedule was due to complaints from Coptic Christians that the original date would interfere with Easter celebrations. Meanwhile, members of the opposition in Egypt blasted President Morsi for releasing any election date when the election law itself remained a matter of dispute. Indeed, the High Constitutional Court had ruled five articles of the election law to be unconstitutional, and amendments would take at least six weeks to complete.

Mohamed ElBaradei, the leader of the main opposition bloc, the National Salvation Front, said via the social media outlet, Twitter: "Morsi's decision to go for parliamentary elections amid severe social polarization and the eroding state authority is a recipe for disaster." ElBaradei also urged Egyptians to boycott the upcoming elections, characterizing the poll an "act of deception."

Note that in March 2013, Egypt's Supreme Administrative Court (SAC) suspended a presidential decree to hold the parliamentary elections on April 22, 2013, and referred 14 claims against the

constitutionality of the newly-drafted election law to the Supreme Constitutional Court. The president responded by launching an appeal against the ruling that resulted in the suspension of the elections. But on April 21, 2013, the SAC rejected the appeal. This decision effectively placed the elections in a state of political limbo. In an indirect manner, the measure served to end one source of dissonance between President Morsi and the secular opposition, which intended to boycott the election anyway.

But President Morsi's political problems were not abating anytime soon. Egypt's minister of justice issued his resignation. In his letter of resignation, Minister of Justice Ahmed Mekki indicated that his reason for stepping down was related to actions by President Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood and its pattern of pressure. He specifically referred to demonstrations organized by the Muslim Brotherhood, which aimed to purge the judiciary. He also condemned the move to decrease the retirement age of judges, which would effectively force the retirement of 3,000 sitting judges. Overall, Mekki suggested that the judiciary was under attack by the Muslim Brotherhood and their supporters.

Meanwhile, on April 13, 2013, as the retrial of ousted Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak opened in the capital city of Cairo, the judge presiding over the case stepped down and referred the case to another court. At issue was the charge that Mubarak conspired to kill anti-government protesters during the 2011 so-called "Nile Revolution" -- Egypt's version of the Arab Spring -- that ultimately brought an end to rule by the former Egyptian head of state. Mubarak was actually convicted of the charge in mid-2012 and sentenced to life in prison, but he launched an appeal against his life sentence, ultimately leading to the decision to hold a retrial. Now, at the start of that retrial in April 2013, Judge Mustafa Hassan Abdullah announced his decision to withdraw from the court proceedings. He said that he would refer the case to the Cairo appeals court due to his personal "unease" in reviewing the case. Despite complaints from prosecution lawyers that the transfer of the trial could delay the case, it was expected that the appeals court in Cairo would form a new panel to lead the retrial.

On April 15, 2013, an Egyptian court ruled that Mubarak should not be held in custody in connection with the charges of conspiring to kill protesters. The decision was made on the basis of the argument by Mubarak's lawyer that he had already spent the maximum time in prison under temporary detention. The ruling did not result in Mubarak's release since the former Egyptian leader was facing separate corruption charges. As well, the matter of the retrial (discussed above) was yet to be decided. To that end, the retrial was to open on May 11, 2013 with Judge Mahmud al-Rashidi presiding over the case at the North Cairo Criminal Court. Meanwhile, on April 17, 2013, Mubarak was ordered back to prison.

Despite the drama surrounding the legal case against Mubarak, the fracas with the judiciary, and the suspension of the elections, the fact of the matter was that in 2013, most Egyptians were not focused on the fact of Mubarak, whom they no longer viewed as influencing the fate of the nation.

Instead, Egyptians, by and large, were worried about the economic future of the country. While Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi spent his political capital on consolidating presidential power and that of his Muslim Brotherhood, and as he sought to entrench an Islamist orientation into the new constitution, the economy of Egypt -- once highly dependent on tourism but hard-hit since the "Nile Revolution" in 2011 -- was in precipitous decline. Since 2011, continued political upheaval has marked the landscape in Egypt, with obvious deleterious results for the tourism sector of the economy as well as broader foreign investment. Indeed, Egypt was suffering from dwindling foreign currency reserves. Egypt's central bank acknowledged that the country's foreign currency reserves fell 10 percent in January 2013, according to the country's central bank. The situation could spur further unrest if food and fuel, which are paid for using currency reserves, become scarce. With that possible end in sight, the government was looking to re-enter talks with the International Monetary Fund in order to secure loan financing.

At the start of June 2013, Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court ruled that the upper house, or Shura Council, along with the panel that drafted a new -- and highly controversial constitution -- were respectively "invalid" and "illegal."

Months earlier in March 2013, Egypt's Supreme Administrative Court suspended a presidential decree to hold the parliamentary elections in the spring of 2013, and referred 14 claims against the constitutionality of the newly-drafted election law to the Supreme Constitutional Court. President Mohammed Morsi responded by launching an appeal against the ruling that resulted in the suspension of the 2013 elections. But in April 2013, the SAC rejected the appeal. This decision effectively placed the elections in a state of political limbo. In an indirect manner, the measure served to end one source of dissonance between President Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood and the secular opposition, which intended to boycott the election anyway.

Now in June 2013, as noted here, the Supreme Constitutional Court was ruling that not only was the upper house, or Shura Council, essentially invalid, but also that the constitutional panel (a body dominated by Morsi-supporting Islamists) was illegal. The decision was a victory for opponents of President Mohammed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood, who have argued that the drafting of the document excluded participation by liberal and Coptic members of the Constitutional Assembly, contained provisions that would establish "principles of Shari'a" or Islamic law as the fulcrum of legislation, and would deleteriously affect freedom of the press, freedom of religion, and the rights of women.

It should be noted that despite this ruling against the Shura Council and the constitutional panel, Egypt's top court also decided that the upper house should only be dissolved after new elections. The legitimacy of the constitution itself was a matter of debate while the timeline for those elections remained very much in doubt. Meanwhile, the constitution debacle, matched by the unclear plan for elections (without electoral reforms), would serve only intensify the cleavages and divisions among political factions in Egypt -- specifically between hardline conservative Islamists

and the coalition of reformers, liberals, and secularists.

Special Report: Goodbye Arab Spring, Hello Arab Summer

In Brief:

In 2013, more than two years after Nile Revolution, Egypt was gripped by conflict between the Muslim Brotherhood and the newly-installed Egyptian authorities. Going back to July 3, 2013, following the issuance of an ultimatum by the Egyptian military, Mohammed Morsi was removed from office as Egypt's head of state. The military said the country's controversial Islamist constitution was suspended, the country's chief justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court would be inaugurated into power as the interim president, and fresh elections would be held in the future. These actions were taken after the military warned Morsi that he had 48 hours to respond to the will of the people, who were in the streets demanding that Morsi resign and fresh elections be held. Morsi's decision to defiantly stake a claim on the presidency, pointing to the fact that he was the elected leader of Egypt, appeared to ensure an end to his tenure in office. For his part, Morsi described the actions of the military as a "full coup" via Twitter. For many anti-Morsi protesters who yearned to see him ousted from office, they did not seem to care whether there was a coup or not. They seemed focused on the goal of seeing Morsi gone. For the military itself, it was unlikely that it viewed its own actions as a coup. Instead, as protests had gained strength in Egypt, leading to a face-off between anti-government protesters on one side and Morsi's pro-Muslim Brotherhood supporters on the other side, the military decided that it needed to intervene to prevent bloodshed. That intervention did entail taking a particular position -- specifically, on the side of the anti-government liberal, secularist, and reformist factions. Since the ousting of Morsi, Egypt has been faced with two challenges: forming a new government, and dealing with the political turmoil now facing the country as Islamists from the Muslim Brotherhood railed against the crackdown against them. On the first issue, the formation of a government, Egypt has seen progress. However, conflict between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian authorities have continued to date. By mid-August 2013, Egyptian security forces were clearing pro-Morsi protest camps, leading to a bloody confrontation and the resignation of Vice President Mohammed ElBaradei. In September 2013, the banning of the Muslim Brotherhood was ongoing, while protests were ramping up once again between pro-Morsi Islamist elements and the military-controlled state forces. As well, those very pro-Morsi Islamist elements were being increasingly implicated in acts of terrorism in the Sinai and in brutal attacks against Coptic Christians. By the start of November 2013, Egypt was marked by by constant waves of protests and a state of turmoil. Note that former President Morsi's trial commenced on Nov. 4, 2013; after he declared himself to be the rightful head of state, the trial was adjourned until January 2014.

See below for a full report of events in Egypt.

Revisiting the Nile Revolution --

More than two years after Egypt's Nile Revolution that swept former President Hosni Mubarak from power, and the election of a new Islamist president, Mohammed Morsi, Egypt was a country in transition. The question, of course, was a matter of the destination for Egypt. Did the Nile Revolution bring to fruition the democratic hopes of the youthful reformists, secularists, and liberals who spurred the mass action in 2011? Or were the hitherto sidelined Islamists finally able to take control and frustrate the reformist and secular elements of Egyptian society seeking for a fresh path to the future?

In fact, Egypt was in a state of political chaos and economic crisis in 2013. Sustained fighting between the branches of government, social instability, and an economic farrago together marked the Egyptian landscape. At issue was the ongoing outrage by liberal, reformist, and secular elements of the opposition and of the Arab Spring movement who have branded President Morsi as an autocrat. They claim that Egypt replaced one dictator, in the form of Mubarak, with another, in the form of Morsi. A particular source of consternation was the constitution, which President Morsi pushed through under questionable circumstances. The liberals, secularists, and reformists have viewed the document as undesirable, due to provisions that would establish "principles of Sharia" or Islamic law as the fulcrum of legislation. Of particular concern was the effects on the freedom of the press, freedom of religion, and the rights of women.

Meanwhile, despite a legal case over the fate of former President Mubarak, the fact of the matter was that in 2013, most Egyptians were not focused on the ex-President, whom they no longer viewed as influencing the fate of the nation. Instead, Egyptians, by and large, were more worried about the economic future of the country. Egyptians were also concerned about the rising crime rate and overall state of instability.

While Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi had spent his political capital on consolidating presidential power and that of his Muslim Brotherhood, and as he sought to entrench an Islamist orientation into the new constitution, the economy of Egypt -- once highly dependent on tourism but hard hit since the "Nile Revolution" in 2011 -- was in precipitous decline. Since 2011, continued political upheaval has marked the landscape in Egypt, with obvious deleterious results for the tourism sector of the economy as well as broader foreign investment. Indeed, Egypt was suffering from dwindling foreign currency reserves. Egypt's central bank acknowledged that the country's foreign currency reserves fell 10 percent in January 2013, according to the country's central bank. The situation could act as a catalyst for further unrest if food and fuel, which are paid for using currency reserves, become scarce. With that possible end in sight, the government was looking to re-enter talks with the International Monetary Fund in order to secure loan financing. However, with the exception of this plan, the government has offered no

comprehensive economic initiatives.

Revolutionary Renewal --

Anti-government protests were set for June 30, 2013 (as discussed below). At issue for President Morsi's detractors was a combination of frustration over the president's autocratic style of leadership and his mismanagement of the country, with particular emphasis on the economy. Prospective protesters said that they intended to participate in a "sit-in" in front of the presidential palace. With news of protests on the horizon, and amidst these aforementioned political tensions and economic challenges, President Mohamed Morsi held a rally on June 21, 2013, which was intended to showcase his popular support a year after he took office.

But it was not clear that a rally attracting Morsi's base of Muslim Brotherhood supporters could change Egypt's dangerous trajectory. For example, in the year before the Nile Revolution, Egypt was ranked as No. 45 on the "Failed States Index"; in 2013, Egypt was ranked in 31st place. No doubt that was not the kind of movement hoped for by Egypt's governing authorities. Crime also skyrocketed to new levels with murders were up 130 percent, robberies up 350 percent, and kidnappings up 145 percent in 2012, according to the Interior Ministry.

Observers were noting that the government was bereft of technocratic acumen and seemed incapable of addressing the challenges of the country. As stated in an article by opposition figure, Mohammed ElBaradei, which was published by "Foreign Policy" magazine: "The executive branch has no clue how to run Egypt. It's not a question of whether they are Muslim Brothers or liberals -- it's a question of people who have no vision or experience. They do not know how to diagnose the problem and then provide the solution. They are simply not qualified to govern." ElBaradei placed the blame on the legacy of the past, saying: "Most of our challenges are a by-product of the old dictatorship. We still have an open wound and need to get a lot of the pus out. We need to clean that wound -- you cannot just place a Band-Aid on it. But that is what is happening -- relying on the same worn-out ideas. The uprising was not about changing people, but changing our mindset. What we see right now, however, is just a change of faces, with the same mode of thinking as in Mubarak's era -- only now with a religious icing on the cake."

On June 26, 2013, President Morsi delivered a 2.5 hour national address aimed at quelling the climate of unrest ahead of anticipated protests. In the speech, Morsi acknowledged making some mistakes during his time in office, and expressed regret over the fuel shortage plaguing the country. In addition, Morsi called for a national reconciliation dialogue, and said that a committee would be established to consider amendments to the highly controversial 2012 constitution. However, the Egyptian president also blamed his political rivals and "enemies of Egypt" for causing trouble, defended his presidency, and rejected demands that he resign or hold early elections.

Of note was the fact that President Morsi's speech did not receive the positive reception he was seeking from his critics. Instead, his detractors generally characterized the address as "too little, too late." As well, anti-government protesters took to the streets early -- indeed, ahead of the scheduled protests for June 30, 2013 -- to express their outrage. The eruption of unrest turned violent and by June 28, 2013, several people had died, including one American, while hundreds were injured.

For its part, the main opposition bloc, the National Salvation Front (NSF), issued a statement in which it warned it was "withdrawing confidence" from Morsi. The statement also criticized the president for mismanaging the country's affairs and exacerbating Egypt's economic crisis. Meanwhile, both anti-Morsi critics and political analysts alike cast Morsi's speech as an exercise in the "politics of justification," and observed that the president and his Muslim Brotherhood appeared to be disconnected from the grievances being expressed by the public. As noted by Khaled Dawoud, a spokesman for the opposition NSF, "This speech shows that [Morsi] lives in another world... The talk of national reconciliation comes too late, it is nothing but lip service. He is refusing to acknowledge the number of problems that have come from his policies and the religious rhetoric of his group."

June 30, 2013, saw Egypt rocked by further mass protests, effectively rendering President Morsi's speech ineffectual. Protesters took to the streets in cities across the country to register their anger over President Morsi's failure to address the country's political and economic challenges. The mass action was organized by the aforementioned National Salvation Front (NSF) -- the main opposition bloc composed of reformists and secularists -- and was intended to spark a grassroots movement known as Tamarod (Rebellion). The goals of the movement did not simply focus on protests and demonstrations. Instead, the Tamarod (Rebellion) movement aimed to force President Morsi to step down from office and to hasten snap elections.

In Cairo alone, tens of thousands of people gathered at both Tahrir Square -- "Ground Zero" of the 2011 Nile Revolution -- as well the presidential palace. They promised to keep up their rallies at Tahrir Square -- which was now seeing its biggest protests since the 2011 revolution -- until Morsi assented to their demands. Indeed, the number of Egyptians in the streets on July 1, 2013, exceeded one million, making it apparent that the protests constituted an overwhelming show of the will of the people.

While the demonstrations could broadly be described as peaceful, there was an attack on the headquarters of the governing Muslim Brotherhood movement, which resulted in violent clashes and some deaths. Several other persons died in other incidences elsewhere in Egypt. The death toll was now approaching 20 victims on July 1, 2013.

It should be noted that there were also thousands of people aligned with Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood on the streets of Cairo holding rallies of their own in a show of support for the

government. Many of these stalwarts of Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood pointed to the fact that the president had been democratically elected and Morsi's right to power should therefore be respected.

Another element on the Egyptian scene was the military. With this outbreak of protests in mid-2013, the military was not initially a visible factor on the scene. However, the country's defense minister warned that the military could enter the equation if the unrest appeared to be leading down the path of chaos. With the NSF opposition bloc releasing its "Revolution Statement 1," it was not known if that path of chaos was in the offing. That statement urged protesters across Egypt to "maintain their peaceful [rallies] in all the squares and streets and villages and hamlets of the country... until the last of this dictatorial regime falls."

Measures by the Military --

At the start of July 2013, the Egyptian military had officially entered the fray. The country's top generals issued a 48-hour ultimatum to President Morsi, urging him to either respond to the demands of the protesters, or accept the military's actions in resolving the unfolding crisis.

The military's communique, which was read in a nationally-televised address, warned that absent serious measures by Morsi, the military would impose its own "roadmap" intended to return Egypt to peace and stability. The communique referenced the "the historic circumstance" unfolding in Egypt, as shown by the millions of Egyptian protesters in the streets. The communique asserted that "if the demands of the people have not been met" within 48 hours, then the Egyptian military would be compelled to act.

The communique stopped short of specifying its potential actions involved in that "roadmap" although there were subsequent suggestions that some measures might include the suspension of the controversial 2012 constitution and the dissolution of parliament.

The communique also made it clear that the military did not envision becoming a political player on the Egyptian scene. To this end, the military's communique included this statement: "The armed forces will not be party to the circle of politics or ruling, and the military refuses to deviate from its assigned role in the original democratic vision that flows from the will of the people." For his part, General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, the head of the armed forces, expressed the reluctance by the military to become involved in political affairs of Egypt, while nonetheless emphasizing the "unprecedented" expression of the will of the people and the priority of the military to stand by that political will. In many senses, the message was reminiscent of the announcement by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces two years prior in 2011, just before the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak.

Not surprisingly, protesters in Tahrir Square exploded with celebration at the news of the military's

ultimatum. Reporters on the ground in Cairo said that spontaneous chants broke out of “The army and the people are one hand!”

The reaction from the Muslim Brotherhood and Morsi's inner cadre to the military's ultimatum was contradictory. Yasser Hamza, a senior member of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, assumed a defiant tone in an interview with al-Jazeera. He said, "Solutions will be in the framework of the constitution. The age of military coups is over." But the New York Times reported that an anonymous adviser to Morsi seemed to concede that a coup might be unfolding. The newspaper had the individual on the record saying, “We understand it as a military coup. What form that will take remains to be seen.” That individual also warned that the Muslim Brotherhood did not intend to “take this lying down."

It should be noted that the Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood have long been reluctant to take seriously the post-Nile Revolution protest actions that occurred in 2012 over the constitution, and now in 2013 over political and economic mismanagement. They have dismissed the idea that the unrest was a sign of mass discontent; instead, they have blamed the demonstrations on factions aligned with former President Mubarak, whom they accused of destabilizing the country.

That being said, the fact of the matter was that mid-2013 saw at least one million angry Egyptians in the streets calling for Morsi to resign and demanding fresh elections. Another fact was that even if the Muslim Brotherhood was not prepared to interpret the protests as a legitimate symbol of the will of the people, the Egyptian military viewed the situation quite differently.

The options available to Morsi were limited. The president could defend his right to the presidency. Morsi could rally his Muslim Brotherhood base in the hopes that the show of support would demonstrate his claim on power. Of course, such a course would inevitably lead to a direct confrontation with the military and could set the path for political catastrophe in Egypt. Another option would be for Morsi to form a power-sharing or unity government. This move could potentially allow Morsi to hold onto the presidency, while possibly assuaging the military. A third option would be to assent to the demands of protesters by resigning and calling early elections.

President Morsi soon indicated that he was not interested in meeting the demands of the military but would continue his efforts towards dialogue and reconciliation. However, despite this stance, the Egyptian president's grip on power appeared to show signs of slipping when several of Morsi's cabinet ministers resigned from his government. Among the resignations was that of Morsi's high level foreign minister.

Note: July 2, 2013 was marked by ongoing protests and demonstrations across Egypt.

Alert:

On July 3, 2013, following the issuance of the aforementioned ultimatum by the Egyptian military, tanks and troops were deployed at major sites, intersections, and even at the presidential palace in Egypt. Meanwhile, there were reports that the military had taken control of the country's media outlets. There were also accounts of the Republican Guard barracks being surrounded by barbed wire, barriers and troops. Given Morsi's rejection of the military's ultimatum (discussed above), Egypt was on edge as the 48 hour deadline drew near.

There were expectations that real action would come on this day when the military issued a statement on the "final hours" ahead of the looming deadline. On its official Facebook page, the armed forces of Egypt asserted the following: "We swear to God that we will sacrifice even our blood for Egypt and its people, to defend them against any terrorist, radical or fool."

Finally, on July 3, 2013, just hours after the 48-hour deadline passed, General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, the head of Egypt's armed forces, announced that Mohammed Morsi had been removed from office as Egypt's head of state. Sisi, speaking on behalf of Egypt's armed forces, said that the country's controversial Islamist constitution was suspended, the country's chief justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court would be inaugurated into power as the interim president, and fresh elections would be held in the future. Sisi, who made the announcement while flanked by military, political, and religious (both Christian and Muslim), and political figures, said that there was consensus among them as regards the path forward for Egypt. Sisi said, "Those in the meeting have agreed on a roadmap for the future that includes initial steps to achieve the building of a strong Egyptian society that is cohesive and does not exclude anyone and ends the state of tension and division."

It should be noted that these actions were taken after the military warned Morsi that he had 48 hours to respond to the will of the people, who were in the streets demanding that Morsi resign and fresh elections be held. Morsi's decision to defiantly stake a claim on the presidency, pointing to the fact that he was the elected leader of Egypt, appeared to ensure an end to his tenure in office. A last-ditch offer to form a more inclusive cabinet did not gain traction as opposition leaders refused to negotiate with Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood. Clearly, the end of Morsi's presidency was now a reality as he was summarily deposed from power.

For his part, Morsi described the actions of the military as a "full coup" via his official Facebook page. For many anti-Morsi protesters who yearned to see him ousted from office, they were not interested in debating the semantics of whether the ousting of Morsi could be classified as a coup or not. They seemed focused on the goal of seeing Morsi gone. Some analysts were meanwhile suggesting that since the military did not intend to seize power for itself, but instead was facilitating a change of government to an inclusive entity, the term coup d'etat could not be applied. For the military itself, it was unlikely that it viewed its own actions as a coup. Instead, as protests had gained strength in Egypt, leading to a potentially violent confrontation between anti-government liberals, secularists, and reformists on one side and Morsi's pro-Muslim Brotherhood supporters on

the other side, the military decided that it needed to intervene to prevent bloodshed. That intervention did entail taking a particular position -- specifically, on the side of the anti-government liberal, secularist, and reformist factions.

For now, the people in the streets in Egypt were applauding the intervention by the military. Indeed, the streets of Cairo, and specifically, Tahrir Square, were filled with people jubilant over the end of the Morsi era. Anti-Morsi activists cheered the military, waved flags, and set off fireworks. At the same time, there were pro-Morsi supporters who were balking at the idea that Egypt's first elected leader had been ousted from office. As well, the Muslim Brotherhood -- simmering at the thought that its power was now gone -- was promising not to accept the situation easily.

Nevertheless, it was clear that on this day at least, the 2013 Tamarod (Rebellion) movement was being viewed as an opportunity to realize the aspirations of the 2011 Nile Revolution. Stated differently, the so-called "Arab Spring" was now being transformed into an "Arab Summer" in the streets of Cairo.

Meanwhile, it should be noted that the United States has taken a cautious position on the events unfolding in Egypt. Foreign Minister Kamel Amr (who resigned from Morsi's government days ahead of the intervention by the military) said that he had offered assurances to United States Secretary of State John Kerry. Amr said that he told Kerry in a telephone call that the removal of Morsi from power was not a military coup, but instead, the result of the "overwhelming will of the people." Despite such assurances, President Barack Obama expressed concern over the removal of Morsi as president and urged the military to quickly return Egypt to a democratically-elected government. He said, "We are deeply concerned by the decision of the Egyptian armed forces to remove President Morsi and suspend the Egyptian Constitution."

Other countries were also entering the fray. Nigeria, Turkey, and Tunisia condemned the military's intervention and the removal of Morsi as president, while Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates appeared to be supportive of the developments in Egypt.

New Leadership and Government --

Regardless of the international community's view, the fact was that Morsi was out as president and a new head of state had to be inaugurated into power. On July 4, 2013, the head of Egypt's highest court, Adly Mansour, was sworn into office as the country's transitional or "caretaker" president.

Mansour served on Egypt's Constitutional Court since 1992. Born in Cairo, Mansour graduated from the faculty of law at Cairo University in 1967. In 1969 and 1970 respectively, he completed postgraduate studies in general law and administrative science. Having won a scholarship to France's most prestigious institute of higher education, he attended Ecole Nationale de

l'Administration from 1975 to 1977. Mansour worked as the chancellor of Egypt's State Council in 1984 and became president of the same institution in 1992. From that time, he served on Egypt's Constitutional Court until 2013 when he was named transitional or caretaker president of Egypt.

Striking a populist tone soon after his swearing in ceremony, President Mansour said the source of his presidential power was "the great people of Egypt." He said: "I received the assignment order from those who possess it, the great people of Egypt, who are the leader and the source of all powers after they corrected the path of their great revolution."

Of course, the views of the actual people of Egypt were not in total alignment over the change in leadership. Clashes between supporters of Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood and members of the Tamarod rebel movement continued even after the military's intervention. Several members of the Muslim Brotherhood were arrested and former President Morsi himself was reported to be in detention at an undisclosed location. As well, several media stations seen as being sympathetic to the Muslim Brotherhood had been raided by the military and taken off the air. Included in this list of media entities was al-Jazeera. Human rights group Amnesty International warned that such shutdowns constituted a "blow to freedom of expression." It was apparent that the military-led authorities were carrying out a crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood and its apparent supporters.

Still, with the inauguration of Mansour as president, there were some hopes that General Sisi's promise of a new technocratic government, "inclusive of all political factions," including youth, and a plan for fresh elections, might set Egypt on more positive footing. As to the leadership of that government, on July 5, 2013, news was emerging that Mohammed ElBaradei -- the former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and a Nobel Laureate -- might be named as the new interim prime minister of Egypt. Ironically, it was ElBaradei himself who called for a new technocratic government of Egypt, noting at the time that the not-yet ousted government could be characterized by incompetence.

Among Tamarod rebel movement supporters, news of ElBaradei possibly becoming prime minister was met with cheers and applause on the streets. But the Salafist Nour Party made it clear that they objected to the move. Clearly the conservative and religious agenda of the Salafists was at odds with the liberal and reformist orientation of ElBaradei. While the Salafists had been prepared to support the notion of a new government being formed, they were clearly not keen on ElBaradei at the helm. The deaths of several people during a pro-Morsi demonstration outside the officers' club of the Presidential Guard, where Morsi was believed to be held, provided the Salafists to walk away from the ongoing discussions on whom might serve as the new Egyptian prime minister. The turmoil that followed in the next few days, especially when the Muslim Brotherhood blamed the army for using live ammunition to disperse the crowds, only served to stultify the opinion of the Salafists.

Regardless of the chaos rocking the streets of Cairo, the matter of forming a transitional government remained a key priority. On July 9, 2013, a presidential spokesperson said that President Adly Mansour had nominated Mohammed ElBaradei, to be vice president. The president had also nominated Hazem el-Beblawi, a technocrat, as prime minister. Beblawi served as finance minister during the period of military rule following the overthrow of former President Hosni Mubarak.

These announcements appeared to solve two problems for the president. First, the president was circumventing the objections levied by the Salafists towards the notion of ElBaradei as prime minister, while at the same time, keeping ElBaradei in the presidential inner circle. Second, by choosing a financial specialist to lead the new government in the form of Beblawi, the president was addressing the economic woes facing Egypt and the need for technocratic expertise.

Indeed, Beblawi's long record in economic management included the 12 years he ran Egypt's Export Development Bank for 12 years, as well as his work running the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (a United Nations entity that promotes cooperation among 17 Arab states), and also his stint as an adviser at the Arab Monetary Fund in the United Arab Emirates. French-educated Beblawi, who also worked in academia, was also described as having many ties across financial circles in the Middle East. These connections were illustrated in high relief when he was able to secure emergency loans and grants from the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. As well, Beblawi's well-known stance as a believer in free markets and legal transparency were likely to gain him applause from financial experts, and would help build confidence that Egypt was regaining its economic footing.

By mid-July 2013, Prime Minister Beblawi had formed a government and those new cabinet ministers were sworn into office. Included in the new cabinet was army chief Gen Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who led the removal of President Morsi from office; Sisi was set to become the deputy prime minister but he would also hold the ministerial portfolio for defense. Other key cabinet members were Nabil Fahmy at the foreign ministry, Sherif Ismail at the oil ministry, and Mohammed Ibrahim, who served as interior minister in the previous government when Morsi was president, and who would hold onto this portfolio. In the interests of diversity, Mounir Fakhry Abdel Nour, a Christian, was named as trade and industry minister, while three women would have cabinet positions, including Maha el-Rabat, who now held health portfolio. There were no cabinet positions for Islamists in the new government, but only because they refused to participate in the new administration. Gehad el-Haddad, a spokesperson for the Muslim Brotherhood said in an interview with the Reuters news agency: "It's an illegitimate government, an illegitimate prime minister, an illegitimate cabinet. We don't recognize anyone in it."

Note: President Mansour indicated that fresh elections in Egypt would take place by early 2014. Objections to this timetable came from two distinct and opposed fronts. As expected, the Muslim Brotherhood rejected the election schedule outright, and instead pressed for Morsi to be reinstated

as president. But objections were also issued by the liberal National Salvation Front (NSF) -- led by ElBaradei until his appointment as deputy president. The NSF said that it required more information regarding President Mansour's transition plan and called for more inclusive consultations on the path forward.

Political Turmoil

Even as the Egyptian authorities set upon the task of forming a new government (discussed above), the fact of the matter was that Egypt was facing political turmoil as Islamists from the Muslim Brotherhood railed against the crackdown against them.

The streets of Cairo were filled with demonstrators and violent clashes among the two polarized camps -- pro-Morsi/pro-Muslim Brotherhood and anti-Islamist/pro-reformist -- were becoming widespread in the last week of July 2013, with deaths reported on a daily basis. Indeed, in the month of July 2013 alone, as many as 100 people -- most of them Morsi supporters -- were reported to have been killed.

The Muslim Brotherhood defiantly called on its supporters to take to the streets on July 26, 2013, and protest against ousting of Morsi and the ensuing military takeover. Around the same time as the Muslim Brotherhood made this call, there was a bomb attack on a police station in Mansoura to the north of Cairo, which killed a policeman. Meanwhile, Islamists were launching regular and violent attacks in the Sinai Peninsula, targeting the police and army there, and adding to the perception that they would go to extreme lengths to rebel against the new Egyptian power base.

Viewing these incidents as terrorist attacks, the new Egyptian authorities signaled that it intended to take a hardline against such violence. The country's military chief and new defense minister, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, called for rallies to give the military a mandate. Sisi said: "I urge the people to take to the streets this coming Friday [July 26, 2013] to prove their will and give me, the army and police, a mandate to confront possible violence and terrorism. So that in case there was a resort to violence and terrorism, the army would have a mandate to confront this." Mohamed el-Beltagy of the Muslim Brotherhood responded angrily to Sisi's statement, saying that the military chief was "calling for a civil war... to protect this military coup."

It was July 27, 2013 that turned out to be a day of chaos with at least 70 people dying in violent clashes across the country. In one incident, 10 Islamists were killed on the Sinai Peninsula. But of greater concern was the violent fracas that broke out between Islamist protesters and security forces at the al-Azhar mosque in Cairo where a sit-in was going on for some time. The protesters accused the security forces of using excessive force and opening fire on them, while the government claimed only tear gas was used. The high number of casualties seemed to bolster the claim that live rounds were used. Egypt's Foreign Minister Nabil Fahmy appeared to tacitly acknowledge that live ammunition was used, albeit from his point of view, by both sides, when he

said: "If you have people shooting each other on both sides then you're obviously going to have to casualties." Fahmy also urged restraint, calling on both sides "to stop inciting violence and using violence."

In these waning days of July 2013, amidst these heightened tensions, the Egyptian Interior Ministry warned that demonstrators participating in a "sit-in" at the Rabaa al-Adawia mosque would soon be dispersed. Interior Minister Mohammed Ibrahim said the authorities would soon respond to complaints from residents close to the mosque about the presence of protesters by clearing the area. Observers worried that such action would only stir the passions of protesters even more, thus sparking further volatile conflict.

On July 31, 2013, the Egyptian military made good on this promise and ordered the police to end the sit-in by supporters of Morsi. An official statement characterized the ongoing protests as a national security threat, while three leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood were referred to the Egyptian courts on charges of inciting violence. In a televised speech, Information Minister Dorreya Sharaf el-Din said: "The continuation of the dangerous situation in Rabaa al-Adawiya and Nahda squares, and consequent terrorism and road blockages are no longer acceptable given the threat to national security." In fact, the Egyptian authorities did not move forward immediately with this threat, and left time for mediation efforts to take shape (as discussed below). However, the failure of those efforts suggested that action would be in the offing.

Meanwhile, Morsi himself returned to the fore in late July 2013 when it was reported that the former president was being detained at an undisclosed location due to allegations that he conspired with the Palestinian militant extremist group, Hamas, to storm police stations and jails in 2011. In fact, Morsi himself was released from a Cairo prison in January 2011 during a jailbreak of the type described in the allegations. However, the fact that legal charges were now being brought against him -- a year after he was allowed to contest and win a presidential election -- suggest some clear political motivation. Indeed, the legal charges could act as justification for the new Egyptian authorities to keep Morsi detained, regardless of either the legitimacy or the politicization of the allegations that Morsi plotted with Hamas. It should be noted Morsi's safety was confirmed after a delegation from the African Union, as well as the European Union foreign policy head, Catherine Ashton, were allowed to meet with the former Egyptian leader.

For its part, the United States has been trying to walk a delicate tightrope in regard to events in Egypt. After several weeks of examining the circumstances that led to the ousting of Morsi from office, the United States authorities declined to characterize the events as a coup. By refraining from this classification, the United States could continue to disburse aid funds to Egypt, the lion's share of which go to the military and is strategically aimed at helping to maintain regional stability. At the same time, in an attempt to display some chastisement for the questionable transfer of power, as well as the ensuing unrest, the United States said it was delaying the delivery of four F-16 fighter jets to Egypt.

By the first week of August 2013, it was clear that international efforts to resolve the political crisis in Egypt had ended in failure. A statement from the office of President Mansour read as follows: "The phase of diplomatic efforts has ended today." The statement continued by blaming the Muslim Brotherhood for the breakdown of talks as follows: "The presidency holds the Muslim Brotherhood completely responsible for the failure of these efforts, and for consequent events and developments relating to violations of the law and endangering public safety." In a televised address, President Mansour characterized the mediation attempts by the international community in the following manner: "We have given the time needed to exhaust the necessary efforts to curb the violence, end the bloodshed and stop the confusion in Egypt's society. I would like to tell you honestly that these efforts have not achieved the success hoped for results."

A respected Islamic organization, al-Azhar, entered the fray by the second week of August 2013 and offered its mediation efforts -- with an eye on ending the crisis. To this end, the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayyib, invited different political factions to participate in negotiations. But, as before, the Muslim Brotherhood was in no mood for either diplomacy or compromise and dismissed the overture. Mohammed Soudan, a spokesperson for the Freedom and Justice Party linked with the Muslim Brotherhood, cast al-Azhar as being a biased entity, pointing to the fact that Imam Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayyib supported the military's actions in removing Morsi from power on July 3, 2013.

Given the failure of the mediation efforts, Prime Minister Beblawi warned that Egyptian authorities would go forward with its decision to clear the protest camps led by the Muslim Brotherhood. On Aug. 11, 2013, all indications were that the clearance of the pro-Morsi demonstrators was imminent and by Aug. 12, 2013, Egypt was bracing for the possibility of violence. Undeterred, the Muslim Brotherhood appeared to invite a bloody confrontation. A leader for the Muslim Brotherhood, Mohammed al-Beltagi, responded to the government's threat in the following manner: "Kill as much as you like. I won't move an inch... We will offer a million martyrs."

Update:

On Aug. 14, 2013, Egyptian security authorities went forward with their threat to clear the pro-Morsi protest camps in Cairo. Armored vehicles and bulldozers razed the main protest camp outside Cairo's Rabaa al-Adawiya mosque, while the protest camp at Nahda Square was raided and demonstrators were forced to disperse. These efforts turned into a bloody confrontation with conflicting reports on the actual number of casualties.

Among those believed to have died -- with numbers ranging from scores to several hundreds -- was the teenage daughter of leading Muslim Brotherhood figure, Mohamed al-Beltagi, who ironically uttered the disturbing words only days before: "Kill as much as you like." Also among the dead

was a cameraman working for Sky News and reporter for Gulf News.

For its part, the Muslim Brotherhood continued its stance of defiance. As noted by Hamza Zawba, a spokesperson for the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice party, "We will not accept the rule of coup perpetrators who open fire at protesters in squares and on the street."

The scenario in Cairo was sufficiently violent and disturbing as to drive Vice President Mohammed ElBaradei resigning from his post in clear effort to distance himself from the hard-line tactics of the military. In an official statement, ElBaradei said: "I cannot continue in shouldering the responsibility for decisions I do not agree with and I fear their consequences. I cannot shoulder the responsibility for a single drop of blood." ElBaradei also explained that he had hoped the removal of Morsi would have brought an end to the dissonance and polarization that came to characterize the Egyptian political scene under rule by the Muslim Brotherhood. However, he noted that the ousting of Morsi did not bring that much sought-after end. As noted by the outgoing vice president, "But things went on in the wrong direction and the state of division became more dangerous as violence only begets violence."

The grim situation in Egypt also drove the international community to register outrage. A spokesman for the European Union cast the scene in Egypt, which included reports of the deaths of protesters, as "extremely worrying" and urged Egyptian authorities to exercise restraint. The foreign ministry of Germany demanded that rival political factions "return immediately to negotiations and avert an escalation of violence" while France called for an "immediate end to the repression." British Prime Minister David Cameron registered his views, noting that the violence was "not going to solve anything." He continued, "What is required in Egypt is a genuine transition to a genuine democracy. That means compromise from all sides." The office of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan lamented that the violence was "a serious blow to the hopes of a return to democracy."

The White House in the United States expressed condemnation of the violence, noting that it "runs directly counter to the pledges by the interim government to pursue reconciliation." The White House also warned that "the world was watching." Secretary of State John Kerry deplored the deadly crackdown, saying it was "a real blow to reconciliation efforts." But on Aug. 15, 2013, United States President Barack Obama decided to match critical words with whatever limited actions were feasible at this point. He announced that the United States was canceling its planned joint military exercise with Egypt, saying, "The Egyptian people deserve better than what we've seen." However, he stopped short of cutting off the military and economic aid that the United States supplies to Egypt. It should be noted that there was a rising chorus in the United States for this action to, in fact, be taken in light of the massacre of pro-Morsi Egyptian protesters.

At the multilateral level, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon called on "all Egyptians to concentrate their efforts on promoting genuinely inclusive reconciliation." Secretary General Ban

further said that he was "well aware that the vast majority of the Egyptian people want their country to go forward peacefully in an Egyptian-led process towards prosperity and democracy." But for the immediate future, hostility and horror was still fresh and the prospect for reconciliation seemed to be a distant and elusive notion.

Egyptian military sources announced that they now had control over the two main protest camps and declared a state of emergency would be enforced for one month. The installed presidency of Egypt released a statement explaining its decision to impose a state of emergency was based on the following rationale: "Security and order of the nation face danger due to deliberate sabotage, and attacks on public and private buildings and the loss of life by extremist groups."

Interior Minister Mohammed Ibrahim responded to criticisms over the use of deadly force, saying that the police had "dealt professionally" with the protesters, and insisting that the police were authorized to use live ammunition "within a legal framework." He also accused the pro-Morsi protesters of escalating the confrontation with security forces. Striking a less defiant tone, interim Prime Minister Hazem Beblawi expressed regret for the deaths and promised that the national state of emergency would be lifted as soon as possible.

By mid-August 2013, as reports were emerging that the death toll in the bloody "scorched earth" assault had surpassed the 600 mark, the interim Egyptian authorities announced that the temporary detention of ousted President Mohamed Morsi would be extended for an additional 30 days. The news of the death toll did not appear to deter the Muslim Brotherhood, whose leadership was encouraging supporters to return to the streets en masse. To that end, a cabal of pro-Morsi protesters stormed the provincial governor's mansion in Giza, setting that building ablaze. As well, pro-Morsi Muslim Brotherhood protesters also attacked at least 50 Coptic Christian churches.

As if Egypt had not already reached a saturation point in terms of bloodshed and violence, the Muslim Brotherhood announced that it was planning a "day of rage" on Aug. 16, 2013. On that day alone, more than 200 people died in clashes across the country, adding to the escalating death toll, and raising anxieties that Egypt was in the incipient stages of a civil war of the type that has plagued Syria since 2011. Regardless of these fears, protesters arrived in droves at a mosque in Cairo's Ramses Square to participate in the "day of rage" and to register their outrage that their leader, Morsi, had been removed from power. Anti-Morsi groups, such as the National Salvation Front and Tamarod, issued calls for counter-demonstrations with their ranks also turning out in the streets. The situation had all the makings of a confrontation and thus, it was not at all surprising that the protests soon turned deadly.

With an eye on preventing Tahrir Square from again being a protest venue as it did in 2011, the army had deployed its ranks across the city and blocked off entrances to Tahrir Square. But the action was actually in the Fateh Mosque at Ramses Square in Cairo, where a number of Muslim Brotherhood members and supporters had barricaded themselves inside. Security forces laid siege

on the mosque and exchanged fire with snipers on the roof. Several hours later, the Egyptian authorities cleared the mosque using tear gas.

On Aug. 18, 2013, the turmoil continued to rock the country when around 36 detained members of the Muslim Brotherhood died as they attempted to escape during their transfer to a prison. There were conflicting explanations as to how they died, ranging from suggestions that they were killed in an exchange of fire after some of them took a military officer hostage, to another explanation that they died from the effects of inhaling tear gas, which was fired when they took the police officer hostage. Elsewhere around the country, violence continued to rule the day with scores more people dying and close to 600 being injured in confrontations across Egypt.

Violence in Egypt continued on Aug. 19, 2013, when 25 off-duty policeman were killed execution style by a gunmen in the northern Sinai. They were traveling in mini buses when they were ambushed by gunmen, forced to kneel at the side of the road, and then shot to death. This incident occurred only hours after the death of Islamists as they tried to escape during a botched prisoner transfer.

Meanwhile, the Egyptian authorities were also making it clear that their intent was to fight against the rise of extremists in Egypt. Mostafa Hegazy, an adviser to the interim president, said the government was committed to returning the country to constitutional order, and noting that a new constitution would be crafted, which was reflective of all Egyptians. He blasted the international media for its "biased" coverage of the chaos rocking Egypt, pointing to the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters were not simply peaceful protesters suffering victimhood at the hands of interim Egyptian authorities. He pointed to the destruction of Christian churches and police stations, as well as the killing and brutal torture of soldiers and police officers. To this end, Hegazy offered the following comments, "I can't see peaceful protesters. We saw machine guns directed directly against civilians. Where are the stories about taking women and children as human shields?"

Hegazy's claims about the pro-Morsi protesters playing a role in the conflict gained traction when interim Foreign Minister Nabil Fahmy displayed videotaped footage of armed protesters firing on security forces in Cairo. The claims of protesters carrying out acts of violence was further bolstered by a warning by the Foreign Press Association that journalists were being targeted by demonstrators in the streets. The chairman of the Foreign Press Association himself, Volkhard Windfuhr, said that he was targeted by a sniper. In correspondence with United Press International, he described the incident as follows: "The criminal was not a policeman either. I have witnesses for that fact -- normal Egyptian citizen passersby. It is outrageous what these aggressive 'protesters' commit. They attack people at random, attack their own state, attack public buildings and an ever increasing number of churches, houses and shops of Christians."

It should be noted that even as the interim authorities were discussing the return to constitutional

order, there were emerging reports that they were looking for the legal means to outlaw and dissolve the Muslim Brotherhood. Any move to outlaw and dissolve the Muslim Brotherhood -- which was demanding daily protests -- promised to spark further acrimony, outrage, and quite likely -- more demonstrations, which would undoubtedly spur confrontations with security forces. That cycle of violence seemed more than likely when General Sisi -- the head of the armed forces which ousted Morsi from office -- entered the fray to note that the military would not allow further unrest to damage the country. Via his Facebook page, General Sisi said, "We will not stand by silently watching the destruction of the country and the people or the torching the nation and terrorizing the citizens." Still, General Sisi did attempt to offer a unifying tone by calling on opponents to join the political process in the interests of national unity. He said, "There is room for everyone in Egypt, and we are cautious about every drop of Egyptian blood."

But despite Sisi's claim of an Egypt with room for everyone, Mohamed Badie, the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), was arrested in Cairo on Aug. 20, 2013. According to reports from Egypt, Badie was transferred to the Mazraah facility within the Torah prisons' complex where former President Hosni Mubarak and his two sons were being held. Despite the clear blow to the Muslim Brotherhood, the group was defiant and quickly appointed Mahmoud Ezzat, the organization's deputy supreme guide, as the interim leader. But a systematic policy was being activated of detaining members and supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, with close to 1,000 such individuals in custody. Moustafa Hegazi, the leading political advisor to the Egyptian interim presidency, was unapologetic for these measures. In an interview with CNN, he said, "Egypt is waging a fierce war against terrorism and criminal acts."

Meanwhile, in a separate development, on Aug. 19, 2013, the Cairo Criminal Court ordered the release of former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak from prison, pending an investigation into corruption charges. Since there were other charges - such as murder - at stake, Mubarak was expected to remain in custody. But by Aug. 21, 2013, the court had determined that Mubarak could be released on bail pending further investigations. He was to be placed under house arrest "in the context of the emergency law" currently in place across Egypt. On Aug. 22, 2013, Mubarak was transferred by helicopter from prison to his new location where he would be under house arrest.

Some analysts advanced the view that the release of Mubarak would be viewed by many Egyptians as a reversal of the gains made in the 2011 so-called Nile Revolution, thus exacerbating tensions on the country's already conflict-ridden and fractious political landscape. In fact, however, there was only a muted expression of outrage over Mubarak's release in a country no longer consumed by the former leader whom they view as effectively neutered. Instead, attention remained on the dividing line between the military authorities on one side, and the Muslim Brotherhood on the other.

Further Developments

At the start of September 2013, Egypt established a judicial panel to investigate the aforementioned possibility of outlawing and banning the Muslim Brotherhood. The panel recommended that the court remove the non-governmental organization status from the Muslim Brotherhood -- a move that would endanger the legal status of the group. At issue was the claim that the registration of the Muslim Brotherhood as a non-governmental organization was illegal as the government at the time was led by that very group -- the Muslim Brotherhood, operating in the political sphere as the Freedom and Justice Party. Stated differently, the Muslim Brotherhood, which operated as the leading force in government (albeit under the guise of the Freedom and Justice Party), had effectively issued a license to itself as a non-government entity.

Around the same time in early September 2013, violence occurred in Egypt with an attack on a Cairo police station and an apparent assassination attack against Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim as he departed his home in Cairo. Although he survived the attack, it was clear that Egypt continued to be plagued by violence while it was divided by politics and ideology -- with the pro-military installed government on one side and the Muslim Brotherhood on the other.

There were plans afoot for a fresh wave of protests by the Muslim Brotherhood. To this latter end, the National Coalition for Legitimacy, which was associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, called for a "million-person march" across Egypt. The coalition said that its protest campaign was to be called "The Coup is Terrorism."

Yet in fact, it was the Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters who were increasingly becoming associated with terrorism as Islamic extremists aligned with the group carried out a series of terrorist attacks in the northern Sinai -- a region that was increasingly becoming a stronghold for pro-Islamist militants and radicals. Accordingly, by Sept. 6, 2013, the Egyptian military had launched a major offensive against Islamic militants in Sinai, just along the border with the Gaza Strip.

The first week of October 2013 saw Egypt mired by a new wave of protests as supporters of ousted President Mohammed Morsi took to the streets. The protesters clashed with security forces, who used tear gas and live rounds of gunfire to disperse the crowds as they attempted to rally towards Tahrir Square in the capital city of Cairo. Fights also broke out between pro-Morsi supporters and backers of the military regime now ruling Egypt. Several people were reported to have been killed -- most of them being supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood -- while scores more were injured as the sound of explosions and gunshots rocked the capital. Clashes were also reported in the northern Sharqiya district, in the cultural center of Giza, in the northern port city of Alexandria, and at the Suez on the Red Sea.

Meanwhile, October 2013 was also marked by the decision of the United States to suspend a significant portion of its aid package to the Egyptian military. The United States Department of

State also said it was halting the delivery of financial assistance and military systems (including Apache helicopters, Harpoon missiles and tank parts) to the Egyptian government. The United States Department of State explained that it was taking these actions in response to the findings of a review that was undertaken following the harsh and bloody crackdown by the military earlier in the year on the supporters of ousted President Mohammed Morsi. That crackdown left hundreds of people dead.

The United States Department of State hinted that the actions were not intended to be indicative of a permanent policy, and that the resumption of aid and the delivery of financial assistance and military equipment would resume if there was "credible progress" made in Egypt on the road towards free and fair elections. As stated by United States Department of States spokesperson Jen Psaki, "We will continue to hold the delivery of certain large-scale military systems and cash assistance to the government pending credible progress toward an inclusive, democratically elected civilian government through free and fair elections." Indeed, with aid continuing to Egypt in the humanitarian realm, and to assist in securing the unstable Sinai peninsula, it was apparent that the measures were intended to be symbolic rather than significantly punitive.

In the third week of October 2013, a car bomb exploded close to an Egyptian army intelligence building in the city of Ismailia in the Suez Canal area. Three soldiers were injured as a result. While no one group claimed responsibility, but al Qaida-linked Islamist militants have increased their attacks in lawless Sinai region since the ousting of Islamist President Mohammed Morsi in mid-2013. A military spokesperson, Ahmed Ali, described the bombing as "a continuation of the wave of cowardly terrorist attacks" by those interested in fomenting division and turmoil in Egypt.

Turmoil seemed to characterize the landscape of Egypt in late October 2013 as gunmen opened fire on Coptic Christian wedding in Cairo, killing three people, including a young girl. Although there was no claim of responsibility, the Coptic Christian Church -- one of the oldest in all of Christendom as it dates back to 50 C.E. in the city of Alexandria, has been a target of attack by extremist Islamists who view the Christian church as backing the army's removal of former President Morsi from power. Indeed, there has been a lengthy list of attacks on the Coptic Christian churches, church property, and even the murder of several Christians. As well, after Pope Tawadros II of the church characterized the post-Morsi path in Egypt as being in the best interests of Egypt, he received a litany of death threats.

For his part, General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, Egypt's army chief and the person behind the ousting of Morsi, has said that the military and police would "confront terrorism and all those who try to create problems and incite strife between the children of this nation."

Also in late October 2013, protests erupted at Cairo's al-Azhar University after the announcement of the arrest of Essam El-Erian -- the deputy leader of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party. The arrest of El-Erian was part of a continuing crackdown against the Islamist

movement, which included several leading figures from the Muslim Brotherhood.

The protests at the al-Azhar University in Cairo turned violent as angry students, presumably aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood, damaged an administrative building on campus and railed against the Egyptian military, which was responsible for the ousting of Islamist President Mohamed Morsi from office only months prior in mid-2013. Several students were rounded up and arrested as a result of the vandalism to the university property. Of significance was the fact that Cairo's al-Azhar University was known for its Islamic curriculum and was, thus, likely to attract students who were more likely to politically align themselves with the Muslim Brotherhood, its Freedom and Justice Party, and ousted President Morsi.

Deputy Prime Minister Ziad Bahaa El-Din entered the fray on behalf of Egypt's military-controlled authorities saying that the government was committed to reconciliation and accusing the Muslim Brotherhood of sparking further turmoil in unstable Egypt. He said, "Those who are until now rejecting or stalling any understandings aimed at achieving reconciliation and stability for the Egyptian people are the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood."

The arrest of Essam El-Erian meant that he would join former President Morsi in detention and face trial, along with several other Muslim Brotherhood figures, for crimes related to the incitement of violence in late 2012. At issue were the deaths of several people during mass protests outside the presidential palace in the Cairo suburb of Heliopolis in December 2012. The protesters had been registering their outrage over President Morsi's controversial decree expanding his powers and his decision to rush through an Islamist constitution.

Of course, it should be noted that the deaths of protesters -- this time numbering around 1,000 -- had occurred in mid-2013 during the outbreak of violence that followed Morsi's overthrow. It was to be seen if anyone would be accountable for those deaths at some point in the future. But for its part, the military-controlled government made it clear that the Muslim Brotherhood leadership would have to face justice not only for those 2012 deaths and inciting violence, but also for terrorism and acting as an enemy of the state. Indeed, it was for those reasons that it had moved to ban the group.

With former President Morsi's trial slated to commence on Nov. 4, 2013, Egypt was bracing for a fresh round of protests across the country. Flashpoint cities included Cairo, Giza, and Alexandria. With an eye on maintaining security, Egypt's Interior ministry officials deployed as many as 20,000 police officers to the area of Cairo where Morsi's trial was set to take place.

On Nov. 4, 2013, as scheduled, former President Morsi's trial began in the Egyptian capital of Cairo. Morsi arrived via helicopter at the Police Academy compound where the trial was to be held. Other defendants, such as Muslim Brotherhood figures Essam el-Erian and Mohammed al-Beltagi, also arrived at the compound via armored car and were held in cages in the courtroom.

For his part, Morsi entered the courtroom, refused to change from his blue suit to the white prison garments and when asked his name, he asserted that he was the president of Egypt. Morsi declared: "I am Dr. Mohammed Morsi, the president of the republic. I am Egypt's legitimate president. You have no right to conduct a trial into presidential matters." The judge quickly adjourned the trial until January 2014 and former President Morsi was flown to the remote and heavily-fortified Burj al-Arab prison in Alexandria.

At the start of the last week of November 2013, Egyptian authorities passed a law prohibiting protests that do not receive prior approval from the police. The move by the Interior Ministry was clearly intended to limit mass protest action in Egypt, which was rocked by instability and turmoil since the ousting of former President Mohammed Morsi by the military establishment. In a development marked by irony, protesters took to the streets to register their opposition to that new law, which was itself intended to limit such protest action. As university students launched protests and rallied against the army and police in clear defiance of the new law banning protests, security forces used tear gas to try to disperse the crowds at two universities in the Assiut province to the south of Cairo.

By the end of November 2013, supporters of ousted Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi were reported to be embroiled in clashes with security forces during mass protests in various cities across Egypt. The demonstrators, who were clearly acting in defiance of the new law limiting protests, demanded Morsi's return. They also accused the military authorities who ousted Morsi from office of ushering a similar type of repression that was the norm during the previous regime of Hosni Mubarak, who was himself ousted from power in Egypt's Nile Revolution of 2011.

Meanwhile, the Muslim Brotherhood, which supports ousted President Morsi, warned that it intended to hold its own protests. The Muslim Brotherhood also announced that it would form a shadow government in France. The leaders of the Islamist entity said that the move to establish a government in exile would allow them to hold the military authorities of Egypt accountable at the International Criminal Court.

On Dec. 24, 2013, Egypt was rocked by violence as a car bomb exploded at a security facility in the city of Mansoura to the north of the capital city of Cairo. Approximately 16 deaths were reported to have resulted from the attack, including at least a dozen policemen. The security chief for the province of Dakahliya was said to have been injured in the blast.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility; however, an al-Qaida-linked militant entity, Ansar Beit al-Maqdis (Champions of Jerusalem), said it was behind the attack. There was no verification of this claim and suspicion soon fell on Islamic militants active in the Sinai peninsula, who have launched audacious attacks against military targets since the military removed Islamist President Mohammed Morsi from power in mid-2013. Those Islamic militants were believed to be

sympathetic to former President Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood organization. As such, suspicion -- albeit without proof -- fell upon this cadre once in this particular case.

Regardless of the actual perpetrators, interim Prime Minister Hazem Beblawi characterized the attack as "an act of terrorism." As well, the military-backed government noted that such attacks were intended to undermine the confidence of the citizenry ahead of a constitutional referendum set to take place at the start of 2014.

For its part, the Muslim Brotherhood attempted to distance itself from the bloodshed in Mansoura by condemning the bombing and issuing a statement that said such violence was a "direct attack on the unity of the Egyptian people." The Islamist organization also accused the military-backed government of "exploiting" the chaos rocking the country to further persecute its members. Since the removal of Morsi -- the country's first democratically elected leader -- Egypt has seen unrest as pro-Morsi and pro-Muslim Brotherhood supporters have staged mass rallies. Meanwhile, the Egyptian authorities have arrested thousands of Muslim Brotherhood members.

In truth, there was no outright blame placed on the Muslim Brotherhood for orchestrating the attack in Mansoura. That being said, a spokesperson for interim Prime Minister Beblawi appeared to link the violence with the pro-Morsi Islamist organization when he said that the Muslim Brotherhood showed "its ugly face as a terrorist organization, shedding blood and messing with Egypt's security." This vociferous claim appeared to hold resonance among some factions of Egyptian society as funeral attendees for the bombing victims chanted, "The people want to execute the Brotherhood," and held signs that read, "No to terrorist groups."

Soon thereafter on Dec. 25, 2013, the government took the hardline step of officially declaring the Muslim Brotherhood to be a terrorist organization. The government wasted no time in using that designation on Dec. 26, 2013, to detain 16 members of the Muslim Brotherhood on terrorism charges. At issue were accusations that those individuals arrested were promoting violence against the military, the police, and other security forces.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the tensions between pro-Morsi/pro-Muslim Brotherhood factions and those opposed to the Islamist cadres were rising precipitously in the last days of December 2013 in response these developments. Those tensions were manifested in a burst of violent clashes in Cairo, ultimately leading to the deaths of at least three people, including a student sympathetic to Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood. Around the same time, a bomb exploded in Nasr City, resulting in injury to at least five people. As well, supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood set fire to two university buildings in Cairo. Those acts of vandalism ended in injuries to students and the death of at least one person.

For his part, General Abdul Fattah al-Sisi -- the country's army chief and defense minister -- promised that Egypt would stand strong against the threat posed by terrorism, saying to members

of the military: "Don't let these cruel terrorist incidents affect you or your morale."

Developments at the start of 2014

At the start of January 2014, in the aftermath of the interim government's decision to classify the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist entity, violence was rocking Egypt. Clashes between supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood and security forces resulted in the deaths of many people across the country and injuries to scores more.

The fresh burst of violence coincided with the news that former Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi and more than 100 others from the Muslim Brotherhood were scheduled to stand for trial on Jan. 28, 2014. The case against Morsi included allegations that he conspired with the Palestinian militant extremist group, Hamas, to storm police stations and jails in 2011. In fact, Morsi himself was released from a Cairo prison in January 2011 during a jailbreak of the type described in the allegations. However, the fact that legal charges were brought against him more than a year after he was allowed to contest and win a presidential election suggested some clear political motivation, regardless of the legitimacy of the allegations that Morsi plotted with Hamas. Other charges against Morsi include his alleged involvement in the killing of demonstrators who were protesting outside the Ittihadiya presidential palace in December 2012.

By the end of the first week of January 2014, more than 100 supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood had been convicted of charges including attacking police, rioting, and weapons possession associated with their participation in protests against the military-controlled government. Most of the defendants were subject to three-year prison sentences. The trial of Morsi hit a roadblock on Jan. 8, 2014 when inclement weather prevented his helicopter from taking off from Alexandria. The case against Morsi was delayed. Meanwhile, anti-government protests were taking place in Egypt. In Cairo, police used tear gas and live fire to disperse demonstrators.

See below for more on the climate of violence ahead of the highly-anticipated constitutional referendum (discussed below), which was set to take place over a two day period starting on Jan. 16, 2014, and ahead of the elections likely to take place in the spring of 2014. These developments were marred by violence with people dying in clashes across the country, most of whom were believed to be members of the Muslim Brotherhood. See below also for information related to the mass conviction of supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood in the spring of 2014.

Egyptians vote on new constitution; army chief gives hints on presidential ambitions

January 2014 saw a host of developments on the political scene. At issue were the following: the

constitutional referendum, which Egyptians overwhelmingly ratified, plans for future elections, as well as an outbreak of violence on the third anniversary of the Nile Revolution. It was clear that Egypt at the start of 2014 was a country characterized by high hopes for transformation, but marred by tumult and upheaval, with the military-backed authorities and the Islamist opposition in stark opposition to one another.

Going back to July 2013, Mohamed Morsi, an Islamist who had been elected to power a year earlier in mid-2012, was ousted from office in what some have viewed as a de facto military coup. Under Morsi's brief tenure as president, a constitution written by Morsi-supporting Islamists was pushed through. The document was criticized partially because liberal and Coptic members of the Constitutional Assembly were not participants in the drafting process, but also because the substance of the document included provisions that would establish "principles of Sharia" or Islamic law as the fulcrum of legislation. Of particular concern were the effects on the freedom of the press, freedom of religion, and the rights of women. It was ultimately ratified, to the grave consternation of reformists, liberals, and secularists.

Perhaps due to these conditions, in conjunction with the establishment of the controversial constitution, and augmented by Morsi's mismanagement of the country, there was rising opposition to his presidency. Finally, following the issuance of an ultimatum by the Egyptian military, Mohammed Morsi was removed from office as Egypt's head of state on July 3, 2013. The military said the country's controversial Islamist constitution (discussed just above) was suspended and fresh elections would be held in the future. On July 4, 2013, the head of Egypt's highest court, Adly Mansour, was sworn into office as the country's transitional or "caretaker" president.

For many anti-Morsi protesters who yearned to see him ousted from office, they did not seem to care whether there was a coup or not. They were focused on the goal of seeing Morsi gone. For the military itself, it was unlikely that it viewed its own actions as a coup. Instead, as protests had gained strength in Egypt, leading to a face-off between anti-government protesters on one side and Morsi's pro-Muslim Brotherhood supporters on the other side, the military decided that it needed to intervene to prevent bloodshed. That intervention did entail taking a particular position -- specifically, on the side of the anti-government liberal, secularist, and reformist factions.

In late 2013, Egyptian Interim President Adly Mansour had announced that a new constitution would be advanced to replace to one crafted during the presidency of the now-deposed Mohamed Morsi. Mansour said that Egyptians would go to the polls a month later -- in January 2014 -- to either ratify or reject the new charter. Central provisions of the new charter included: term limits (two) for an elected president; the establishment of Islam as state religion, but with protections for absolute freedom of belief; guaranteed gender equality; bans on political parties based on "religion, race, gender, or geography;" and the military's right to appoint the defense minister for the next eight years.

The interim government of Egypt has said that ratification of the new constitution was a stepping stone on the path towards the restoration of democracy in Egypt. Speaking of the new constitution, President Mansour said, "Let this constitution be a word of justice, that unites and doesn't separate ... for hatred is a tool for destruction ... disagreement is legislated, as long it adopts peacefulness and is in the country's interest."

On Jan. 10, 2014, a week ahead of the constitutional referendum, an opposition alliance, led by the Muslim Brotherhood, called for a boycott of the vote. A statement released via the Muslim Brotherhood website read declared: "Down with the referendum of blood and treason. Long live Egypt and its proud people." But the vote to reject or ratify the constitution was already going forward with Egyptian expatriates already casting their ballots. Voting in the constitutional referendum was scheduled to begin on Jan. 16, 2014 and take place over the course of two days.

Note that in addition to the new constitution, there were plans afoot for parliamentary and presidential elections to be held in Egypt, with an eye on returning Egypt to constitutional and democratic order. The interim authorities initially envisioned parliamentary elections would be held ahead of a presidential contest; however President Mansour indicated that the presidential contest might occur first in order to give time for new political parties to be founded, and to stabilize the country, which has seen unrelenting unrest since the removal of Morsi from power. That unrest led to the decision in the last week of December 2013 to declare Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood to be a terrorist organization.

At the start of January 2014, in the aftermath of the interim government's decision to classify the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist entity, violence was rocking Egypt. Clashes between supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood and security forces resulted in the deaths of at least a dozen people across the country and injuries to scores more.

The fresh burst of violence coincided with the news that former Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi and more than 100 others from the Muslim Brotherhood were scheduled to stand for trial on Jan. 28, 2014. The case against Morsi included allegations that he conspired with the Palestinian militant extremist group, Hamas, to storm police stations and jails in 2011. In fact, Morsi himself was released from a Cairo prison in January 2011 during a jailbreak of the type described in the allegations. However, the fact that legal charges were brought against him more than a year after he was allowed to contest and win a presidential election suggested some clear political motivation, regardless of the legitimacy of the allegations that Morsi plotted with Hamas. Other charges against Morsi include his alleged involvement in the killing of demonstrators who were protesting outside the Ittihadiya presidential palace in December 2012.

By the end of the first week of January 2014, more than 100 supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood had been convicted of charges including attacking police, rioting, and weapons possession associated with their participation in protests against the military-controlled

government. Most of the defendants were subject to three-year prison sentences. The trial of Morsi hit a roadblock on Jan. 8, 2014 when inclement weather prevented his helicopter from taking off from Alexandria. The case against Morsi was delayed until the start of February 2014. Meanwhile, anti-government protests were taking place in Egypt. In Cairo, police used tear gas and live fire to disperse demonstrators.

This climate of violence presaged the highly-anticipated constitutional referendum, which was set to take place over a two day period starting on Jan. 16, 2014. Not surprisingly, the referendum process was also marred by violence. As many as a dozen people died in pre-referendum clashes across the country, with most of those killed believed to be members of the Muslim Brotherhood. As well, a bomb exploded in a Giza neighborhood. In the midst of this chaos, more than 400 members of the Muslim Brotherhood were arrested.

Nevertheless, the referendum went off as planned and soon the process of tabulation was underway. The head of Egypt's election commission, Nabil Salib, characterized the referendum as an "unrivalled success." When the vote counting was complete, Egyptian authorities were ready to announce the result. According to those Egyptian officials, the draft charter was overwhelmingly approved -- with more than 95 percent of voters registering an affirmative vote -- following the two-day referendum. It should be noted that in contrast to the earlier Morsi-endorsed charter, this document appeared to enshrine women with more rights and freedom, facilitate increased social justice for citizens, while at the same time, augmenting the power of the military.

In the third week of January 2014, with the new constitution overwhelmingly ratified via the aforementioned referendum, and with future elections looming, attention was on the future political course of Egypt. To that end, Egypt's army chief, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, had said he would consider contesting a future presidential contest, if he had the support of the Egyptian people and the military. The Egyptian newspaper, al-Ahram, had Sisi on the record declaring, "If I nominate myself, there must be a popular demand, and a mandate from my army."

Sisi's presidential ambitions were backed by Amr Moussa, the chairman of the committee that drafted an Egyptian constitution. A former presidential candidate himself, and the former secretary-general for the Arab League, Moussa made it clear he would support a presidential bid from Sisi, saying: "I believe that Sisi will take this decision [to stand for president] and I back this." But Sisi's biggest show of support came from the military itself on Jan. 27, 2014 when that body said that it would back his candidacy for president. Soon thereafter, Egypt's military council urged Sisi to contest the presidential election. In a statement, the council said, "The people's trust in Sisi is a call that must be responded."

Should he decide to move forward with a bid for the presidency, Sisi would be aided by strong popular support despite his role in the ousting of Morsi from power. Indeed, Sisi was commanding not only the armed forces but also a growing popular movement. Note that all eyes were on

March 2014 as a likely timeline when a forthcoming presidential election might take place.

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Ahead of that election, Egypt continued to be plagued by unrest. In the last week of January 2014, Cairo was rocked by a series of bombings that left at least six people dead and more than 100 others wounded. The worst bombing occurred outside the police headquarters, although bombings occurred elsewhere in the city including the Dokki district of the capital and outside a cinema in the Giza district of that city. The attacks came on the third anniversary of Egypt's so-called Nile Revolution against former President Hosni Mubarak. Islamist militants from the group, Ansar Beit al-Maqdis (Champions of Jerusalem), claimed responsibility for these attacks. The Egyptian government said that Islamists were now using terrorism against the military-led authorities who ousted Mubarak's successor -- Morsi -- from office. Meanwhile, 10 people were reported killed in violent clashes between Egyptian security forces and Muslim Brotherhood supporters. Since the overthrow of Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood -- now deemed to be a terrorist entity -- has been holding regular protests.

It was apparent that Egypt at the start of 2014 was a country marked by hopes about a transformative future, but challenged by turbulence and turmoil, as the military-backed authorities and the Islamist opposition retrenched into highly polarized and antagonistic positions.

Egyptian government resigns; new government formed

On Feb. 24, 2014, interim Prime Minister Hazem Beblawi of Egypt and his government resigned from office. Beblawi and the members of the outgoing government resigned without giving a specific reason for the decision; however, their announcement came as public sector strikes were

rocking Egypt and as the Sinai peninsula continued to be hit by terrorist attacks by extremist Islamists. Beblawi's exit address nonetheless tacitly implied the government's frustrations and the need to place the country above personal interests as he said: "The cabinet has over the past six or seven months shouldered a very difficult responsibility... in most cases the results were good. This is neither the time for demands by public workers nor the time for personal interests, but the time for us to put our country's interests above all others."

A day later on Feb. 25, 2014, President Adly Mansour asked Ibrahim Mahlab -- the housing minister from the outgoing government -- to form a new government. Mahlab said his new government would focus its efforts on addressing the strikes, dealing with Egypt's unemployment and other economic challenges, and restoring security to the country. He said, "Restoration of security and national unity of the Egyptian people are indispensable to move forward towards improving the living conditions of Egyptian families." It should be noted that Egyptian army chief Field Marshal Abdel Fattah al-Sisi would retain his post as defense minister in the new government. Sisi was meanwhile preparing for a possible bid for the presidency in forthcoming elections. It was assumed that Sisi would vacate the position of defense minister once he officially announced his intent to contest the presidency.

To that end, Sisi said at the start of March 2014 that he could not ignore the calls from the people to run as a candidate in the impending presidential election. As he delivered a speech at the Egyptian Military Academy in Cairo, Sisi said that he could "not turn his back on calls by the majority of Egyptians for him to run for president." Indicating that an official announcement was in the offing, he added, "Official measures should be taken in the coming days."

Egyptian court convicts and sentences Muslim Brotherhood supporters en masse to death

In March 2014, a court in Egypt convicted and sentenced 529 supporters of the now-outlawed Muslim Brotherhood to death for their involvement in the killing of an Egyptian policeman, the attempted murder of two other police officers, and an attack on a police station in the city of Minya. Only 16 people were acquitted of the charges before them. The sentencing of more than 500 people to death in this way constituted the largest capital punishment case on record in Egypt.

The case dated back to mid-2013 when the country erupted in turmoil and turbulence following the military's removal of former President Mohammed Morsi -- the country's freely first elected president -- from office. Since that time, the Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters have been defiantly leading violent protests against the military leadership that installed itself at the helm of Egypt's government. Some have even been implicated in a spate of terror attacks on the Sinai peninsula. Bolstered by the belief that the Muslim Brotherhood posed a serious threat to stability and security of Egypt, the new military authorities banned the Muslim Brotherhood from existence. They have also carried out a harsh crackdown campaign against the Islamist

opposition.

Perhaps not surprisingly, this draconian mass sentencing of more than 500 individuals to death has been met by international outrage. At home, youth student protesters took to the streets to register their discontent and became embroiled in clashes with security personnel. However, these reactions did little to deter the Egyptian authorities as the country's public prosecutor announced that another 900 members of the Muslim Brotherhood would have to stand trial in Minya on charges of terrorism and murder -- again related to the outbreak of violence following Morsi's ouster.

In late April 2014, a court in Egypt sentenced more than 600 members of the now-outlawed Muslim Brotherhood to death. Included in the list of individuals subject to capital punishment was Mohammed Badie -- the leader of the hardline Islamist group that supports Mohammed Morsi who was ousted from the presidency in mid-2013. For his part, Badie was undeterred by the sentence, declaring, "If they executed me one thousand times I will not retreat from the right path."

The move to sentence more than 600 people to death was more than likely to outrage Muslim Brotherhood supporters who still identified with conservative Islamic notions even if the group itself was banned from existence. As such, Egypt was bracing for more protests ahead of a presidential election set for May 2014.

By the close of May 2014, an Egyptian court took a different line on the Muslim Brotherhood from the recent past, moving instead to acquit as many as 170 Muslim Brotherhood. The individuals had been charged with "illegal gathering" in relation to violence in Cairo following the overthrow by the military of former President Mohammed Morsi in mid 2013. Clearly, the ruling was a shift from the trend that saw hundreds sentenced to death for their political uprising.

Nevertheless, Egypt was bracing for more protests ahead of a presidential election set for May 2014. Underlining the climate of tension and dissonance, May 2014 was marked by violence in Egypt. Two suicide bombings rocked the Sinai, killing a soldier and wounding at least eight other people. In Cairo, two other bombs struck the capital and left two people dead. One explosion was due to a car bombing close to a Cairo metro station; the second explosion was due to a bombing at a traffic security post near a courthouse. In the port city of Alexandria, two people were shot to death as residents clashed with supporters of deposed President Morsi. Overall, the spate of violence and bloodshed in Egypt appeared to be attributable to discontent and anger from among the ranks of Morsi and Muslim Brotherhood supporters.

In late June 2014, an Egyptian court confirmed the death sentences against Mohamed Badie -- the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood -- and more than 180 other supporters. The charges against Badie and other supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood stemmed from an outbreak of violence in the town of Minya. That uprising occurred following the ousting of Islamist President Mohammed Morsi in mid-2013 and left a police officer dead.

The guilty verdicts, as well as the ensuing death sentences, were issued at a mass hearing months earlier and prompted Badie to defiantly declare, "If they executed me one thousand times I will not retreat from the right path." Now, some months later, it seemed that the court was ratifying this outcome for Badie and the Muslim Brotherhood support base.

The mass death sentences appeared to be a draconian move by the Egyptian judiciary to crackdown on the movement that has been responsible for violent protests since Morsi's ouster. However, there were indications that it was more than simply a crackdown and, in fact, an inelegant method of purging the country of a rival movement.

As noted by Sarah Leah Whitson, the executive director for Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa section, when the sentences were first rendered in the spring of 2014: "The decisions are possibly the largest possible death sentences in recent world history. While they're exceptional in scale, they're certainly not exceptional in kind. It seems that these sentences are aimed at striking fear and terror into the hearts of those who oppose the interim government." Amnesty International had a similar assessment following the confirmation of the sentences in June 2014, describing the verdicts as "the latest example of the Egyptian judiciary's bid to crush dissent."

Political wing of Muslim Brotherhood dissolved in Egypt

On Aug. 9, 2014, Egypt's Supreme Administrative Court dissolved the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) -- the political wing of the banned Muslim Brotherhood. In the aftermath of the ousting of former Islamist Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi from power in 2013, the Islamist movement known as the Muslim Brotherhood had been banned in Egypt. But that ruling had left open the possibility that the FJP could still function and, presumably, contest elections. The ruling by the court in August 2014, however, brought an end to such speculation. It should be noted that the ruling was final and not subject to appeal; it additionally included a provision for the state to seize the group's assets.

Now that the political wing had been dissolved, it was apparent that the Muslim Brotherhood's influence on the political sphere in Egypt would be rendered almost nil, with the movement forced out of the mainstream political sphere. It was possible that the Muslim Brotherhood and the FJP element would move underground with the movement re-emerging as a political pressure group (vis a vis an actual political party).

Some critics judged these moves as anti-democratic, and noted that they were essentially intended to silence the voices of pro-Islamists from the political scene in Egypt. Indeed, they pointed to the military-backed government of Egypt, which has systematically sought to ensure that the Muslim

Brotherhood would not be positioned to return to power any time soon. To that end, hundreds of members of the Muslim Brotherhood have been sentenced to death for inciting violence and terrorism in controversial court trials convened earlier in 2014.

While these argument might, in the abstract, be regarded as legitimate, the fact of the matter was that the public support for pro-Islamists, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, weakened significantly in recent times. The vast majority of the Egyptian public had become weary and frustrated during the brief time that Morsi and the FJP spent in office. Indeed, that tenure was marked by utter mismanagement of the country's affairs, economic disaster, and cultural oppression of communities that did not subscribe to hardline Islam. Egyptians thus, by and large, breathed a collective sign of relief when the military seized power in a de facto coup d'etat, and ultimately awarded General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi with the presidency when Egypt returned to constitutional governance in 2014. Therefore, it was unlikely that Egyptians would mourn the demise of the Muslim Brotherhood and the FJP from the political scene, as they were more interested in seeing their country return to stability.

Primer on Egypt's presidential election

-- Note that some aspects of the following report are replicated from above --

First round May 26-27, 2014; second round June 16-17, 2014:

In late 2013, Egyptian Interim President Adly Mansour had announced that a new constitution would be advanced to replace to one crafted during the presidency of the now-deposed Mohamed Morsi. Mansour said that Egyptians would go to the polls a month later -- in January 2014 -- to either ratify or reject the new charter. Central provisions of the new charter included: term limits (two) for an elected president; the establishment of Islam as state religion, but with protections for absolute freedom of belief; guaranteed gender equality; bans on political parties based on "religion, race, gender, or geography;" and the military's right to appoint the defense minister for the next eight years.

The interim government of Egypt has said that ratification of the new constitution was a stepping stone on the path towards the restoration of democracy in Egypt. Speaking of the new constitution, President Mansour said, "Let this constitution be a word of justice, that unites and doesn't separate ... for hatred is a tool for destruction ... disagreement is legislated, as long it adopts peacefulness and is in the country's interest."

When the votes were counted, Egyptian voters overwhelmingly ratified the new constitution that would replace to one crafted during the presidency of the now-deposed Mohamed Morsi. Indeed, more than 95 percent of voters registered an affirmative vote following the two-day referendum.

It should be noted that in contrast to the earlier Morsi-endorsed charter, this document appeared to enshrine women with more rights and freedom, facilitate increased social justice for citizens, while at the same time, augmenting the power of the military.

With the new constitution ratified, there were plans afoot for parliamentary and presidential elections to be held in Egypt, with an eye on returning Egypt to constitutional and democratic order. The interim authorities initially envisioned parliamentary elections would be held ahead of a presidential contest; however, President Mansour indicated that the presidential contest might occur first in order to give time for new political parties to be founded, and to stabilize the country, which has seen unrelenting unrest since the removal of Morsi from power.

With those future elections looming, attention was on the future political course of Egypt. To that end, Egypt's army chief, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, had said he would consider contesting the future presidential contest, if he had the support of the Egyptian people and the military. The Egyptian newspaper, al-Ahram, had Sisi on the record declaring, "If I nominate myself, there must be a popular demand, and a mandate from my army."

Sisi's presidential ambitions were backed by Amr Moussa, the chairman of the committee that drafted an Egyptian constitution. A former presidential candidate himself, and the former secretary-general for the Arab League, Moussa made it clear he would support a presidential bid from Sisi, saying: "I believe that Sisi will take this decision [to stand for president] and I back this." But Sisi's biggest show of support came from the military itself on Jan. 27, 2014, when that body said that it would back his candidacy for president.

Sisi said at the start of March 2014 that he could not ignore the calls from the people to run as a candidate in the impending presidential election. As he delivered a speech at the Egyptian Military Academy in Cairo, Sisi said that he could "not turn his back on calls by the majority of Egyptians for him to run for president." Indicating that an official announcement was in the offing, he added, "Official measures should be taken in the coming days."

Should he ultimately decide to move forward with a bid for the presidency, Sisi would be aided by strong popular support despite his role in the ousting of Morsi from power. Indeed, Sisi was commanding not only the armed forces but also a growing popular movement, made up of Egyptians disillusioned by the religiosity and the incompetence of the former Morsi presidency, and anxious for strongman-style but rational leadership, that he seemed to embody. That being said, Sisi would likely be vociferously opposed by supporters of the now-banned Muslim Brotherhood of Morsi, who have blame him for the harsh crackdown on Islamists, which has included the sentencing of more than 500 Islamists to death for their involvement in the violence that followed Morsi's ouster. Another 900 Islamists were yet to face charges of terrorism and murder on the same grounds and would likely endure a similar fate. Thus, Sisi would also have to deal with passionate antagonists.

One opponent for Sisi would be a "Nasserist" leftist Egyptian politician, Hamdeen Sabahi, who announced his bid to contest the presidency. Not a newcomer to the presidential election field, Sabahi actually contested the 2012 presidential election, which was ultimately won by Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood (and later deposed by the army in July 2013). Sabahi enjoyed a respectable performance in those 2012 elections, securing a third place finish. In these forthcoming 2014 elections, his presence was expected to invigorate the race by offering an alternative to Sisi and possibly inspiring other contenders to join the race. In his announcement to supporters, Sabahi said, "My personal decision as a citizen is to run for the coming presidential elections." He continued, "Hamdeen Sabahi's battle is the battle of the revolution." It should be noted that Sabahi was the head of the political alliance called the Popular Current.

Meanwhile, in late March 2014, Sisi announced that he was stepping down as the country's defense minister, essentially setting the stage for his presidential bid. He would be replaced by General Sedki Sobhi -- the post of chief of staff. With his resignation established, Sisi announced his candidacy for the presidency. In a national address that was broadcast by the media across the country, he said, "I am here before you humbly stating my intention to run for the presidency of the Arab Republic of Egypt. Only your support will grant me this great honor." Emphasizing that he intended to continue his effort to rid Egypt of Islamic militancy and terrorism, Sisi said: "True, today is my last day in military uniform, but I will continue to fight every day for an Egypt free of fear and terrorism." He also issued a realistic stance as regards the manifold economic challenges facing Egypt, as Sisi added, "We must be truthful with ourselves. Our country faces great challenges. Our economy is weak. There are millions of youths who suffer from unemployment in Egypt."

It should be noted that in April 2014, both Sabahi and Sisi made official their respective bids for the presidency by submitting the requisite documents for contesting the presidential election.

In the first week of May 2014, former army chief Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, who was contesting the presidential election in Egypt set for later in the month, vowed to end the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood. In an interview with Egyptian media, Sisi promised that if he won the presidency, the banned Muslim Brotherhood "will not exist." Sisi appeared to indicate that such an end for the Muslim Brotherhood was actually the result of the will of the people as he declared, "I want to tell you that it is not me that finished [the Muslim Brotherhood]. You, the Egyptians, are the ones who finished it." But Sisi also made clear that Egypt would not be ruled by the military, saying, "The army would not have a role in ruling Egypt." In the same interview, Sisi also claimed that Egyptian authorities had discovered two assassination plots against him although he declined to provide details. Undeterred by the threats against his life, Sisi said, "I believe in fate, I am not afraid."

Although the early expectations were that the election would take place in March or April 2014, May 2014 was announced as the likely timeline when a forthcoming presidential election would

take place. The tentative timeline was May 26-27, 2014, according to Egypt's electoral authorities. If no one candidate secured an outright majority following the first round, a second "runoff" round would be held on June 16-17, 2014.

That second round was unnecessary since former Egyptian army chief, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, won a landslide victory in a presidential election following the first round of voting, having claimed an overwhelming 93 percent of the vote share. His rival, Hamdeen Sabahi, was not able to pose a credible threat. Critics pointed to the low voter turnout -- 46 percent -- as a factor that might mitigate a strong mandate for Sisi; however, the fact of the matter was that Sisi had secured the presidency at the ballot box and would now have the task of stabilizing the country, both politically and economically.

On the political agenda would be the task of addressing Islamic insurgency in the Sinai region of Egypt and dealing with remnants of influence from the Muslim Brotherhood. It should be noted that Sisi has vowed to end the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood. In an interview with Egyptian media prior to winning the presidency, Sisi promised that the banned Muslim Brotherhood "will not exist." Sisi indicated that such an end for the Muslim Brotherhood was actually the result of the will of the people as he declared, "I want to tell you that it is not me that finished [the Muslim Brotherhood]. You, the Egyptians, are the ones who finished it." Sisi also made it clear that Egypt would not be ruled by the military, saying, "The army would not have a role in ruling Egypt." In the same interview, Sisi also claimed that Egyptian authorities had discovered two assassination plots against him although he declined to provide details. Undeterred by the threats against his life, Sisi said, "I believe in fate, I am not afraid."

Economically, painful reforms would have to be undertaken, including an end of energy subsidies that have tended to drain the country's coffers in the past. While being the "non-Morsi" option may have been sufficient to boost Sisi's popularity to this end, the difficult work of governing would present new -- and manifold -- challenges to the new Egyptian president.

Note that newly inaugurated President Sisi re-appointed Prime Minister Ibrahim Mehleb as the head of government in early June 2014. This move indicated that he intended to travel the course of continuity in the effort to address the political dissonance and economic challenges facing Egypt.

Islamic militants carry out attack on security forces in Egypt's Sinai

In the last week of October 2014, Islamic militants carried out two attacks in Egypt's Sinai, killing close to 30 people. A car bombing in the al-Kharouba area, relatively close to the Gaza Strip, left 25 people dead. A second attack involved gunmen opening fire at a security checkpoint in al-Arish; that incident left at least three security forces dead. Together, the attacks constituted the worst violence in Egypt since the ousting of Islamist President Mohamed Morsi in 2013. That

being said, ever since Morsi was removed in a de facto military coup, and the subsequent crackdown on the former president's Muslim Brotherhood, the Sinai has seen no shortage of violent attacks by angry Islamic militants. In response to this latest bout of deadly violence, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi convened a meeting of the country's National Defence Council to discuss the response to these acts of terrorism. Around the same time, the Egyptian military carried out an offensive operation into the region, aimed at purging the Sinai of Islamic militants.

Former Egyptian President Mubarak cleared of charges

In the latter part of 2014, former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was cleared of charges associated with the deaths of about 800 protesters during the 2011 Nile Revolution. In a previous trial, Mubarak, his former Interior Minister Habib al-Adly and six other individuals were convicted of conspiracy to kill and sentenced to life in prison. However, a legal technicality resulted in a retrial, which ended quite differently in November 2014, as the judge in the case declared: "The court dismisses criminal charges."

In Tahrir Square in Cairo -- "Ground Zero" of Egypt's Arab Spring (also known as the "Nile Revolution") -- angry protesters gathered in the thousands to express their anger over the decision to drop the charges against Mubarak, essentially clearing him of responsibility over the deaths of hundreds of people three years prior. Soon, however, police moved in and used tear gas and water cannons to disperse the crowd -- a move that was reminiscent of the 2011 uprising.

In January 2015, Egypt's high court overturned the last remaining conviction against former President Hosni Mubarak. At issue in this case was a conviction and three-year sentence against Mubarak involving allegations that he diverted public funds intended for renovations for presidential palaces, using the funds instead to upgrade his own family properties. Two of Mubarak's sons were also sentenced to jail in connection with the same case. Now, however, Mubarak was cleared of these remaining charges.

These court rulings, combined with the return of several Mubarak-era figures to the political fore, and also the crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood, indicated that some of the apparent gains of the 2011 Nile Revolution uprising had been reversed. It was certainly true that Mubarak's own Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif, along with several other politicians from the Mubarak regime, had been released from jail, while still others were actually serving in the new President Sisi's cabinet. Nevertheless, despite the appetite for justice from many anti-Mubarak activists for his alleged crimes, there was nonetheless a parallel thrust for stability in Egypt.

The reaction of the public in January 2015 to Mubarak being cleared of the last charges was quite different from the scene in 2014 described above. Now, it seemed that the Egyptian citizenry was

less interested in the Mubarak factor and much more concerned with stability and moving the country forward.

For his part, Mubarak has maintained that he did "nothing wrong." The rulings by the court made clear that the judiciary agreed with his assessment. Since he was in ill health and confined to a military ruling, the overturning of the court cases against Mubarak opened the door for him to be released. That judgement would be made by the office of public prosecution or the courts that carried out the retrials.

Islamist terrorists carry out attacks in Egypt's restive Sinai; Egyptian military responds with assault

In late January 2015, a bombing at a military compound in Egypt's restive North Sinai province left at least 30 people dead -- many of them military personnel -- and scores more wounded. The apparent targets of the bomb attack were a military hotel and a military base; however, the office of the newspaper, al-Ahram, in the town of Al-Arish was destroyed in the blast. In a separate attack, an army major was shot to death and six others were wounded at a checkpoint in Rafah close to the border with the Gaza Strip. A third incident involved a roadside bombing in Suez that left a police officer dead.

These attacks occurred just as some Egyptians marked the anniversary of the 2011 Nile Revolution that resulted in the end of the regime of Hosni Mubarak. It should be noted that those celebrations turned deadly. In one incident in Cairo, a group of women took to the streets in protest over the death of an activist, Shaimaa Sabbagh, and several others who died at the hands of security forces during rallies marking the 2011 Nile Revolution.

Since the ousting of President Mohammed Morsi by the Egyptian military in 2013, the new military-backed government of Egypt has carried out a purge of the hardline Muslim Brotherhood, and in response, an Islamist insurgency has plagued Egypt's Sinai. These attacks -- claimed by Sinai Province, Islamic State's Egypt wing -- were the latest manifestation of this violent Islamist insurgency. However, in the aftermath of the January 2015 attacks that killed so many security officers, Egyptian President Fattah al-Sisi promised a harsh response and urged Egyptians to prepare for a long fight against the Islamist insurgency.

Making good on this promise, on Feb. 6, 2015, the Egyptian military launched a massive offensive operation in the Northern Sinai. In that assault, as many as 47 terrorists were killed. An aerial attack by Apache helicopters eliminated 27 Islamic terrorists in one case, while soldiers used gunfire to eliminate another 20 Islamic terrorists in another case. It was clear that the government of Egypt was taking seriously the threat posed by these Islamist extremists, who have aligned themselves with the terror enclave Islamic State.

That being said, the start of the operation in the Northern Sinai did not leave Egypt immuned from violence. Around the same period, a bomb exploded in Egypt's second largest city of Alexandria, yielding five casualties. As well, clashes erupted in the Cairo suburb of Matariya between security forces and members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Islamic State threat to Egypt; Libyan connections

In mid-February 2015, a new battleground in the fight against Islamic State emerged in Libya when more than 20 Coptic Christians from Egypt were brutally killed. In keeping with the terror group's favorite mode of assassination, the victims were beheaded. As with the horrific immolation of a Jordanian pilot by Islamic State at the start of 2015 in Syria, the decapitations of the Egyptian Christian workers in Libya stood as an imprimatur for yet another Arab country to enter the global effort to defeat the Islamist Jihadist terror group.

Six weeks earlier at the start of January 2015, masked gunmen kidnapped the 13 Coptic Christians in northern Libya. The Coptic Christians were workers from Egypt living at a residential compound in the city of Sirte. The gunmen entered the compound and demanded to see identification papers of the workers; Christians and Muslims were separated with the Christians being taken away in handcuffs. A week prior, a group of seven Christians from Egypt were similarly attacked and kidnapped from a phony checkpoint in the same Libyan city of Sirte. In a separate attack, an Egyptian-born Coptic Christian doctor and his wife were attacked and killed in their own home in Sirte. These acts of kidnapping and murder, with Coptic Christians as the targets, appeared to be the latest manifestation of the manifold instability plaguing Libya. In the post-Qadhafi era, Libya was now beset by violence at the hands of rival militias, and a stronghold for extremist fighters aligned with Islamic State for whom Christians present a prime target for attack.

The ghastly targeting of Christians by Islamic State reached a new nadir in mid-February 2015. As discussed here, videotaped footage emerged depicting the gruesome beheadings of the more than 20 Coptic Christians from Egypt who had been kidnapped by Islamic State terrorists in Libya. As has become a favored pattern by Islamic State, the revolting recording showed the victims dressed in orange jumpsuits, forced to kneel down and then decapitated in a barbaric theatre of horror. Adding to the tragedy was the fact that most of the victims were from impoverished villages in Upper Egypt who were seeking work in Libya due to their socio-economic plight.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi declared a week of national mourning, banned all travel by Egyptian citizens to Libya, and made a point of visiting St Mark's Cathedral in Cairo to offer his condolences to the Coptic Christian Pope Tawadros II. For its part, the Coptic Christian Church of Egypt expressed grave sadness over the deaths of the victims but said it was "confident" that the Egyptian authorities would respond appropriately.

To that end, Egyptian President Sisi condemned the repugnant murders of Coptic Christians, calling their assassins "inhuman criminal killers." The Egyptian leader wasted little time in asserting that it was his country's prerogative to exact retribution. Sisi also made clear that there was a global war emerging as the world confronted Islamist Jihadists. He said, "Egypt and the whole world are in a fierce battle with extremist groups carrying extremist ideology and sharing the same goals."

Soon, Egyptian forces were striking various Islamic State satellite targets in Libya -- from terror training camps and sites to weapons depots in the city of Derna. Meanwhile, Libya forces -- under the instruction of the internationally-recognized government of that country, and in coordination with Egypt -- were hitting Islamic State targets in Sirte and Bin Jawad. Egyptian authorities soon said that the plan would be to target all Islamic State locations in Libya. They also called on the United States-led international coalition against Islamic State to provide support to Egypt in its efforts against the bloodthirsty Islamist Jihadist terror group.

On Feb. 17, 2015, Egyptian President Sisi called for a United Nations resolution facilitating an international intervention into Libya. In an interview with French media, he explained that there was no other alternative, as he declared, "We will not allow them to cut off the heads of our children."

Days later, Libya was struck by violence when Islamic State militants launched a spate of suicide attacks, resulting in the deaths of 40 people. The terrorists packed cars with explosives, which were then detonated in the eastern town of Qubbah with deadly results. The three explosions took place at the town council of Qubbah, the local security office, and a gas station. Islamic State said the attacks were being carried out in retaliation for Egyptian air strikes on pro-ISIL targets in Derna, Libya (as discussed above). The claim of responsibility statement by Islamic State of Cyrenaica read as follows: "They killed and wounded tens in revenge for the bloodshed of Muslims in the city of Derna."

On July 10, 2015, Islamic terrorists carried out a car bomb attack outside the Italian consulate in Egypt's capital city of Cairo. At least one person was reported to have been killed while several others were injured in the explosion, which destroyed the entrance of the building housing the consulate. The notorious terror group, Islamic State, soon claimed responsibility for the bloodshed, with the group declaring via the social media outlet, Twitter, that international consulates constituted "legitimate targets" for strikes. While the Italian government condemned the attack, Prime Minister Matteo Renzi made clear that Italy would stand defiant in the face of terrorism, and expressed solidarity with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi "in the fight against terrorism and fanaticism."

Editor's Note on Islamic State

Islamic State (alternatively referred to as ISIL and ISIS), has gained notoriety for its particularly brutal tactics, ranging from the abductions and mass murders of religious and ethnic minorities, which they view as apostates, and their beheadings of soldiers and journalists. The group has said that it aims to establish an Islamic "caliphate" that would be ruled according to Islamic Shari'a law. Its ambitions are Jihadists and not simply limited to Iraq and Syria; in fact, ISIL has made clear that it intends to extend its control to Jordan and Lebanon. A satellite venue of Islamic State has opened up in post-Arab Spring Libya as extremists have taken advantage of the power chasm there. Another ambition for ISIL is the cause of Palestine. Adherents are required to swear their allegiance to the ISIL leader, Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri al-Samarrai, known in the public sphere as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Baghdadi's appeal has, to some degree, been fed by his mystery as he has only rarely been seen in public.

In terms of legacy, ISIL is actually an outgrowth of al-Qaida in Iraq, led by the Jordanian-born terrorist, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. After Zarqawi's death in 2006, al-Qaida in Iraq transposed itself into Islamic State in Iraq. Although it was weakened by the United States-led "surge" in Iraq to deal with the Sunni insurgency, and which included the involvement of Sahwa (Awakening) councils by Sunni Arab tribesmen, Islamic State in Iraq experienced a resurgence in 2010 under Baghdadi. Once Syria was embroiled in a civil war in 2011, Islamic State was able to establish a foothold in Syria, essentially uprooting other extremist and terror groups, such as al-Nusra Front and al-Qaida, by 2013, and ultimately holding control over wide swaths of territory from Syria to Iraq as of 2014, and extending to Libya as of 2015. ISIL's ability to take over Anbar province and then the northern city of Mosul in Iraq in 2014 were key developments in the entrenchment of ISIL in the region.

ISIL's genocidal practices have been characterized most acutely by their infamous and gruesome beheadings of foreign nationals and apostates, but have also included other revolting and repugnant means of execution, such as crucifixions, immolations, and mass shootings. These bloodthirsty techniques of terror and tactics of murder, which are professionally videotaped and disseminated for maximum effect, have been so ghastly that other militant Islamist movements have sought to distance themselves from ISIL. Indeed, the Yemeni wing of al-Qaida (known as al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula) went so far as to note that beheadings, and the videotaping of decapitations, were to be regarded as un-Islamic. Meanwhile, Lebanon-based Hezbollah, which has been deemed to be a terrorist organization by some countries of the West, made clear that ISIL's tactics of terror were inhumane. These stances by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and Hezbollah suggested that even among extremists, militants, Jihadists, and Islamist terrorists, there remained some degree of a "code" that ISIL had apparently violated.

It should be noted that ISIL's barbarism and brutality has had a double effect. First, the brutality appears to have functioned as a recruitment tool for other murderous Islamist extremists across the world. To date, it is not known how many ISIL fighters exist in the Middle East although estimates suggest that as many as 30,000 Islamic State fighters are in the Iraq-Syria region. These fighters

come from across the world although, as Libya has slipped further into failed state status, it is believed to be the largest single source of terrorists to the cause. That being said, ISIL has attracted disgruntled youth from Europe and the Americas as well, with recruits often traveling through Turkey to enter ISIL-controlled territory. Second, even as ISIL's barbarism has been a recruitment tool, it has simultaneously stimulated the reluctant engagement of a United States-led international coalition in an anti-Islamic State mission.

Socio-economic strife is a popular -- and often facile -- explanation for extremism and activism. It certainly applies to the roots of the Arab Spring and specifically the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia, for example, but does not apply to ISIL. Yes, the power chasms created in the wake of the Arab Spring -- specifically in Libya but also in other countries in the region -- certainly created the conditions for recruitment. But creating fertile ground for recruitment still does not address the reason why people would be attracted to ISIL. Likewise, the call for more education may have resonance in countries where young people are educated only about Islam in Madrassas, or in impoverished regions where people simply have no access to education at all. But these cases do not properly apply to ISIL recruits and sympathizers. The problem is not a lack of education -- most of these recruits are computer savvy and were recruited via the Internet while using their own laptops or in Internet cafes. Indeed, many youth ISIL recruits were from middle class or even wealthy families -- certainly not backgrounds without marked by socio-economic hardship. Recruits and sympathizers are also not necessarily from strict Muslim families; indeed, there were reports that many ISIL recruits were actually fairly new to hardline Islam with translations of instructional introductory texts on Islam being a particularly popular purchase for them.

It would seem that many recruits to ISIL appeared to be the same type of profile as vulnerable youth likely to join gang or cults, susceptible to brainwashing, and thus excellent candidates for adherence to Islamic State's religious ideology.

That being said, to properly understand the attraction of ISIL, it is imperative to address the ideological appeal of hardline and regressive Islam, which embraces barbaric practices of execution, such as beheadings and crucifixion, while integrating socio-governing practices such as conquest and the enslavement of women. Well-meaning public figures have cast these tactics of terror and abuses of humanity as "perversions" of Islam. Left unsaid is that fact that they are actually clear dictates that come from historic Islam, and which have been embraced by ISIL as the "true" path to salvation, irrespective of the fact that their practices are a violation of modern understandings of human rights.

Indeed, Islamic State must be an apocalyptic and millenarian death cult, with a strict Medieval interpretation of Islam at the core and a gruesome theatre of murder as the main attraction. Relying on apocalyptic prophesies of Islamic Jihadist ascendancy and an ultimate "Day of Judgement," the expansion of Islamic State territory in Iraq and Syria, and even Libya, was being understood as a sign of "victory." Stated differently, the rapid rate of expansion (read: victory) by

ISIL in Iraq and Syria in 2014 functioned to empower sympathizers and recruits to the ISIL cause.

Given this paradigm, the only prescription for defeat would be the disruption of what looks like an unstoppable juggernaut by ISIL. That being said, the texture of that defeat would have to be carefully -- and globally -- crafted since ISIL militants believe in the apocalyptic prophesy of a "final" confrontation with the West. Rather than facilitating that end, international stakeholders have noted that the preferable path would be to target this Islamist Jihadist terror entity as part of a global coalition. With United States-led air strikes only going so far to destroy ISIL, there would ultimately be a need for ground forces. An effective strategy against ISIL would be one that looks to Arab "boots on the ground" rather than feeding the hunger by Islamists for a Crusades-style war with the West.

It should be noted that Islamic State is sometimes pejoratively referred to as "Daesh." Islamic State rejects this term of reference, which sounds roughly in Arabic to the words "Daes" which means "one who crushes something underfoot" and "Dahes" which means "one who sows discord." For precisely these negative associations, the enemies of Islamic State have increasingly used the term "Daesh" to describe the terror group in defiance.

Egyptian court delays parliamentary elections indefinitely due to electoral law

Parliamentary elections were expected to be held in Egypt March 22-23, 2015 and April 26-27, 2015 on a phased basis. In Egypt, the legislative branch of government was, until 2013, a bicameral Federal Parliamentary Assembly, consisting of the "Majlis ash-Shura" (Advisory Council) and "Majlis ash-Shaab" (People's Assembly or House of Representatives). In 2013, the previous bicameral structure was eliminated and in 2014, it was replaced -- under the aegis of a constitutional measure -- with a unicameral House of Representatives, composed of at least 450 seats (usually more) and with up to five percent of the membership being appointed by the president; members serve five-year terms in office.

The 2015 parliamentary elections were being regarded as another measure aimed at stabilizing Egypt in the years following the Nile Revolution in 2011. Presidential elections brought Mohammed Morsi to power in the executive branch of office in 2012, only to be toppled by the military in 2013. At the time, the military said it would hold a presidential election and parliamentary contests in the future, to return the country to the path of democracy. A presidential election was thus held in 2014, and ended with the democratic ratification of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi as president. Now, the long-awaited parliamentary elections were set to take place, and were being regarded as the final step in the direction of good governance. Of note was the fact that Egypt had actually been without a parliament since 2012 when the courts dissolved the now-defunct "Majlis ash-Shaab" (People's Assembly or House of Representatives). The 2015 contest would, thus, be the first time candidates would be elected to the new unicameral body.

At the start of March 2015, however, only weeks before the first phase of the elections were set to take place, Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court declared a key provision of the electoral law to be unconstitutional. That ruling was followed by a decision by Egypt's Administrative Court to delay the long-anticipated parliamentary contest indefinitely. A new election schedule would be considered by the High Election Committee after the electoral law was amended. That change would require voting districts to be arranged in such a manner as to ensure a more equitable distribution of voters. The practical result of the postponement would be that President Sisi would be able to continue to rule Egypt, unfettered by the legislative branch of government.

Muslim Brotherhood and Former President Morsi face legal consequences

In the spring of 2015, Egyptian courts were ruling against Islamist politicians and activists. At issue was a broad crackdown by the new Egyptian authorities on the now-outlawed Muslim Brotherhood.

Going back to 2013, in the aftermath of the military takeover of the Egyptian government by General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, the Muslim Brotherhood was declared to be a terrorist group. By 2014, the hardline Islamist group was outlawed. Meanwhile, since taking to the streets in violent protests that left many dead, including security personnel, thousands of members of the Muslim Brotherhood have been arrested, jailed, and ultimately sentenced to death for their terrorist activities. Indeed, the secular and pro-military government of Egypt, now under the control of President Sisi, has been focused on the task of erasing the militant and extremist Islamist elements in Egypt, which they have said present a destabilizing threat to national security.

One such manifestation of this process came in March 2015 when an Egyptian court sentenced the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Mohammed Badie, to death. More than a dozen other members of the Muslim Brotherhood were also sentenced to death by the court. All defendants were found guilty of planning terror attacks against the state. The ruling against Badie and more than a dozen others would be referred to Egypt's Grand Mufti, as part of a ratification process. A final verdict would be rendered when this process was complete.

Weeks later in mid-April 2015, an Egyptian court issued a death sentence to Mohamed Badie, and more than a dozen other senior members of the extremist Islamist group, for inciting chaos and violence during a Cairo sit-in. As with the previous death sentence, there would be a period of reassessment of the ruling and sentence before a final verdict could be rendered.

Other Muslim Brotherhood figures, including the political wing's general secretary, Mohamed El-Beltagy, have also been subject to multiple death sentences along with Badie for his involvement in violent episodes involving the Islamist entity.

In the third week of April 2015, an Egyptian court sentenced former Islamist President Mohamed Morsi to 20 years in prison. The case against Morsi, who was ousted from power in 2013, involved charges of inciting the killing of protesters in Cairo in late 2012. Lawyers for the ousted president have said they would appeal the ruling. As with other Muslim Brotherhood leaders, such as Mohammed Badie and Mohammed El-Beltagy, Morsi was one of several Islamists who were being legally pursued as part of the aforementioned crackdown on the now-outlawed Muslim Brotherhood.

In June 2015, President Morsi's legal woes deepened when an Egyptian court sentenced him to death over a mass jail break during the country's 2011 uprising, known as the Nile Revolution. The death sentence was issued in addition to the 20-year prison sentence already given for another case. Other Muslim Brotherhood leaders, including Mohamed Badie (mentioned above), Khairat el-Shater, and Ahmed Abdelaty, were also handed death sentences. Not surprisingly, the rulings raised the ire of the now-outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, which called on its support base to enact a popular uprising. Meanwhile, Morsi and the other members of the Muslim Brotherhood would have the opportunity to appeal their convictions. It was possible that Egypt's new government would not want to risk turning Morsi into a political martyr of sorts.

It should be noted that these rulings against Morsi marked a steep decline in fortune from the man democratically-elected to be Egypt's president to an outlaw of sorts. Morsi's aim of creating an "Egyptian renaissance with an Islamic foundation" was unrealized, with his Islamist constitutional changes contributing to his decline in popularity. Poor management of the Egyptian economy, along with excessive focus on an ideological agenda, contributed to the military intervention, and the ousting of Morsi from power. These factors also concomitantly contributed to the popularity of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who instead focused on stability and security in Egypt. That concentration on security has included the crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood, which Sisi regards as a terrorist group.

While the Islamist movement has insisted that its agenda is now peaceful, the Muslim Brotherhood has nonetheless been linked with a long list of terror attacks in Sinai. As well, the Muslim Brotherhood has insisted that it will never engage in reconciliation with the pro-military government of Egypt.

The latest manifestation of Islamists resorting to terrorism to register their discontent over being shut out of the political process came in late June 2015 when Egypt's leading prosecutor was assassinated in a clear act of terrorism. Hisham Barakat died when a bomb hidden in a parked car was detonated, causing a massive explosion. Several other people were injured in the attack. While there was no official claim of responsibility, senior officials in the new military-backed government of Egypt have typically been the targets of attacks by Islamists. Officials in Egypt's judiciary have been regarded as prime targets due to their involvement in the legal cases against the

Muslim Brotherhood. But in 2015, those types of attacks could reach new heights thanks to the call by the terror enclave, Islamic State, for its allies and supporters to specifically go after judges in Egypt.

Despite harsh anti-terrorism laws, Egypt struck by violent attack

On Aug. 20, 2015, a bomb exploded at a state security building on the outskirts of the Egyptian capital of Cairo. The blast -- reported caused by a car bomb -- occurred during the night at the state security compound in the area of Shubra Al-Khaima and left approximately 30 people wounded, some of whom were police officers. The notorious terror group, Islamic State, claimed responsibility for the attack and said that the violence was intended to "to avenge Muslim martyrs." It was unclear if the attack was orchestrated directly by Islamic State or from the Islamist extremist terrorists operating in Egypt's Sinai Province, which intensified its attacks after the military in Egypt overthrew Islamist President Mohammed Morsi, and which has aligned itself with Islamic State. That particular "wing" of Jihadist Islamist terrorists has been responsible for no shortage of attacks in Cairo in recent times.

Ironically, this latest attack in Egypt occurred only days after President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi approved a slate of harsh anti-terrorism laws intended to curb extremism, militancy, and Jihadism. At issue was the imposition of no shortage of hardline counter-terrorism regulations. These regulations included provisions for: 1. the establishment of special terrorism courts; 2. stringent penalties for people found guilty of joining a terror group or funding a terror group; 3. onerous penalties for people found guilty of inciting terrorism or spreading messages intended to attract would-be militants; 4. the imposition of the death penalty for anyone found guilty of leading a terrorist group; 5. extra protections for security forces using force against insurgents; penalties for journalists offering accounts of militant attacks that run contrary to the government's position.

While critics of the counter-terrorism strategies, including the human rights group, Amnesty International, have said that they are intended to silence and suppress dissent, the fact of the matter was that terrorism was on the rise in Egypt. Indeed, the legislation was spurred by the assassination of Prosecutor General Hisham Barakat in a car bomb months prior.

Egypt rocked by corruption scandal; new government ahead of parliamentary elections

Ahead of long-awaited parliamentary elections, Egypt was rocked by a corruption scandal involving the sitting government. Amidst media scrutiny of the government's incompetence and the arrest of the agricultural minister (Salah el-Din Helal), the government of Prime Minister Ibrahim Mahlab resigned from office. With only a month to go until Egypt would begin its phased parliamentary election process, President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi was compelled to name a new

prime minister. To that end, in mid-September 2015, the president swore into office Petroleum Minister, Sheriff Ismail as the new prime minister. The president's choice of Ismail was hailed generally as a good one since the petroleum minister was viewed as one of the more competent and effective members of government. A new cabinet -- composed of a mix of old and new faces -- was subsequently put into place but would have a short duration since elections were begin a month later in October 2015 and would continue on a phased basis through the rest of the year. The results of that exercise would determine the composition of the new government.

Primer on 2015 parliamentary elections in Egypt

In August 2015, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi signed new electoral legislation into law, effectively paving the way for highly anticipated parliamentary polls. Those elections would be held on a phased basis, with a first round of voting taking place from Oct. 18-19, 2015, and a second round taking place from Nov. 22-23, 2015. If needed, a run-off round would take place at the start of December 2015 to determine the winner of contested seats. At stake would be the composition of the newly established unicameral parliament.

It should be noted that parliamentary elections were actually scheduled to be held in Egypt on March 22-23, 2015, and April 26-27, 2015, on a phased basis, but as discussed below, were postponed for constitutional reasons.

In Egypt, the legislative branch of government was, until 2013, a bicameral Federal Parliamentary Assembly, consisting of the "Majlis ash-Shura" (Advisory Council) and "Majlis ash-Shaab" (People's Assembly or House of Representatives). In 2013, the previous bicameral structure was eliminated and in 2014, it was replaced -- under the aegis of a constitutional measure -- with a unicameral House of Representatives, composed of at least 450 seats (usually more) and with up to five percent of the membership being appointed by the president; members serve five-year terms in office.

The 2015 parliamentary elections have been regarded as another measure aimed at stabilizing Egypt in the years following the Nile Revolution in 2011. Presidential elections brought Mohammed Morsi to power in the executive branch of office in 2012, only to be toppled by the military in 2013. At the time, the military said it would hold a presidential election and parliamentary contests in the future, to return the country to the path of democracy. A presidential election was thus held in 2014, and ended with the democratic ratification of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi as president. The long-awaited parliamentary elections were thus set to take place in 2015, and were being regarded as the final step in the direction of good governance.

At the start of March 2015, however, only weeks before the initial date set for the first phase of the elections to take place, Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court declared a key provision of the

electoral law to be unconstitutional. That ruling was followed by a decision by Egypt's Administrative Court to delay the long-anticipated parliamentary contest indefinitely. A new election schedule would be considered by the High Election Committee after the electoral law was amended. That change would require voting districts to be arranged in such a manner as to ensure a more equitable distribution of voters. The practical result of the postponement would be that President Sisi would be able to continue to rule Egypt, unfettered by the legislative branch of government.

Some months later in August 2015, the amendments to the electoral law had been made, and the new legislation was officially signed by President Sisi. The new law provided for a new parliament containing 568 elected seats -- 448 seats to be held by individual candidates and another 120 seats to be held by candidates contesting the election under the aegis of winner-takes-all lists, with quotas for special groups such as women, youth, and Christians. With the changes made and with the new system in place, there were high hopes that a schedule for the delayed parliamentary elections would be announced, and then Egyptians would finally go to the polls to select the representatives for the legislative branch of government.

Of note was the fact that Egypt had actually been without a parliament since 2012 when the courts dissolved the now-defunct "Majlis ash-Shaab" (People's Assembly or House of Representatives). The 2015 contest would, therefore, be the first time candidates would be elected to the new unicameral body.

As August 2015 came to a close, the dates for the elections were finally scheduled by the election commission. The two-stage phased elections would begin with a first round of voting from Oct. 18-19, 2015, and a second round would take place from Nov. 22-23, 2015. As stated above, a run-off round would take place at the start of December 2015, if needed.

Note that elections in Egypt began in October 2015 under the aegis of the phased schedule for voting. The first phase of voting went smoothly although mired by low voter turnout. The subsequent phase occurred as scheduled and was likewise affected by low voter turnout. All indications pointed to a strong performance of pro-government parties and candidates (i.e. allied with President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi) at this stage and an apparent consolidation of power. Indeed, early election results indicated that the pro-government alliance loyal to President Sisi, known as "For the Love of Egypt," won all of the "winner take all" list seats in the second phase of voting. Some run-off votes were expected to take place at the start of December 2015.

In the first week of December 2015, Egypt's election committee made clear that President Sisi's bloc, "For the Love of Egypt," had won all 120 "winner take all" seats up for grabs. Also at stake were the remaining 448 seats, which are elected on an individual basis (versus the 120 seats elected on the basis of party lists). The final tally in that regard was yet to be announced but all signs pointed to a strong performance for pro-Sisi candidates.

Special Entry:

Russia acknowledges that bomb brought down jet carrying vacationers from Egyptian resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh; promises retribution against Islamic State

Summary

The crash of a Russian airliner in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula resulted in the deaths of all 224 persons on board. The Russian Metrojet Flight KG9268 departed the Red Sea resort city of Sharm-el-Sheikh and was bound for the Russian city of St. Petersburg but crashed before the tourists and flight crew could arrive at their destination. The notorious terror group, Islamic State, claimed responsibility for the downing of the flight but Egyptian officials dismissed the claim on the basis of their belief that the terror group did not have the capability to bring down a jet. The Russian government was, likewise, reticent to accept terrorism as explanation. Nevertheless, both the United States and the United Kingdom made clear that intelligence pointed to a bomb being planted on the aircraft and exploding shortly after taking off from Sharm-el-Sheikh. With an affiliate of Islamic State active in the Egyptian Sinai in recent years, and with intelligence pointing in the direction of terrorism, that group's claim of responsibility was being viewed by the countries of the West as credible. Russia joined that group's conclusions two weeks after the crash, pointing to explosive material found on crash debris, while Russian President Vladimir Putin promised that those responsible would face justice. The international dimension of the tragedy catapulted the global security threat posed by Islamic State to new heights.

In Detail

On Oct. 31, 2015, a Russian airliner carrying 224 people crashed in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula about 20 minutes after taking off from the Egyptian resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh, killing all the persons on board. While most of those aboard were Russian citizens, there were also four Ukrainians and one Belarussian national among the victims. The Russian Metrojet Flight KG9268 departed the Red Sea city and was bound for the Russian city of St. Petersburg but crashed before the tourists and flight crew could arrive at their destination. It was the deadliest crash of the French-made Airbus A321 airliner in recent times.

According to the Egyptian authorities, the aircraft disappeared from radar approximately 20 minutes after its departure from Sharm el-Sheikh while flying over the central Sinai Peninsula at an altitude of 31,000 feet. The Egyptian military aircraft later located the wreckage of the aircraft in an area of the Sinai called Hasna, just south of the Mediterranean coastal town of el-Arish. Russian officials confirmed that the aircraft split into two in mid-air but refrained from immediately drawing conclusions about the cause of the disaster. With both of the aircraft's flight recorders,

known as "black boxes," recovered, along with no shortage of forensic evidence, there would be a good foundation for investigators to determine what happened to Metrojet Flight KG9268.

To that end, Egypt would be leading the investigation, which would involve the participation of an international group of aviation experts. The Russians were expected to assist with the inquiry given the fact that its citizens made up the vast majority of the appalling death toll. Because the aircraft was a French-made Airbus A321, France would also be involved in the investigation into what went wrong. As well, an Irish delegation would be part of the investigation since the actual aircraft was registered in Ireland.

Although Egyptian officials initially indicated that there was nothing irregular about the doomed flight and suggested either human error or a mechanical malfunction, Islamist terrorists in the Sinai aligned with the notorious terror group, Islamic State, claimed responsibility for downing the flight via a Telegram messaging application. Egyptian Prime Minister Sharif Ismail immediately dismissed the claim, asserting that the terror group did not have the capability to bring down an aircraft from the type of high altitude Metrojet Flight KG9268 reached at the time it disappeared from radar.

But in the days after the crash, authorities in the United States and United Kingdom respectively indicated that intelligence pointed to the likelihood that Metrojet Flight KG9268 was brought down by a bomb. Clearly, this assertion by two Western countries would vitiate the notion that an Islamic State affiliate in the Sinai used some sort of missile to target the aircraft. Instead, attention was settling on a more conventional methodology for the conduct of terrorism -- the use of a bomb, which was likely planted on the aircraft by an airport insider, and which was very likely programmed to explode when that aircraft reached a certain altitude.

United Kingdom Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond did not prevaricate in any way as he made the following declaration: "We have concluded that there is a significant possibility that the crash was caused by an explosive device on board the aircraft." Moreover, the government of the United Kingdom moved to suspend all flights to and from Sharm-el-Sheikh, while putting plans into place for providing transportation to bring British nationals home from Egypt, but only after new and stringent security protocols had been put into place. The office of United Kingdom Prime Minister David Cameron explained the government's decision with the following statement: "The evidence we received suggested there was a credible threat with regard to Sharm al-Sheikh airport which is why we have taken the actions we have." The prime minister's office stopped short of providing information about what types of security actions would be taken.

Across the Atlantic, unnamed officials in the United States revealed to various news agencies that a bomb "was a highly possible scenario" and that terrorism was the likely cause of the crash. Subsequently, United States President Barack Obama himself noted that there was a possibility that the Russian airliner was brought down by a bomb that was planted on board. To that end,

President Obama said, "We're taking that very seriously." President Obama's head of homeland security, Jey Johnson, later noted that new and more stringent security measures would be implemented at certain airports across the world for aircraft flying into the United States.

Of note was the fact that no United States-registered airlines fly in and out of the Sharm al-Sheikh airport due to enduring concerns about poor security. As such, the United States Transportation Security Administration has not been at that airport in recent times to actually evaluate security there.

Perhaps eager to protect its vital tourism industry, Egypt again dismissed the idea that Islamic State terrorists within its own borders might be responsible for the tragedy. Indeed, the Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Sisi went so far as to disparage Islamic State's claim of responsibility as mere "propaganda." But on Nov. 4, 2015, another claim of responsibility had been advanced by Islamic State in the Sinai -- this time via an audio message posted on Twitter. In that message, the speaker said: "We, with God's grace, are the ones who brought it down, and we are not obliged to disclose the mechanism of its demise."

Meanwhile, Russia was likewise distancing itself from the Islamic State and terrorism angle. With Russia now actively participating in the civil war in Syria against both anti-Assad rebels and Islamic State, it was not keen to admit that it might be suffering so quickly from what is generally known as "blowback" from its Syrian engagement. Still, the truth of the matter was that if the cause of the crash was ultimately determined to be terrorism at the hands of Islamic State, Russia would have to confront the reality that its heavy military footprint in Syria quite possibly was yielding deleterious consequences. Of note was the fact that airplanes from various European countries depart to and from Sharm-el-Sheikh daily, yet of all the aircraft available, it was a Russian jetliner which may have been selected by Islamic State terrorists as a target.

Regardless of its hesitation in accepting the terrorism explanation for the crash of Metrojet Flight KG9268, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered all flights to and from Egypt to be halted.

Putin made that decision after a meeting with Alexander Bortnikov, the head of Russia's security service, in which he recommended that Russia suspend passenger flights to Egypt until the precise cause of the crash was determined. Bortnikov explained the move saying, "Until we know the real reasons for what happened, I consider it expedient to stop Russian flights to Egypt. Above all, this concerns tourist routes." Arrangements were also made to repatriate Russians stranded at the Egyptian resort town.

Several other airlines were also taking precautions by grounding flights scheduled to traverse that route, rerouting aircraft flying over the Sinai, while several Western governments released travel warnings expressly stating that their citizens should not travel to the Egyptian Sinai.

Note that as the first week of November 2015 came to a close, authorities in the United States and

United Kingdom made clear that their intelligence assets had intercepted communications, known in intelligence circles as "chatter," from suspected terrorists. This revelation only bolstered their view that Russian Metrojet Flight KG9268 was the target of terrorism. While this view would yet have to be proved via forensic evidence and a thorough assessment of information on the flight recorders, the working theory at this time was that a bomb had been hidden in luggage and stowed in the hold of the aircraft. The general belief was that the bomb was quite likely planted by an insider working at the Sharm-el-Sheikh airport. That insider was believed to have worked in some form or fashion with Islamic State in the Sinai.

In the second week of November 2015, Russia and Egypt continued to officially resist the terrorism explanation for the crash of the Russian Metrojet airliner in the Egyptian Sinai. For Russia, there was no willingness to publicly admit that it was suffering from blowback as a result of its military engagement in Syria. For Egypt, there was no desire to taint its tourism industry by admitting that the resort city of Sharm-el-Sheikh may have suffered from lax security; Egypt was also not eager to confront the reality that despite its hardline measures against Islamist militants, a likely act of international terrorism had quite possibly occurred on its soil. As such, Russia and Egypt continued to publicly insist that it was too soon to draw conclusions about what happened on Oct. 31, 2015.

In the same period (the second week of November 2015), Islamic State -- which had already claimed responsibility for bringing down the Russian jet -- was now promising further attacks on Russia. To this end, Islamic State was vowing via a videotaped threat to attack Russians "very soon" on Russian soil for that country's heavy involvement in the Syrian crisis.

On Nov. 17, 2015, after two weeks of avoiding the terrorism explanation for the downing of the Metrojet flight, Russian authorities finally acknowledged that "an act of terror" in the form of a bomb brought down the plane over the Egyptian Sinai. Russian authorities reportedly informed President Putin that "traces of foreign explosives" were identified on the debris from the aircraft. Publicly, the head of Russia's security service, Alexander Bortnikov, said, "We can unequivocally say it was a terrorist act."

It should be noted that the government of Egypt continued to insist that it would not arrive at premature conclusions and would let the the investigatory process be fully completed. Egyptian Prime Minister Sherif Ismail said, "The Egyptian authorities affirm they will take into consideration the investigations that the Russian side reached ... in the comprehensive investigation." Egyptian Interior Minister Magid Abdel Ghaffar went slightly further, noting that there would be consequences if the investigation indicated security lapses at the Sharm el-Sheikh airport. He said, "Regarding Sharm al-Sheikh airport, when we discover that there have been security lapses action will be taken, but up to now we have no information about lapses in the search and security procedures." Egypt's Civil Aviation Minister Hosam Kamel, however, would not even concede that anything nefarious had occurred, as he said, "Up until this moment, there is no evidence of

crime."

Note that on Nov. 18, 2015, Islamic State released details regarding their claim of responsibility in the Russian Metrojet disaster. In the terror group's Dabiq magazine, Islamic State explained that its operatives used its liquids bomb manufacturing capability, hidden in a canned Schweppes soft drink, to bring down the doomed jetliner. That liquids bomb making capability has been known to global anti-terrorism experts since 2006 following an investigation by MI6 experts from the United Kingdom, which has led to regulations on carry-on liquids belonging to aircraft passengers. In this message from Islamic State, the terror group said, "The divided Crusaders of the East and West thought themselves safe in their jets as they cowardly bombarded the Muslims of the Caliphate. And so revenge was exacted upon those who felt safe in the cockpits."

Russia's Official Response

With Islamic State claiming responsibility for the fatal crash, Russian President Vladimir Putin promised to "find and punish" those responsible for the attack over the Sinai peninsula. He said, "We'll look for them everywhere, wherever they are hiding. We'll find them in any corner of the planet and punish them." The Russian leader warned that those who carried out the attack that led to the deaths of more than 200 Russians, or were in anyway complicit in helping them, would face justice as he declared, "We must do this without any statute of limitations and we must find out all their names. Anyone who tries to help the criminals should know that the consequences for trying to shelter them will lie completely on their shoulders."

President Putin also made it clear that his country's military engagement in Syria would not only continue, but that Russian air strikes "must be intensified so that the criminals understand that retribution is inevitable." To that end, Russian warplanes wasted no time before stepping up its air campaign in Syria. The Russian government was also signaling its interest in working with France, which was also struck with a spate of terrorist attacks at the hands of Islamic State in the French capital of Paris. Indeed, both countries were reported to be carrying out sustained air strikes on Islamic State targets in Syria. As well, despite strained relations with the United States, as a result of their shared interest in defeating Islamic State, Russian and United States forces were said to be more closely coordinating their respective strikes on Islamic State targets in Syria.

Editor's Note on Security Situation in Egypt

Since the ousting of President Mohammed Morsi by the Egyptian military in 2013, the new military-backed government of Egypt has carried out a purge of the hardline Muslim Brotherhood, and in response, an Islamist insurgency has plagued Egypt's Sinai. These attacks -- claimed by Sinai Province, Islamic State's Egypt wing -- were a manifestation of this violent Islamist insurgency. Egyptian President Fattah al-Sisi promised a harsh response and urged Egyptians to prepare for a long fight against the Islamist insurgency.

Highlights of the developments in 2015 related to Islamist terrorists leading up to the October 2015 Russian airplane jet crash --

- In late January 2015, a bombing at a military compound in Egypt's restive North Sinai province left at least 30 people dead -- many of them military personnel -- and scores more wounded
- In a separate attack, an army major was shot to death and six others were wounded at a checkpoint in Rafah close to the border with the Gaza Strip
- A third incident involved a roadside bombing in Suez that left a police officer dead.
- One the anniversary of the 2011 Nile Revolution that resulted in the end of the regime of Hosni Mubarak, celebrations turned deadly
- In February 2015 a bomb exploded in Egypt's second largest city of Alexandria yielding five casualties
- In the same period, clashes erupted in the Cairo suburb of Matariya between security forces and members of the Muslim Brotherhood.
- In mid-February 2015, more than 20 Coptic Christians from Egypt were brutally killed in Libya at the hands of Islamic State
- In response, Egypt launched a campaign against Islamic State satellite targets in Libya -- from terror training camps and sites to weapons depots in the city of Derna
- In June 2015, Prosecutor General Hisham Barakat responsible for several anti-terrorism measures was assassinated in a car bomb carried out by Islamists
- In July 2015, Islamic terrorists carried out a car bomb attack outside the Italian consulate in Cairo killing at least one person
- In August 2015, Islamic militants planted a bomb at a state security building in Shubra Al-Khaima; the explosion wounded 30 people wounded, some of whom were police officers
- In the same period, President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi approved a slate of harsh anti-terrorism laws intended to curb extremism, militancy, and Jihadism
- In October 2015, a Russian jet traveling from the resort town of Sharm-el-Sheikh crashed in the Sinai; U.K and U.S. intelligence attributed the crash to terrorism at the hands of Islamic State

While critics including the human rights group, Amnesty International, have said that Egypt's counter-terrorism strategies are intended to silence and suppress dissent, the fact of the matter was that terrorism was on the rise in Egypt. The latest manifestation of that terrorism came in the form of the crash of Russian Metrojet Flight KG9268 and was believed to be the work of the terror group, Islamic State. The international dimension of the tragedy catapulted the global security threat posed by Islamic State to new heights.

Editor's Note on Egypt's Nile Revolution:

Ultimately, it is to be determined if the democratic ambitions of the Egyptian people will be

realized. The "Nile Revolution" in 2011 -- a key development in the so-called "Arab Spring" -- had resulted in the exit of the key figure of the Mubarak "old guard," with possibilities ripe for a reformist agenda. This historic moment of change in Egypt was achieved by the people -- not with the typical weapons of conflict and confrontation, but with relentless determination, via the Internet and telecommunications devices, which were used as organizing mechanisms to advance grassroots transformation.

As the spirit of regional unrest transfixed the region, the final chapter in this story was yet to be written. That being said, the post-colonial structure of the Arab world in the Maghreb and the Middle East would be affected by the pro-democracy wave washing over the region. Ultimately, Egypt in 2011 had traversed a similar path as Tunisia and Libya, with regime change simply opening the door to further transformational action. Actual change, though, has been harder to accomplish due to the entrenched dynamics of power. The result has been a sense of anger and frustration by the people that the transformations sought have not yet been achieved, thus driving them back into the streets to register their discontent.

The people of the region have been explicit in expressing their high expectations that actual policy reforms will ensue, that greater freedom will win the day, and that rule by the prevailing political elites in Arab countries will end. Nevertheless, as has been seen by similar popular uprisings that brought down regimes in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan (notably out of the Middle East but still subject to post-uprising political discontent), celebration today can often be followed by disappointment and disillusionment tomorrow over the slow pace of change.

The important parliamentary elections and landmark presidential elections of 2012 offered Egypt a pathway to realizing its democratic ambitions. However, the autocratic and pro-Islamist stances taken by Egypt's new President Mohammed Morsi threatened to -- at best -- set up a power battle between the executive and judicial branches of government, and -- at worst -- reverse the democratic and progressive gains made in the immediate aftermath of the "Nile Revolution." The economic crisis in 2013 significantly pushed the country to the brink of default -- with deleterious effects in the offing as a result. Not surprisingly, a fresh "Rebellion," known as Tamarod, emerged in mid-2013, followed by the military takeover in which Morsi was ousted from office. It was clear that Egypt's revolutionary path was not yet over. Indeed, the events of 2013, initiated by the General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and the military, could be viewed either as a short-circuiting of the people-powered movement -- or -- another chapter in the same story of transformation in Egypt.

In 2014, a new constitution was ratified and Sisi garnered an overwhelming victory at the polls thanks to a citizenry weary of turbulence and turmoil. By the start of 2015, former President Hosni Mubarak was cleared of the charges against him. It was clear that the Egyptian citizenry was less interested in the Mubarak factor and much more concerned with stability and moving the country forward.

In 2015, former President Morsi, an Islamist, along with other members of the Muslim Brotherhood, were sentenced to death as the new regime sought to reverse the Islamizing effect on the Egyptian public sphere.

-- December 2015

Written by Dr. Denise Coleman, Editor in Chief, www.countrywatch.com . See Bibliography for research sources.

Political Risk Index

Political Risk Index

The **Political Risk Index** is a proprietary index measuring the level of risk posed to governments, corporations, and investors, based on a myriad of political and economic factors. The [Political Risk Index](#) is calculated using an established methodology by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on varied criteria* including the following consideration: political stability, political representation, democratic accountability, freedom of expression, security and crime, risk of conflict, human development, jurisprudence and regulatory transparency, economic risk, foreign investment considerations, possibility of sovereign default, and corruption. Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the highest political risk, while a score of 10 marks the lowest political risk. Stated differently, countries with the lowest scores pose the greatest political risk. A score of 0 marks the most dire level of political risk and an ultimate nadir, while a score of 10 marks the lowest possible level of political risk, according to this proprietary index. Rarely will there be scores of 0 or 10 due to the reality that countries contain complex landscapes; as such, the index offers a range of possibilities ranging from lesser to greater risk.

Country	Assessment
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Afghanistan	2
Albania	4
Algeria	6
Andorra	9
Angola	4
Antigua	8
Argentina	4
Armenia	4-5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9.5
Azerbaijan	4
Bahamas	8.5
Bahrain	6
Bangladesh	3.5
Barbados	8.5-9
Belarus	3
Belgium	9

Belize	8
Benin	5
Bhutan	5
Bolivia	5
Bosnia-Herzegovina	4
Botswana	7
Brazil	7
Brunei	7
Bulgaria	6
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5
Burundi	3
Cambodia	4
Cameroon	5
Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4

Chile	9
China	7
China: Hong Kong	8
China: Taiwan	8
Colombia	7
Comoros	5
Congo DRC	3
Congo RC	4
Costa Rica	8
Cote d'Ivoire	4.5
Croatia	7
Cuba	4-4.5
Cyprus	5
Czech Republic	8
Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	4.5
Dominica	7
Dominican Republic	6

East Timor	5
Ecuador	6
Egypt	5
El Salvador	7
Equatorial Guinea	4
Eritrea	3
Estonia	8
Ethiopia	4
Fiji	5
Finland	9
Fr.YugoslavRep.Macedonia	5
France	9
Gabon	5
Gambia	4
Georgia	5
Germany	9.5
Ghana	6
Greece	4.5-5

Grenada	8
Guatemala	6
Guinea	3.5
Guinea-Bissau	3.5
Guyana	4.5
Haiti	3.5
Holy See (Vatican)	9
Honduras	4.5-5
Hungary	7
Iceland	8.5-9
India	7.5-8
Indonesia	6
Iran	3.5-4
Iraq	2.5-3
Ireland	8-8.5
Israel	8
Italy	7.5
Jamaica	6.5-7

Japan	9
Jordan	6.5
Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	7
Korea, North	1
Korea, South	8
Kosovo	4
Kuwait	7
Kyrgyzstan	4.5
Laos	4.5
Latvia	7
Lebanon	5.5
Lesotho	6
Liberia	3.5
Libya	2
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	7.5

Luxembourg	9
Madagascar	4
Malawi	4
Malaysia	8
Maldives	4.5
Mali	4
Malta	8
Marshall Islands	6
Mauritania	4.5-5
Mauritius	7
Mexico	6.5
Micronesia	7
Moldova	5
Monaco	9
Mongolia	5
Montenegro	6
Morocco	6.5
Mozambique	4.5-5

Namibia	6.5-7
Nauru	6
Nepal	4
Netherlands	9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	5
Niger	4
Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9.5
Oman	7
Pakistan	3.5
Palau	7
Panama	7.5
Papua New Guinea	5
Paraguay	6.5-7
Peru	7
Philippines	6
Poland	8

Portugal	7.5
Qatar	7.5
Romania	5.5
Russia	5.5
Rwanda	5
Saint Kitts and Nevis	8
Saint Lucia	8
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	8
Samoa	7
San Marino	9
Sao Tome and Principe	5.5
Saudi Arabia	6
Senegal	6
Serbia	5
Seychelles	7
Sierra Leone	4.5
Singapore	9
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8

Slovenia	8
Solomon Islands	6
Somalia	2
South Africa	7
Spain	7.5
Sri Lanka	5
Sudan	3.5
Suriname	5
Swaziland	5
Sweden	9.5
Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2
Tajikistan	4.5
Tanzania	6
Thailand	6.5
Togo	4.5
Tonga	7
Trinidad and Tobago	8

Tunisia	6
Turkey	7
Turkmenistan	4.5
Tuvalu	7
Uganda	6
Ukraine	3.5-4
United Arab Emirates	7
United Kingdom	9
United States	9.5
Uruguay	8
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	7
Venezuela	4
Vietnam	5
Yemen	3
Zambia	4.5
Zimbabwe	3

*Methodology

The [Political Risk Index](#) is calculated by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on the combined scoring of varied criteria as follows --

1. political stability (record of peaceful transitions of power, ability of government to stay in office and carry out policies as a result of productive executive-legislative relationship, perhaps with popular support vis a vis risk of government collapse)
2. political representation (right of suffrage, free and fair elections, multi-party participation, and influence of foreign powers)
3. democratic accountability (record of respect for political rights, human rights, and civil liberties, backed by constitutional protections)
4. freedom of expression (media freedom and freedom of expression, right to dissent or express political opposition, backed by constitutional protections)
5. security and crime (the degree to which a country has security mechanisms that ensures safety of citizens and ensures law and order, without resorting to extra-judicial measures)
6. risk of conflict (the presence of conflict; record of coups or civil disturbances; threat of war; threats posed by internal or external tensions; threat or record of terrorism or insurgencies)
7. human development (quality of life; access to education; socio-economic conditions; systemic concern for the status of women and children)
8. jurisprudence and regulatory transparency (the impartiality of the legal system, the degree of transparency within the regulatory system of a country and the durability of that structure)
9. economic conditions (economic stability, investment climate, degree of nationalization of industries, property rights, labor force development)
10. corruption (the degree of corruption in a country and/or efforts by the government to address graft and other irregularities)

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the current climate of upheaval internationally -- both politically and economically -- has affected the ratings for several countries across the world.

North Korea, [Afghanistan](#), [Somalia](#), and [Zimbabwe](#) -- retain their low rankings.

Several Middle Eastern and North African countries, such as [Tunisia](#), [Egypt](#), [Libya](#), [Syria](#), [Iraq](#) and [Yemen](#) were downgraded in recent years due to political instability occurring in the "season of unrest" sweeping the region since 2011 and continuing today. The worst downgrades affected [Syria](#) where civil war is at play, along with the rampage of terror being carried out by Islamist terrorists who have also seized control over part of Syrian territory. [Iraq](#) has been further downgraded due to the rampage of Islamist terrorists and their takeover of wide swaths of Iraqi territory. [Libya](#) has also been downgraded further due to its slippage into failed state status; at issue in [Libya](#) have been an ongoing power struggle between rival militias. [Yemen](#) continues to hold steady with a poor ranking due to continued unrest at the hands of Houthi rebels, secessionists, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, and Islamic State. Its landscape has been further complicated by the fact that it is now the site of a proxy war between [Iran](#) and [Saudi Arabia](#). Conversely, [Tunisia](#) and [Egypt](#) have seen slight upgrades as these countries stabilize.

In Africa, [Zimbabwe](#) continues to be one of the bleak spots of the world with the Mugabe regime effectively destroying the country's once vibrant economy, and miring [Zimbabwe](#) with an exceedingly high rate of inflation, debilitating unemployment, devolving public services, and critical food shortages; rampant crime and political oppression round out the landscape. [Somalia](#) also sports a poor ranking due to the continuing influence of the terror group, al-Shabab, which was not operating across the border in [Kenya](#). On the upside, [Nigeria](#), which was ineffectively dealing with the threat posed by the terror group, Boko Haram, was making some strides on the national security front with its new president at the helm. [Mali](#) was slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. But the [Central African Republic](#) was downgraded due to the takeover of the government by Muslim Seleka rebels and a continued state of lawlessness in that country. South [Sudan](#) -- the world's newest nation state -- has not been officially included in this assessment; however, it can be unofficially assessed to be in the vicinity of "3" due to its manifold political and economic challenges. [Burkina Faso](#), [Burundi](#) and [Guinea](#) have been downgraded due to political unrest, with [Guinea](#) also having to deal with the burgeoning Ebola crisis.

In Europe, [Ukraine](#) was downgraded due to the unrest facing that country following its Maidan revolution that triggered a pro-Russian uprising in the eastern part of the country. [Russia](#) was also implicated in the Ukrainian crisis due to its intervention on behalf of pro-Russian separatists, as well as its annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. Strains on the infrastructure of southern and eastern European countries, such as [Serbia](#), [Croatia](#), and [Hungary](#), due to an influx of refugees was expected to pose social and economic challenges, and slight downgrades were made accordingly. So too, a corruption crisis for the Romanian prime minister has affected the ranking of that country. Meanwhile, the rankings for [Spain](#), [Portugal](#), [Ireland](#), and [Italy](#) were maintained due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. [Greece](#), another euro zone nation,

was earlier downgraded due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, no further downgrade was added since the country was able to successfully forge a bailout rescue deal with creditor institutions. Cyprus' exposure to Greek banks yielded a downgrade in its case.

In Asia, [Nepal](#) was downgraded in response to continuous political instability and a constitutional crisis that prevails well after landmark elections were held. Both [India](#) and [China](#) retain their rankings; [India](#) holds a slightly higher ranking than [China](#) due to its record of democratic representation and accountability. Increasing violence and political instability in [Pakistan](#) resulted in a downgrade for this country's already low rating. Meanwhile, [Singapore](#) retained its strong rankings due to its continued effective stewardship of the economy and political stability.

In the Americas, ongoing political and economic woes, as well as crime and corruption have affected the rankings for [Mexico](#), [Guatemala](#), and [Brazil](#). [Argentina](#) was downgraded due to its default on debt following the failure of talks with bond holders. [Venezuela](#) was downgraded due to its mix of market unfriendly policies and political oppression. For the moment, the [United States](#) maintains a strong ranking along with [Canada](#), and most of the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean; however, a renewed debt ceiling crisis could cause the [United States](#) to be downgraded in a future edition. Finally, a small but significant upgrade was attributed to [Cuba](#) due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the United States.

Source:

Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

2015

Political Stability

Political Stability

The **Political Stability Index** is a proprietary index measuring a country's level of stability, standard of good governance, record of constitutional order, respect for human rights, and overall strength of democracy. The [Political Stability](#) Index is calculated using an established methodology* by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on a given country's record of peaceful

transitions of power, ability of a government to stay in office and carry out its policies vis a vis risk credible risks of government collapse. Threats include coups, domestic violence and instability, terrorism, etc. This index measures the dynamic between the quality of a country's government and the threats that can compromise and undermine stability. Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the lowest level of political stability and an ultimate nadir, while a score of 10 marks the highest level of political stability possible, according to this proprietary index. Rarely will there be scores of 0 or 10 due to the reality that countries contain complex landscapes; as such, the index offers a range of possibilities ranging from lesser to greater stability.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2
Albania	4.5-5
Algeria	5
Andorra	9.5
Angola	4.5-5
Antigua	8.5-9
Argentina	7
Armenia	5.5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9.5
Azerbaijan	5

Bahamas	9
Bahrain	6
Bangladesh	4.5
Barbados	9
Belarus	4
Belgium	9
Belize	8
Benin	5
Bhutan	5
Bolivia	6
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5
Botswana	8.5
Brazil	7
Brunei	8
Bulgaria	7.5
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5
Burundi	4

Cambodia	4.5-5
Cameroon	6
Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4.5
Chile	9
China	7
China: Hong Kong	8
China: Taiwan	8
Colombia	7.5
Comoros	5
Congo DRC	3
Congo RC	5
Costa Rica	9.5
Cote d'Ivoire	3.5
Croatia	7.5
Cuba	4.5

Cyprus	8
Czech Republic	8.5
Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	5
Dominica	8.5
Dominican Republic	7
East Timor	5
Ecuador	7
Egypt	4.5-5
El Salvador	7.5-8
Equatorial Guinea	4.5
Eritrea	4
Estonia	9
Ethiopia	4.5
Fiji	5
Finland	9
Fr.YugoslavRep.Macedonia	6.5
France	9

Gabon	5
Gambia	4.5
Georgia	5
Germany	9.5
Ghana	7
Greece	6
Grenada	8.5
Guatemala	7
Guinea	3.5-4
Guinea-Bissau	4
Guyana	6
Haiti	3.5-4
Holy See (Vatican)	9.5
Honduras	6
Hungary	7.5
Iceland	9
India	8
Indonesia	7

Iran	3.5
Iraq	2.5
Ireland	9.5
Israel	8
Italy	8.5-9
Jamaica	8
Japan	9
Jordan	6
Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	8
Korea, North	2
Korea, South	8.5
Kosovo	5.5
Kuwait	7
Kyrgyzstan	5
Laos	5
Latvia	8.5

Lebanon	5.5
Lesotho	5
Liberia	3.5-4
Libya	2
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	9
Luxembourg	9.5
Madagascar	4
Malawi	5
Malaysia	8
Maldives	4.5-5
Mali	4.5-5
Malta	9
Marshall Islands	8
Mauritania	6
Mauritius	8
Mexico	6.5-7
Micronesia	8

Moldova	5.5
Monaco	9.5
Mongolia	6.5-7
Montenegro	8
Morocco	7
Mozambique	5
Namibia	8.5
Nauru	8
Nepal	4.5
Netherlands	9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	6
Niger	4.5
Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9.5
Oman	7
Pakistan	3
Palau	8

Panama	8.5
Papua New Guinea	6
Paraguay	8
Peru	7.5
Philippines	6
Poland	9
Portugal	9
Qatar	7
Romania	7
Russia	6
Rwanda	5
Saint Kitts and Nevis	9
Saint Lucia	9
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	9
Samoa	8
San Marino	9.5
Sao Tome and Principe	7
Saudi Arabia	6

Senegal	7.5
Serbia	6.5
Seychelles	8
Sierra Leone	4.5
Singapore	9.5
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8.5
Slovenia	9
Solomon Islands	6.5-7
Somalia	2
South Africa	7.5
Spain	9
Sri Lanka	5
Sudan	3
Suriname	5
Swaziland	5
Sweden	9.5
Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2

Tajikistan	4.5
Tanzania	6
Thailand	6
Togo	5
Tonga	7
Trinidad and Tobago	8
Tunisia	5
Turkey	7.5
Turkmenistan	5
Tuvalu	8.5
Uganda	6
Ukraine	3.5-4
United Arab Emirates	7
United Kingdom	9
United States	9
Uruguay	8.5
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	8.5

Venezuela	4.5-5
Vietnam	4.5
Yemen	2.5
Zambia	5
Zimbabwe	3

*Methodology

The Political Stability Index is calculated by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on the combined scoring of varied criteria as follows --

1. record of peaceful transitions of power (free and fair elections; adherence to political accords)
2. record of democratic representation, presence of instruments of democracy; systemic accountability
3. respect for human rights; respect for civil rights
4. strength of the system of jurisprudence, adherence to constitutional order, and good governance
5. ability of a government to stay in office and carry out its policies vis a vis risk credible risks of government collapse (i.e. government stability versus a country being deemed "ungovernable")
6. threat of coups, insurgencies, and insurrection
7. level of unchecked crime and corruption
8. risk of terrorism and other threats to national security
9. relationship with regional powers and international community; record of bilateral or multilateral cooperation
10. degree of economic strife (i.e. economic and financial challenges)

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the current climate of upheaval internationally -- both politically and economically -- has affected the ratings for several countries across the world. The usual suspects -- North Korea, [Afghanistan](#), and [Somalia](#) -- retain their low rankings. The reclusive and ultra-dictatorial North Korean regime, which has terrified the world with its nuclear threats, has exhibited internal instability. Of note was a cut-throat purge of hundreds of high ranking officials deemed to be a threat to Kim Jung-un. Despite their attempts to recover from years of lawlessness, war, and warlordism, both [Afghanistan](#) and [Somalia](#) continue to be beset by terrorism and turmoil. In [Afghanistan](#), while international forces have seen success in the effort against the terror group, al-Qaida, the other Islamist extremist group, the Taliban, continues to carry out a vicious insurgency using terrorism. In [Somalia](#), while the government attempts to do the nation's business, the terror group, al-Shabab continues to make its presence known not only in [Somalia](#), but across the border into [Kenya](#) with devastating results/ Also in this category is [Iraq](#), which continues to be rocked by horrific violence and terrorism at the hands of Islamic State, which has taken over wide swaths of Iraqi territory.

Syria, [Libya](#), and [Yemen](#) have been added to this unfortunate echelon of the world's most politically unstable countries. [Syria](#) has been mired by the twin hazards of 1. a civil war as rebels oppose the Assad regime; and 2. the rampage of terror being carried out by Islamic State, which also seized control over vast portions of Syrian territory. Meanwhile, the post-Qaddhafi landscape of [Libya](#) has devolved into chaos as rival militias battle for control -- the elected government of the country notwithstanding. Rounding out this grim triad is [Yemen](#), which was dealing with a Houthi rebellion, secessionists in the south, as well as the threat of terrorism from al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula as well as Islamic State, while also being the site of a proxy war between Shi'a [Iran](#) and Sunni [Saudi Arabia](#).

Meanwhile, several Middle Eastern and North African countries, such as [Tunisia](#), [Egypt](#), and [Bahrain](#) were downgraded in recent years due to political instability occurring in the "season of unrest" sweeping the region since 2011 and continuing today. All three of these countries have stabilized in recent years and have been upgraded accordingly. In [Bahrain](#), the landscape had calmed. In [Egypt](#), the secular military-backed government has generated criticism for its crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood; however, the country had ratified the presidency via democratic elections and were on track to hold parliamentary elections as the country moved along the path of democratization. Perhaps the most impressive story was coming out of [Tunisia](#) -- the country whose Jasmine Revolution sparked the entire Arab Spring -- and where after a few years of strife, a new progressive constitution was passed into law and a secular government had been elected to power. [Tunisia](#), [Egypt](#), and [Bahrain](#) have seen slight upgrades as these countries stabilize.

In Africa, the [Central African Republic](#) was downgraded the previous year due to the takeover of the government by Muslim Seleka rebels. Although the country has been trying to emerge from this crisis, the fact of the matter was that it was difficult to halt the precipitous decline into lawlessness in that country. [Zimbabwe](#) has maintained its consistently poor ranking due to the dictatorial regime of Mugabe, who continues to hold a tight grip on power, intimidates the opposition, squashes dissent, and oppresses the white farmer population of the country. Moving in a slightly improved direction is [Nigeria](#), which has sported abysmal ratings due to the government's fecklessness in dealing with the threat posed by the Islamist terror group, Boko Haram. Under its newly-elected government, there appears to be more of a concerted effort to make national security a priority action item. [Mali](#) was also slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. Political instability has visited [Burkina Faso](#) and [Burundi](#) as the leaders of those countries attempted to side-step constitutional limits to hold onto power. In [Burundi](#), an attempted coup ensued but quelled, and the president won a (questionable) new term in office; unrest has since punctuated the landscape. In [Burkina Faso](#), the political climate has turned stormy as a result of a successful coup that ended the rule of the president, and then a putsch against the transitional government. These two African countries have been downgraded as a result.

It should be noted that the African country of South [Sudan](#) -- the world's newest nation state -- has not been officially included in this assessment; however, it can be unofficially assessed to be in the vicinity of "3" due to its manifold political and economic challenges. [Guinea](#) has endured poor rankings throughout, but was slightly downgraded further over fears of social unrest and the Ebola heath crisis.

In Europe, [Ukraine](#) was downgraded due to the unrest facing that country following its Maidan revolution that triggered a pro-Russian uprising in the eastern part of the country. [Russia](#) was also implicated in the Ukrainian crisis due to its intervention on behalf of pro-Russian separatists, as well as its annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. [Serbia](#) and [Albania](#) were slightly downgraded due to eruptions of unrest, while [Romania](#) was slightly downgraded on the basis of corruption charges against the prime minister. [Spain](#), [Portugal](#), [Ireland](#), and [Italy](#) were downgraded due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. [Greece](#), another euro zone nation, was downgraded the previous year due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, the country successfully forged a rescue deal with international creditors and stayed within the Euro zone. Greek voters rewarded the hitherto unknown upstart party at the polls for these efforts. As a result, [Greece](#) was actually upgraded slightly as it proved to the world that it could endure the political and economic storms. Meanwhile, [Germany](#), [France](#), [Switzerland](#), the [United Kingdom](#), the [Netherlands](#), and the Scandinavian countries continue to post impressive ranking consistent with these countries' strong records of democracy, freedom, and peaceful transfers of power.

In Asia, [Nepal](#) was downgraded in response to continuous political instability well after landmark elections that prevails today. [Cambodia](#) was very slightly downgraded due to post-election

instability that has resulted in occasional flares of violence. Despite the "trifecta of tragedy" in [Japan](#) in 2011 -- the earthquake, the ensuing tsunami, and the resulting nuclear crisis -- and the appreciable destabilization of the economic and political terrain therein, this country has only slightly been downgraded. Japan's challenges have been assessed to be transient, the government remains accountable, and there is little risk of default. Both [India](#) and China retain their rankings; [India](#) holds a slightly higher ranking than [China](#) due to its record of democratic representation and accountability. Increasing violence and political instability in [Pakistan](#) resulted in a downgrade for this country's already low rating.

In the Americas, [Haiti](#) retained its downgraded status due to ongoing political and economic woes. [Mexico](#) was downgraded due to its alarming rate of crime. [Guatemala](#) was downgraded due to charges of corruption, the arrest of the president, and uncertainty over the outcome of elections. [Brazil](#) was downgraded due to the corruption charges erupting on the political landscape, the stalling of the economy, and the increasingly loud calls for the impeachment of President Rousseff. [Argentina](#) was downgraded due to its default on debt following the failure of talks with bond holders. [Venezuela](#) was downgraded due to the fact that the country's post-Chavez government is every bit as autocratic and nationalistic, but even more inclined to oppress its political opponents. [Colombia](#) was upgraded slightly due to efforts aimed at securing a peace deal with the FARC insurgents. A small but significant upgrade was attributed to [Cuba](#) due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the United States. Meanwhile, the [United States](#), [Canada](#), [Costa Rica](#), [Panama](#), and most of the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean retain their strong rankings due to their records of stability and peaceful transfers of power.

In the Pacific, [Fiji](#) was upgraded due to its return to constitutional order and democracy with the holding of the first elections in eight years.

In Oceania, [Maldives](#) has been slightly downgraded due to the government's continued and rather relentless persecution of the country's former pro-democracy leader - former President Nasheed.

Source:

Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

2015

Freedom Rankings

Freedom Rankings

Freedom in the World

Editor's Note: This ranking by Freedom House quantifies political freedom and civil liberties into a single combined index on each sovereign country's level of freedom and liberty. The initials "PR" and "CL" stand for Political Rights and Civil Liberties, respectively. The number 1 represents the most free countries and the number 7 represents the least free. Several countries fall in the continuum in between. The freedom ratings reflect an overall judgment based on survey results.

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
Afghanistan	6 ?	6	Not Free	
Albania*	3	3	Partly Free	
Algeria	6	5	Not Free	
Andorra*	1	1	Free	
Angola	6	5	Not Free	
Antigua and Barbuda*	3 ?	2	Free	
Argentina*	2	2	Free	
Armenia	6	4	Partly Free	
Australia*	1	1	Free	

Austria*	1	1	Free	
Azerbaijan	6	5	Not Free	
Bahamas*	1	1	Free	
Bahrain	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Bangladesh*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Barbados*	1	1	Free	
Belarus	7	6	Not Free	
Belgium*	1	1	Free	
Belize*	1	2	Free	
Benin*	2	2	Free	
Bhutan	4	5	Partly Free	
Bolivia*	3	3	Partly Free	
Bosnia-Herzegovina*	4	3	Partly Free	
Botswana*	3 ?	2	Free	
Brazil*	2	2	Free	
Brunei	6	5	Not Free	
Bulgaria*	2	2	Free	
Burkina Faso	5	3	Partly Free	

Burma	7	7	Not Free	
Burundi*	4	5	Partly Free	↑
Cambodia	6	5	Not Free	↓
Cameroon	6	6	Not Free	
Canada*	1	1	Free	
Cape Verde*	1	1	Free	
Central African Republic	5	5	Partly Free	
Chad	7	6	Not Free	
Chile*	1	1	Free	
China	7	6	Not Free	
Colombia*	3	4	Partly Free	
Comoros*	3	4	Partly Free	
Congo (Brazzaville)	6	5	Not Free	↓
Congo (Kinshasa)	6	6	Not Free	↓
Costa Rica*	1	1	Free	
Cote d'Ivoire	6	5	Not Free	
Croatia*	1 ?	2	Free	
Cuba	7	6	Not Free	

Cyprus*	1	1	Free	
Czech Republic*	1	1	Free	
Denmark*	1	1	Free	
Djibouti	5	5	Partly Free	
Dominica*	1	1	Free	
Dominican Republic*	2	2	Free	↓
East Timor*	3	4	Partly Free	
Ecuador*	3	3	Partly Free	
Egypt	6	5	Not Free	
El Salvador*	2	3	Free	
Equatorial Guinea	7	7	Not Free	
Eritrea	7	7 ?	Not Free	
Estonia*	1	1	Free	
Ethiopia	5	5	Partly Free	↓
Fiji	6	4	Partly Free	
Finland*	1	1	Free	
France*	1	1	Free	
Gabon	6	5 ?	Not Free ?	

The Gambia	5	5 ?	Partly Free	
Georgia	4	4	Partly Free	
Germany*	1	1	Free	
Ghana*	1	2	Free	
Greece*	1	2	Free	
Grenada*	1	2	Free	
Guatemala*	4 ?	4	Partly Free	
Guinea	7	6 ?	Not Free	
Guinea-Bissau*	4	4	Partly Free	
Guyana*	2	3	Free	
Haiti*	4	5	Partly Free	
Honduras	4 ?	4 ?	Partly Free	
Hungary*	1	1	Free	
Iceland*	1	1	Free	
India*	2	3	Free	
Indonesia*	2	3	Free	
Iran	6	6	Not Free	↓
Iraq	5 ?	6	Not Free	

Ireland*	1	1	Free	
Israel*	1	2	Free	
Italy*	1	2	Free	
Jamaica*	2	3	Free	
Japan*	1	2	Free	
Jordan	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Kazakhstan	6	5	Not Free	↓
Kenya	4	4 ?	Partly Free	
Kiribati*	1	1	Free	
Kosovo	5 ?	4 ?	Partly Free ?	
Kuwait	4	4	Partly Free	
Kyrgyzstan	6 ?	5 ?	Not Free ?	
Laos	7	6	Not Free	
Latvia*	2	1	Free	
Lebanon	5	3 ?	Partly Free	
Lesotho*	3 ?	3	Partly Free ?	
Liberia*	3	4	Partly Free	
Libya	7	7	Not Free	

Liechtenstein*	1	1	Free	
Lithuania*	1	1	Free	
Luxembourg*	1	1	Free	
Macedonia*	3	3	Partly Free	↑
Madagascar	6 ?	4 ?	Partly Free	
Malawi*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Malaysia	4	4	Partly Free	
Maldives*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Mali*	2	3	Free	
Malta*	1	1	Free	↓
Marshall Islands*	1	1	Free	
Mauritania	6	5	Not Free	
Mauritius*	1	2	Free	
Mexico*	2	3	Free	
Micronesia*	1	1	Free	
Moldova*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Monaco*	2	1	Free	
Mongolia*	2	2	Free	↑

Montenegro*	3	2 ?	Free ?	
Morocco	5	4	Partly Free	↓
Mozambique	4 ?	3	Partly Free	
Namibia*	2	2	Free	
Nauru*	1	1	Free	
Nepal	4	4	Partly Free	
Netherlands*	1	1	Free	
New Zealand*	1	1	Free	
Nicaragua*	4	4 ?	Partly Free	
Niger	5 ?	4	Partly Free	
Nigeria	5	4	Partly Free	↓
North Korea	7	7	Not Free	↓
Norway*	1	1	Free	
Oman	6	5	Not Free	
Pakistan	4	5	Partly Free	
Palau*	1	1	Free	
Panama*	1	2	Free	
Papua New Guinea*	4	3	Partly Free	

Paraguay*	3	3	Partly Free	
Peru*	2	3	Free	
Philippines	4	3	Partly Free	↓
Poland*	1	1	Free	
Portugal*	1	1	Free	
Qatar	6	5	Not Free	
Romania*	2	2	Free	
Russia	6	5	Not Free	↓
Rwanda	6	5	Not Free	
Saint Kitts and Nevis*	1	1	Free	
Saint Lucia*	1	1	Free	
Saint Vincent and Grenadines*	2	1	Free	
Samoa*	2	2	Free	
San Marino*	1	1	Free	
Sao Tome and Principe*	2	2	Free	
Saudi Arabia	7	6	Not Free	
Senegal*	3	3	Partly Free	
Serbia*	2 ?	2	Free	

Seychelles*	3	3	Partly Free	
Sierra Leone*	3	3	Partly Free	
Singapore	5	4	Partly Free	
Slovakia*	1	1	Free	↓
Slovenia*	1	1	Free	
Solomon Islands	4	3	Partly Free	
Somalia	7	7	Not Free	
South Africa*	2	2	Free	
South Korea*	1	2	Free	
Spain*	1	1	Free	
Sri Lanka*	4	4	Partly Free	
Sudan	7	7	Not Free	
Suriname*	2	2	Free	
Swaziland	7	5	Not Free	
Sweden*	1	1	Free	
Switzerland*	1	1	Free	↓
Syria	7	6	Not Free	
Taiwan*	1 ?	2 ?	Free	

Tajikistan	6	5	Not Free	
Tanzania	4	3	Partly Free	
Thailand	5	4	Partly Free	
Togo	5	4 ?	Partly Free	
Tonga	5	3	Partly Free	
Trinidad and Tobago*	2	2	Free	
Tunisia	7	5	Not Free	
Turkey*	3	3	Partly Free	↓
Turkmenistan	7	7	Not Free	
Tuvalu*	1	1	Free	
Uganda	5	4	Partly Free	
Ukraine*	3	2	Free	
United Arab Emirates	6	5	Not Free	
United Kingdom*	1	1	Free	
United States*	1	1	Free	
Uruguay*	1	1	Free	
Uzbekistan	7	7	Not Free	
Vanuatu*	2	2	Free	

Venezuela	5 ?	4	Partly Free	
Vietnam	7	5	Not Free	↓
Yemen	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Zambia*	3	4 ?	Partly Free	
Zimbabwe	6 ?	6	Not Free	

Methodology:

PR and CL stand for political rights and civil liberties, respectively; 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free rating. The ratings reflect an overall judgment based on survey results.

? ? up or down indicates a change in political rights, civil liberties, or status since the last survey.

↑ ↓ up or down indicates a trend of positive or negative changes that took place but that were not sufficient to result in a change in political rights or civil liberties ratings of 1-7.

* indicates a country's status as an electoral democracy.

Source:

This data is derived from the latest edition of Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2010 edition.

Available at URL: <http://www.freedomhouse.org>

Updated:

Reviewed in 2015

Human Rights

Overview of Human Rights in Egypt

On September 7, 2005, President Hosni Mubarak won his fifth consecutive term in office. This election was marred by low voter turnout and charges of fraud. The election was not monitored by international observers. Mubarak's regime has not been known for placing a high priority on respect for human rights. Serious abuses continue to go unchecked in many areas.

Since 1967, there has been an almost continuous "state of emergency" in place in Egypt. Near absolute power and control of the state by the regime in power are the result of this situation. The National Democratic Party (NDP) continues to maintain governing authority.

In May 2006, the government renewed the Emergency Law (Law # 162 of 1958). This law prohibits demonstrations and public rallies thus effectively limiting the freedoms of assembly, association, and expression. The government also put back into effect the Law on Political Rights. This law introduced criminal penalties for journalists found guilty of publishing "false information" against the government.

In 2007 through 2008, civil and human rights activists argued that media freedom in Egypt has become increasingly limited with the arrest, trial and jailing of a newspaper editor on the basis of this controversial law. (See "Political Conditions" for details.)

Recent terror attacks, which combined killed over 100 people, the State Security Investigation (SSI) carried out mass arrests and detentions of over 3,000 people. Of these, some 2,000 still remain in custody without charges. There is no release date in sight.

Law enforcement officials in Egypt often use torture against dissidents, but recently they expanded its use to include suspects of 'normal' crimes. From the 1990s through the next decade, there have been hundreds of reported cases of torture, of which 120 resulted in the death of the suspect. In the vast majority of cases, the authorities did not even try to conduct prompt, impartial investigations into the crime. Many who perpetrated these acts were not brought to court, let alone justice.

Homeless or truant children are often arrested by law enforcement for arbitrary reasons. While in custody, many are physically and/or sexually abused. They are also denied the right to food, bedding and medical treatment. Those who perpetrate these acts are not sanctioned for their actions.

NOTE: Please see "Political Conditions" for details related to the crackdown on Egyptian protesters in the 2011 season of unrest in this country.

Human Development Index (HDI) Rank:

See full listing of the Human Development Index located in the Social Overview of this report for this country's current rank.

Human Poverty Index Rank:

55th out of 103

Gini Index:

34.4

Life Expectancy at Birth (years):

71.85 years

Unemployment Rate:

10%

Population living on \$1 a day (%):

3.1%

Population living on \$2 a day (%):

43.9%

Population living beneath the Poverty Line (%):

20%

Internally Displaced People:

N/A

Note-There are some 89,000 refugees currently seeking asylum in Egypt

Total Crime Rate (%):

28.7%

Health Expenditure (% of GDP):

Public: 1.8%

% of GDP Spent on Education:

3.9%

Human Rights Conventions Party to:

- International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Conventions on the Rights of the Child
- Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (signed but not yet ratified)

*Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite index that measures the level of well-being in 177 nations in the world. It uses factors such as poverty, literacy, life-expectancy, education, gross domestic product, and purchasing power parity to assess the average achievements in each nation. It has been used in the United Nation's Human Development Report since 1993.

*Human Poverty Index Ranking is based on certain indicators used to calculate the Human Poverty Index. Probability at birth of not surviving to age 40, adult literacy rate, population without sustainable access to an improved water source, and population below income poverty line are the indicators assessed in this measure.

*The Gini Index measures inequality based on the distribution of family income or consumption. A value of 0 represents perfect equality (income being distributed equally), and a value of 100 perfect inequality (income all going to one individual).

*The calculation of the total crime rate is the % of the total population which has been effected by property crime, robbery, sexual assault, assault, or bribery (corruption) related occurrences.

Government Functions

NOTE:

In late January 2011 well into mid-February 2011, protesters took to the streets in Egypt in a furious display of anger, demanding the resignation of President Mubarak. After days of protests, President Mubarak named a deputy, instituted a new government, and said he would stay on as president but would not seek re-election in Sept. 2011. That timeline was not satisfying for the protesters and the demonstrations continued, ultimately going from peaceful demonstrations to violent clashes as fierce battles with pro-Mubarak factions ensued. Meanwhile, journalists were being targeted for attacks and suspicion fell on governing authorities for trying to silence the media. Protesters eyed a "day of departure" for Mubarak but the Egyptian president, in an interview, made it clear that his exit would mean chaos for his country. Strikes and protests continued but on Feb. 11, 2011, Egyptian President Mubarak finally stepped down from office, one day after powers were transferred to Vice President Suleiman. The vice president's power, though, was rendered irrelevant after Mubarak's resignation with the military, instead, at the helm.

Because power had been transferred to the military, in contravention to constitutional provisions, there were rumblings that Mubarak's refusal to fully stand down the day before may have precipitated a "soft coup" of sorts, backed by the armed forces of the country. For its part, the military released a communique referencing the delegation of presidential powers, promising to institute constitutional reforms, and vowing to end the controversial emergency laws. In effect, the military of Egypt was announcing that it would guarantee the democratic aspirations of the Egyptian people. A statement released by the military command, headed by Defense Minister Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, seemed mindful of the extra-constitutional dimensions of the situation, and was therefore quick to limit its own power. It issued a statement that read: "There is no legitimacy other than that of the people."

In terms of everyday governance, the military said that the current government had been asked to stay on until a new one could be formed, which would "pave the way for an elected civil authority to build a free democratic state." The transitional military authorities also said that parliament was dissolved and the constitution was suspended. A committee would be established to draft a new constitution, which would be ratified via a popular referendum within a short period of time. The transitional military authorities also noted that it would remain in power only for six months, or, until fresh elections could be held.

Egypt's military -- the transitional authority of the country -- affirmed that it was committed to all international treaties. The announcement was an implicit reference to Egypt's peace treaty with Israel, signed in 1979 between then-Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and then-Israeli Prime

Minister Menachem Begin at Camp David in the United States. The situation in Egypt in 2011 raised anxieties in Israel about the fate of the peace deal and the concomitant stability of the region.

On Feb. 13, 2011, on state television, the transitional military authorities said that parliament was dissolved and the constitution was suspended. A committee would be established to draft a new constitution, which would be ratified via a popular referendum. Two days later on Feb. 15, 2011, the transitional military authorities of Egypt set a constitution reform deadline, saying that work on this effort would have to be completed in ten days, or roughly the close of February 2011. The constitutional committee, led by a retired judge, was given the task of formulating the amended constitution. It was tasked with amending, "...all articles as it sees fit to guarantee democracy and the integrity of presidential and parliamentary elections." As well, the transitional military authorities also noted that they would remain in power only for six months, or, until fresh elections could be held. In this way, the military transitional authorities seemed to be committed to keeping its promise to move Egypt on the path of civilian democratic rule as quickly as possible. It was also announced on that day that a referendum on constitutional reform would be held on March 19, 2011, with parliamentary and presidential elections scheduled to be held within six months. Tahrir Square was filled with celebration at the news.

On March 19, 2011, Egyptian voters enthusiastically went to the polls to vote in the aforementioned constitutional referendum. Turnout was said to be massive, strengthening the possible legitimacy of the referendum results. Many voters said that they regarded this exercise as the first really democratic vote in the country. At stake was the ratification of constitutional changes that would set presidential term limits (two four-year terms) and establish a 100-seat unicameral constitutional congress. A day after the referendum on March 20, 2011, transitional Egyptian authorities said that results of the referendum indicated decisive ratification of the proposed constitutional changes. With initial reports pointing toward more than 75 percent of voters casting affirmative votes in the referendum, democratic presidential and parliamentary elections were soon to be held in Egypt.

Due to public discontent over the pace of the transition, in November 2011, Egypt's interim civilian government of Prime Minister Essam Sharaf submitted its resignation to the country's ruling military council. Egypt's ruling military council soon announced an accelerated transition schedule to civilian rule. Specifically, it called for the formation of a new civilian cabinet, led by a "technocrat" prime minister rather than a politician. Finally, measures were to be implemented to ensure the adoption of a new constitution and the holding of a presidential election no later than June 2012 -- a significant shift from the formerly open-ended timetable. Dr. Kamal Ganzouri was named as the new prime minister of Egypt and charged with forming a "national salvation" government.

In mid-January 2012, Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces announced that candidates

hoping to contest the forthcoming presidential election could commence the process of registering their candidacies. As February 2012 came to a close, Egypt's transitional authorities firmed up the dates for the presidential contest, announcing that the first presidential election after the fall of former President Hosni Mubarak would be held from May 23 to May 24, 2012. Ultimately, the presidential election went off in May-June 2012 and an Islamist, Mohammed Morsi, became the new head of state in Egypt.

The drafting of the new constitution was complete at the start of December 2012. That document was drawn up by a body dominated by Morsi-supporting Islamists. It was then approved in a marathon vote that lasted several hours, but which excluded participation by liberal and Coptic members of the Constitutional Assembly due to a boycott. Many opposition activists and secularists cast the document as undesirable, and pointed to the provision that would establish "principles of Sharia" or Islamic law as the fulcrum of legislation. Of particular concern were the effects on the freedom of the press, freedom of religion, and the rights of women. It was ultimately ratified, to the consternation of reformists, liberals, and secularists.

On July 3, 2013, following the issuance of an ultimatum by the Egyptian military, Mohammed Morsi was removed from office as Egypt's head of state. The military said the country's controversial Islamist constitution was suspended, the country's chief justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court would be inaugurated into power as the interim president, and fresh elections would be held in the future. These actions were taken after the military warned Morsi that he had 48 hours to respond to the will of the people, who were in the streets demanding that Morsi resign and fresh elections be held. Morsi's decision to defiantly stake a claim on the presidency, pointing to the fact that he was the elected leader of Egypt, appeared to ensure an end to his tenure in office. For his part, Morsi described the actions of the military as a "full coup" via Twitter.

For many anti-Morsi protesters who yearned to see him ousted from office, they did not seem to care whether there was a coup or not. They seemed focused on the goal of seeing Morsi gone. For the military itself, it was unlikely that it viewed its own actions as a coup. Instead, as protests had gained strength in Egypt, leading to a face-off between anti-government protesters on one side and Morsi's pro-Muslim Brotherhood supporters on the other side, the military decided that it needed to intervene to prevent bloodshed. That intervention did entail taking a particular position - specifically, on the side of the anti-government liberal, secularist, and reformist factions.

Ultimately, it is to be determined if the democratic ambitions of the protesters in Egypt will be realized. At this point, the Nile Revolution had resulted in the exit of the key figure of the "old guard," and an elected president, who was himself ousted from office a year later. The Nile Revolution of 2011 was a historic moment of change in Egypt that was achieved by the people -- not with the typical weapons of conflict and confrontation, but peacefully, with relentless determination of the people, via the Internet and telecommunications devices, which were used as organizing mechanisms to advance grassroots transformation. The events of 2013, initiated by the

military, could be viewed either as a short-circuiting of the people-powered movement -- or -- another chapter in the same story of transformation in Egypt.

Note: Fresh presidential elections took place in 2014 and ended in the ratification of Sisi's leadership. The election was viewed as the means to returning Egypt to the path of democratization.

Constitution

A post-Mubarak constitution was passed by referendum in late 2012. It reflects the priorities of the new Islamist-oriented government of Egypt that took power in the aftermath of the so-called "Nile Revolution." This constitution was nullified in 2013 after the military takeover. A new constitution was advanced in late 2013; that draft was ratified via referendum in January 2014.

See "Note" below.

Note: Egyptians vote on new constitution

Egyptian Interim President Adly Mansour announced in mid-December 2013 that a new constitution would be advanced to replace to one crafted during the presidency of the now-deposed Mohamed Morsi. Mansour said that Egyptians would go to the polls a month later -- on Jan. 14-15, 2014 -- to either ratify or reject the new charter. The interim government of Egypt has said that ratification of the new constitution was a stepping stone on the path towards the restoration of democracy in Egypt. Speaking of the new constitution, President Mansour said, "Let this constitution be a word of justice, that unites and doesn't separate ... for hatred is a tool for destruction ... disagreement is legislated, as long it adopts peacefulness and is in the country's interest."

On Jan. 10, 2014, a week ahead of the constitutional referendum, an opposition alliance, led by the Muslim Brotherhood, called for a boycott of the vote. A statement released via the Muslim Brotherhood website read declared: "Down with the referendum of blood and treason. Long live Egypt and its proud people." But the vote to reject or ratify the constitution was already going forward with Egyptian expatriates already casting their ballots. Voting in the constitutional referendum was scheduled to begin on Jan. 16, 2014 and take place over the course of two days.

Nevertheless, the referendum went off as planned and soon the process of tabulation was underway. The head of Egypt's election commission, Nabil Salib, characterized the referendum as an "unrivalled success." When the vote counting was complete, Egyptian authorities were ready to announce the result. According to those Egyptian officials, the draft charter was overwhelmingly approved -- with more than 95 percent of voters registering an affirmative vote -- following the

two-day referendum. It should be noted that in contrast to the earlier Morsi-endorsed charter, this document appeared to enshrine women with more rights and freedom, facilitate increased to social justice for citizens, while at the same time, augmenting the power of the military.

Executive Authority

The head of state in Egypt is the president.

Legislative Authority

Former bicameral system:

Consists of the "Majlis ash-Shura" (Advisory Council) and "Majlis ash-Shaab" (People's Assembly or House of Representatives). The

"Majlis al-Shura" (Advisory Council) traditionally functions in a consultative role (at least 150 seats with up to one-tenth of body appointed by the president; members serve six-year terms. The "Majlis ash-Shaab" (People's Assembly or House of Representatives) is the main parliamentary body (at least 350 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms).

Current unicameral system:

Consists of a unicameral House of Representatives, composed of at least 450 seats (usually more) and with up to five percent of the membership being appointed by the president; members serve five-year terms in office. Under the new system, the majority of seats are to be held by individual candidates but with provisions for additional seats to be held by candidates contesting the election under the aegis of winner-takes-all lists, with quotas for special groups such as women, youth, and Christians.

Legal System and Judiciary

Egypt's judicial system is a mixed legal system based on Napoleonic civil law and Islamic religious law; judicial review by Supreme Court and Council of State (oversees validity of administrative decisions).

Administration

Administratively, Egypt is divided into governorates.

Government Structure

Names:

conventional long form:

"Jumhuriyat Misr al-Arabiya" (Arab Republic of Egypt)

conventional short form:

"Misr" (Egypt)

local long form:

Jumhuriyat Misr al-Arabiya

local short form:

Misr

former:

United Arab Republic (with Syria, 1958-1961)

Type:

Republic

NOTE:

In late January 2011 well into mid-February 2011, protesters took to the streets in Egypt in a furious display of anger, demanding the resignation of President Mubarak. After days of protests, President Mubarak named a deputy, instituted a new government, and said he would stay on as president but would not seek re-election in Sept. 2011. That timeline was not satisfying for the protesters and the demonstrations continued, ultimately going from peaceful demonstrations to violent clashes as fierce battles with pro-Mubarak factions ensued. Meanwhile, journalists were being targeted for attacks and suspicion fell on governing authorities for trying to silence the media. Protesters eyed a "day of departure" for Mubarak but the Egyptian president, in an interview, made it clear that his exit would mean chaos for his country. Strikes and protests continued but on Feb. 11, 2011, Egyptian President Mubarak finally stepped down from office, one day after powers were transferred to Vice President Suleiman. The vice president's power, though, was rendered irrelevant after Mubarak's resignation with the military, instead, at the helm.

Because power had been transferred to the military, in contravention to constitutional provisions, there were rumblings that Mubarak's refusal to fully stand down the day before may have precipitated a "soft coup" of sorts, backed by the armed forces of the country. For its part, the

military released a communique referencing the delegation of presidential powers, promising to institute constitutional reforms, and vowing to end the controversial emergency laws. In effect, the military of Egypt was announcing that it would guarantee the democratic aspirations of the Egyptian people. A statement released by the military command, headed by Defense Minister Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, seemed mindful of the extra-constitutional dimensions of the situation, and was therefore quick to limit its own power. It issued a statement that read: "There is no legitimacy other than that of the people."

In terms of everyday governance, the military said that the current government had been asked to stay on until a new one could be formed, which would "pave the way for an elected civil authority to build a free democratic state." The transitional military authorities also said that parliament was dissolved and the constitution was suspended. A committee would be established to draft a new constitution, which would be ratified via a popular referendum within a short period of time. The transitional military authorities also noted that it would remain in power only for six months, or, until fresh elections could be held.

Egypt's military -- the transitional authority of the country -- affirmed that it was committed to all international treaties. The announcement was an implicit reference to Egypt's peace treaty with Israel, signed in 1979 between then-Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and then-Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin at Camp David in the United States. The situation in Egypt in 2011 raised anxieties in Israel about the fate of the peace deal and the concomitant stability of the region.

On Feb. 13, 2011, on state television, the transitional military authorities said that parliament was dissolved and the constitution was suspended. A committee would be established to draft a new constitution, which would be ratified via a popular referendum. Two days later on Feb. 15, 2011, the transitional military authorities of Egypt set a constitution reform deadline, saying that work on this effort would have to be completed in ten days, or roughly the close of February 2011. The constitutional committee, led by a retired judge, was given the task of formulating the amended constitution. It was tasked with amending, "...all articles as it sees fit to guarantee democracy and the integrity of presidential and parliamentary elections." As well, the transitional military authorities also noted that they would remain in power only for six months, or, until fresh elections could be held. In this way, the military transitional authorities seemed to be committed to keeping its promise to move Egypt on the path of civilian democratic rule as quickly as possible. It was also announced on that day that a referendum on constitutional reform would be held on March 19, 2011, with parliamentary and presidential elections scheduled to be held within six months. Tahrir Square was filled with celebration at the news.

On March 19, 2011, Egyptian voters enthusiastically went to the polls to vote in the aforementioned constitutional referendum. Turnout was said to be massive, strengthening the possible legitimacy of the referendum results. Many voters said that they regarded this exercise as

the first really democratic vote in the country. At stake was the ratification of constitutional changes that would set presidential term limits (two four-year terms) and establish a 100-seat unicameral constitutional congress. A day after the referendum on March 20, 2011, transitional Egyptian authorities said that results of the referendum indicated decisive ratification of the proposed constitutional changes. With initial reports pointing toward more than 75 percent of voters casting affirmative votes in the referendum, democratic presidential and parliamentary elections were soon to be held in Egypt.

Due to public discontent over the pace of the transition, in November 2011, Egypt's interim civilian government of Prime Minister Essam Sharaf submitted its resignation to the country's ruling military council. Egypt's ruling military council soon announced an accelerated transition schedule to civilian rule. Specifically, it called for the formation of a new civilian cabinet, led by a "technocrat" prime minister rather than a politician. Finally, measures were to be implemented to ensure the adoption of a new constitution and the holding of a presidential election no later than June 2012 -- a significant shift from the formerly open-ended timetable. Dr. Kamal Ganzouri was named as the new prime minister of Egypt and charged with forming a "national salvation" government.

In mid-January 2012, Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces announced that candidates hoping to contest the forthcoming presidential election could commence the process of registering their candidacies. As February 2012 came to a close, Egypt's transitional authorities firmed up the dates for the presidential contest, announcing that the first presidential election after the fall of former President Hosni Mubarak would be held from May 23 to May 24, 2012. Ultimately, the presidential election went off in May-June 2012 and an Islamist, Mohammed Morsi, became the new head of state in Egypt.

The drafting of the new constitution was complete at the start of December 2012. That document was drawn up by a body dominated by Morsi-supporting Islamists. It was then approved in a marathon vote that lasted several hours, but which excluded participation by liberal and Coptic members of the Constitutional Assembly due to a boycott. Many opposition activists and secularists cast the document as undesirable, and pointed to the provision that would establish "principles of Sharia" or Islamic law as the fulcrum of legislation. Of particular concern were the effects on the freedom of the press, freedom of religion, and the rights of women. It was ultimately ratified, to the consternation of reformists, liberals, and secularists.

On July 3, 2013, following the issuance of an ultimatum by the Egyptian military, Mohammed Morsi was removed from office as Egypt's head of state. The military said the country's controversial Islamist constitution was suspended, the country's chief justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court would be inaugurated into power as the interim president, and fresh elections would be held in the future. These actions were taken after the military warned Morsi that he had 48 hours to respond to the will of the people, who were in the streets demanding that Morsi resign

and fresh elections be held. Morsi's decision to defiantly stake a claim on the presidency, pointing to the fact that he was the elected leader of Egypt, appeared to ensure an end to his tenure in office. For his part, Morsi described the actions of the military as a "full coup" via Twitter.

For many anti-Morsi protesters who yearned to see him ousted from office, they did not seem to care whether there was a coup or not. They seemed focused on the goal of seeing Morsi gone. For the military itself, it was unlikely that it viewed its own actions as a coup. Instead, as protests had gained strength in Egypt, leading to a face-off between anti-government protesters on one side and Morsi's pro-Muslim Brotherhood supporters on the other side, the military decided that it needed to intervene to prevent bloodshed. That intervention did entail taking a particular position - specifically, on the side of the anti-government liberal, secularist, and reformist factions.

Ultimately, it is to be determined if the democratic ambitions of the protesters in Egypt will be realized. At this point, the Nile Revolution had resulted in the exit of the key figure of the "old guard," and an elected president, who was himself ousted from office a year later. The Nile Revolution of 2011 was a historic moment of change in Egypt that was achieved by the people -- not with the typical weapons of conflict and confrontation, but peacefully, with relentless determination of the people, via the Internet and telecommunications devices, which were used as organizing mechanisms to advance grassroots transformation. The events of 2013, initiated by the military, could be viewed either as a short-circuiting of the people-powered movement -- or -- another chapter in the same story of transformation in Egypt.

Note: Fresh presidential elections took place in 2014 and ended in the ratification of Sisi's leadership. The election was viewed as the means to returning Egypt to the path of democratization. See below for details.

Executive Branch:

Head of state:

President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi elected in 2014 elections, as discussed below

Note on Egyptian Leadership --

Regardless of the international community's view, the fact was that in July 2013, Mohammed Morsi was out as president and a new head of state had to be inaugurated into power. On July 4, 2013, the head of Egypt's highest court, Adly Mansour, was sworn into office as the country's transitional or "caretaker" president.

Mansour served on Egypt's Constitutional Court since 1992. Born in Cairo, Mansour graduated from the faculty of law at Cairo University in 1967. In 1969 and 1970 respectively, he completed postgraduate studies in general law and administrative science. Having won a scholarship to France's most prestigious institute of higher education, he attended Ecole Nationale de

l'Administration from 1975 to 1977. Mansour worked as the chancellor of Egypt's State Council in 1984 and became president of the same institution in 1992. From that time, he served on Egypt's Constitutional Court until 2013 when he was named transitional or caretaker president of Egypt.

Striking a populist tone soon after his swearing in ceremony, President Mansour said that the source of his presidential power was "the great people of Egypt." He said: "I received the assignment order from those who possess it, the great people of Egypt, who are the leader and the source of all powers after they corrected the path of their great revolution."

Of course, the views of the actual people of Egypt were not in total alignment over the change in leadership. Clashes between supporters of Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood and members of the Tamarod rebel movement continued even after the military's intervention. In fact, more than a dozen people were killed on the night of July 3, 2013, alone -- ahead of Mansour's inauguration. Tensions were on the rise when Egyptian authorities ordered the arrests of senior Muslim Brotherhood leaders, Mohammed Badie and Khairat el-Shater, on the basis of inciting violence. Several other members of the Muslim Brotherhood were arrested at that time and former President Morsi himself was reported to be in detention at an undisclosed location. As well, several media stations seen as being sympathetic to the Muslim Brotherhood had been raided by the military and taken off the air. Included in this list of media entities was al-Jazeera. Human rights group Amnesty International warned that such shutdowns constituted a "blow to freedom of expression."

Still, with the inauguration of Mansour as president, there were some hopes that General Sisi's promise of a new technocratic government, "inclusive of all political factions," including youth, and a plan for fresh elections, might set Egypt on more positive footing. As to the leadership of that government, on July 5, 2013, news was emerging that opposition figure and Nobel Peace Prize winner Mohammed ElBaradei might be named as the new interim prime minister of Egypt. Ironically, it was ElBaradei himself who called for a new technocratic government of Egypt (as discussed above), noting that the not-yet ousted government could be characterized by incompetence.

Among Tamarod rebel movement supporters, news of ElBaradei possibly becoming prime minister was met with cheers and applause on the streets. But the Salafist Nour Party made it clear that they objected to the move. Clearly the conservative and religious agenda of the Salafists was at odds with the liberal and reformist orientation of ElBaradei. While the Salafists had been prepared to support the notion of a new government being formed, they were clearly not keen on ElBaradei at the helm. The deaths of several people during a pro-Morsi demonstration outside the officers' club of the Presidential Guard, where Morsi was believed to be held, provided the Salafists to walk away from the ongoing discussions on whom might serve as the new Egyptian prime minister. The turmoil that followed in the next few days, especially when the Muslim Brotherhood blamed the army for using live ammunition to disperse the crowds, only served to stultify the opinion of the

Salafists.

Regardless of the chaos rocking the streets of Cairo, the matter of forming a transitional government remained a key priority. On July 9, 2013, a presidential spokesperson said that President Adly Mansour had nominated Mohammed ElBaradei, to be vice president. The president had also nominated Hazem el-Beblawi, a technocrat, as prime minister. Beblawi served as finance minister during the period of military rule following the overthrow of former President Hosni Mubarak.

These announcements appeared to solve two problems for the president. First, the president was circumventing the objections levied by the Salafists towards the notion of ElBaradei as prime minister, while at the same time, keeping ElBaradei in the presidential inner circle. Second, by choosing a financial specialist to lead the new government in the form of Beblawi, the president was addressing the economic woes facing Egypt and the need for technocratic expertise.

Indeed, Beblawi's long record in economic management included the 12 years he ran Egypt's Export Development Bank for 12 years, as well as his work running the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (a United Nations entity that promotes cooperation among 17 Arab states), and also his stint as an adviser at the Arab Monetary Fund in the United Arab Emirates. French-educated Beblawi, who also worked in academia, was also described as having many ties across financial circles in the Middle East. These connections were illustrated in high relief when he was able to secure emergency loans and grants from the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. As well, Beblawi's well-known stance as a believer in free markets and legal transparency were likely to gain him applause from financial experts, and would help build confidence that Egypt was regaining its economic footing.

By mid-July 2013, Prime Minister Beblawi had formed a government and those new cabinet ministers were sworn into office. Included in the new cabinet was army chief Gen Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who led the removal of President Morsi from office; Sisi was set to become the deputy prime minister but he would also hold the ministerial portfolio for defense. Other key cabinet members were Nabil Fahmy at the foreign ministry, Sherif Ismail at the oil ministry, and Mohammed Ibrahim, who served as interior minister in the previous government when Morsi was president, would hold onto this portfolio. In the interests of diversity, Mounir Fakhry Abdel Nour, a Christian, was named as trade and industry minister, while three women would have cabinet positions, including Maha el-Rabat, who now held health portfolio. There were no cabinet positions for Islamists in the new government, but only because they refused to participate in the new administration. Gehad el-Haddad, a spokesperson for the Muslim Brotherhood said in an interview with the Reuters news agency: "It's an illegitimate government, an illegitimate prime minister, an illegitimate cabinet. We don't recognize anyone in it."

Note: President Mansour indicated that fresh elections in Egypt would take place by 2014.

Objections to this timetable came from two distinct and opposed fronts. As expected, the Muslim Brotherhood rejected the election schedule outright, and instead pressed for Morsi to be reinstated as president. But objections were also issued by the liberal National Salvation Front (NSF) -- led by ElBaradei until his appointment as deputy president. The NSF said that it required more information regarding President Mansour's transition plan and called for more inclusive consultations on the path forward. Regardless, elections were set to take place in Egypt in 2014 as discussed in the 2014 Elections Primer below.

Primer on Egypt's 2014 presidential election:

First round May 26-27, 2014; second round June 16-17, 2014 --

In late 2013, Egyptian Interim President Adly Mansour had announced that a new constitution would be advanced to replace to one crafted during the presidency of the now-deposed Mohamed Morsi. Mansour said that Egyptians would go to the polls a month later -- in January 2014 -- to either ratify or reject the new charter. Central provisions of the new charter included: term limits (two) for an elected president; the establishment of Islam as state religion, but with protections for absolute freedom of belief; guaranteed gender equality; bans on political parties based on "religion, race, gender, or geography;" and the military's right to appoint the defense minister for the next eight years.

The interim government of Egypt has said that ratification of the new constitution was a stepping stone on the path towards the restoration of democracy in Egypt. Speaking of the new constitution, President Mansour said, "Let this constitution be a word of justice, that unites and doesn't separate ... for hatred is a tool for destruction ... disagreement is legislated, as long it adopts peacefulness and is in the country's interest."

When the votes were counted, Egyptian voters overwhelmingly ratified the new constitution that would replace to one crafted during the presidency of the now-deposed Mohamed Morsi. Indeed, more than 95 percent of voters registered an affirmative vote following the two-day referendum. It should be noted that in contrast to the earlier Morsi-endorsed charter, this document appeared to enshrine women with more rights and freedom, facilitate increased to social justice for citizens, while at the same time, augmenting the power of the military.

With the new constitution ratified, there were plans afoot for parliamentary and presidential elections to be held in Egypt, with an eye on returning Egypt to constitutional and democratic order. The interim authorities initially envisioned parliamentary elections would be held ahead of a presidential contest; however, President Mansour indicated that the presidential contest might occur first in order to give time for new political parties to be founded, and to stabilize the country, which has seen unrelenting unrest since the removal of Morsi from power.

With those future elections looming, attention was on the future political course of Egypt. To that

end, Egypt's army chief, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, had said he would consider contesting the future presidential contest, if he had the support of the Egyptian people and the military. The Egyptian newspaper, al-Ahram, had Sisi on the record declaring, "If I nominate myself, there must be a popular demand, and a mandate from my army."

Sisi's presidential ambitions were backed by Amr Moussa, the chairman of the committee that drafted an Egyptian constitution. A former presidential candidate himself, and the former secretary-general for the Arab League, Moussa made it clear he would support a presidential bid from Sisi, saying: "I believe that Sisi will take this decision [to stand for president] and I back this." But Sisi's biggest show of support came from the military itself on Jan. 27, 2014, when that body said that it would back his candidacy for president.

Sisi said at the start of March 2014 that he could not ignore the calls from the people to run as a candidate in the impending presidential election. As he delivered a speech at the Egyptian Military Academy in Cairo, Sisi said that he could "not turn his back on calls by the majority of Egyptians for him to run for president." Indicating that an official announcement was in the offing, he added, "Official measures should be taken in the coming days."

Should he ultimately decide to move forward with a bid for the presidency, Sisi would be aided by strong popular support despite his role in the ousting of Morsi from power. Indeed, Sisi was commanding not only the armed forces but also a growing popular movement, made up of Egyptians disillusioned by the religiosity and the incompetence of the former Morsi presidency, and anxious for strongman-style but rational leadership, that he seemed to embody. That being said, Sisi would likely be vociferously opposed by supporters of the now-banned Muslim Brotherhood of Morsi, who have blame him for the harsh crackdown on Islamists, which has included the sentencing of more than 500 Islamists to death for their involvement in the violence that followed Morsi's ouster. Another 900 Islamists were yet to face charges of terrorism and murder on the same grounds and would likely endure a similar fate. Thus, Sisi would also have to deal with passionate antagonists.

One opponent for Sisi would be a "Nasserist" leftist Egyptian politician, Hamdeen Sabahi, who announced his bid to contest the presidency. Not a newcomer to the presidential election field, Sabahi actually contested the 2012 presidential election, which was ultimately won by Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood (and later deposed by the army in July 2013). Sabahi enjoyed a respectable performance in those 2012 elections, securing a third place finish. In these forthcoming 2014 elections, his presence was expected to invigorate the race by offering an alternative to Sisi and possibly inspiring other contenders to join the race. In his announcement to supporters, Sabahi said, "My personal decision as a citizen is to run for the coming presidential elections." He continued, "Hamdeen Sabahi's battle is the battle of the revolution." It should be noted that Sabahi was the head of the political alliance called the Popular Current.

Meanwhile, in late March 2014, Sisi announced that he was stepping down as the country's defense minister, essentially setting the stage for his presidential bid. He would be replaced by General Sedki Sobhi -- the post of chief of staff. With his resignation established, Sisi announced his candidacy for the presidency. In a national address that was broadcast by the media across the country, he said, "I am here before you humbly stating my intention to run for the presidency of the Arab Republic of Egypt. Only your support will grant me this great honor." Emphasizing that he intended to continue his effort to rid Egypt of Islamic militancy and terrorism, Sisi said: "True, today is my last day in military uniform, but I will continue to fight every day for an Egypt free of fear and terrorism." He also issued a realistic stance as regards the manifold economic challenges facing Egypt, as Sisi added, "We must be truthful with ourselves. Our country faces great challenges. Our economy is weak. There are millions of youths who suffer from unemployment in Egypt."

It should be noted that in April 2014, both Sabahi and Sisi made official their respective bids for the presidency by submitting the requisite documents for contesting the presidential election.

In the first week of May 2014, former army chief Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, who was contesting the presidential election in Egypt set for later in the month, vowed to end the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood. In an interview with Egyptian media, Sisi promised that if he won the presidency, the banned Muslim Brotherhood "will not exist." Sisi appeared to indicate that such an end for the Muslim Brotherhood was actually the result of the will of the people as he declared, "I want to tell you that it is not me that finished [the Muslim Brotherhood]. You, the Egyptians, are the ones who finished it." But Sisi also made clear that Egypt would not be ruled by the military, saying, "The army would not have a role in ruling Egypt." In the same interview, Sisi also claimed that Egyptian authorities had discovered two assassination plots against him although he declined to provide details. Undeterred by the threats against his life, Sisi said, "I believe in fate, I am not afraid."

Although the early expectations were that the election would take place in March or April 2014, May 2014 was announced as the likely timeline when a forthcoming presidential election would take place. The tentative timeline was May 26-27, 2014, according to Egypt's electoral authorities. If no one candidate secured an outright majority following the first round, a second "runoff" round would be held on June 16-17, 2014.

That second round was unnecessary since former Egyptian army chief, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, won a landslide victory in a presidential election following the first round of voting, having claimed an overwhelming 93 percent of the vote share. His rival, Hamdeen Sabahi, was not able to pose a credible threat. Critics pointed to the low voter turnout -- 46 percent -- as a factor that might mitigate a strong mandate for Sisi; however, the fact of the matter was that Sisi had secured the presidency at the ballot box and would now have the task of stabilizing the country, both politically and economically.

On the political agenda would be the task of addressing Islamic insurgency in the Sinai region of Egypt and dealing with remnants of influence from the Muslim Brotherhood. It should be noted that Sisi has vowed to end the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood. In an interview with Egyptian media prior to winning the presidency, Sisi promised that the banned Muslim Brotherhood "will not exist." Sisi indicated that such an end for the Muslim Brotherhood was actually the result of the will of the people as he declared, "I want to tell you that it is not me that finished [the Muslim Brotherhood]. You, the Egyptians, are the ones who finished it." Sisi also made it clear that Egypt would not be ruled by the military, saying, "The army would not have a role in ruling Egypt." In the same interview, Sisi also claimed that Egyptian authorities had discovered two assassination plots against him although he declined to provide details. Undeterred by the threats against his life, Sisi said, "I believe in fate, I am not afraid."

Economically, painful reforms would have to be undertaken, including an end of energy subsidies that have tended to drain the country's coffers in the past. While being the "non-Morsi" option may have been sufficient to boost Sisi's popularity to this end, the difficult work of governing would present new -- and manifold -- challenges to the new Egyptian president.

Note on Egyptian government:

On Feb. 24, 2014, interim Prime Minister Hazem Beblawi of Egypt and his government resigned from office. Beblawi and the members of the outgoing government resigned without giving a specific reason for the decision; however, their announcement came as public sector strikes were rocking Egypt and as the Sinai peninsula continued to be hit by terrorist attacks by extremist Islamists. Beblawi's exit address nonetheless tacitly implied the government's frustrations and the need to place the country above personal interests as he said: "The cabinet has over the past six or seven months shouldered a very difficult responsibility... in most cases the results were good. This is neither the time for demands by public workers nor the time for personal interests, but the time for us to put our country's interests above all others."

A day later on Feb. 25, 2014, President Adly Mansour asked Ibrahim Mahlab -- the housing minister from the outgoing government -- to form a new government. Mahlab said his new government would focus its efforts on addressing the strikes, dealing with Egypt's unemployment and other economic challenges, and restoring security to the country. He said, "Restoration of security and national unity of the Egyptian people are indispensable to move forward towards improving the living conditions of Egyptian families." It should be noted that Egyptian army chief Field Marshal Abdel Fattah al-Sisi would retain his post as defense minister in the new government. Sisi was meanwhile preparing for a possible bid for the presidency in forthcoming elections. Sisi vacated the position of defense minister once he officially announced his intent to contest the presidency. As discussed above, Sisi ultimately won the presidency in May-June 2014.

Ahead of long-awaited parliamentary elections of 2015, Egypt was rocked by a corruption scandal involving the sitting government. Amidst media scrutiny of the government's incompetence and

the arrest of the agricultural minister (Salah el-Din Helal), the government of Prime Minister Ibrahim Mahlab resigned from office. With only a month to go until Egypt would begin its phased parliamentary election process, President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi was compelled to name a new prime minister. To that end, in mid-September 2015, the president swore into office Petroleum Minister, Sherif Ismail as the new prime minister. The president's choice of Ismail was hailed generally as a good one since the petroleum minister was viewed as one of the more competent and effective members of government. A new cabinet -- composed of a mix of old and new faces -- was subsequently put into place but would have a short duration since elections were to begin a month later in October 2015 and would continue on a phased basis through the rest of the year. The results of that exercise would determine the composition of the new government.

Legislative Branch:

Former bicameral system:

Consists of the "Majlis ash-Shura" (Advisory Council) and "Majlis ash-Shaab" (People's Assembly or House of Representatives). The

"Majlis al-Shura" (Advisory Council) traditionally functions in a consultative role (at least 150 seats with up to one-tenth of body appointed by the president; members serve six-year terms. The "Majlis ash-Shaab" (People's Assembly or House of Representatives) is the main parliamentary body (at least 350 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms).

Current unicameral system:

Consists of a unicameral House of Representatives, composed of at least 450 seats (usually more) and with up to five percent of the membership being appointed by the president; members serve five-year terms in office. Under the new system, the majority of seats are to be held by individual candidates but with provisions for additional seats to be held by candidates contesting the election under the aegis of winner-takes-all lists, with quotas for special groups such as women, youth, and Christians.

Forthcoming unicameral system:

The unicameral House of Representatives (Majlis Al-Nawaab) will consist of up to 567 members; 420 members to be elected in single- and multi-seat districts by simple majority vote, 120 members to be elected in party-list districts by simple majority vote, and up to 27 seats as optional presidential appointees.

2011-2012 Elections:

Parliamentary elections were originally scheduled to take place in Egypt in September 2011. These elections constituted a tangible and significant outcome of the anti-government uprising that took hold in Egypt earlier in the year, and resulted in the ousting of former President Hosni Mubarak from power.

In July 2011, there were some suggestions that the much-anticipated parliamentary elections might be delayed due to calls for the establishment of a new constitution ahead of the elections. Without constitutional changes, secular elements of the Egyptian political scene were afraid that the already well established Muslim Brotherhood and the Wafd Party would win the most votes. As well, the many fledgling political parties formed following in the post-Mubarak's ousting period were saying that they needed more time to organize themselves. Perhaps not surprisingly, the Muslim Brotherhood was not willing to relinquish its advantage and registered its opposition to the "constitution first" popular movement gripping the country. That being said, interim Egyptian Prime Minister Essam Sharaf indicated that the elections would go forward, as scheduled, at the end of September 2011. He said, "Until now it's business as usual, the dates will be determined by the referendum. The (parliamentary) election will be in late September and after that, presidential elections."

Only weeks after this assertion was made, though, Egypt's ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces announced that the elections would indeed be delayed from September 2011 to later in the year, with a likely date expected in October or November of 2011. According to the Egyptian newspaper, Al-Masry Al-Youm, General Mamdouh Shaheen, one of the leading figures in the military council, had confirmed that election preparations would begin in September 2011, with elections occurring about a month after that in October 2011.

In September 2011, Egypt's ruling Supreme Council, said that parliamentary elections to the People's Assembly and the Shura Council would be respectively held on Nov. 28, 2011, and Jan. 29, 2012. The Egyptian interim authorities also moved to amend the law on the parliamentary elections, changing the seats in the People's Assembly seats to 498, and those in the Shura council to 270 seats. Seventy percent of the parliamentary seats would be based on the party list system, but the remaining thirty percent would be earmarked for individual candidate voting. As well, the country would be divided into 60 constituencies -- 30 for the party lists system, in which each list was mandated to include at least one woman candidate, and the other 30 for the individual candidate system in which the candidate would be prohibited from affiliations with any political party.

The changes were aimed at advancing as much participation from all elements of Egyptian society. Egyptians would be able to vote with their national identity cards. The council promised to protect the people's revolution that led to the ousting of the Mubarak regime and to facilitate the process that would lead to a democratically elected civilian government in Egypt before the end of 2011.

At the close of September 2011, a coalition of Islamic political parties was threatening to boycott the elections if members of the former ruling National Democratic Party were allowed to contest the elections. The coalition, which included the Muslim Brotherhood, was against a law that would allow former National Democratic Party members to run as independent candidates.

By mid-November 2011, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces in Egypt had ruled that certain

members of the disbanded National Democratic Party were eligible to contest the parliamentary elections. The decision was sure to be met with a loud outcry from the Muslim Brotherhood; however, the court of the transitional authorities concluded that members of the National Democratic Party were full Egyptian citizens, and therefore, they were guaranteed the same political rights as other citizens of the country without criminal records.

Complaints about the political structure were further punctuated by the release in early November 2011 of the new draft constitution, produced by the transitional military authorities. Included in that draft document were principles or guidelines for jurisprudence in the new Egypt, but it also included its provisions was an exemption for the military from both civilian oversight and budget norms. These provisions enraged some Egyptian activists, who viewed them as signs that the institutionalized military authority was attempting to consolidate its grip on power.

Collectively, these conditions set the stage for a climate of anger and political frustration in Egypt. Indeed, ahead of these landmark elections, renewed protests broke out in Tahrir Square in Cairo, with deadly consequences. The situation marked a shift in the political landscape, as the military -- previously viewed as protectors of the Egyptian people during the uprising against Mubarak -- was now the target of the ire by the demonstrators in the streets. The climate of unrest surged as the crowds of protesters now numbered about 10,000 at Tahrir Square in Cairo, and the death toll had exceeded 30.

Amidst this backdrop of political chaos, Egyptian officials were insisting that the first phase of the parliamentary elections would be held on Nov. 28, 2011, as scheduled. Egyptian officials additionally accused elements of the protest movement of attempting to undermine the legitimacy of the elections and preventing the formation of new state institutions. In a statement, Egyptian authorities said that while Egyptians had the right to peacefully rally and to voice demands, the government could not allow Egypt's national security to be compromised. The Egyptian authorities also expressed regret for the violence that had erupted in the renewed unrest, but insisted that the country would adhere to the power transfer schedule.

Meanwhile, as political dissonance rocked the country, individuals with political aspirations in Egypt reacted to the latest developments. The former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and a current opposition leader and presidential contender, Mohammed El Baradei, said in an interview with *The Guardian*, that Egypt needed to be rescued from the precipice of crisis. He called on the government of Premier Sharaf to resign and be replaced by a "national salvation government" tasked with "saving" Egypt's Nile Revolution. Speaking of the hard line response by police to the protesters, he said, "I think what we've seen ... is an excessive use of force, bordering on a slaughterhouse, against innocent civilians exercising their inalienable rights to demonstrate." Arab League's former head, Amr Moussa, who earlier declared his intent to seek the presidency, struck a less fiery tone, and called for talks between stakeholders and a negotiated end to the crisis.

A less well-known presidential contender, Hesham Al-Bastawissy, announced his withdrawal from Egypt's presidential race, saying that the violent crackdown had "stripped legitimacy" from the interim ruling military council. Bastawissy said he would only remain in the presidential race if a presidential council took over from the military council. Hazem Salah Abu-Ismaïl, a favored presidential contender of the Salafists, was reported to be in Tahrir Square, where he said he would remain until the interim ruling military council declared an actual date for the presidential elections.

Abdel-Moneim Abul-Fotouh, an independent presidential aspirant formerly allied with the Muslim Brotherhood member, denounced "police brutality" and railed against the military authorities for failing to effectively handle the outbreak of violence. Independent Islamist, Mohamed Selim Al-Aawa, also criticized the military authorities for failing to respond appropriately to the renewed protest movement, but called on Egyptians to stay unified and focused on the forthcoming elections.

That being said, the calls for an end of the system of military rule appeared to be resonating a week ahead of those long-awaited elections. On Nov. 21, 2011, Egypt's interim civilian government of Prime Minister Essam Sharaf submitted its resignation to the country's ruling military council. The en masse resignation appeared to be a nod by the civilian government to the renewed protest movement and represented a crisis of legitimacy for the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. Still, the head of Egypt's ruling military council, Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi, said that the council had accepted the civilian government's resignation.

In an apparent bid to shore up its own legitimacy, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces quickly moved to issue a decree banning individuals viewed as damaging to the political life of Egypt from contesting the legislative elections. The move appeared to target former members of the now-disbanded National Democratic Party (NDP) of ousted Mubarak. Indeed, it was clearly intended to appease the Muslim Brotherhood and other opposition elements who opposed a recent ruling allowing members of the NDP without criminal records to contest the elections. That being said, the interim military authorities said that the ban was not a blanket prohibition, but that there had to be evidence proving ruinous political life.

On the following day -- Nov. 22, 2011 -- Egypt's ruling military council met with representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups in a conference. Notably absent from that session were a number of other political parties that decided to boycott the event. Nevertheless, those present forged an agreement to ensure that the first phase of the elections to the national assembly would go forward, as scheduled, on Nov. 28, 2011. Field Marshall Tantawi insisted that the military did not "care about who will win" the elections, and observed that "it's up to the people to decide who will rule." The agreement also accelerated the pace of the transition to civilian rule. Specifically, it called for the formation of a new civilian cabinet, led by a "technocrat" prime minister rather than a politician. Finally, measures were to be implemented to ensure the adoption of a new constitution and the holding of a presidential election no later than June 2012 -- a significant shift from the formerly open-ended timetable.

These moves were clearly being made in response to the populist fervor opposing the continued yoke of military rule. It was yet to be seen if these measures would appease the protesters still gathered in Tahrir Square.

On Nov. 25, 2011, Dr. Kamal Ganzouri was named as the new prime minister of Egypt and charged with forming a "national salvation" government. A former prime minister who stood at the helm of government during the Mubarak regime from 1996 to 1999, Ganzouri also served as the planning minister in the Egyptian government in previous years. Notably, Ganzouri was not a member of the dissolved National Democratic Party (NDP) of ousted Mubarak, but a respected leader on the Egyptian political scene with a reputation for advocating anti-corruption policies. Despite the appearance of Ganzouri being something of a consensus figure, in fact, thousands of protesters continued to rally at Tahrir Square in Cairo. That being said, a counter-protest movement was also taking shape as thousands of demonstrators gathered at Abassya to show support for the ruling military council. For its part, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces called on its supporters to go home and not add to the chaos erupting in Egypt.

Days later on Nov. 28, 2011, even as the political landscape continued to be turbulent, Egyptian voters began the process of voting in the first phase of democratic elections. Despite the spate of violence that rocked Egypt in the week leading up to the start of the phased elections, millions of Egyptians were not deterred from exercising the democratic right to vote. Long lines of voters at polling stations were reported across the country. Turnout was as high as 70 percent with participation expected to rise to 80 percent after elections were extended an additional day. Although there were sporadic reports of clashes, the elections appeared to be going off in a relatively calm manner and security forces were maintaining law and order.

The High Election Commission soon announced that the Islamic fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party garnered 36.6 percent of the votes cast; the Nour Party, representing the more hard-line and extremist Salafi Islamists, captured 24.4 percent; the secular Egyptian Bloc took 15 percent; the Al-Wafd Party secured 11 percent. These results gave a limited view of the composition of the new parliament since there were further rounds of voting to come. That said, it was apparent that the grip of the Islamists over the next parliament would be strong.

In response to this development, reformist political leader, Mohammed El Baradei, expressed some degree of angst, which he said was shared among the educated elites of Egypt. El Baradei -- a Nobel Prize laureate and possible presidential candidate -- said, "The outcome so far is not the greatest one." He therefore urged moderate Egyptians to issue a message at the polls in further rounds, and called on reformers and youth to make it clear that Egypt would not go down an ultraconservative religious path. El Baradei expressed concerns about the priorities of some Salafis, such as the censorship of Egypt's Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz's novels, and the banning of women from driving. He observed that such statements (by the Salafis) "will have tremendous economic and political implications." He added that moderate Islamists would have to "make clear

that some of these voices ... are on the extreme fringes and they will not be the mainstream." He noted that the priorities of the new parliament should social problems such as poverty and illiteracy, rather than socio-cultural obsessions.

El Baradei particularly worried about the youth who took to the streets in the "Nile Revolution" that ousted Mubarak from power, noting that the aspirations of the liberal youth had been "decimated." He said in an interview with the Associated Press, "The youth feel let down. They don't feel that any of the revolution's goals have been achieved." El Baradei therefore called on reformists and activist youth to keep up fight for the principles of the "Nile Revolution." he said, "We'll have to keep fighting...the revolution is still a work in progress."

On Dec. 14, 2011, Egyptians went to the polls to vote in the second stage of the parliamentary elections. Election results from the first two stages of the elections indicated that the Muslim Brotherhood would control between 40 percent and 50 percent of the seats in the People's Assembly.

Meanwhile, pro-democracy activists clashed with Egyptian security forces in Cairo. Dozens of people were reported to have been injured in the flurry of Molotov cocktails, rocks, and bricks that were hurled during the fracas between the activists and the security forces out the parliament building. Warning shots were fired and water cannons were fired in an attempt to disperse the crowds. According to activist blogger, Walid Nada, the outbreak of violence was sparked when the military arrested one of the pro-democracy demonstrators who was subsequently found after being badly beaten.

The unrest aside, there remained an uproar over the possible domination in the new parliament of regressive Islamists. With such concerns at hand, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces made it clear that the executive privileges handed to interim Egyptian Prime Minister Ganzouri were temporary. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces said that many of Ganzouri's powers would be in force only until the establishment of the new parliament (the military and judiciary being the exceptions). While this news could be regarded as a boon for the Islamists, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces also announced that the military -- and not the parliament -- would determine Egypt's new constitution. The rationale for this move, according to Egyptian officials, was derived from a desire to retain stability in Egypt, and to recognize that an Islamist-dominated parliament was not really representative of all the Egyptian people. It was yet to be seen how people would respond to this news.

For its part, the Muslim Brotherhood wasted no time in trying to shore up its moderate credentials with a spokesperson for the party, Mahmoud Ghazlan, saying, "We believe in a civil state rather than a military or theocratic state." He continued, "If we reform some things, it will be through persuasion and dialogue and an appropriate atmosphere for people to accept them without repression." Mahmoud Ghazlan did warn that there would be a review of the peace treaty with Israel in the National Assembly, but he indicated that the party would work toward reforming

provisions while at the same time respecting the treaty. He said, "We respect the international treaties but if we find it's unfair we will amend it."

The official result of the elections showed that Islamist parties in Egypt captured about 70 percent of seats in the landmark parliamentary elections to the People's Assembly. According to Egypt's Supreme Electoral Commission, the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party took 127 seats, representing 38 percent of the 332 party list seats available. The Salafist Nour Party, an ultra-conservative Islamist party, took 29 percent of the list seats, and the moderate Islamist Al-Wasat Party secured 3 percent. The liberal New Wafd and the secular Egyptian Bloc, both non-Islamist parties, took 21 percent, or 69 seats, collectively. With the conclusion of the elections, the first session of the new People's Assembly was to be convened on March 17, 2012, while the new Shura Council would be convened on March 24, 2012. As discussed here, a presidential election was to be held no later than June 2012; see Primer below for details.

On March 24, 2012, the members of parliament of Egypt -- the Egyptian People's Assembly (lower house) and the Shura Council (upper house) -- convened a meeting to elect members of the Constituent Assembly. Members of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice party, the Salafists, as well as several independents, were elected to serve in the Constituent Assembly, which would be tasked with drafting the country's new constitution. It should be noted that the actual constitution-drafting committee was to include 50 members of parliament and another 50 chosen from syndicates, unions and public figures.

In mid-April 2012, the High Administrative Court of Egypt announced it had ruled in favor of a case challenging the composition of the country's new Constitutional panel. The challenge claimed that it was illegal for members of parliament to appoint themselves to the Constituent Assembly, which would be responsible for drafting a new constitution. At issue for those putting forth the challenge was the fact that the actual constitution-drafting committee was to include 50 members of parliament and another 50 chosen from syndicates, unions and public figures. The result was a panel dominated by Islamists and Salafists to the great chagrin of liberals and reformists.

Earlier, the Egyptian Social Democratic Party announced it was withdrawing from the Constituent Assembly in protest of the 50-50 ratio of members of parliament to non-members of parliament in the 100-seat body. Soon thereafter, a number of liberal and leftist parties announced they were also withdrawing from the Constituent Assembly. Free Egyptians Party, National Progressive Unionist Party (Tagammu party), and Popular Alliance party joined the Egyptian Social Democratic Party, in objecting to the way of Constituent Assembly members were being chosen. They excoriated the Islamists, who dominate the parliament, for ignoring proposals for fair standards. Also protesting the method of choosing members to the Constituent Assembly were various political activists in Egypt.

In April 2012, with the High Administrative Court ruling in favor of those challenging the panel,

the case was expected to advance to the Constitutional Court for review. Meanwhile, the constitutional panel was suspended.

Primer on 2013 Parliamentary Elections in Egypt

April 22-23, 2013; subsequently suspended due to court ruling --

In February 2013, Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi issued a presidential decree declaring that parliamentary elections would be held in April 2013. At stake would be the composition of the House of Representatives.

The president soon rescheduled the parliamentary elections date, with the first phase occurring on April 22-23, 2013, instead of April 27-28, 2013, as he initially said. The change in schedule was due to complaints from Coptic Christians that the original date would interfere with Easter celebrations. Meanwhile, members of the opposition in Egypt blasted President Morsi for releasing any election date when the election law itself remained a matter of dispute. Indeed, the High Constitutional Court had ruled five articles of the election law to be unconstitutional, and amendments would take at least six weeks to complete.

Mohamed ElBaradei, the leader of the main opposition bloc, the National Salvation Front, said via the social media outlet, Twitter: "Morsi's decision to go for parliamentary elections amid severe social polarization and the eroding state authority is a recipe for disaster." ElBaradei also urged Egyptians to boycott the upcoming elections, characterizing the poll an "act of deception."

Note that in March 2013, Egypt's Supreme Administrative Court (SAC) suspended a presidential decree to hold the parliamentary elections on April 22, 2013, and referred 14 claims against the constitutionality of the newly-drafted election law to the Supreme Constitutional Court. The president responded by launching an appeal against the ruling that resulted in the suspension of the elections. But on April 21, 2013, the SAC rejected the appeal. This decision effectively placed the elections in a state of political limbo. In an indirect manner, the measure served to end one source of dissonance between President Morsi and the secular opposition, which intended to boycott the election anyway.

But President Morsi's political problems were not abating anytime soon. Egypt's minister of justice issued his resignation. In his letter of resignation, Minister of Justice Ahmed Mekki indicated that his reason for stepping down was related to actions by President Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood and its pattern of pressure. He specifically referred to demonstrations organized by the Muslim Brotherhood, which aimed to purge the judiciary. He also condemned the move to decrease the retirement age of judges, which would effectively force the retirement of 3,000 sitting judges. Overall, Mekki suggested that the judiciary was under attack by the Muslim Brotherhood and their supporters.

At the start of June 2013, Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court ruled that the upper house, or Shura Council, along with the panel that drafted a new -- and highly controversial constitution -- were respectively "invalid" and "illegal."

Months earlier in March 2013, Egypt's Supreme Administrative Court suspended a presidential decree to hold the parliamentary elections in the spring of 2013, and referred 14 claims against the constitutionality of the newly-drafted election law to the Supreme Constitutional Court. President Mohammed Morsi responded by launching an appeal against the ruling that resulted in the suspension of the 2013 elections. But in April 2013, the SAC rejected the appeal. This decision effectively placed the elections in a state of political limbo. In an indirect manner, the measure served to end one source of dissonance between President Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood and the secular opposition, which intended to boycott the election anyway.

Now in June 2013, as noted here, the Supreme Constitutional Court was ruling that not only was the upper house, or Shura Council, essentially invalid, but also that the constitutional panel (a body dominated by Morsi-supporting Islamists) was illegal. The decision was a victory for opponents of President Mohammed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood, who have argued that the drafting of the document excluded participation by liberal and Coptic members of the Constitutional Assembly, contained provisions that would establish "principles of Shari'a" or Islamic law as the fulcrum of legislation, and would deleteriously affect freedom of the press, freedom of religion, and the rights of women.

It should be noted that despite this ruling against the Shura Council and the constitutional panel, Egypt's top court also decided that the upper house should only be dissolved after new elections. The legitimacy of the constitution itself was a matter of debate while the timeline for those elections remained very much in doubt. Meanwhile, the constitution debacle, matched by the unclear plan for elections (without electoral reforms), would serve only intensify the cleavages and divisions among political factions in Egypt -- specifically between hardline conservative Islamists and the coalition of reformers, liberals, and secularists.

Primer on 2015 parliamentary elections: delayed due to electoral law

March 2015; April 2015 (delayed indefinitely as noted below)

Parliamentary elections were expected to be held in Egypt March 22-23, 2015 and April 26-27, 2015 on a phased basis. In Egypt, the legislative branch of government was, until 2013, a bicameral Federal Parliamentary Assembly, consisting of the "Majlis ash-Shura" (Advisory Council) and "Majlis ash-Shaab" (People's Assembly or House of Representatives). In 2013, the previous bicameral structure was eliminated and in 2014, it was replaced -- under the aegis of a constitutional measure -- with a unicameral House of Representatives, composed of at least 450 seats (usually more) and with up to five percent of the membership being appointed by the president; members serve five-year terms in office.

The 2015 parliamentary elections were being regarded as another measure aimed at stabilizing Egypt in the years following the Nile Revolution in 2011. Presidential elections brought Mohammed Morsi to power in the executive branch of office in 2012, only to be toppled by the military in 2013. At the time, the military said it would hold a presidential election and parliamentary contests in the future, to return the country to the path of democracy. A presidential election was thus held in 2014, and ended with the democratic ratification of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi as president. Now, the long-awaited parliamentary elections were set to take place, and were being regarded as the final step in the direction of good governance. Of note was the fact that Egypt had actually been without a parliament since 2012 when the courts dissolved the now-defunct "Majlis ash-Shaab" (People's Assembly or House of Representatives). The 2015 contest would, thus, be the first time candidates would be elected to the new unicameral body.

At the start of March 2015, however, only weeks before the first phase of the elections were set to take place, Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court declared a key provision of the electoral law to be unconstitutional. That ruling was followed by a decision by Egypt's Administrative Court to delay the long-anticipated parliamentary contest indefinitely. A new election schedule would be considered by the High Election Committee after the electoral law was amended. That change would require voting districts to be arranged in such a manner as to ensure a more equitable distribution of voters. The practical result of the postponement would be that President Sisi would be able to continue to rule Egypt, unfettered by the legislative branch of government.

Primer on 2015 parliamentary elections in Egypt

Oct. 18-19 2015 - first round; Nov. 22-23, 2015 - second round

In August 2015, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi signed new electoral legislation into law, effectively paving the way for highly anticipated parliamentary polls. Those elections would be held on a phased basis, with a first round of voting taking place from Oct. 18-19, 2015, and a second round taking place from Nov. 22-23, 2015. If needed, a run-off round would take place at the start of December 2015 to determine the winner of contested seats. At stake would be the composition of the newly established unicameral parliament.

It should be noted that parliamentary elections were actually scheduled to be held in Egypt on March 22-23, 2015, and April 26-27, 2015, on a phased basis, but as discussed below, were postponed for constitutional reasons.

In Egypt, the legislative branch of government was, until 2013, a bicameral Federal Parliamentary Assembly, consisting of the "Majlis ash-Shura" (Advisory Council) and "Majlis ash-Shaab" (People's Assembly or House of Representatives). In 2013, the previous bicameral structure was eliminated and in 2014, it was replaced -- under the aegis of a constitutional measure -- with a unicameral House of Representatives, composed of at least 450 seats (usually more) and with up

to five percent of the membership being appointed by the president; members serve five-year terms in office.

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At the start of March 2015, however, only weeks before the initial date set for the first phase of the elections to take place, Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court declared a key provision of the electoral law to be unconstitutional. That ruling was followed by a decision by Egypt's Administrative Court to delay the long-anticipated parliamentary contest indefinitely. A new election schedule would be considered by the High Election Committee after the electoral law was amended. That change would require voting districts to be arranged in such a manner as to ensure a more equitable distribution of voters. The practical result of the postponement would be that President Sisi would be able to continue to rule Egypt, unfettered by the legislative branch of government.

Some months later in August 2015, the amendments to the electoral law had been made, and the new legislation was officially signed by President Sisi. The new law provided for a new parliament containing 568 elected seats -- 448 seats to be held by individual candidates and another 120 seats to be held by candidates contesting the election under the aegis of winner-takes-all lists, with quotas for special groups such as women, youth, and Christians. With the changes made and with the new system in place, there were high hopes that a schedule for the delayed parliamentary elections would be announced, and then Egyptians would finally go to the polls to select the representatives for the legislative branch of government.

Of note was the fact that Egypt had actually been without a parliament since 2012 when the courts dissolved the now-defunct "Majlis ash-Shaab" (People's Assembly or House of Representatives). The 2015 contest would, therefore, be the first time candidates would be elected to the new unicameral body.

As August 2015 came to a close, the dates for the elections were finally scheduled by the election commission. The two-stage phased elections would begin with a first round of voting from Oct. 18-19, 2015, and a second round would take place from Nov. 22-23, 2015. As stated above, a run-off round would take place at the start of December 2015, if needed.

Note that elections in Egypt began in October 2015 under the aegis of the phased schedule for voting. The first phase of voting went smoothly although mired by low voter turnout. The subsequent phase occurred as scheduled and was likewise affected by low voter turnout. All indications pointed to a strong performance of pro-government parties and candidates (i.e. allied with President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi) at this stage and an apparent consolidation of power. Indeed, early election results indicated that the pro-government alliance loyal to President Sisi, known as "For the Love of Egypt," won all of the "winner take all" list seats in the second phase of voting. Some run-off votes were expected to take place at the start of December 2015.

In the first week of December 2015, Egypt's election committee made clear that President Sisi's bloc, "For the Love of Egypt," had won all 120 "winner take all" seats up for grabs. Also at stake were the remaining 448 seats, which are elected on an individual basis (versus the 120 seats elected on the basis of party lists). The final tally in that regard was yet to be announced but all signs pointed to a strong performance for pro-Sisi candidates.

Judicial Branch:

Court of Cassation (final court of appeal in civil and criminal cases); State Council (head of court system administration); Supreme Constitutional Court (jurisdiction limited to constitutionality of laws)

Constitution:

A post-Mubarak constitution was passed by referendum in late 2012. It reflects the priorities of the new Islamist-oriented government of Egypt that took power in the aftermath of the so-called "Nile Revolution." This constitution was nullified in 2013 after the military takeover. A new constitution was being advanced in late 2013; that draft was ratified via referendum in January 2014.

See "Note" below.

Note: Egyptians to vote on new constitution

Egyptian Interim President Adly Mansour announced in mid-December 2013 that a new constitution would be advanced to replace to one crafted during the presidency of the now-deposed Mohamed Morsi. Mansour said that Egyptians would go to the polls a month later -- on Jan. 14-15, 2014 -- to either ratify or reject the new charter. The interim government of Egypt has said that ratification of the new constitution was a stepping stone on the path towards the restoration of democracy in Egypt. Speaking of the new constitution, President Mansour said, "Let this constitution be a word of justice, that unites and doesn't separate ... for hatred is a tool for destruction ... disagreement is legislated, as long it adopts peacefulness and is in the country's

interest."

On Jan. 10, 2014, a week ahead of the constitutional referendum, an opposition alliance, led by the Muslim Brotherhood, called for a boycott of the vote. A statement released via the Muslim Brotherhood website read declared: "Down with the referendum of blood and treason. Long live Egypt and its proud people." But the vote to reject or ratify the constitution was already going forward with Egyptian expatriates already casting their ballots. Voting in the constitutional referendum was scheduled to begin on Jan. 16, 2014 and take place over the course of two days.

Nevertheless, the referendum went off as planned and soon the process of tabulation was underway. The head of Egypt's election commission, Nabil Salib, characterized the referendum as an "unrivalled success." When the vote counting was complete, Egyptian authorities were ready to announce the result. According to those Egyptian officials, the draft charter was overwhelmingly approved -- with more than 95 percent of voters registering an affirmative vote -- following the two-day referendum. It should be noted that in contrast to the earlier Morsi-endorsed charter, this document appeared to enshrine women with more rights and freedom, facilitate increased social justice for citizens, while at the same time, augmenting the power of the military.

Legal System:

Egypt's judicial system is a mixed legal system based on Napoleonic civil law and Islamic religious law; judicial review by Supreme Court and Council of State (oversees validity of administrative decisions).

Political Parties and Leaders:

officially recognized:

Al-Asala [Ehab SHIHA]

Al-Doustour (Constitution) Party [Hala SHUKRALLAH]

Al-Karama Party [Mohamed SAMY]

Al-Nour [Yunis MAKHYUN]

Al-Wasat Party [Abou Elela MADY]

Al-Watan [Imad Abd al-GHAFUR]

Building and Development Party or BDP [Nasr Abdul-SALAM]

Congress Party [Ambassador Mohamed ELORABY]

Egyptian National Movement Party [Ahmed SHAFIK]

Egyptian Social Democratic Party [Mohamed Aboul GHAR]

El Tagamu'u Party [Sayed Abdel AAL]

Free Egyptians Party [Amre HAMZAWY]

New Wafd Party [Sayed al-BADADWI]

Popular Current Party [Hamdeen SABAHI]
Reform and Development Party [Muhammad Anwar al-SADAT]
Socialist Popular Alliance [Abdel Ghafar SHOUKR]
Strong Egypt Party [Abdel Aboul FOTOUH]

Suffrage:

18 years of age; universal and compulsory

Administrative Divisions:

27 governorates (muhafazat, singular - muhafazat); Ad Daqahliyah, Al Bahr al Ahmar (Red Sea), Al Buhayrah, Al Fayyum, Al Gharbiyah, Al Iskandariyah (Alexandria), Al Isma'iliyah (Ismailia), Al Jizah (Giza), Al Minufiyah, Al Minya, Al Qahirah (Cairo), Al Qalyubiyah, Al Uqsur (Luxor), Al Wadi al Jadid (New Valley), As Suways (Suez), Ash Sharqiyah, Aswan, Asyut, Bani Suwayf, Bur Sa'id (Port Said), Dumyat (Damietta), Janub Sina' (South Sinai), Kafr ash Shaykh, Matruh, Qina, Shamal Sina' (North Sinai), Suhaj

Principal Government Officials

Leadership and Cabinet

Executive Branch:

Head of state:

President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi elected in 2014 elections, as discussed below

Note on Egyptian Leadership --

Regardless of the international community's view, the fact was that in July 2013, Mohammed Morsi was out as president and a new head of state had to be inaugurated into power. On July 4, 2013, the head of Egypt's highest court, Adly Mansour, was sworn into office as the country's transitional or "caretaker" president.

Mansour served on Egypt's Constitutional Court since 1992. Born in Cairo, Mansour graduated from the faculty of law at Cairo University in 1967. In 1969 and 1970 respectively, he completed

postgraduate studies in general law and administrative science. Having won a scholarship to France's most prestigious institute of higher education, he attended Ecole Nationale de l'Administration from 1975 to 1977. Mansour worked as the chancellor of Egypt's State Council in 1984 and became president of the same institution in 1992. From that time, he served on Egypt's Constitutional Court until 2013 when he was named transitional or caretaker president of Egypt.

Striking a populist tone soon after his swearing in ceremony, President Mansour said that the source of his presidential power was "the great people of Egypt." He said: "I received the assignment order from those who possess it, the great people of Egypt, who are the leader and the source of all powers after they corrected the path of their great revolution."

Of course, the views of the actual people of Egypt were not in total alignment over the change in leadership. Clashes between supporters of Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood and members of the Tamarod rebel movement continued even after the military's intervention. In fact, more than a dozen people were killed on the night of July 3, 2013, alone -- ahead of Mansour's inauguration. Tensions were on the rise when Egyptian authorities ordered the arrests of senior Muslim Brotherhood leaders, Mohammed Badie and Khairat el-Shater, on the basis of inciting violence. Several other members of the Muslim Brotherhood were arrested at that time and former President Morsi himself was reported to be in detention at an undisclosed location. As well, several media stations seen as being sympathetic to the Muslim Brotherhood had been raided by the military and taken off the air. Included in this list of media entities was al-Jazeera. Human rights group Amnesty International warned that such shutdowns constituted a "blow to freedom of expression."

Still, with the inauguration of Mansour as president, there were some hopes that General Sisi's promise of a new technocratic government, "inclusive of all political factions," including youth, and a plan for fresh elections, might set Egypt on more positive footing. As to the leadership of that government, on July 5, 2013, news was emerging that opposition figure and Nobel Peace Prize winner Mohammed ElBaradei might be named as the new interim prime minister of Egypt. Ironically, it was ElBaradei himself who called for a new technocratic government of Egypt (as discussed above), noting that the not-yet ousted government could be characterized by incompetence.

Among Tamarod rebel movement supporters, news of ElBaradei possibly becoming prime minister was met with cheers and applause on the streets. But the Salafist Nour Party made it clear that they objected to the move. Clearly the conservative and religious agenda of the Salafists was at odds with the liberal and reformist orientation of ElBaradei. While the Salafists had been prepared to support the notion of a new government being formed, they were clearly not keen on ElBaradei at the helm. The deaths of several people during a pro-Morsi demonstration outside the officers' club of the Presidential Guard, where Morsi was believed to be held, provided the Salafists to walk away from the ongoing discussions on whom might serve as the new Egyptian prime minister. The

turmoil that followed in the next few days, especially when the Muslim Brotherhood blamed the army for using live ammunition to disperse the crowds, only served to stultify the opinion of the Salafists.

Regardless of the chaos rocking the streets of Cairo, the matter of forming a transitional government remained a key priority. On July 9, 2013, a presidential spokesperson said that President Adly Mansour had nominated Mohammed ElBaradei, to be vice president. The president had also nominated Hazem el-Beblawi, a technocrat, as prime minister. Beblawi served as finance minister during the period of military rule following the overthrow of former President Hosni Mubarak.

These announcements appeared to solve two problems for the president. First, the president was circumventing the objections levied by the Salafists towards the notion of ElBaradei as prime minister, while at the same time, keeping ElBaradei in the presidential inner circle. Second, by choosing a financial specialist to lead the new government in the form of Beblawi, the president was addressing the economic woes facing Egypt and the need for technocratic expertise.

Indeed, Beblawi's long record in economic management included the 12 years he ran Egypt's Export Development Bank for 12 years, as well as his work running the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (a United Nations entity that promotes cooperation among 17 Arab states), and also his stint as an adviser at the Arab Monetary Fund in the United Arab Emirates. French-educated Beblawi, who also worked in academia, was also described as having many ties across financial circles in the Middle East. These connections were illustrated in high relief when he was able to secure emergency loans and grants from the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. As well, Beblawi's well-known stance as a believer in free markets and legal transparency were likely to gain him applause from financial experts, and would help build confidence that Egypt was regaining its economic footing.

By mid-July 2013, Prime Minister Beblawi had formed a government and those new cabinet ministers were sworn into office. Included in the new cabinet was army chief Gen Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who led the removal of President Morsi from office; Sisi was set to become the deputy prime minister but he would also hold the ministerial portfolio for defense. Other key cabinet members were Nabil Fahmy at the foreign ministry, Sherif Ismail at the oil ministry, and Mohammed Ibrahim, who served as interior minister in the previous government when Morsi was president, would hold onto this portfolio. In the interests of diversity, Mounir Fakhry Abdel Nour, a Christian, was named as trade and industry minister, while three women would have cabinet positions, including Maha el-Rabat, who now held health portfolio. There were no cabinet positions for Islamists in the new government, but only because they refused to participate in the new administration. Gehad el-Haddad, a spokesperson for the Muslim Brotherhood said in an interview with the Reuters news agency: "It's an illegitimate government, an illegitimate prime minister, an illegitimate cabinet. We don't recognize anyone in it."

Note: President Mansour indicated that fresh elections in Egypt would take place by 2014. Objections to this timetable came from two distinct and opposed fronts. As expected, the Muslim Brotherhood rejected the election schedule outright, and instead pressed for Morsi to be reinstated as president. But objections were also issued by the liberal National Salvation Front (NSF) -- led by ElBaradei until his appointment as deputy president. The NSF said that it required more information regarding President Mansour's transition plan and called for more inclusive consultations on the path forward. Regardless, elections were set to take place in Egypt in 2014 as discussed in the 2014 Elections Primer below.

Primer on Egypt's 2014 presidential election:

First round May 26-27, 2014; second round June 16-17, 2014 --

In late 2013, Egyptian Interim President Adly Mansour had announced that a new constitution would be advanced to replace to one crafted during the presidency of the now-deposed Mohamed Morsi. Mansour said that Egyptians would go to the polls a month later -- in January 2014 -- to either ratify or reject the new charter. Central provisions of the new charter included: term limits (two) for an elected president; the establishment of Islam as state religion, but with protections for absolute freedom of belief; guaranteed gender equality; bans on political parties based on "religion, race, gender, or geography;" and the military's right to appoint the defense minister for the next eight years.

The interim government of Egypt has said that ratification of the new constitution was a stepping stone on the path towards the restoration of democracy in Egypt. Speaking of the new constitution, President Mansour said, "Let this constitution be a word of justice, that unites and doesn't separate ... for hatred is a tool for destruction ... disagreement is legislated, as long it adopts peacefulness and is in the country's interest."

When the votes were counted, Egyptian voters overwhelmingly ratified the new constitution that would replace to one crafted during the presidency of the now-deposed Mohamed Morsi. Indeed, more than 95 percent of voters registered an affirmative vote following the two-day referendum. It should be noted that in contrast to the earlier Morsi-endorsed charter, this document appeared to enshrine women with more rights and freedom, facilitate increased to social justice for citizens, while at the same time, augmenting the power of the military.

With the new constitution ratified, there were plans afoot for parliamentary and presidential elections to be held in Egypt, with an eye on returning Egypt to constitutional and democratic order. The interim authorities initially envisioned parliamentary elections would be held ahead of a presidential contest; however, President Mansour indicated that the presidential contest might occur first in order to give time for new political parties to be founded, and to stabilize the country, which has seen unrelenting unrest since the removal of Morsi from power.

With those future elections looming, attention was on the future political course of Egypt. To that end, Egypt's army chief, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, had said he would consider contesting the future presidential contest, if he had the support of the Egyptian people and the military. The Egyptian newspaper, al-Ahram, had Sisi on the record declaring, "If I nominate myself, there must be a popular demand, and a mandate from my army."

Sisi's presidential ambitions were backed by Amr Moussa, the chairman of the committee that drafted an Egyptian constitution. A former presidential candidate himself, and the former secretary-general for the Arab League, Moussa made it clear he would support a presidential bid from Sisi, saying: "I believe that Sisi will take this decision [to stand for president] and I back this." But Sisi's biggest show of support came from the military itself on Jan. 27, 2014, when that body said that it would back his candidacy for president.

Sisi said at the start of March 2014 that he could not ignore the calls from the people to run as a candidate in the impending presidential election. As he delivered a speech at the Egyptian Military Academy in Cairo, Sisi said that he could "not turn his back on calls by the majority of Egyptians for him to run for president." Indicating that an official announcement was in the offing, he added, "Official measures should be taken in the coming days."

Should he ultimately decide to move forward with a bid for the presidency, Sisi would be aided by strong popular support despite his role in the ousting of Morsi from power. Indeed, Sisi was commanding not only the armed forces but also a growing popular movement, made up of Egyptians disillusioned by the religiosity and the incompetence of the former Morsi presidency, and anxious for strongman-style but rational leadership, that he seemed to embody. That being said, Sisi would likely be vociferously opposed by supporters of the now-banned Muslim Brotherhood of Morsi, who have blame him for the harsh crackdown on Islamists, which has included the sentencing of more than 500 Islamists to death for their involvement in the violence that followed Morsi's ouster. Another 900 Islamists were yet to face charges of terrorism and murder on the same grounds and would likely endure a similar fate. Thus, Sisi would also have to deal with passionate antagonists.

One opponent for Sisi would be a "Nasserist" leftist Egyptian politician, Hamdeen Sabahi, who announced his bid to contest the presidency. Not a newcomer to the presidential election field, Sabahi actually contested the 2012 presidential election, which was ultimately won by Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood (and later deposed by the army in July 2013). Sabahi enjoyed a respectable performance in those 2012 elections, securing a third place finish. In these forthcoming 2014 elections, his presence was expected to invigorate the race by offering an alternative to Sisi and possibly inspiring other contenders to join the race. In his announcement to supporters, Sabahi said, "My personal decision as a citizen is to run for the coming presidential elections." He continued, "Hamdeen Sabahi's battle is the battle of the revolution." It should be noted that Sabahi

was the head of the political alliance called the Popular Current.

Meanwhile, in late March 2014, Sisi announced that he was stepping down as the country's defense minister, essentially setting the stage for his presidential bid. He would be replaced by General Sedki Sobhi -- the post of chief of staff. With his resignation established, Sisi announced his candidacy for the presidency. In a national address that was broadcast by the media across the country, he said, "I am here before you humbly stating my intention to run for the presidency of the Arab Republic of Egypt. Only your support will grant me this great honor." Emphasizing that he intended to continue his effort to rid Egypt of Islamic militancy and terrorism, Sisi said: "True, today is my last day in military uniform, but I will continue to fight every day for an Egypt free of fear and terrorism." He also issued a realistic stance as regards the manifold economic challenges facing Egypt, as Sisi added, "We must be truthful with ourselves. Our country faces great challenges. Our economy is weak. There are millions of youths who suffer from unemployment in Egypt."

It should be noted that in April 2014, both Sabahi and Sisi made official their respective bids for the presidency by submitting the requisite documents for contesting the presidential election.

In the first week of May 2014, former army chief Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, who was contesting the presidential election in Egypt set for later in the month, vowed to end the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood. In an interview with Egyptian media, Sisi promised that if he won the presidency, the banned Muslim Brotherhood "will not exist." Sisi appeared to indicate that such an end for the Muslim Brotherhood was actually the result of the will of the people as he declared, "I want to tell you that it is not me that finished [the Muslim Brotherhood]. You, the Egyptians, are the ones who finished it." But Sisi also made clear that Egypt would not be ruled by the military, saying, "The army would not have a role in ruling Egypt." In the same interview, Sisi also claimed that Egyptian authorities had discovered two assassination plots against him although he declined to provide details. Undeterred by the threats against his life, Sisi said, "I believe in fate, I am not afraid."

Although the early expectations were that the election would take place in March or April 2014, May 2014 was announced as the likely timeline when a forthcoming presidential election would take place. The tentative timeline was May 26-27, 2014, according to Egypt's electoral authorities. If no one candidate secured an outright majority following the first round, a second "runoff" round would be held on June 16-17, 2014.

That second round was unnecessary since former Egyptian army chief, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, won a landslide victory in a presidential election following the first round of voting, having claimed an overwhelming 93 percent of the vote share. His rival, Hamdeen Sabahi, was not able to pose a credible threat. Critics pointed to the low voter turnout -- 46 percent -- as a factor that might mitigate a strong mandate for Sisi; however, the fact of the matter was that Sisi had secured the presidency at the ballot box and would now have the task of stabilizing the country, both politically

and economically.

On the political agenda would be the task of addressing Islamic insurgency in the Sinai region of Egypt and dealing with remnants of influence from the Muslim Brotherhood. It should be noted that Sisi has vowed to end the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood. In an interview with Egyptian media prior to winning the presidency, Sisi promised that the banned Muslim Brotherhood "will not exist." Sisi indicated that such an end for the Muslim Brotherhood was actually the result of the will of the people as he declared, "I want to tell you that it is not me that finished [the Muslim Brotherhood]. You, the Egyptians, are the ones who finished it." Sisi also made it clear that Egypt would not be ruled by the military, saying, "The army would not have a role in ruling Egypt." In the same interview, Sisi also claimed that Egyptian authorities had discovered two assassination plots against him although he declined to provide details. Undeterred by the threats against his life, Sisi said, "I believe in fate, I am not afraid."

Economically, painful reforms would have to be undertaken, including an end of energy subsidies that have tended to drain the country's coffers in the past. While being the "non-Morsi" option may have been sufficient to boost Sisi's popularity to this end, the difficult work of governing would present new -- and manifold -- challenges to the new Egyptian president.

Note on Egyptian government:

On Feb. 24, 2014, interim Prime Minister Hazem Beblawi of Egypt and his government resigned from office. Beblawi and the members of the outgoing government resigned without giving a specific reason for the decision; however, their announcement came as public sector strikes were rocking Egypt and as the Sinai peninsula continued to be hit by terrorist attacks by extremist Islamists. Beblawi's exit address nonetheless tacitly implied the government's frustrations and the need to place the country above personal interests as he said: "The cabinet has over the past six or seven months shouldered a very difficult responsibility... in most cases the results were good. This is neither the time for demands by public workers nor the time for personal interests, but the time for us to put our country's interests above all others."

A day later on Feb. 25, 2014, President Adly Mansour asked Ibrahim Mahlab -- the housing minister from the outgoing government -- to form a new government. Mahlab said his new government would focus its efforts on addressing the strikes, dealing with Egypt's unemployment and other economic challenges, and restoring security to the country. He said, "Restoration of security and national unity of the Egyptian people are indispensable to move forward towards improving the living conditions of Egyptian families." It should be noted that Egyptian army chief Field Marshal Abdel Fattah al-Sisi would retain his post as defense minister in the new government. Sisi was meanwhile preparing for a possible bid for the presidency in forthcoming elections. Sisi vacated the position of defense minister once he officially announced his intent to contest the presidency. As discussed above, Sisi ultimately won the presidency in May-June 2014.

Ahead of long-awaited parliamentary elections of 2015, Egypt was rocked by a corruption scandal involving the sitting government. Amidst media scrutiny of the government's incompetence and the arrest of the agricultural minister (Salah el-Din Helal), the government of Prime Minister Ibrahim Mahlab resigned from office. With only a month to go until Egypt would begin its phased parliamentary election process, President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi was compelled to name a new prime minister. To that end, in mid-September 2015, the president swore into office Petroleum Minister, Sheriff Ismail as the new prime minister. The president's choice of Ismail was hailed generally as a good one since the petroleum minister was viewed as one of the more competent and effective members of government. A new cabinet -- composed of a mix of old and new faces -- was subsequently put into place but would have a short duration since elections were begun a month later in October 2015 and would continue on a phased basis through the rest of the year. The results of that exercise would determine the composition of the new government.

-- as of 2015

Leader Biography

Leader Biography

Leadership

NOTE:

In late January 2011 well into mid-February 2011, protesters took to the streets in Egypt in a furious display of anger, demanding the resignation of President Mubarak. After days of protests, President Mubarak named a deputy, instituted a new government, and said he would stay on as president but would not seek re-election in Sept. 2011. That timeline was not satisfying for the protesters and the demonstrations continued, ultimately going from peaceful demonstrations to violent clashes as fierce battles with pro-Mubarak factions ensued. Meanwhile, journalists were being targeted for attacks and suspicion fell on governing authorities for trying to silence the media.

Protesters eyed a "day of departure" for Mubarak but the Egyptian president, in an interview, made it clear that his exit would mean chaos for his country. Strikes and protests continued but on Feb. 11, 2011, Egyptian President Mubarak finally stepped down from office, one day after powers were transferred to Vice President Suleiman. The vice president's power, though, was rendered irrelevant after Mubarak's resignation with the military, instead, at the helm.

Because power had been transferred to the military, in contravention to constitutional provisions, there were rumblings that Mubarak's refusal to fully stand down the day before may have precipitated a "soft coup" of sorts, backed by the armed forces of the country. For its part, the military released a communique referencing the delegation of presidential powers, promising to institute constitutional reforms, and vowing to end the controversial emergency laws. In effect, the military of Egypt was announcing that it would guarantee the democratic aspirations of the Egyptian people. A statement released by the military command, headed by Defense Minister Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, seemed mindful of the extra-constitutional dimensions of the situation, and was therefore quick to limit its own power. It issued a statement that read: "There is no legitimacy other than that of the people."

In terms of everyday governance, the military said that the current government had been asked to stay on until a new one could be formed, which would "pave the way for an elected civil authority to build a free democratic state." The transitional military authorities also said that parliament was dissolved and the constitution was suspended. A committee would be established to draft a new constitution, which would be ratified via a popular referendum within a short period of time. The transitional military authorities also noted that it would remain in power only for six months, or, until fresh elections could be held.

Egypt's military -- the transitional authority of the country -- affirmed that it was committed to all international treaties. The announcement was an implicit reference to Egypt's peace treaty with Israel, signed in 1979 between then-Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and then-Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin at Camp David in the United States. The situation in Egypt in 2011 raised anxieties in Israel about the fate of the peace deal and the concomitant stability of the

region.

On Feb. 13, 2011, on state television, the transitional military authorities said that parliament was dissolved and the constitution was suspended. A committee would be established to draft a new constitution, which would be ratified via a popular referendum. Two days later on Feb. 15, 2011, the transitional military authorities of Egypt set a constitution reform deadline, saying that work on this effort would have to be completed in ten days, or roughly the close of February 2011. The constitutional committee, led by a retired judge, was given the task of formulating the amended constitution. It was tasked with amending, "...all articles as it sees fit to guarantee democracy and the integrity of presidential and parliamentary elections." As well, the transitional military authorities also noted that they would remain in power only for six months, or, until fresh elections could be held. In this way, the military transitional authorities seemed to be committed to keeping its promise to move Egypt on the path of civilian democratic rule as quickly as possible. It was also announced on that day that a referendum on constitutional reform would be held on March 19, 2011, with parliamentary and presidential elections scheduled to be held within six months. Tahrir Square was filled with celebration at the news.

On March 19, 2011, Egyptian voters enthusiastically went to the polls to vote in the aforementioned constitutional referendum. Turnout was said to be massive, strengthening the possible legitimacy of the referendum results. Many voters said that they regarded this exercise as the first really democratic vote in the country. At stake was the ratification of constitutional changes that would set presidential term limits (two four-year terms) and establish a 100-seat unicameral constitutional congress. A day after the referendum on March 20, 2011, transitional Egyptian authorities said that results of the referendum indicated decisive ratification of the proposed constitutional changes. With initial reports pointing toward more than 75 percent of voters casting affirmative votes in the referendum, democratic presidential and parliamentary elections were soon to be held in Egypt.

Due to public discontent over the pace of the transition, in November 2011, Egypt's interim civilian government of Prime Minister Essam Sharaf submitted its resignation to the country's

ruling military council. Egypt's ruling military council soon announced an accelerated transition schedule to civilian rule. Specifically, it called for the formation of a new civilian cabinet, led by a "technocrat" prime minister rather than a politician. Finally, measures were to be implemented to ensure the adoption of a new constitution and the holding of a presidential election no later than June 2012 -- a significant shift from the formerly open-ended timetable. Dr. Kamal Ganzouri was named as the new prime minister of Egypt and charged with forming a "national salvation" government.

In mid-January 2012, Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces announced that candidates hoping to contest the forthcoming presidential election could commence the process of registering their candidacies. As February 2012 came to a close, Egypt's transitional authorities firmed up the dates for the presidential contest, announcing that the first presidential election after the fall of former President Hosni Mubarak would be held from May 23 to May 24, 2012. Ultimately, the presidential election went off in May-June 2012 and an Islamist, Mohammed Morsi, became the new head of state in Egypt.

The drafting of the new constitution was complete at the start of December 2012. That document was drawn up by a body dominated by Morsi-supporting Islamists. It was then approved in a marathon vote that lasted several hours, but which excluded participation by liberal and Coptic members of the Constitutional Assembly due to a boycott. Many opposition activists and secularists cast the document as undesirable, and pointed to the provision that would establish "principles of Sharia" or Islamic law as the fulcrum of legislation. Of particular concern were the effects on the freedom of the press, freedom of religion, and the rights of women. It was ultimately ratified, to the consternation of reformists, liberals, and secularists.

On July 3, 2013, following the issuance of an ultimatum by the Egyptian military, Mohammed Morsi was removed from office as Egypt's head of state. The military said the country's controversial Islamist constitution was suspended, the country's chief justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court would be inaugurated into power as the interim president, and fresh elections would be held in the future. These actions were taken after the military warned Morsi that he had

48 hours to respond to the will of the people, who were in the streets demanding that Morsi resign and fresh elections be held. Morsi's decision to defiantly stake a claim on the presidency, pointing to the fact that he was the elected leader of Egypt, appeared to ensure an end to his tenure in office. For his part, Morsi described the actions of the military as a "full coup" via Twitter.

For many anti-Morsi protesters who yearned to see him ousted from office, they did not seem to care whether there was a coup or not. They seemed focused on the goal of seeing Morsi gone. For the military itself, it was unlikely that it viewed its own actions as a coup. Instead, as protests had gained strength in Egypt, leading to a face-off between anti-government protesters on one side and Morsi's pro-Muslim Brotherhood supporters on the other side, the military decided that it needed to intervene to prevent bloodshed. That intervention did entail taking a particular position - specifically, on the side of the anti-government liberal, secularist, and reformist factions.

Ultimately, it is to be determined if the democratic ambitions of the protesters in Egypt will be realized. At this point, the Nile Revolution had resulted in the exit of the key figure of the "old guard," and an elected president, who was himself ousted from office a year later. The Nile Revolution of 2011 was a historic moment of change in Egypt that was achieved by the people -- not with the typical weapons of conflict and confrontation, but peacefully, with relentless determination of the people, via the Internet and telecommunications devices, which were used as organizing mechanisms to advance grassroots transformation. The events of 2013, initiated by the military, could be viewed either as a short-circuiting of the people-powered movement -- or -- another chapter in the same story of transformation in Egypt.

Note: Fresh presidential elections took place in 2014 and ended in the ratification of Sisi's leadership. The election was viewed as the means to returning Egypt to the path of democratization. See below for details.

Executive Branch:

Head of state:

President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi elected in 2014 elections, as discussed below

Note on Egyptian Leadership --

Regardless of the international community's view, the fact was that in July 2013, Mohammed Morsi was out as president and a new head of state had to be inaugurated into power. On July 4, 2013, the head of Egypt's highest court, Adly Mansour, was sworn into office as the country's transitional or "caretaker" president.

Mansour served on Egypt's Constitutional Court since 1992. Born in Cairo, Mansour graduated from the faculty of law at Cairo University in 1967. In 1969 and 1970 respectively, he completed postgraduate studies in general law and administrative science. Having won a scholarship to France's most prestigious institute of higher education, he attended Ecole Nationale de l'Administration from 1975 to 1977. Mansour worked as the chancellor of Egypt's State Council in 1984 and became president of the same institution in 1992. From that time, he served on Egypt's Constitutional Court until 2013 when he was named transitional or caretaker president of Egypt.

Striking a populist tone soon after his swearing in ceremony, President Mansour said that the source of his presidential power was "the great people of Egypt." He said: "I received the assignment order from those who possess it, the great people of Egypt, who are the leader and the source of all powers after they corrected the path of their great revolution."

Of course, the views of the actual people of Egypt were not in total alignment over the change in leadership. Clashes between supporters of Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood and members of the Tamarod rebel movement continued even after the military's intervention. In fact, more than a dozen people were killed on the night of July 3, 2013, alone -- ahead of Mansour's inauguration. Tensions were on the rise when Egyptian authorities ordered the arrests of senior Muslim Brotherhood leaders, Mohammed Badie and Khairat el-Shater, on the basis of inciting violence. Several other members of the Muslim Brotherhood were arrested at that time and former President Morsi himself was reported to be in detention at an undisclosed location. As well, several media

stations seen as being sympathetic to the Muslim Brotherhood had been raided by the military and taken off the air. Included in this list of media entities was al-Jazeera. Human rights group Amnesty International warned that such shutdowns constituted a "blow to freedom of expression."

Still, with the inauguration of Mansour as president, there were some hopes that General Sisi's promise of a new technocratic government, "inclusive of all political factions," including youth, and a plan for fresh elections, might set Egypt on more positive footing. As to the leadership of that government, on July 5, 2013, news was emerging that opposition figure and Nobel Peace Prize winner Mohammed ElBaradei might be named as the new interim prime minister of Egypt. Ironically, it was ElBaradei himself who called for a new technocratic government of Egypt (as discussed above), noting that the not-yet ousted government could be characterized by incompetence.

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Regardless of the chaos rocking the streets of Cairo, the matter of forming a transitional government remained a key priority. On July 9, 2013, a presidential spokesperson said that President Adly Mansour had nominated Mohammed ElBaradei, to be vice president. The president had also nominated Hazem el-Beblawi, a technocrat, as prime minister. Beblawi served as finance minister during the period of military rule following the overthrow of former President

Hosni Mubarak.

These announcements appeared to solve two problems for the president. First, the president was circumventing the objections levied by the Salafists towards the notion of ElBaradei as prime minister, while at the same time, keeping ElBaradei in the presidential inner circle. Second, by choosing a financial specialist to lead the new government in the form of Beblawi, the president was addressing the economic woes facing Egypt and the need for technocratic expertise.

Indeed, Beblawi's long record in economic management included the 12 years he ran Egypt's Export Development Bank for 12 years, as well as his work running the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (a United Nations entity that promotes cooperation among 17 Arab states), and also his stint as an adviser at the Arab Monetary Fund in the United Arab Emirates. French-educated Beblawi, who also worked in academia, was also described as having many ties across financial circles in the Middle East. These connections were illustrated in high relief when he was able to secure emergency loans and grants from the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. As well, Beblawi's well-known stance as a believer in free markets and legal transparency were likely to gain him applause from financial experts, and would help build confidence that Egypt was regaining its economic footing.

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interview with the Reuters news agency: "It's an illegitimate government, an illegitimate prime minister, an illegitimate cabinet. We don't recognize anyone in it."

Note: President Mansour indicated that fresh elections in Egypt would take place by 2014.

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Special Entry:

Egyptian government resigns; new government formed --

On Feb. 24, 2014, interim Prime Minister Hazem Beblawi of Egypt and his government resigned from office. Beblawi and the members of the outgoing government resigned without giving a specific reason for the decision; however, their announcement came as public sector strikes were rocking Egypt and as the Sinai peninsula continued to be hit by terrorist attacks by extremist Islamists. Beblawi's exit address nonetheless tacitly implied the government's frustrations and the need to place the country above personal interests as he said: "The cabinet has over the past six or seven months shouldered a very difficult responsibility... in most cases the results were good. This is neither the time for demands by public workers nor the time for personal interests, but the time for us to put our country's interests above all others."

A day later on Feb. 25, 2014, President Adly Mansour asked Ibrahim Mahlab -- the housing minister from the outgoing government -- to form a new government. Mahlab said his new government would focus its efforts on addressing the strikes, dealing with Egypt's unemployment and other economic challenges, and restoring security to the country. He said, "Restoration of security and national unity of the Egyptian people are indispensable to move forward towards

improving the living conditions of Egyptian families." It should be noted that Egyptian army chief Field Marshal Abdel Fattah al-Sisi would retain his post as defense minister in the new government. Sisi was meanwhile preparing for a possible bid for the presidency in forthcoming elections. It was assumed that Sisi would vacate the position of defense minister once he officially announced his intent to contest the presidency.

Primer on Egypt's 2014 presidential election:

First round May 26-27, 2014; second round June 16-17, 2014 --

In late 2013, Egyptian Interim President Adly Mansour had announced that a new constitution would be advanced to replace to one crafted during the presidency of the now-deposed Mohamed Morsi. Mansour said that Egyptians would go to the polls a month later -- in January 2014 -- to either ratify or reject the new charter. Central provisions of the new charter included: term limits (two) for an elected president; the establishment of Islam as state religion, but with protections for absolute freedom of belief; guaranteed gender equality; bans on political parties based on "religion, race, gender, or geography;" and the military's right to appoint the defense minister for the next eight years.

The interim government of Egypt has said that ratification of the new constitution was a stepping stone on the path towards the restoration of democracy in Egypt. Speaking of the new constitution, President Mansour said, "Let this constitution be a word of justice, that unites and doesn't separate ... for hatred is a tool for destruction ... disagreement is legislated, as long it adopts peacefulness and is in the country's interest."

When the votes were counted, Egyptian voters overwhelmingly ratified the new constitution that would replace to one crafted during the presidency of the now-deposed Mohamed Morsi. Indeed, more than 95 percent of voters registered an affirmative vote following the two-day referendum. It should be noted that in contrast to the earlier Morsi-endorsed charter, this document appeared to enshrine women with more rights and freedom, facilitate increased to social justice for citizens, while at the same time, augmenting the power of the military.

With the new constitution ratified, there were plans afoot for parliamentary and presidential elections to be held in Egypt, with an eye on returning Egypt to constitutional and democratic order. The interim authorities initially envisioned parliamentary elections would be held ahead of a presidential contest; however, President Mansour indicated that the presidential contest might occur first in order to give time for new political parties to be founded, and to stabilize the country, which has seen unrelenting unrest since the removal of Morsi from power.

With those future elections looming, attention was on the future political course of Egypt. To that end, Egypt's army chief, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, had said he would consider contesting the future presidential contest, if he had the support of the Egyptian people and the military. The Egyptian newspaper, al-Ahram, had Sisi on the record declaring, "If I nominate myself, there must be a popular demand, and a mandate from my army."

Sisi's presidential ambitions were backed by Amr Moussa, the chairman of the committee that drafted an Egyptian constitution. A former presidential candidate himself, and the former secretary-general for the Arab League, Moussa made it clear he would support a presidential bid from Sisi, saying: "I believe that Sisi will take this decision [to stand for president] and I back this." But Sisi's biggest show of support came from the military itself on Jan. 27, 2014, when that body said that it would back his candidacy for president.

Sisi said at the start of March 2014 that he could not ignore the calls from the people to run as a candidate in the impending presidential election. As he delivered a speech at the Egyptian Military Academy in Cairo, Sisi said that he could "not turn his back on calls by the majority of Egyptians for him to run for president." Indicating that an official announcement was in the offing, he added, "Official measures should be taken in the coming days."

Should he ultimately decide to move forward with a bid for the presidency, Sisi would be aided by strong popular support despite his role in the ousting of Morsi from power. Indeed, Sisi was commanding not only the armed forces but also a growing popular movement, made up of Egyptians disillusioned by the religiosity and the incompetence of the former Morsi presidency, and

anxious for strongman-style but rational leadership, that he seemed to embody. That being said, Sisi would likely be vociferously opposed by supporters of the now-banned Muslim Brotherhood of Morsi, who have blame him for the harsh crackdown on Islamists, which has included the sentencing of more than 500 Islamists to death for their involvement in the violence that followed Morsi's ouster. Another 900 Islamists were yet to face charges of terrorism and murder on the same grounds and would likely endure a similar fate. Thus, Sisi would also have to deal with passionate antagonists.

One opponent for Sisi would be a "Nasserist" leftist Egyptian politician, Hamdeen Sabahi, who announced his bid to contest the presidency. Not a newcomer to the presidential election field, Sabahi actually contested the 2012 presidential election, which was ultimately won by Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood (and later deposed by the army in July 2013). Sabahi enjoyed a respectable performance in those 2012 elections, securing a third place finish. In these forthcoming 2014 elections, his presence was expected to invigorate the race by offering an alternative to Sisi and possibly inspiring other contenders to join the race. In his announcement to supporters, Sabahi said, "My personal decision as a citizen is to run for the coming presidential elections." He continued, "Hamdeen Sabahi's battle is the battle of the revolution." It should be noted that Sabahi was the head of the political alliance called the Popular Current.

Meanwhile, in late March 2014, Sisi announced that he was stepping down as the country's defense minister, essentially setting the stage for his presidential bid. He would be replaced by General Sedki Sobhi -- the post of chief of staff. With his resignation established, Sisi announced his candidacy for the presidency. In a national address that was broadcast by the media across the country, he said, "I am here before you humbly stating my intention to run for the presidency of the Arab Republic of Egypt. Only your support will grant me this great honor." Emphasizing that he intended to continue his effort to rid Egypt of Islamic militancy and terrorism, Sisi said: "True, today is my last day in military uniform, but I will continue to fight every day for an Egypt free of fear and terrorism." He also issued a realistic stance as regards the manifold economic challenges facing Egypt, as Sisi added, "We must be truthful with ourselves. Our country faces great challenges. Our economy is weak. There are millions of youths who suffer from unemployment in

Egypt."

It should be noted that in April 2014, both Sabahi and Sisi made official their respective bids for the presidency by submitting the requisite documents for contesting the presidential election.

In the first week of May 2014, former army chief Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, who was contesting the presidential election in Egypt set for later in the month, vowed to end the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood. In an interview with Egyptian media, Sisi promised that if he won the presidency, the banned Muslim Brotherhood "will not exist." Sisi appeared to indicate that such an end for the Muslim Brotherhood was actually the result of the will of the people as he declared, "I want to tell you that it is not me that finished [the Muslim Brotherhood]. You, the Egyptians, are the ones who finished it." But Sisi also made clear that Egypt would not be ruled by the military, saying, "The army would not have a role in ruling Egypt." In the same interview, Sisi also claimed that Egyptian authorities had discovered two assassination plots against him although he declined to provide details. Undeterred by the threats against his life, Sisi said, "I believe in fate, I am not afraid."

Although the early expectations were that the election would take place in March or April 2014, May 2014 was announced as the likely timeline when a forthcoming presidential election would take place. The tentative timeline was May 26-27, 2014, according to Egypt's electoral authorities. If no one candidate secured an outright majority following the first round, a second "runoff" round would be held on June 16-17, 2014.

That second round was unnecessary since former Egyptian army chief, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, won a landslide victory in a presidential election following the first round of voting, having claimed an overwhelming 93 percent of the vote share. His rival, Hamdeen Sabahi, was not able to pose a credible threat. Critics pointed to the low voter turnout -- 46 percent -- as a factor that might mitigate a strong mandate for Sisi; however, the fact of the matter was that Sisi had secured the presidency at the ballot box and would now have the task of stabilizing the country, both politically and economically.

On the political agenda would be the task of addressing Islamic insurgency in the Sinai region of Egypt and dealing with remnants of influence from the Muslim Brotherhood. It should be noted that Sisi has vowed to end the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood. In an interview with Egyptian media prior to winning the presidency, Sisi promised that the banned Muslim Brotherhood "will not exist." Sisi indicated that such an end for the Muslim Brotherhood was actually the result of the will of the people as he declared, "I want to tell you that it is not me that finished [the Muslim Brotherhood]. You, the Egyptians, are the ones who finished it." Sisi also made it clear that Egypt would not be ruled by the military, saying, "The army would not have a role in ruling Egypt." In the same interview, Sisi also claimed that Egyptian authorities had discovered two assassination plots against him although he declined to provide details. Undeterred by the threats against his life, Sisi said, "I believe in fate, I am not afraid."

Economically, painful reforms would have to be undertaken, including an end of energy subsidies that have tended to drain the country's coffers in the past. While being the "non-Morsi" option may have been sufficient to boost Sisi's popularity to this end, the difficult work of governing would present new -- and manifold -- challenges to the new Egyptian president.

Foreign Relations

General Relations

Egypt has significant standing in the Arab world, as well as strong ties with the West. This dual standing enables it to play a critical role as a Middle East dispute moderator, negotiator and ombudsman.

Egypt has been actively engaged in several areas of international cooperation. In addition to the traditional markets of sisterly Arab and friendly countries and the World Trade Organization, Egypt signed several loan and aid agreements with the United States (U.S.), the European Union, Middle Eastern and Asian countries, and the Mediterranean Forum. It also promotes traditional African connections.

In a world pervasively affected by developments such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the globalized market, competitive advantage and world standardized specifications, Egypt has sought to take advantage of these developments in a way that serves its own interests. Its goals are to find a foothold on the export market and to expand the scope of its foreign dealings not only inside main trade blocs but also through activating bilateral and multilateral relations.

In the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, President Hosni Mubarak has manifested Egypt's central role. Mubarak is seen as a key figure in rallying Arab support for the Western-led campaign. While Mubarak strongly denounced the attacks, and promised assistance from Egyptian intelligence and security services, he was also careful to point out that only peace in the Middle East could bring about a permanent solution.

Reflecting Egypt's own experience with terrorist activities, Mubarak has for ten years campaigned for an international conference on terrorism. At the end of September 2001, Egyptian foreign minister Ahmed Maher delivered an appeal to President Bush for a United Nations (U.N.)-led international anti-terror conference.

Regional Relations

Perhaps Egypt's most fundamental role in the region has been as a broker of peace in the Middle East and an advocate on behalf of a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Indeed, Egypt has been one of few Middle Eastern countries willing to recognize Israel and engage in productive relations aimed at peace.

For these efforts, Egypt has been rewarded, at times, by ostracism. Indeed, Egypt had been removed from the Arab League in 1979 after President Sadat agreed to establish peace with Israel. However, it was re-admitted in May 1989, and the Arab League headquarters has returned to Cairo from Tunis. Former Egyptian Foreign Minister Abdul Meguid is the present Secretary General of the Arab League. President Mubarak chaired the Organization of African Unity from 1989 to 1990 and again in 1993.

Egypt played a key role during the 1990-91 Persian Gulf crisis. President Mubarak helped assemble the international military coalition, including the deployment of 35,000 Egyptian troops, used against Iraq to liberate Kuwait. Egypt's contingent was the second-largest in the coalition forces. In the aftermath of the Gulf War, Egypt signed the Damascus declaration with Syria and the Gulf States to strengthen Gulf security.

Egypt played an important role in the negotiations leading to the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference, which, under U.S. and Russian sponsorship, brought together all parties in the region to discuss Middle East peace. Egypt was a strong supporter of the bilateral discussions leading to the

September 1993 Israel-Palestinian (PLO) Declaration of Principles on Palestinian Self-rule and the October 1994 signing of the Jordan-Israel peace treaty.

Egyptian-Israeli relations improved after the Labor Party's 1992 victory in Israeli national elections. By mid-1993, President Mubarak and Prime Minister Rabin had met twice, and other senior-level bilateral contacts had increased. There had also been progress on the return of Sinai antiquities to Egypt and on issues relating to military personnel missing in action. Agricultural cooperation was the most active area of Egyptian-Israeli technical cooperation.

While occasionally strained, relations between Egypt and Israel in general had been improving just prior to the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin in November 1995. After Rabin's assassination and the installation of the new Likud administration under Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu in May 1996, relations between Egypt and Israel quickly deteriorated. Egypt became concerned when Netanyahu refused to continue the "land for peace" negotiations of his predecessors, Rabin and interim Prime Minister Shimon Peres. At a 1996 summit meeting of the Arab League, Egypt joined its fellow Arab states in calling for Israel to return all land occupied since 1967. Netanyahu refused to do so, and Israel continued its settlement of Palestinian-occupied territories, commencing construction of a new settlement, Har Homa, in East Jerusalem in March 1997. Although Egypt continually attempted to engage the Palestinians and Israelis in further negotiations, the hard-line stance of the Netanyahu government essentially brought the peace process to a halt.

Tension between Egypt and Israel increased after an Egyptian court convicted an Arab-Israeli man of espionage in August 1997. The verdict outraged Israel, which totally denied the charges. Increased military coordination between Israel and Turkey also added to the tension between Israel and Egypt. On Jan. 4, 1998, the Arab League (including Egypt) denounced a planned one-day naval exercise, scheduled for Jan. 7, involving the Israeli, Turkish and United States navies.

Egypt expressed cautious optimism when Ehud Barak was elected Israel's prime minister in May 1999, defeating Binyamin Netanyahu. Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs Amre Mahmoud Moussa called on Barak to resume the peace process quickly.

Egypt continues to play a major mediator role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Several meetings between the parties have taken place in Egypt over the years, and President Mubarak continues to enjoy a good standing in both camps. However, balancing the interest of its people, Arab allies and the West, means that the Egyptian government is often walking a thin line. At times, Egypt has been accused of succumbing to U.S. pressure and its perceived biased role in favor of Israel.

After the outbreak of the second Palestinian Intifada in September 2000, several meetings between the parties were held in Egypt. An Oct. 17, 2000, meeting between Barak and Arafat in Sharm el-Sheikh, produced only a vague agreement to stop the violence. Egyptian opposition and Islamist

activists criticized Egypt and Arab leaders for failing to meet 'the minimum requirements' in their actions against Israel on the Qatari-owned *Al-Jazeera* TV channel. The Egyptian Minister of Information responded by accusing the station of "slandorous propaganda" and threatened to close down its offices in Egypt.

As the violence intensified and the death toll increased, Egypt became more critical of Israeli actions. In a dramatic move, and only the second time in 20 years, Egypt recalled its ambassador to Israel on Nov. 21, 2000-a day after Israeli helicopter fired missiles on Palestinian targets in Gaza City, including the office of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat. Earlier, as part of the 22-member Arab League, on Oct. 21-22, 2000, Egypt condemned Israeli "excessive use of force" against the Palestinians; the country also set up funds to support families of Palestinians killed in clashes with Israeli forces, and also to support the Arab and Islamic character of Jerusalem.

As the Intifada continues, official Egyptian-Israeli ties have been seriously damaged. Generally, the Egyptian masses are strongly supportive of the Palestinian people while at the same time increasingly critical of their own government. Until recently, Egypt had not broken off all of its ties with Israel. However, the Israeli offensive in the spring of 2002 resulted in Egypt severing all diplomatic ties with Israel except those that aid the Palestinian cause. The disintegration of bilateral relations is noteworthy as Egypt has been Israel's longest standing ally in the Middle East. This positive history has been vitiated by increasing Arab-Israeli antipathy since the start of the Intifada in 2000.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak decided not to attend an Arab summit in Beirut, Lebanon, on March 27-28, 2002, and instead asked Prime Minister Atef Obeid to travel there. The decision came amid Israel's insistence on its condition for allowing Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to attend the upcoming Arab summit.

Although not attributing Mubarak's absence to Israeli practices, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher, noted that the Egyptian government found that Israel's practices to try to prevent Arafat from showing up at the Arab summit were "illegal."

By April 2002, Egypt had officially downgraded its relations with Israel - restricting contacts to those which "serve the Palestinian cause" - after Israel's crackdown on Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. Then in May 2002, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon met with visiting Egyptian envoy Osama Al-Baz, insisting that Israel's preconditions must be met in advance of any headway in the political process.

According to a statement of the Israeli Government Press Office, Sharon told Al-Baz that "progress in the political process will be possible only upon the cessation of violence, terror and incitement, and the implementation of comprehensive reforms in the governing institutions of the Palestinian (National) Authority."

Still, in more recent years, despite Egypt's criticism of Israeli actions at various times -- especially when it perceives the use of "excessive force" against extremist Palestinian elements -- Egypt has continued to pursue a productive relationship with Israel. It was yet to be seen if the end of the Mubarak regime in 2011 would yield a shift in bilateral relations.

At the start of September 2011, Egyptian rioters stormed the Israeli embassy in Cairo. The fracas yielded the deaths of three people as security forces clashed with the rioters. Egyptian authorities deployed security forces to disperse the protesters, even firing tear gas. They also placed the country on alert as a result.

The attack on the Israeli embassy occurred in the aftermath of the violence in Gaza in August 2011, which resulted in the deaths of five Egyptian policemen. In fact, Palestinian extremist militants had traveled via the Sinai in Egypt into Israeli territory to carry out an attack on a bus in southern Israel. As Israeli troops moved into pursuit mode, seven of the Palestinian gunmen and five Egyptian security personnel were killed in the exchange of fire.

On one hand, the situation showed that the border region between Israel and Egypt was relatively unprotected, and appeared to indicate that the new interim authorities in Egypt have not made cross-border security as much of a priority as the former Mubarak regime. But on the other hand, the violence in Gaza caused outrage among Egyptians, to some degree sparking latent hostilities felt by some Egyptians in regard to Israel. Now, a month later, those tensions were emerging in the form of the attack in September 2011 on the Israel embassy in Cairo.

It should be noted that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that his country would maintain its peace treaty with Egypt despite the assault on its embassy in Cairo. Speaking from Jerusalem, the Israeli prime minister said; "Israel will continue to hold fast to the peace accord with Egypt." He continued, "We are working together with the Egyptian government to return our ambassador to Cairo soon." Prime Minister Netanyahu also thanked United States President Barack Obama for assistance in arranging the evacuation of the embassy's diplomatic staff. Some embassy security staff were reportedly trapped there but were ultimately rescued by Egyptian commandos.

Meanwhile, Egyptian authorities made it clear that they intended to try the culprits of the embassy attack in an emergency court. As well, Egyptian Prime Minister Essam Sharaf offered to step down from office but the country's interim military leader, Mohamad Hussain Tantawi, quickly rejected the offer of resignation. The scenario illuminated an uneasy balance that the Egyptian authorities would have to strike in being responsible to the cause of regional stability, while meeting the needs of people empowered by the ethos of liberation.

Egypt enjoys strong relations with other Arab states, particularly secular or non-fundamentalist ones including Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain.

Bilateral relations with Sudan have been tense since 1995, after Egypt accused Sudan of involvement in an assassination attempt against President Mubarak in Ethiopia. Sudan has denied the allegations. The Nile River, shared by Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt, has also been a source of friction between the two countries. Egypt fears that a hostile government could restrict the river's water, and Egypt has, together with Libya, mediated in the civil conflict hoping to stabilize Sudan. Egyptian and Libyan leaders presented a nine-item memo in June 2001, and met in Tripoli in August to discuss ways of activating the peace initiative. The peace proposal calls for resuming the peace process, forming a transitional cabinet of all political forces, holding new elections, and an immediate cessation of hostilities.

Egypt has had strained relations with Qatar. In November 1997, Egyptian-Qatari ties worsened when Egypt joined several Arab states in boycotting the Middle East and North Africa economic conference held in Doha, Qatar. In addition, in December 1997, Qatar's Foreign Minister accused Egypt of complicity in a failed 1996 coup attempt against Qatar's emir, Sheik Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani. Egyptian-Qatari relations also have been strained by differences on the Arab-Israeli peace process, including the possibility of natural gas supplies to Israel.

Under the U.N. oil-for-food program, Egypt has boosted its trade with Iraq and has also taken political steps towards a closer relationship. Humanitarian flights to Iraq have taken off from Cairo, and Egypt is calling for an end to the U.N. imposed sanctions. In November 2000, Egypt and Iraq turned their interest sections into embassies, but have yet to restore full diplomatic relations. The Egyptian and Iraqi trade ministers met in Cairo on Dec. 7, 2000, to discuss ways of expanding their economic relations. Egypt has become Iraq's largest Arab and the world's fifth largest trade partner.

Egypt and Iran have recently called for the normalization of relations which have been strained since 1979, when Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel. Relations were not helped by Iran accusing Egypt of helping Iraq in the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war and Egypt accusing Iran of supporting Islamic fundamentalists in Egypt. Today, the two countries have interest sections in each others' capitals, and trade relations have been restored. On Sept. 30, 2000, Trade Minister Mokhtar Khattab visited Tehran as the first Egyptian Minister to visit Iran in 21 years. In June 2000 President Khatami held his first phone conversation with the Egyptian president, and in September 2001, Khatami expressed hope that Egyptian-Iranian relations would be improved in the near future. A further improvement of Egypt-Iranian relations might be helped by both countries participation in the international campaign against terrorism.

Since the election of hardline President Ahmadinejad in Iran, however, Egypt has taken a more cautious tone as regards relations with Iran. That country's support for Hezbollah has been a key source of continuing tensions. In 2009, the arrest of close to 50 Hezbollah agents accused of plotting to carry out attacks against Israeli tourists at resorts in the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula was one sign of the tensions between the two countries.

Other Significant Relations

Relations between the United States and Egypt saw a marked shift beginning with the tenure of President Anwar Sadat. The September 1978 Camp David Accords, brokered by U.S. President Jimmy Carter and signed by Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, established peace between the two countries and led to Israeli troop withdrawals from the Sinai Peninsula. In addition, Sadat distanced Egypt from the former Soviet Union, ending the two states' Treaty of Friendship in 1976. After that, Egypt received significant economic and military assistance from the United States.

In 1975, the United States provided \$2.2 billion to improve and expand water and sewage systems in Cairo, Alexandria and other Egyptian cities. Since then, the U.S. has continued significant capital transfers as part of U.S. military cooperation to help Egypt modernize its armed forces and strengthen regional security and stability. The U.S. has provided F-4 jet aircraft, F-16 jet fighters, M-60A3 and M1A1 tanks, armored personnel carriers, Apache helicopters, anti-aircraft missile batteries, aerial surveillance aircraft, and other equipment. The U.S. and Egypt have also participated in combined military exercises, including deployment of U.S. troops to Egypt. Units of the U.S. 6th Fleet are regular visitors to Egyptian ports. U.S. assistance has aided in both the development of the country and the increased stability of the region. Egyptian resources freed up as a result allow Mubarak to be a key regional ombudsman and forceful secular voice in the Middle East. The size of this bilateral aid package makes Egypt the second largest (after Israel) recipient of regular U.S. aid in the world. (In 1997, Egypt received \$US 2.2 billion in foreign aid, while Israel received \$US 3 billion.) The U.K. and the U.S. are the largest importers of Egyptian goods. The devaluation of the Egyptian pounds (twice in 2001) has helped Egyptian exports, by raising its first half exports in 2001 to the U.S. by 22 percent.

President Mubarak has long been a supporter of a strong U.S.-Egyptian relationship based on shared interests in regional security and the peaceful resolution of disputes between Israel and other Middle Eastern states. President Mubarak was the first Arab leader to visit the U.S. after President Clinton's inauguration. President Clinton visited Egypt in October 1994 en route to Jordan for the signing of the Jordan-Israel peace treaty. The two countries have worked closely together to promote a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and to resolve conflicts in Africa. For example, Egyptian and U.S. soldiers participated in the U.N. peacekeeping efforts in Somalia. Occasionally, however, relations between Egypt and the U.S. have become strained. For example, in 1995, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty became a source of contention between the two states. Egypt refused to renew its agreement unless Israel became a signatory; the U.S. threatened to cease or reduce aid to Egypt if Egypt refused to sign. Ultimately, Egypt joined its fellow Arab states in signing a United Nations resolution calling for all Middle Eastern states to sign the NPT.

At times, the Middle East peace process has also been a point of contention in Egypt-U.S. relations. In early January 1998, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa accused the United States of failing to fulfill its "honest broker" role in the negotiations. The key role of President Clinton in negotiating the Wye Peace Accord, which outlined the "land-for-peace" strategy supported by Egyptian and other Arab leaders, helped to extinguish some of the accusations that the U.S. has failed to place sufficient pressure on Israel throughout the negotiations. Future Egyptian-U.S. relations will be determined, in large part, by U.S. involvement in ensuring the implementation of the Middle East peace accords in general and the normalization of Israeli-Palestinian relations and Israeli-Syrian relations in particular.

On Nov. 1, 1999, an EgyptAir plane leaving New York for Cairo crashed, killing all 216 passengers on board. While many at first suspected this was a terrorist attack, the investigation pointed to a deliberate suicidal act of the pilot acting on his own. This conclusion generated much public anger in Egypt, where suicide is unacceptable. A draft report written by American experts and released in April 2001, drew angry official reactions from Egypt. The reports suggests that the co-pilot deliberately crashed the plane. EgyptAir experts, on the other hand, urged examiners to look more closely at mechanical explanations for the crash. Despite the disagreement over the conclusion, cooperation between American FBI and Egyptian authorities in this investigation remains a tribute to U.S.-Egyptian relations.

Since the coming to power of U.S. President George W. Bush, Egypt has warned the U.S. about not ignoring the Arab voice on the situation in the Middle East. The Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the U.S. will undoubtedly impact Egyptian-U.S. relations, as well as the entire regional situation. The attacks on the U.S. have widely been commented on as "they didn't deserve it, but they asked for it" among the Egyptian populace. While Mubarak strongly denounced the attacks, and promised assistance from Egyptian intelligence and security services, he was also careful to point out that only peace in the Middle East could bring about a permanent solution. Mubarak maintains that Israel's actions has created an atmosphere that encourages terrorism. Egypt has repeatedly called for an international conference to draft an anti-terrorism convention, and proposed to take anti-terrorism measures under the framework of the United Nations.

In June 2000, the Egyptian-American sociologist Saad Eddin Ibrahim, a professor at the American University in Cairo, and the President of the Ibn Khaldoun Center for Social Development, was detained without charges for 45 days.

By August 2002, the Ibrahim situation had begun to strain Egypt's relationship with the United States. U.S. President George W. Bush said he would seek to withhold additional aid from Egypt to protest the activist's prosecution. Ibrahim, who holds a US as well as an Egyptian passport, was sentenced in July 2002 to seven years in jail after a judge found him guilty of embezzlement and "tarnishing" Egypt's image. The decision infuriated the Bush administration to the point that it

declared it would not contemplate any additional funds for Egypt.

By early December 2002, the pressure from the U.S. and other international groups seemed to have helped produce a victory in the area of civil rights: Egypt's highest appeal court freed Ibrahim after quashing his seven-year sentence on charges of defaming the country, and ordered a retrial.

In September 2002, the Egyptian foreign minister, Ahmed Maher, criticized the United States' policy towards the Palestinian and Iraqi leaders as neither in line with its own principles nor with international law.

Maher, who was asked by the newspaper *al-Hayat* to comment on U.S. calls to replace Yasser Arafat and Saddam Hussein, said the choice of head of state was the affair of the countries concerned. He also said there was no need for a new United Nations resolution which would include a military option against Iraq.

At that time, Maher also said he saw no reason to believe that Baghdad would not cooperate with United Nations inspectors.

In early January 2003, the Turkish Prime Minister, Abdullah Gul, and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said they would work to prevent a possible American-led war against Iraq.

The two countries were under pressure to allow the United States to use their air bases in the event of a conflict. Gul and Mubarak have been described as like-minded leaders who have used almost identical language about the catastrophe that a war would inflict on the entire region. The war, however, went forth.

To date, in the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq and ongoing conflict there, Egypt has maintained its cautionary stance in regards to the security situation in the region. That caution was only reified in 2005 when Egypt's envoy to Iraq was assassinated.

With the change of government in the United States, strengthened bilateral ties with Middle Eastern nation states, such as Egypt, were anticipated. There were hopes that United States' President Barack Obama's landmark speech to the Islamic world from the Egyptian capital of Cairo would pay diplomatic dividends in the long run.

Egypt enjoys a close relationship with most European countries. Egypt has been a beneficiary of European Union financial cooperation since 1977. Negotiations for a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Agreement with Egypt began in June 1999, and an agreement was concluded in March 2001.

NOTE:

The United States and many Western countries, although allied with the (now deposed) Mubarak regime, eventually gave support to the revolutionary movement in the "season of unrest" in 2011. It was not known how Egypt's relations with the rest of the world would be affected with new leadership at the helm.

A hint of trouble came in February 2012 when approximately 40 aid workers were referred to a criminal court in Egypt on charges of illegally funding a civil society organization. The 40 aid workers were a multinational group including Europeans, Americans, Arabs, and Egyptians -- all of whom were non-governmental organization (NGO) workers affiliated with organizations that failed to properly register with the government and were now facing charges. Among the defendants was Sam LaHood -- the son of Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood, who has been serving in the Obama administration. The situation has sparked tensions between the United States and Egypt.

Speaking on behalf of the Obama administration, State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said, "We are urging the government of Egypt to lift these restrictions immediately and allow folks to come home as soon as possible. Frankly, we don't know how this is going to come out yet."

See "Political Conditions" for details.

NOTE:

On Sept. 11, 2012, protests erupted in the Egyptian capital city of Cairo with the United States embassy being the main target. The unrest was sparked by a film of amateur quality, which was produced by a United States citizen, and which some Muslims have determined to be insulting to the Islamic Prophet Muhammad. The protests soon spread to embassies of Western countries located in various other Muslim countries including Lebanon, Bangladesh, Tunisia, Sudan, Nigeria, as well as the Palestinian territory of Gaza, while unrest persisted in Egypt and Yemen. German and British embassies were attacked in Tunisia and Sudan; in Lebanon, at least one person died. The government of Yemen, like the government of Libya, was quick to express condemnation over the attacks on the United States' embassies. However, there has been concern over the weakness of the new Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi's response, prompting United States President Obama to characterize Egypt as neither an ally nor an enemy, effectively placing relations with post-Nile Revolution Egypt in the category of "to be determined." Egyptian authorities soon stepped up their efforts to repel the protesters in that country.

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NOTE:

Goodbye Arab Spring, Hello Arab Summer --

In mid-2013, Egypt was gripped by conflict between the Muslim Brotherhood and the newly-installed Egyptian authorities. Going back to July 3, 2013, following the issuance of an ultimatum by the Egyptian military, Mohammed Morsi was removed from office as Egypt's head of state. The military said the country's controversial Islamist constitution was suspended, the country's chief justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court would be inaugurated into power as the interim president, and fresh elections would be held in the future.

These actions were taken after the military warned Morsi that he had 48 hours to respond to the will of the people, who were in the streets demanding that Morsi resign and fresh elections be held. Morsi's decision to defiantly stake a claim on the presidency, pointing to the fact that he was the elected leader of Egypt, appeared to ensure an end to his tenure in office. For his part, Morsi described the actions of the military as a "full coup" via Twitter.

For many anti-Morsi protesters who yearned to see him ousted from office, they did not seem to care whether there was a coup or not. They seemed focused on the goal of seeing Morsi gone.

For the military itself, it was unlikely that it viewed its own actions as a coup. Instead, as protests had gained strength in Egypt, leading to a face-off between anti-government protesters on one side and Morsi's pro-Muslim Brotherhood supporters on the other side, the military decided that it needed to intervene to prevent bloodshed. That intervention did entail taking a particular position - specifically, on the side of the anti-government liberal, secularist, and reformist factions.

Since the ousting of Morsi, Egypt has been faced with two challenges: forming a new government, and dealing with the political turmoil now facing the country as Islamists from the Muslim Brotherhood railed against the crackdown against them. On the first issue, the formation of a government, Egypt has seen progress. However, conflict between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian authorities have continued to date. By mid-August 2013, Egyptian security forces were clearing pro-Morsi protest camps, leading to a bloody confrontation and the resignation of Vice President Mohammed ElBaradei.

The first week of October 2013 saw Egypt mired by a new wave of protests as supporters of ousted President Mohammed Morsi took to the streets. The protesters clashed with security forces, who used tear gas and live rounds of gunfire to disperse the crowds as they attempted to rally towards Tahrir Square in the capital city of Cairo. Fights also broke out between pro-Morsi supporters and backers of the military regime now ruling Egypt. Several people were reported to have been killed -- most of them being supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood -- while scores more were injured as the sound of explosions and gunshots rocked the capital. Clashes were also reported in the northern Sharqiya district, in the cultural center of Giza, in the northern port city of

Alexandria, and at the Suez on the Red Sea.

As October 2013 moved into its second week, the United States announced that it was suspending a significant portion of its aid package to the Egyptian military. The United States Department of State also said that it was halting the delivery of financial assistance and military systems (including Apache helicopters, Harpoon missiles and tank parts) to the Egyptian government. The United States Department of State explained that it was taking these actions in response to the findings of a review that was undertaken following the harsh and bloody crackdown by the military earlier in the year on the supporters of ousted President Mohammed Morsi. That crackdown left hundreds of people dead.

The United States Department of State hinted that the actions were not intended to be indicative of a permanent policy, and that the resumption of aid and the delivery of financial assistance and military equipment would resume if there was "credible progress" made in Egypt on the road towards free and fair elections. As stated by United States Department of States spokesperson, Jen Psaki, "We will continue to hold the delivery of certain large-scale military systems and cash assistance to the government pending credible progress toward an inclusive, democratically elected civilian government through free and fair elections." Indeed, with aid continuing to Egypt in the humanitarian realm, and to assist in securing the unstable Sinai peninsula, it was apparent that the measures were intended to be symbolic rather than significantly punitive.

Special Entry:

Egyptian Christians killed by Islamic State terrorists in Libya; Egypt retaliates with air strikes on Islamic State targets in Libya --

In mid-February 2015, a new battleground in the fight against Islamic State emerged in Libya when more than 20 Coptic Christians from Egypt were brutally killed. In keeping with the terror group's favorite mode of assassination, the victims were beheaded. As with the horrific immolation of a Jordanian pilot by Islamic State at the start of 2015 in Syria, the decapitations of the Egyptian Christian workers in Libya stood as an imprimatur for yet another Arab country to enter the global effort to defeat the Islamist Jihadist terror group.

Six weeks earlier at the start of January 2015, masked gunmen kidnapped the 13 Coptic Christians in northern Libya. The Coptic Christians were workers from Egypt living at a residential compound in the city of Sirte. The gunmen entered the compound and demanded to see identification papers of the workers; Christians and Muslims were separated with the Christians being taken away in handcuffs. A week prior, a group of seven Christians from Egypt were similarly attacked and kidnapped from a phony checkpoint in the same Libyan city of Sirte. In a separate attack, an Egyptian-born Coptic Christian doctor and his wife were attacked and killed in their own home in

Sirte. These acts of kidnapping and murder, with Coptic Christians as the targets, appeared to be the latest manifestation of the manifold instability plaguing Libya. In the post-Qadhafi era, Libya was now beset by violence at the hands of rival militias, and a stronghold for extremist fighters aligned with Islamic State for whom Christians present a prime target for attack.

The ghastly targeting of Christians by Islamic State reached a new nadir in mid-February 2015. As discussed here, videotaped footage emerged depicting the gruesome beheadings of the more than 20 Coptic Christians from Egypt who had been kidnapped by Islamic State terrorists in Libya. As has become a favored pattern by Islamic State, the revolting recording showed the victims dressed in orange jumpsuits, forced to kneel down and then decapitated in a barbaric theatre of horror. Adding to the tragedy was the fact that most of the victims were from impoverished villages in Upper Egypt who were seeking work in Libya due to their socio-economic plight.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi declared a week of national mourning, banned all travel by Egyptian citizens to Libya, and made a point of visiting St Mark's Cathedral in Cairo to offer his condolences to the Coptic Christian Pope Tawadros II. For its part, the Coptic Christian Church of Egypt expressed grave sadness over the deaths of the victims but said it was "confident" that the Egyptian authorities would respond appropriately.

To that end, Egyptian President Sisi condemned the repugnant murders of Coptic Christians, calling their assassins "inhuman criminal killers." The Egyptian leader wasted little time in asserting that it was his country's prerogative to exact retribution. Sisi also made clear that there was a global war emerging as the world confronted Islamist Jihadists. He said, "Egypt and the whole world are in a fierce battle with extremist groups carrying extremist ideology and sharing the same goals."

Soon, Egyptian forces were striking various Islamic State satellite targets in Libya -- from terror training camps and sites to weapons depots in the city of Derna. Meanwhile, Libya forces -- under the instruction of the internationally-recognized government of that country, and in coordination with Egypt -- were hitting Islamic State targets in Sirte and Bin Jawad. Egyptian authorities soon said that the plan would be to target all Islamic State locations in Libya. They also called on the United States-led international coalition against Islamic State to provide support to Egypt in its efforts against the bloodthirsty Islamist Jihadist terror group.

On Feb. 17, 2015, Egyptian President Sisi called for a United Nations resolution facilitating an international intervention into Libya. In an interview with French media, he explained that there was no other alternative, as he declared, "We will not allow them to cut off the heads of our children."

Days later, Libya was struck by violence when Islamic State militants launched a spate of suicide attacks, resulting in the deaths of 40 people. The terrorists packed cars with explosives, which

were then detonated in the eastern town of Qubbah with deadly results. The three explosions took place at the town council of Qubbah, the local security office, and a gas station. Islamic State said the attacks were being carried out in retaliation for Egyptian air strikes on pro-ISIL targets in Derna, Libya (as discussed above). The claim of responsibility statement by Islamic State of Cyrenaica read as follows: "They killed and wounded tens in revenge for the bloodshed of Muslims in the city of Derna."

Islamic State carries out bomb attack on Italian consulate in Cairo

On July 10, 2015, Islamic terrorists carried out a car bomb attack outside the Italian consulate in Egypt's capital city of Cairo. At least one person was reported to have been killed while several others were injured in the explosion, which destroyed the entrance of the building housing the consulate. The notorious terror group, Islamic State, soon claimed responsibility for the bloodshed, with the group declaring via the social media outlet, Twitter, that international consulates constituted "legitimate targets" for strikes. While the Italian government condemned the attack, Prime Minister Matteo Renzi made clear that Italy would stand defiant in the face of terrorism, and expressed solidarity with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi "in the fight against terrorism and fanaticism."

Bomb believed to be responsible for crash of Russian jet departing Egyptian resort; Islamic State in the Egyptian Sinai viewed as likely culprit --

The crash of a Russian airliner in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula in October 2015 resulted in the deaths of all 224 persons on board. The Russian Metrojet Flight KG9268 departed the Red Sea resort city of Sharm-el-Shekh and was bound for the Russian city of St. Petersburg but crashed before the tourists and flight crew could arrive at their destination. The notorious terror group, Islamic State, claimed responsibility for the downing of the flight but Egyptian officials dismissed the claim on the basis of their belief that the terror group did not have the capability to bring down a jet. The Russian government was, likewise, reticent to accept terrorism as explanation. Nevertheless, both the United States and the United Kingdom made clear that intelligence pointed to a bomb being planted on the aircraft and exploding shortly after taking off from Sharm-el-Sheikh. With an affiliate of Islamic State active in the Egyptian Sinai in recent years, and with intelligence pointing in the direction of terrorism, that group's claim of responsibility was being viewed by the countries of the West as credible. The international dimension of the tragedy catapulted the global security threat posed by Islamic State to new heights.

Editor's Note on Islamic State

Islamic State (alternatively referred to as ISIL and ISIS), has gained notoriety for its particularly brutal tactics, ranging from the abductions and mass murders of religious and ethnic minorities, which they view as apostates, and their beheadings of soldiers and journalists. The group has said that it aims to establish an Islamic "caliphate" that would be ruled according to Islamic Shari'a law. Its ambitions are Jihadists and not simply limited to Iraq and Syria; in fact, ISIL has made clear that it intends to extend its control to Jordan and Lebanon. A satellite venue of Islamic State has opened up in post-Arab Spring Libya as extremists have taken advantage of the power chasm there. Another ambition for ISIL is the cause of Palestine. Adherents are required to swear their allegiance to the ISIL leader, Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri al-Samarrai, known in the public sphere as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Baghdadi's appeal has, to some degree, been fed by his mystery as he has only rarely been seen in public.

In terms of legacy, ISIL is actually an outgrowth of al-Qaida in Iraq, led by the Jordanian-born terrorist, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. After Zarqawi's death in 2006, al-Qaida in Iraq transposed itself into Islamic State in Iraq. Although it was weakened by the United States-led "surge" in Iraq to deal with the Sunni insurgency, and which included the involvement of Sahwa (Awakening) councils by Sunni Arab tribesmen, Islamic State in Iraq experienced a resurgence in 2010 under Baghdadi. Once Syria was embroiled in a civil war in 2011, Islamic State was able to establish a foothold in Syria, essentially uprooting other extremist and terror groups, such as al-Nusra Front and al-Qaida, by 2013, and ultimately holding control over wide swaths of territory from Syria to Iraq as of 2014, and extending to Libya as of 2015. ISIL's ability to take over Anbar province and then the northern city of Mosul in Iraq in 2014 were key developments in the entrenchment of ISIL in the region.

ISIL's genocidal practices have been characterized most acutely by their infamous and gruesome beheadings of foreign nationals and apostates, but have also included other revolting and repugnant means of execution, such as crucifixions, immolations, and mass shootings. These bloodthirsty techniques of terror and tactics of murder, which are professionally videotaped and disseminated for maximum effect, have been so ghastly that other militant Islamist movements have sought to distance themselves from ISIL. Indeed, the Yemeni wing of al-Qaida (known as al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula) went so far as to note that beheadings, and the videotaping of decapitations, were to be regarded as un-Islamic. Meanwhile, Lebanon-based Hezbollah, which has been deemed to be a terrorist organization by some countries of the West, made clear that ISIL's tactics of terror were inhumane. These stances by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and Hezbollah suggested that even among extremists, militants, Jihadists, and Islamist terrorists, there remained some degree of a "code" that ISIL had apparently violated.

It should be noted that ISIL's barbarism and brutality has had a double effect. First, the brutality appears to have functioned as a recruitment tool for other murderous Islamist extremists across the world. To date, it is not known how many ISIL fighters exist in the Middle East although estimates suggest that as many as 30,000 Islamic State fighters are in the Iraq-Syria region. These fighters

come from across the world although, as Libya has slipped further into failed state status, it is believed to be the largest single source of terrorists to the cause. That being said, ISIL has attracted disgruntled youth from Europe and the Americas as well, with recruits often traveling through Turkey to enter ISIL-controlled territory. Second, even as ISIL's barbarism has been a recruitment tool, it has simultaneously stimulated the reluctant engagement of a United States-led international coalition in an anti-Islamic State mission.

Socio-economic strife is a popular -- and often facile -- explanation for extremism and activism. It certainly applies to the roots of the Arab Spring and specifically the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia, for example, but does not apply to ISIL. Yes, the power chasms created in the wake of the Arab Spring -- specifically in Libya but also in other countries in the region -- certainly created the conditions for recruitment. But creating fertile ground for recruitment still does not address the reason why people would be attracted to ISIL. Likewise, the call for more education may have resonance in countries where young people are educated only about Islam in Madrassas, or in impoverished regions where people simply have no access to education at all. But these cases do not properly apply to ISIL recruits and sympathizers. The problem is not a lack of education -- most of these recruits are computer savvy and were recruited via the Internet while using their own laptops or in Internet cafes. Indeed, many youth ISIL recruits were from middle class or even wealthy families -- certainly not backgrounds without marked by socio-economic hardship. Recruits and sympathizers are also not necessarily from strict Muslim families; indeed, there were reports that many ISIL recruits were actually fairly new to hardline Islam with translations of instructional introductory texts on Islam being a particularly popular purchase for them.

It would seem that many recruits to ISIL appeared to be the same type of profile as vulnerable youth likely to join gang or cults, susceptible to brainwashing, and thus excellent candidates for adherence to Islamic State's religious ideology.

That being said, to properly understand the attraction of ISIL, it is imperative to address the ideological appeal of hardline and regressive Islam, which embraces barbaric practices of execution, such as beheadings and crucifixion, while integrating socio-governing practices such as conquest and the enslavement of women. Well-meaning public figures have cast these tactics of terror and abuses of humanity as "perversions" of Islam. Left unsaid is that fact that they are actually clear dictates that come from historic Islam, and which have been embraced by ISIL as the "true" path to salvation, irrespective of the fact that their practices are a violation of modern understandings of human rights.

Indeed, Islamic State must be an apocalyptic and millenarian death cult, with a strict Medieval interpretation of Islam at the core and a gruesome theatre of murder as the main attraction. Relying on apocalyptic prophesies of Islamic Jihadist ascendancy and an ultimate "Day of Judgement," the expansion of Islamic State territory in Iraq and Syria, and even Libya, was being understood as a sign of "victory." Stated differently, the rapid rate of expansion (read: victory) by

ISIL in Iraq and Syria in 2014 functioned to empower sympathizers and recruits to the ISIL cause.

Given this paradigm, the only prescription for defeat would be the disruption of what looks like an unstoppable juggernaut by ISIL. That being said, the texture of that defeat would have to be carefully -- and globally -- crafted since ISIL militants believe in the apocalyptic prophesy of a "final" confrontation with the West. Rather than facilitating that end, international stakeholders have noted that the preferable path would be to target this Islamist Jihadist terror entity as part of a global coalition. With United States-led air strikes only going so far to destroy ISIL, there would ultimately be a need for ground forces. An effective strategy against ISIL would be one that looks to Arab "boots on the ground" rather than feeding the hunger by Islamists for a Crusades-style war with the West.

It should be noted that Islamic State is sometimes pejoratively referred to as "Daesh." Islamic State rejects this term of reference, which sounds roughly in Arabic to the words "Daes" which means "one who crushes something underfoot" and "Daesh" which means "one who sows discord." For precisely these negative associations, the enemies of Islamic State have increasingly used the term "Daesh" to describe the terror group in defiance.

Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, www.countrywatch.com . See Bibliography for list of general research sources.

National Security

External Threats

While Egypt's once tumultuous relations with Israel have greatly improved, it remains engaged in a longstanding dispute with Sudan. Egypt and Israel fought against each other in 1948, 1956, and during the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 (a.k.a. the Six-Day War) and 1973 (a.k.a. the Yom Kippur War). The two governments signed the Camp David Accords in September 1978, which in turn led to the signing of a March 1979 peace treaty. They have since maintained generally equitable relations. Furthermore, the Egyptian government has played a key role in the ongoing search for a permanent solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

A longstanding dispute between Egypt and another neighbor remains unresolved, however. Egypt and Sudan have yet to fully settle a disagreement over the triangular regions north and south of the

22nd parallel, designated as their official boundary in 1899. Egypt administers the zone north of the treaty line known as the Hala'ib Triangle, situated in close proximity to Red Sea oil deposits, highlighting its strategic importance.

In 2004, an attack on Taba and other Egyptian resort towns on the Red Sea put Egypt on alert and now they diligently monitor the Sinai and its borders with Israel and the Gaza Strip to protect itself from further attacks. Nevertheless, violent attacks have been ongoing. In July 2005, close to 60 people were killed in attacks at Sharm el-Sheikh. In April 2006, there were triple attacks by suicide bombers in the resort town of Dahab in the Sinai. Two days later, two suicide bombers launched attacks against foreign peacekeepers and security forces in the region of Sinai Peninsula, although there were no casualties.

Crime

Egypt has a generally low rate of crime. It does, however, serve as an interim destination for Southeast and Southwest Asian narcotics bound for markets in Africa, Europe and the United States. Egypt is also a known transit stop for Nigerian couriers. The country also has concerns about money-laundering due to their lax financial regulations and enforcement of the laws that are in place.

Insurgencies

Egypt plays host to two major anti-government extremist movements, the Islamic Group (IG, known in Arabic as Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya) and Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ, known in Arabic as Al-Jihad). IG emerged in the late 1970s with the principle objective of overthrowing the Egyptian government and replacing it with an Islamic regime. Affiliated with al-Qaida, it has also developed a decidedly anti-United States (U.S.) bent. IG claims responsibility for the June 1995 attempt to assassinate Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. From 1993 until 1999, IG militants perpetrated several attacks against tourist facilities in Egypt, most notably a November 1997 attack at Luxor that claimed the lives of 58 foreign visitors. IG has not attacked a target inside Egypt since August 1998. In March 1999, the organization announced plans to halt its campaign of violence. The group's spiritual leader, Shaykh Umar Abd al-Rahman, serving a life sentence in a U.S. prison for his involvement in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, rescinded his support for the cease-fire in June 2000, which in effect divided IG into two factions -- one advocating a cessation of hostilities and the other supporting a continuation of the violent campaign. The split and the Egyptian government's crackdown on IG have served to diminish its ranks. The U.S. State Department does not have an estimate of its total membership.

Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ, known in Arabic as Al-Jihad) also emerged in the 1970s with objectives similar to those of IG, namely to replace the Egyptian government with an Islamic

regime. The group has also historically displayed an anti-Israeli and anti-American posture. EIJ was responsible for the 1981 assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. EIJ has also claimed responsibility for the assassinations of other high-ranking Egyptian officials. It has not conducted an attack in Egypt since 1993, but did manage to bomb the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, in 1995. In 1998, an EIJ plan to attack the U.S. embassy in Albaniawas thwarted. The U.S. Department of State estimates EIJ's total membership at several hundred.

Terrorism

Egypt continues to face the threat of terrorist attacks against targets there, as well as against its interests abroad. As mentioned in the above "Insurgencies" section, its two major insurgent organizations - the Islamic Group (IG, known in Arabic as Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya) and Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ, known in Arabic as Al-Jihad) - emerged in the 1970s with the objective of overthrowing the Egyptian government and replacing it with an Islamic regime. Both reportedly linked to al-Qaida, IG and EIJ have also displayed a strong anti-U.S. bent, as well. Though neither group has conducted an attack against Egyptian interests recently, both maintain a presence there, and both have used terrorism to further their political agendas in the past. In addition to the 1981 assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, EIJ is responsible for the 1995 bombing of the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan. In November 1997, IG militants attacked a group of foreign visitors to Luxor, killing 58 people. IG has since split into two factions: one that opposes violence and one that continues to advocate it (see above). Other Egyptian-based Islamic extremist organizations that advocate the use of terrorism include Gund Allah, Al-Takfir wa Al-Hijrah, and the Islamic Liberation Party (Hizb Al Tahrir Al Islami).

Egyptian officials have been highly successful in their efforts to combat terrorism at home. Perpetrators have traditionally been prosecuted to the full extent of the law in Egypt. There has not been an attack against a target there since August 1998. Egyptian authorities arrested scores of alleged members of terrorist organizations throughout 2003 and 2004. As part of a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy, in 2002 and 2003, Egyptian authorities also released as many as 1,000 IG members who, in accord with a 1999 cease-fire, had renounced the use of violence. The Egyptian government has also been cooperative with international efforts to combat terrorism. Egypt is party to nine of the twelve protocols and conventions pertaining to terrorism as well as a key supporter of the U.S war against terrorism and the steps that America is implementing in the reconstruction of Iraq's central government. Domestically, Egypt extended emergency legislation in 2006 to combat terror threats at home.

On Feb. 29, 2012, a top al-Qaida militant was arrested in Egypt. Saif al-Adel, an Egyptian who achieved a high rank in the terrorist enclave, al-Qaida, following the death of Osama bin Ladin, was arrested when he arrived from Pakistan at the airport in the Egyptian capital of Cairo. Saif al-Adel -- who has used the alias, Mohammed Ibrahim Makkawi -- has been on the "most wanted" list of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for years since the 1998 bombings of the

American embassies in Tanzania and Kenya.

Update on Insurgencies and Terrorism:

Since the ousting of President Mohammed Morsi by the Egyptian military in 2013, the new military-backed government of Egypt has carried out a purge of the hardline Muslim Brotherhood, and in response, an Islamist insurgency has plagued Egypt's Sinai. These attacks -- claimed by Sinai Province, Islamic State's Egypt wing -- were the latest manifestation of this violent Islamist insurgency. However, in the aftermath of the January 2015 attacks that killed so many security officers, Egyptian President Fattah al-Sisi promised a harsh response and urged Egyptians to prepare for a long fight against the Islamist insurgency.

The crash of a Russian airliner in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula in October 2015 resulted in the deaths of all 224 persons on board. The Russian Metrojet Flight KG9268 departed the Red Sea resort city of Sharm-el-Shekh and was bound for the Russian city of St. Petersburg but crashed before the tourists and flight crew could arrive at their destination. The notorious terror group, Islamic State, claimed responsibility for the downing of the flight but Egyptian officials dismissed the claim on the basis of their belief that the terror group did not have the capability to bring down a jet. The Russian government was, likewise, reticent to accept terrorism as explanation. Nevertheless, both the United States and the United Kingdom made clear that intelligence pointed to a bomb being planted on the aircraft and exploding shortly after taking off from Sharm-el-Sheikh. With an affiliate of Islamic State active in the Egyptian Sinai in recent years, and with intelligence pointing in the direction of terrorism, that group's claim of responsibility was being viewed by the countries of the West as credible. The international dimension of the tragedy catapulted the global security threat posed by Islamic State to new heights.

Highlights of the developments in 2015 alone related to Islamist terrorists leading up to the October 2015 Russian airplane jet crash --

- In late January 2015, a bombing at a military compound in Egypt's restive North Sinai province left at least 30 people dead -- many of them military personnel -- and scores more wounded
- In a separate attack, an army major was shot to death and six others were wounded at a checkpoint in Rafah close to the border with the Gaza Strip
- A third incident involved a roadside bombing in Suez that left a police officer dead.
- One the anniversary of the 2011 Nile Revolution that resulted in the end of the regime of Hosni Mubarak, celebrations turned deadly
- In February 2015 a bomb exploded in Egypt's second largest city of Alexandria yielding five casualties
- In the same period, clashes erupted in the Cairo suburb of Matariya between security forces and

members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

- In mid-February 2015, more than 20 Coptic Christians from Egypt were brutally killed in Libya at the hands of Islamic State
- In response, Egypt launched a campaign against Islamic State satellite targets in Libya -- from terror training camps and sites to weapons depots in the city of Derna
- In June 2015, Prosecutor General Hisham Barakat responsible for several anti-terrorism measures was assassinated in a car bomb carried out by Islamists
- In July 2015, Islamic terrorists carried out a car bomb attack outside the Italian consulate in Cairo killing at least one person
- In August 2015, Islamic militants planted a bomb at a state security building in Shubra Al-Khaima; the explosion wounded 30 people wounded, some of whom were police officers
- In the same period, President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi approved a slate of harsh anti-terrorism laws intended to curb extremism, militancy, and Jihadism
- In October 2015, a Russian jet traveling from the resort town of Sharm-el-Sheikh crashed in the Sinai; U.K and U.S. intelligence attributed the crash to terrorism at the hands of Islamic State

While critics including the human rights group, Amnesty International, have said that Egypt's counter-terrorism strategies are intended to silence and suppress dissent, the fact of the matter was that terrorism was on the rise in Egypt. The latest manifestation of that terrorism came in the form of the crash of Russian Metrojet Flight KG9268 and was believed to be the work of the terror group, Islamic State. The international dimension of the tragedy catapulted the global security threat posed by Islamic State to new heights.

Editor's Note:

Ultimately, it is to be determined if the democratic ambitions of the Egyptian people will be realized. The "Nile Revolution" in 2011 -- a key development in the so-called "Arab Spring" -- had resulted in the exit of the key figure of the Mubarak "old guard," with possibilities ripe for a reformist agenda. This historic moment of change in Egypt was achieved by the people -- not with the typical weapons of conflict and confrontation, but with relentless determination, via the Internet and telecommunications devices, which were used as organizing mechanisms to advance grassroots transformation.

As the spirit of regional unrest transfixed the region, the final chapter in this story was yet to be written. That being said, the post-colonial structure of the Arab world in the Maghreb and the Middle East would be affected by the pro-democracy wave washing over the region. Ultimately, Egypt in 2011 had traversed a similar path as Tunisia and Libya, with regime change simply opening the door to further transformational action. Actual change, though, has been harder to accomplish due to the entrenched dynamics of power. The result has been a sense of anger and frustration by the people that the transformations sought have not yet been achieved, thus driving

them back into the streets to register their discontent.

The people of the region have been explicit in expressing their high expectations that actual policy reforms will ensue, that greater freedom will win the day, and that rule by the prevailing political elites in Arab countries will end. Nevertheless, as has been seen by similar popular uprisings that brought down regimes in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan (notably out of the Middle East but still subject to post-uprising political discontent), celebration today can often be followed by disappointment and disillusionment tomorrow over the slow pace of change.

The important parliamentary elections and landmark presidential elections of 2012 offered Egypt a pathway to realizing its democratic ambitions. However, the autocratic and pro-Islamist stances taken by Egypt's new President Mohammed Morsi threatened to -- at best -- set up a power battle between the executive and judicial branches of government, and -- at worst -- reverse the democratic and progressive gains made in the immediate aftermath of the "Nile Revolution." The economic crisis in 2013 significantly pushed the country to the brink of default -- with deleterious effects in the offing as a result. Not surprisingly, a fresh "Rebellion," known as Tamarod, emerged in mid-2013, followed by the military takeover in which Morsi was ousted from office. It was clear that Egypt's revolutionary path was not yet over. Indeed, the events of 2013, initiated by the General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and the military, could be viewed either as a short-circuiting of the people-powered movement -- or -- another chapter in the same story of transformation in Egypt.

In 2014, a new constitution was ratified and Sisi garnered an overwhelming victory at the polls thanks to a citizenry weary of turbulence and turmoil. By the start of 2015, former President Hosni Mubarak was cleared of the charges against him. It was clear that the Egyptian citizenry was less interested in the Mubarak factor and much more concerned with stability and moving the country forward.

Defense Forces

Military Data

Military Branches:

Army, Navy, Air Force, Air Defense Command

Eligible age to enter service:

18; Voluntary enlistment possible from age 16

Mandatory Service Terms:

18-36 months for conscripted service, followed by a 9-year reserve obligation

Manpower in general population-fit for military service:

males age 16-49: 18,060,543

females age 16-49: 17,244,838

Manpower reaching eligible age annually:

Males: 783,405

Females: 748,647

Military Expenditures-Percent of GDP:

1.76%

Chapter 3

Economic Overview

Economic Overview

Overview

Egypt is the most populous country in the Arab world, and the second most populous in Africa behind Nigeria. Its economy is the second largest in the Arab world -- following only Saudi Arabia. The country is a significant producer of oil and is a rapidly growing gas producer. The Egyptian economy is highly dependent on tourism revenues, oil and gas exports, remittances from Egyptian workers abroad, and revenue from the Suez Canal tolls. In recent years, Egypt's economic performance has been impressive as a result of the implementation of a broad range of economic reform programs. Reforms have included the liberalization of foreign trade, investment, the exchange market, and privatization of state entities, as well as measures to strengthen bank balance sheets and banking supervision. A favorable external environment has also supported the good performance.

Sound macroeconomic management and reforms implemented since 2004 have strengthened the resilience of the Egyptian economy. As a result, the country weathered the global economic crisis relatively well, and financial contagion was contained reflecting its limited integration into the global financial markets. The government's prompt fiscal and monetary responses also helped cushion the impact of the global crisis, with additional infrastructure expenditures providing a targeted and temporary stimulus. Real GDP growth declined only moderately in 2009, on the strength of consumption spending as well as production in the construction, communications and trade sectors. As the recovery gains strength and growth having further picked up recently, it is important for the government to shift policies back toward fiscal consolidation. As inflation still remains high, a tightening monetary stance may be needed to prevent a build-up of inflationary pressures. Over the medium term, continued broad-based reforms are required to foster employment-generating growth, with the priorities of improving the investment climate and raising productivity.

The global financial crisis slowed the reform efforts. The budget deficit climbed to over 8 percent of GDP and Egypt's GDP growth slowed to 4.6 percent in 2009, predominately due to reduced growth in export-oriented sectors, including manufacturing and tourism, and Suez Canal revenues. In 2010, the government spent more on infrastructure and public projects, and exports drove GDP growth to more than 5 percent, and GDP growth in 2011 was not expected to bounce back to pre-global financial recession levels, when it stood at 7 percent. Indeed in 2011, the Egyptian government was turned upside down as the country's citizens banded together in an uprising of discontent (part of the "Arab Spring") that ultimately culminated in the February ousting of President Hosni Mubarak. In June 2011, the IMF reached a staff-level agreement with Egyptian

officials amounting to \$3 billion. But Egyptian authorities decided not to borrow abroad. Still, the IMF said it remained committed to helping Egypt and its people through technical assistance and policy advice “to achieve their objectives of maintaining social cohesion, preserving macroeconomic stability, and moving the economy on a path that leads to high and more inclusive medium-term growth and employment.” In general it was the IMF’s hope that the revolution that had taken place would unleash Egypt’s huge economic potential by promoting greater inclusiveness and transparency, and enhancing governance. However, by October 2011, many workers were still suffering as investors had fled the country after the unrest, which caused the economy to nosedive. The central bank's reserves dropped by about \$12 billion from early in the year to \$24 billion in September. As such, Egypt was experiencing a fresh wave of worker unrest that the military-backed government was not attempting to suppress forcibly. There were fears that another uprising was imminent. For the year, Egypt's economy grew modestly and down from previous years, as the revolution frightened away tourists and foreign investors and prompted a wave of strikes.

In late June 2012, Mohamed Morsi was elected as the new president of Egypt. After his election, the number of suppliers was declining as oil traders had a difficult time obtaining letters of credit from banks. As such, the country was finding it increasingly difficult to import fuel with foreign banks and traders not providing loans and charging high premiums due to concerns over its financial and political stability. In August 2012, Egypt formally requested a US\$4.8 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund, who said it was “ready to help” and would send a technical team to Cairo to finalize details of possible financial assistance. The country was facing many challenges, including the need to restart growth and reduce deficits or else it risked the fate of debt-stricken Greece, which was dependent on a small pool of traders charging a great deal of money for supplies. Christine Lagarde, the IMF’s Managing Director, acknowledged that getting the country’s economy back on track and raising the living standards for all would not be an easy task. “The Egyptian people have legitimate expectations for a better life and greater social justice. We at the IMF stand ready to help,” she said. Overall, the government drew down foreign exchange reserves by more than 50 percent in 2011 and 2012 to support the Egyptian pound and the dearth of foreign financial assistance.

By November 2013, Egypt’s central bank predicted flat profits at Egypt’s banks for the year due to lower Treasury bill yields and a lack of lending opportunities. Egyptian banks saw their net profits climb by 30 percent in 2012 due to banks' heavy investment in government T-bills and bonds, whose yields spiked because of the state's worsening financial position in the wake of the February 2011 revolution which ousted President Hosni Mubarak. But after President Mohamed Morsi was ousted in July 2013, yields on T-bills dropped sharply, reducing banks' returns from them. Meanwhile, three Gulf Arab states began delivering on a pledged \$12 billion in aid to Egypt after the president was deposed.

Also in November 2013, Standard & Poor's Ratings raised its sovereign credit ratings for Egypt to

'B-/B' from 'CCC+/C' with a stable outlook, saying it expected the support from other countries to continue. The three main international ratings agencies had been cutting Egypt's credit rating steadily since the Jan. 25, 2011, uprising against Hosni Mubarak. According to Finance Minister Ahmed Galal, the move marked the first improvement in S&P's assessment since the agency began coverage of Egypt's finances in the 1990s. Meanwhile, the IMF said it remained ready to provide aid to Egypt when needed.

“We have some technical work already underway and we will be very ready and keen to support them when they think the time is right in terms of financing,” Masood Ahmed, the IMF's Director for the Middle East and North Africa, said at a news conference in Dubai.

After President Morsi's ousting in July 2013, Egypt entered another phase of political uncertainty. Economic growth moderated. In 2012/13, the resilience of private consumption and the munificence of government consumption kept the economy from sliding into recession, as investment and exports remained weak, according to the African Economic Outlook. Unceasing violent protests and political instability adversely affected manufacturing, trade and tourism. Only traditional sectors such as agriculture and mining remained relatively unscathed.

The economic outlook for 2014 was overall weak but began to look up as the year went on. Growth was expected to remain fragile, the fiscal deficit unsustainably high, and public debt in excess of 100 percent of GDP, as Egypt continued to implement expansionary macroeconomic policies with the help of aid from the Gulf countries. Against the backdrop of mounting political unrest and insecurity, socioeconomic conditions continued to worsen with a rising unemployment rate, especially among youth (39 percent of the 20-24 age group are unemployed), and rural-urban income disparities remain wide.

The approach of a new Constitution in January 2014 was a key milestone of the transition roadmap issued in July 2013. On the plus side, international credit rating agencies recently took a favorable view of Egypt's economic outlook because of the massive inflow of funds from the Gulf. And, in September 2014, Reuters reported that Egypt's tourist numbers should climb by 5 to 10 percent for the year as the security situation improved following the election of ex-army chief Fattah al-Sisi as president.

The economic outlook for 2015 was cautiously optimistic after the July 2014 presidential election with GDP growth in the fourth quarter up compared to the year prior. The successful outcome of the March Egypt Economic Development Conference secured over US\$60 billion worth of investments, loan agreements and grants and reinforced the government's commitment to continue the structural reforms and promote inclusive growth and restore back investor confidence. However, inflation remained high and the balanced budget was still projected to show a deficit in FY 2014/15. Also, the country's high outstanding public debt to GDP ratio and the unemployment rate were both up.

On the plus side, growth was being driven by the manufacturing sector, despite energy shortages and changes to the energy-subsidy scheme. In July 2015, Reuters reported that tourism revenue was up in the first half of 2015 compared to the year before. Projections for advance bookings indicated the full-year total for 2015 would be around 12 million tourists, below 2010's peak of 14.7 million but above 2014's 9.9 million.

Economic Performance

Egypt enjoyed rapid growth from 2006 to 2008 underpinned by large-scale foreign investment and the favorable external environment. In the face of weaker external demand as a result of the global economic crisis, the economy held up relatively well with real GDP growth declining in 2009 and 2010. Inflation picked up in 2007 and 2008, reflecting rising world commodity prices and strong domestic demand. After falling to single digit levels in the first half of 2009, inflation picked up again later in the year mainly due to supply shocks. By 2010, it had dropped again. Although the fiscal deficit narrowed in 2008 and 2009, it remained high before dropping in 2010.

According to CountryWatch estimated calculations for 2014:

Real GDP growth rate was: 2.3 percent

The fiscal deficit/surplus as percent of GDP (%) was: -10.2 percent

Inflation was measured at: 14.2 percent

Updated in 2015

**Please note that the figures in our Economic Performance section are estimates or forecasts based on IMF-based data that are formulated using CountryWatch models of analysis.*

Supplementary Sources: International Monetary Fund, African Economic Outlook and Reuters

Nominal GDP and Components

Nominal GDP and Components					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Nominal GDP (LCU billions)	1,371.10	1,575.50	1,753.30	1,997.60	2,310.46
Nominal GDP Growth Rate (%)	13.633	14.908	11.285	13.934	15.662
Consumption (LCU billions)	1,036.10	1,271.00	1,417.80	1,654.10	1,910.11
Government Expenditure (LCU billions)	157.000	179.000	204.800	240.000	277.145
Gross Capital Formation (LCU billions)	234.500	258.100	248.600	280.600	341.440
Exports of Goods & Services (LCU billions)	282.000	274.600	316.600	303.400	383.373
Imports of Goods & Services (LCU billions)	338.500	407.200	434.500	480.500	601.600

Population and GDP Per Capita

Population and GDP Per Capita					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Population, total (million)	80.400	82.400	84.700	86.700	88.434
Population growth (%)	2.124	2.488	2.791	2.361	2.000
Nominal GDP per Capita (LCU 1000s)	17,053.48	19,120.15	20,700.12	23,040.37	26,126.42

Real GDP and Inflation

Real GDP and Inflation					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Real Gross Domestic Product (LCU billions 2005 base)	1,541.24	1,575.55	1,608.61	1,643.40	1,712.33
Real GDP Growth Rate (%)	1.764	2.226	2.098	2.163	4.194
GDP Deflator (2005=100.0)	88.961	99.997	108.995	121.553	134.931
Inflation, GDP Deflator (%)	11.663	12.405	8.998	11.522	11.006

Government Spending and Taxation

Government Spending and Taxation					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Government Fiscal Budget (billions)	436.148	514.554	650.489	770.551	818.058
Fiscal Budget Growth Rate (percentage)	8.141	17.977	26.418	18.457	6.165
National Tax Rate Net of Transfers (%)	22.027	22.143	23.019	24.977	23.702
Government Revenues Net of Transfers (LCU billions)	302.009	348.864	403.589	498.948	547.634
Government Surplus(-) Deficit(+) (LCU billions)	-134.1390	-165.6900	-246.9000	-271.6030	-270.4240
Government Surplus(+) Deficit(-) (%GDP)	-9.7833	-10.5167	-14.0820	-13.5965	-11.7043

Money Supply, Interest Rates and Unemployment

Money Supply, Interest Rates and Unemployment					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Money and Quasi-Money (M2) (LCU billions)	1,038.87	1,167.16	1,387.69	1,606.50	1,858.12
Money Supply Growth Rate (%)	6.664	12.349	18.894	15.768	15.662
Lending Interest Rate (%)	11.033	12.000	12.292	11.708	15.779
Unemployment Rate (%)	10.379	12.372	12.992	13.365	12.881

Foreign Trade and the Exchange Rate

Foreign Trade and the Exchange Rate					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Official Exchange Rate (LCU/\$US)	5.820	6.007	6.460	6.974	7.539
Trade Balance NIPA (\$US billions)	-9.7085	-22.0724	-18.2520	-25.3943	-28.9459
Trade Balance % of GDP	-4.1208	-8.4164	-6.7245	-8.8656	-9.4452
Total Foreign Exchange Reserves (\$US billions)	18.638	15.672	16.536	14.927	34.841

Data in US Dollars

Data in US Dollars					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Nominal GDP (\$US billions)	235.598	262.256	271.427	286.435	306.463
Exports (\$US billions)	48.456	45.710	49.013	43.504	50.851
Imports (\$US billions)	58.165	67.782	67.265	68.899	79.797

Energy Consumption and Production Standard Units

Energy Consumption and Production Standard Units					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Petroleum Consumption (TBDP)	709.729	742.647	752.000	813.222	848.926
Petroleum Production (TBDP)	717.793	704.774	691.298	649.897	650.853
Petroleum Net Exports (TBDP)	8.064	-37.8728	-60.7024	-163.3248	-198.0727
Natural Gas Consumption (bcf)	1,792.24	1,876.64	1,861.81	1,795.06	2,009.84
Natural Gas Production (bcf)	2,165.51	2,147.06	2,038.32	1,695.69	1,754.55
Natural Gas Net Exports (bcf)	373.271	270.420	176.516	-99.3695	-255.2928
Coal Consumption (1000s st)	1,699.76	1,821.02	755.865	2,936.34	3,060.18
Coal Production (1000s st)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Net					

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Exports (1000s st)	-1699.7641	-1821.0184	-755.8649	-2936.3353	-3060.1770
Nuclear Production (bil kwh)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Hydroelectric Production (bil kwh)	12.805	13.224	12.805	13.482	13.715
Renewables Production (bil kwh)	1.880	1.497	1.600	1.784	1.754

Energy Consumption and Production QUADS

Energy Consumption and Production QUADS					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Petroleum Consumption (Quads)	1.515	1.586	1.606	1.736	1.813
Petroleum Production (Quads)	1.532	1.515	1.481	1.419	1.111
Petroleum Net Exports (Quads)	0.0170	-0.0706	-0.1248	-0.3170	-0.7019
Natural Gas Consumption (Quads)	1.828	1.914	1.899	1.831	2.050
Natural Gas Production (Quads)	2.207	2.183	2.075	1.754	1.532
Natural Gas Net Exports (Quads)	0.3786	0.2687	0.1758	-0.0766	-0.5183
Coal Consumption (Quads)	0.0340	0.0364	0.0151	0.0587	0.0612
Coal Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Net Exports (Quads)	-0.0340	-0.0364	-0.0151	-0.0587	-0.0612
Nuclear Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Hydroelectric Production (Quads)	0.1280	0.1322	0.1280	0.1348	0.1371
Renewables Production (Quads)	0.0188	0.0150	0.0160	0.0178	0.0175

World Energy Price Summary

World Energy Price Summary					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Petroleum-WTI (\$/bbl)	95.054	94.159	97.943	93.112	48.709
Natural Gas-Henry Hub (\$/mmbtu)	3.999	2.752	3.729	4.369	2.614
Coal Thermal-Australian (\$/mt)	121.448	96.364	84.562	70.130	57.511

CO2 Emissions

CO2 Emissions					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Petroleum Based (mm mt C)	33.857	35.427	35.873	38.794	40.497
Natural Gas Based (mm mt C)	29.077	30.447	30.206	29.123	32.608
Coal Based (mm mt C)	0.9741	1.044	0.4332	1.683	1.754
Total CO2 Emissions (mm mt C)	63.908	66.917	66.512	69.600	74.858

Agriculture Consumption and Production

Agriculture Consumption and Production					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Corn Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	13,922.08	14,150.84	13,725.90	11,443.09	11,463.76
Corn Production (1000 metric tons)	6,863.73	8,069.03	7,924.18	5,888.73	5,488.33
Corn Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-7058.3549	-6081.8132	-5801.7242	-5554.3628	-5975.4275
Soybeans Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	1,742.11	1,840.20	1,604.25	1,540.40	1,498.02
Soybeans Production (1000 metric tons)	29.824	25.953	32.558	24.596	21.896
Soybeans Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-1712.2859	-1814.2511	-1571.6886	-1515.8090	-1476.1230

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Rice Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	5,674.56	5,910.79	5,723.77	5,999.85	5,860.89
Rice Production (1000 metric tons)	5,678.85	5,910.99	5,721.60	5,997.64	5,811.57
Rice Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	4.298	0.2007	-2.1730	-2.2088	-49.3212
Coffee Total Consumption (metric tons)	18,016.00	15,441.00	30,416.00	32,565.98	33,331.59
Coffee Production (metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coffee Net Exports (metric tons)	-18016.0000	-15441.0000	-30416.0000	-32565.9780	-33331.5931
Cocoa Beans Total Consumption (metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Cocoa Beans Production (metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Cocoa Beans Net Exports	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
(metric tons)					
Wheat Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	18,204.52	20,223.24	19,748.58	19,468.51	17,773.21
Wheat Production (1000 metric tons)	8,388.45	8,842.04	9,445.38	9,310.40	8,144.22
Wheat Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-9816.0721	-11381.2017	-10303.2024	-10158.1033	-9628.9911

World Agriculture Pricing Summary

World Agriculture Pricing Summary					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Corn Pricing Summary (\$/metric ton)	291.684	298.417	259.389	192.881	169.750
Soybeans Pricing Summary (\$/metric ton)	540.667	591.417	538.417	491.771	390.417
Rice Pricing Summary (\$/metric ton)	458.558	525.071	473.989	425.148	386.033
Coffee Pricing Summary (\$/kilogram)	5.976	4.111	3.076	4.424	3.526
Cocoa Beans Pricing Summary (\$/kilogram)	2.980	2.392	2.439	3.062	3.135
Wheat Pricing Summary (\$/metric ton)	316.264	313.242	312.248	284.895	203.177

Metals Consumption and Production

Metals Consumption and Production					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Copper Consumption (1000 mt)	182,533.75	102,217.10	83,769.33	62,513.20	59,374
Copper Production (1000 mt)	2,976.89	2,971.71	2,983.49	3,196.22	2,813.
Copper Net Exports (1000 mt)	-179556.8677	-99245.3850	-80785.8338	-59316.9842	-56561.2
Zinc Consumption (1000 mt)	13,750.22	11,500.30	19,336.24	21,068.40	20,743
Zinc Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.000
Zinc Exports (1000 mt)	-13750.2160	-11500.3000	-19336.2410	-21068.4020	-20743.7
Lead Consumption (1000 mt)	331.156	3,746.28	7,161.40	10,242.59	9,424.
Lead Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.000

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Lead Exports (1000 mt)	-331.1560	-3746.2755	-7161.3950	-10242.5932	-9424.9
Tin Consumption (1000 mt)	190.026	102.000	261.706	177.826	179.4
Tin Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.000
Tin Exports (1000 mt)	-190.0260	-102.0000	-261.7060	-177.8259	-179.48
Nickel Consumption (1000 mt)	251.325	176.208	198.027	185.268	161.8
Nickel Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.000
Nickel Exports (1000 mt)	-251.3250	-176.2080	-198.0270	-185.2680	-161.88
Gold Consumption (kg)	62,921.81	163,392.28	263,862.76	26,722.70	25,781
Gold Production (kg)	14,305.77	16,397.46	19,613.20	28,473.34	28,269
Gold Exports (kg)	-48616.0413	-146994.8237	-244249.5629	1,750.64	2,487.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Silver Consumption (mt)	28,550.42	28,550.42	28,465.00	30,080.00	27,106
Silver Production (mt)	9,004.30	9,447.91	9,600.65	9,935.45	9,130.
Silver Exports (mt)	-19546.1211	-19102.5138	-18864.3467	-20144.5526	-17975.3

World Metals Pricing Summary

World Metals Pricing Summary					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Copper (\$/mt)	8,828.19	7,962.35	7,332.10	6,863.40	5,510.46
Zinc (\$/mt)	2,193.90	1,950.41	1,910.26	2,160.97	1,931.68
Tin (\$/mt)	26,053.68	21,125.99	22,282.80	21,898.87	16,066.63
Lead (\$/mt)	2,400.81	2,064.64	2,139.79	2,095.46	1,787.82
Nickel (\$/mt)	22,910.36	17,547.55	15,031.80	16,893.38	11,862.64
Gold (\$/oz)	1,569.21	1,669.52	1,411.46	1,265.58	1,160.66
Silver (\$/oz)	35.224	31.137	23.850	19.071	15.721

Economic Performance Index

Economic Performance Index

The Economic Performance rankings are calculated by CountryWatch's editorial team, and are based on criteria including sustained economic growth, monetary stability, current account deficits, budget surplus, unemployment and structural imbalances. Scores are assessed from 0 to 100 using this aforementioned criteria as well as CountryWatch's proprietary economic research data and models.

	Bank stability risk	Monetary/ Currency stability	Government Finances	Empl./ Unempl.	Econ.GNP growth or decline/ forecast
	0 - 100	0 - 100	0 - 100	0 - 100	%
North Americas					
Canada	92	69	35	38	3.14%
United States	94	76	4	29	3.01%
Western Europe					
Austria	90	27	30	63	1.33%
Belgium	88	27	19	23	1.15%
Cyprus	81	91	16	80	-0.69%
Denmark	97	70	45	78	1.20%
Finland	89	27	41	33	1.25%

France	87	27	18	27	1.52%
Germany	86	27	22	21	1.25%
Greece	79	27	5	24	-2.00%
Iceland	90	17	2	34	-3.04%
Italy	85	27	37	24	0.84%
Ireland	92	27	11	10	-1.55%
Luxembourg	99	27	28	66	2.08%
Malta	77	27	41	51	0.54%
Netherlands	91	27	26	74	1.30%
Norway	98	44	10	76	1.08%
Portugal	77	27	13	20	0.29%
Spain	83	27	9	3	-0.41%
Sweden	94	72	54	32	1.23%
Switzerland	97	86	55	77	1.53%
United Kingdom	85	12	9	37	1.34%
Central and Eastern Europe					
Albania	44	60	33	6	2.30%
Armenia	45	59	49	30	1.80%

Azerbaijan	56	4	84	99	2.68%
Belarus	59	21	83	98	2.41%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	34	68	69	N/A	0.50%
Bulgaria	58	75	88	49	0.20%
Croatia	69	68	94	9	0.18%
Czech Republic	80	89	29	70	1.67%
Estonia	72	90	66	92	0.80%
Georgia	36	60	53	56	2.00%
Hungary	70	66	26	54	-0.16%
Latvia	67	100	65	44	-3.97%
Lithuania	65	91	87	79	-1.65%
Macedonia (FYR)	53	69	56	2	2.03%
Moldova	23	36	81	67	2.50%
Poland	74	74	38	12	2.72%
Romania	62	56	70	62	0.75%
Russia	73	18	90	8	4.00%
Serbia	48	49	52	5	1.97%

Montenegro	39	27	73	1	-1.70%
Slovak Republic	80	62	30	14	4.06%
Slovenia	81	27	36	65	1.12%
Ukraine	41	11	57	N/A	3.68%
Africa					
Algeria	57	18	96	7	4.55%
Angola	49	1	97	N/A	7.05%
Benin	19	91	20	N/A	3.22%
Botswana	68	58	76	N/A	6.33%
Burkina Faso	16	91	13	N/A	4.41%
Burundi	2	91	6	N/A	3.85%
Cameroon	26	91	91	N/A	2.58%
Cape Verde	52	87	4	N/A	4.96%
Central African Republic	9	91	32	N/A	3.18%
Chad	22	91	89	N/A	4.42%
Congo	52	87	87	N/A	12.13%
Côte d'Ivoire	25	91	82	28	2.98%
Dem. Republic					

Congo	4	91	47	N/A	5.44%
Djibouti	31	76	50	N/A	4.47%
Egypt	37	20	24	69	5.01%
Equatorial Guinea	82	91	85	N/A	0.94%
Eritrea	1	3	1	18	1.81%
Ethiopia	6	45	8	N/A	6.96%
Gabon	64	91	96	N/A	5.36%
Gambia	8	48	86	N/A	4.82%
Ghana	9	11	69	N/A	4.50%
Guinea	10	7	91	N/A	3.03%
Guinea-Bissau	5	91	46	N/A	3.47%
Kenya	20	41	59	N/A	4.11%
Lesotho	13	40	12	N/A	2.98%
Liberia	12	73	74	N/A	5.92%
Libya	73	2	94	N/A	5.22%
Madagascar	4	22	24	N/A	-1.02%
Malawi	7	25	55	N/A	5.96%
Mali	20	91	82	N/A	5.12%

Mauritania	15	13	93	N/A	4.58%
Mauritius	65	52	56	55	4.10%
Morocco	37	72	48	26	3.23%
Mozambique	12	23	71	N/A	6.45%
Namibia	40	39	62	N/A	1.70%
Niger	10	91	21	N/A	4.41%
Nigeria	30	6	61	N/A	6.98%
Rwanda	21	40	68	N/A	5.39%
Sao Tome & Principe	1	61	100	N/A	3.40%
Senegal	24	91	63	N/A	3.44%
Seychelles	60	67	97	N/A	4.01%
Sierra Leone	5	10	39	N/A	4.77%
Somalia	2	38	59	N/A	3.19%
South Africa	61	37	70	N/A	2.59%
Sudan	16	5	73	N/A	5.52%
Swaziland	32	44	79	N/A	1.09%
Tanzania	15	45	32	N/A	6.17%
Togo	8	91	92	N/A	2.56%

Tunisia	50	61	44	39	4.00%
Uganda	11	17	54	N/A	5.59%
Zambia	29	20	49	N/A	5.84%
Zimbabwe	0	8	16	N/A	2.24%
South and Central America					
Argentina	66	3	80	36	3.50%
Belize	47	76	80	N/A	1.00%
Bolivia	32	51	61	81	3.99%
Brazil	71	47	78	11	5.50%
Chile	78	25	92	73	4.72%
Columbia	47	52	34	47	2.25%
Costa Rica	60	42	39	57	3.45%
Ecuador	43	76	75	64	2.51%
El Salvador	35	76	67	N/A	1.04%
Guatemala	46	59	58	N/A	2.52%
Honduras	27	47	58	N/A	2.00%
Mexico	69	42	52	61	4.07%
Nicaragua	23	49	42	N/A	1.75%

Panama	66	76	72	45	5.00%
Paraguay	35	46	66	16	5.27%
Peru	59	66	75	22	6.33%
Suriname	58	26	81	59	4.02%
Uruguay	70	26	27	N/A	5.71%
Venezuela	55	1	28	13	-2.63%
Caribbean					
Antigua & Barbuda	72	76	15	N/A	-2.01%
Bahamas	74	76	45	87	-0.50%
Barbados	67	76	33	15	-0.50%
Bermuda	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cuba	45	76	18	95	0.25%
Dominica	53	76	65	N/A	1.40%
Dominican Republic	54	39	43	4	3.50%
Grenada	63	76	48	N/A	0.80%
Guyana	28	56	17	N/A	4.36%
Haiti	11	27	89	N/A	-8.50%
Jamaica	42	9	85	19	-0.28%

St Lucia	55	76	67	N/A	1.14%
St Vincent & Grenadines	49	76	95	N/A	0.50%
Trinidad & Tobago	82	37	77	72	2.13%
Middle East					
Bahrain	84	76	62	91	3.48%
Iran	51	19	40	58	3.01%
Iraq	48	9	8	N/A	7.27%
Israel	87	62	12	48	3.20%
Jordan	41	51	3	N/A	4.10%
Kuwait	96	4	99	N/A	3.10%
Lebanon	63	54	2	N/A	6.00%
Oman	76	16	88	N/A	4.71%
Qatar	99	16	83	N/A	18.54%
Saudi Arabia	76	8	98	N/A	3.70%
Syria	61	24	40	N/A	5.00%
Turkey	75	23	27	60	5.20%
United Arab Emirates	96	24	98	94	1.29%

Yemen	28	2	78	N/A	7.78%
Asia					
Afghanistan	17	70	74	N/A	8.64%
Bangladesh	13	43	25	N/A	5.38%
Bhutan	24	55	5	N/A	6.85%
Brunei	78	19	99	75	0.48%
Cambodia	18	67	42	N/A	4.77%
China	54	90	19	68	11.03%
Hong Kong	89	76	14	82	5.02%
India	31	38	34	35	8.78%
Indonesia	42	46	37	31	6.00%
Japan	88	89	6	71	1.90%
Kazakhstan	62	13	76	42	2.40%
Korea North	18	65	23	N/A	1.50%
Korea South	83	63	22	85	4.44%
Kyrgyz Republic	24	15	84	88	4.61%
Laos	17	54	7	N/A	7.22%
Macao	91	76	14	82	3.00%

Malaysia	68	65	44	90	4.72%
Maldives	44	55	17	N/A	3.45%
Mongolia	33	5	77	93	7.22%
Myanmar	3	41	72	N/A	5.26%
Nepal	3	14	25	N/A	2.97%
Pakistan	19	15	31	41	3.00%
Papua New Guinea	75	50	11	N/A	7.96%
Philippines	30	48	53	43	3.63%
Singapore	93	75	63	40	5.68%
Sri Lanka	38	22	10	N/A	5.50%
Taiwan	84	88	35	89	6.50%
Tajikistan	6	6	60	97	4.00%
Thailand	56	64	90	96	5.46%
Turkmenistan	51	53	68	N/A	12.00%
Uzbekistan	40	10	60	100	8.00%
Vietnam	25	12	20	N/A	6.04%
Pacific					
Australia	96	63	31	46	2.96%

Fiji	46	53	3	N/A	2.06%
Marshall Islands	27	76	46	N/A	1.08%
Micronesia (Fed. States)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New Caledonia	96	73	51	52	2.00%
New Zealand	98	73	51	52	2.00%
Samoa	34	88	64	N/A	-2.77%
Solomon Islands	14	71	1	N/A	3.36%
Tonga	26	57	38	N/A	0.60%
Vanuatu	33	58	47	N/A	3.80%

Source:

CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

This material was produced in 2010; it is subject to updating in 2012.

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Chapter 4

Investment Overview

Foreign Investment Climate

Background

Occupying the northeast corner of the African continent, Egypt is bisected by the highly fertile Nile valley, where most economic activity takes place. Egypt's economy was highly centralized during the rule of former President Gamal Abdel NASSER but opened up considerably under former Presidents Anwar EL-SADAT and Mohamed Hosni MUBARAK. Cairo from 2004 to 2008 aggressively pursued economic reforms to attract foreign investment and facilitate GDP growth. The global financial crisis slowed the reform efforts and increased the budget deficit. Despite the relatively high levels of economic growth over the past few years, living conditions for the average Egyptian remain poor.

Foreign Investment Assessment

Openness to Foreign Investment

Increased foreign investment continues to be at the heart of the government of Egypt's (GOE) economic strategy for attaining and sustaining high economic growth rates. In October 1999, President Mubarak appointed a new cabinet under the leadership of Prime Minister Atef Ebeid with the mandate to bring fresh impetus to Egypt's economic reform program. One of the most significant organizational moves by the new prime minister was to merge the Ministry of Economy with the Ministry of Foreign Trade. The General Agency for Free Zones and Investment (GAFI) reports to the new Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade. In a development highlighting the government's focus on developing Egypt's information technology sector, the Ministry for Communication and Information Technology was formed.

The General Authority for Free Zones and Investment (GAFI), which was incorporated into the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade in October 1999, has the primary responsibility for regulating foreign investment. The Egyptian government implemented Law 8 of 1997 to facilitate foreign investment by creating a unified and clear package of guarantees and incentives. Remaining obstacles to investment and business include:

- excessive bureaucracy;
- a shortage of skilled mid-level management;
- periodic shortfalls in credit facilities;

- inadequate intellectual property rights (IPR) protection and enforcement;
- and non-tariff trade barriers.

In addition, pharmaceutical prices remain controlled, although the government has decontrolled prices on other industrial products. The government uses a standard cost-plus formula to determine pharmaceutical prices for new-to-market products. Although foreign and Egyptian pharmaceutical companies argue that the price control system constrains development of the sector, it is a politically popular policy likely to remain in effect for the foreseeable future. Most agricultural product price controls have been removed except on cigarettes, rationed edible oil, bread and rationed sugar.

Egypt's privatization program broadened in the past years with the government opening maritime, telecommunications, and infrastructure sectors to the private sector on a build-own-operate-transfer (BOOT) basis. In addition to awarding three BOOT contracts for power generation in 1998 and 1999, the Egyptian Electrical Authority (EEA) named a consortium led by Merrill Lynch and the Egyptian investment bank EFG-Hermes to evaluate the country's seven state-owned power generation and distribution companies for privatization. These assets have an estimated aggregate value of \$14 billion.

More private sector companies, long known as closed or family businesses, are now expanding and going public, making bond or stock offerings to the public. This development represents an area of opportunity for domestic and overseas investors. Foreign investors are allowed to purchase stocks and bonds of private firms, and there are no restrictions or limits on the percentage of shares which a foreign party may acquire.

Transparency of Regulatory System

The streamlining of Egyptian investment procedures during recent years represents constructive steps towards improving Egypt's business environment. However, there is still room for improvement. Significant obstacles continue to hinder private sector investment in Egypt. They include the often arbitrary imposition of bureaucratic impediments and the length of time that must be spent resolving them. Import clearance remains difficult, as several ministries have overlapping regulatory authority. In addition, quality control is a major issue for importers. Enforcement of health and safety regulations is uneven, and enforcement is complicated by a multiplicity of laws, agencies, and opinions. For example, at least four ministries regulate the operation of restaurants. Egypt's accounting system is not consistent with international norms.

In May 1998, the government passed Law 89 of 1998 as an amendment to the Tenders and Bidding Law 9 of 1983 to improve equality and transparency in government procurement. Key provisions of the new law include:

- a prohibition on transforming a bid into a tender (a main defect of Law 9);
- more transparency in the criteria for bid acceptance and rejection; equality among bidders, contractors and government agencies; more weight given to the technical aspects of a tender or bid;
- protection of contractor rights;
- reduction of insurance fees;
- immediate return of deposits once the government announces bid or tender results;
- the establishment of a Central Office for Complaint Resolution in the Ministry of Finance.

Labor Force

Total: 20.71 million estimated

By occupation: agriculture 32%, industry 17%, services 51%

Agriculture and Industry

Agriculture products: cotton, rice, corn, wheat, beans, fruits, vegetables; cattle, water buffalo, sheep, goats

Industries: textiles, food processing, tourism, chemicals, hydrocarbons, construction, cement, metals

Import Commodities and Partners

Commodities: machinery and equipment, foodstuffs, chemicals, wood products, fuels

Partners: US 13.7%, Germany 7.5%, Italy 7%, France 6.6%, China 4.8%, Saudi Arabia 4.3%

Export Commodities and Partners

Commodities: crude oil and petroleum products, cotton, textiles, metal products, chemicals

Partners: US 13.4%, Italy 12.3%, UK 8%, Germany 4.7%, France 4.6%

Telephone System

Telephones- main lines in use: 8,735,700

Telephones- mobile cellular: 5,797,500

General Assessment: large system; underwent extensive upgrading during 1990s and is reasonably modern; Internet access and cellular service are available

Domestic: principal centers at Alexandria, Cairo, Al Mansurah, Ismailia, Suez, and Tanta are connected by coaxial cable and microwave radio relay

International: country code - 20; satellite earth stations - 2 Intelsat (Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean), 1 Arabsat, and 1 Inmarsat; 5 coaxial submarine cables; tropospheric scatter to Sudan; microwave radio relay to Israel; a participant in Medarabtel and a signatory to Project Oxygen (a global submarine fiber-optic cable system)

Internet

Internet Hosts: 3,401

Internet users: 2.7 million

Roads, Airports, Ports and Harbors

Railways: 5,063 km

Highways: 64,000 km

Ports and harbors: Alexandria, Al Ghardaqah, Aswan, Asyut, Bur Safajah, Damietta, Marsa Matruh, Port Said, Suez

Airports: 87; w/paved runways: 72

Legal System and Considerations

Egypt's legal system is based on a combination of English common law, Islamic law, and Napoleonic codes. It has a judicial review by Supreme Court and Council of State (oversees validity of administrative decisions), and also accepts compulsory ICJ jurisdiction albeit with reservations.

Dispute Settlement

Egypt acceded to the International Convention for the Settlement of Investment Disputes in 1971. It is a member of the International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) which provides a framework for arbitration of investment disputes between the government of the host country and a foreign investor from another member state, provided that the parties agree to such arbitration. Without prejudice to Egyptian courts, Law 8 of 1997 recognizes the right of investors to settle disputes within the framework of bilateral agreements, the ICSID or through arbitration before the Regional Center for International Commercial Arbitration in Cairo.

Egypt's Dispute Settlement Law 27 of 1994 and its 1997 amendment provide a comprehensive framework for the arbitration of all domestic and international commercial disputes and limited challenges of arbitration award in court. Law 27 was amended in 1997 to include disputes between public enterprises and the private sector. A special order is required to challenge an arbitration

award and such orders are only granted if there is a strong case for successfully challenging the award.

In July 1999, the minister of justice issued a decree to establish a system of special courts for investment disputes. The decree calls for the development of a corps of judges specialized in investment matters.

Egypt adheres to the 1958 New York Convention on Enforcement of Arbitration Awards; the 1965 Washington Convention on the Settlement of Investment Disputes between States and the Nationals of Other States; and the 1974 Convention on the Settlement of Investment Disputes between the Arab States and Nationals of Other States.

Corruption Perception Ranking

See listing elsewhere in this Country Review, as reported by Transparency International, for Egypt's current ranking.

Cultural Considerations

Egypt is a conservative Muslim culture and Islamic behaviors and practices should be respected. For example, one should always be aware of how Islamic law, which is delineated in the Shari'a, is used as the basis for the legal and juridical structure in Islamic countries. While the violation of traditions may simply be rationalized as ignorance in other countries, they take on far greater meaning in countries where the Islamic religions textures all aspect of society and culture.

For More information see:

United States' State Department Commercial Guide

Foreign Investment Index

Foreign Investment Index

The Foreign Investment Index is a proprietary index measuring attractiveness to international investment flows. The Foreign Investment Index is calculated using an established methodology by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on a given country's economic stability (sustained economic growth, monetary stability, current account deficits, budget surplus), economic risk (risk of non-servicing of payments for goods or services, loans and trade-related finance, risk of sovereign default), business and investment climate (property rights, labor force and laws, regulatory transparency, openness to foreign investment, market conditions, and stability of

government). Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the lowest level of foreign investment viability, while a score of 10 marks the highest level of foreign investment viability, according to this proprietary index.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2
Albania	4.5
Algeria	6
Andorra	9
Angola	4.5-5
Antigua	8.5
Argentina	5
Armenia	5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9-9.5
Azerbaijan	5
Bahamas	9
Bahrain	7.5

Bangladesh	4.5
Barbados	9
Belarus	4
Belgium	9
Belize	7.5
Benin	5.5
Bhutan	4.5
Bolivia	4.5
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5
Botswana	7.5-8
Brazil	8
Brunei	7
Bulgaria	5.5
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5
Burundi	4
Cambodia	4.5
Cameroon	5

Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4
Chile	9
China	7.5
China: Hong Kong	8.5
China: Taiwan	8.5
Colombia	7
Comoros	4
Congo DRC	4
Congo RC	5
Costa Rica	8
Cote d'Ivoire	4.5
Croatia	7
Cuba	4.5
Cyprus	7
Czech Republic	8.5

Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	4.5
Dominica	6
Dominican Republic	6.5
East Timor	4.5
Ecuador	5.5
Egypt	4.5-5
El Salvador	6
Equatorial Guinea	4.5
Eritrea	3.5
Estonia	8
Ethiopia	4.5
Fiji	5
Finland	9
Former Yugoslav Rep. of Macedonia	5
France	9-9.5
Gabon	5.5
Gambia	5

Georgia	5
Germany	9-9.5
Ghana	5.5
Greece	5
Grenada	7.5
Guatemala	5.5
Guinea	3.5
Guinea-Bissau	3.5
Guyana	4.5
Haiti	4
Holy See (Vatican)	n/a
Hong Kong (China)	8.5
Honduras	5.5
Hungary	8
Iceland	8-8.5
India	8
Indonesia	5.5
Iran	4

Iraq	3
Ireland	8
Israel	8.5
Italy	8
Jamaica	5.5
Japan	9.5
Jordan	6
Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	5.5
Korea, North	1
Korea, South	9
Kosovo	4.5
Kuwait	8.5
Kyrgyzstan	4.5
Laos	4
Latvia	7
Lebanon	5

Lesotho	5.5
Liberia	3.5
Libya	3
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	7.5
Luxembourg	9-9.5
Madagascar	4.5
Malawi	4.5
Malaysia	8.5
Maldives	6.5
Mali	5
Malta	9
Marshall Islands	5
Mauritania	4.5
Mauritius	7.5-8
Mexico	6.5-7
Micronesia	5
Moldova	4.5-5

Monaco	9
Mongolia	5
Montenegro	5.5
Morocco	7.5
Mozambique	5
Namibia	7.5
Nauru	4.5
Nepal	4
Netherlands	9-9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	5
Niger	4.5
Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9-9.5
Oman	8
Pakistan	4
Palau	4.5-5
Panama	7

Papua New Guinea	5
Paraguay	6
Peru	6
Philippines	6
Poland	8
Portugal	7.5-8
Qatar	9
Romania	6-6.5
Russia	6
Rwanda	4
Saint Kitts and Nevis	8
Saint Lucia	8
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	7
Samoa	7
San Marino	8.5
Sao Tome and Principe	4.5-5
Saudi Arabia	7
Senegal	6

Serbia	6
Seychelles	5
Sierra Leone	4
Singapore	9.5
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8.5
Slovenia	8.5-9
Solomon Islands	5
Somalia	2
South Africa	8
Spain	7.5-8
Sri Lanka	5.5
Sudan	4
Suriname	5
Swaziland	4.5
Sweden	9.5
Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2.5
Tajikistan	4

Taiwan (China)	8.5
Tanzania	5
Thailand	7.5-8
Togo	4.5-5
Tonga	5.5-6
Trinidad and Tobago	8-8.5
Tunisia	6
Turkey	6.5-7
Turkmenistan	4
Tuvalu	7
Uganda	5
Ukraine	4.5-5
United Arab Emirates	8.5
United Kingdom	9
United States	9
Uruguay	6.5-7
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	6

Venezuela	5
Vietnam	5.5
Yemen	3
Zambia	4.5-5
Zimbabwe	3.5

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the global economic crisis (emerging in 2008) had affected many countries across the world, resulting in changes to their rankings. Among those countries affected were top tier economies, such as the [United Kingdom](#), [Iceland](#), [Switzerland](#) and [Austria](#). However, in all these cases, their rankings have moved back upward in the last couple of years as anxieties have eased. Other top tier countries, such as [Spain](#), [Portugal](#), [Ireland](#), and [Italy](#), suffered some effects due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. Greece, another euro zone nation, was also downgraded due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, Greece's position on the precipice of default incurred a sharper downgrade than the other four euro zone countries mentioned above. Cyprus' exposure to Greek bank yielded a downgrade in its case. Slovenia and [Latvia](#) have been slightly downgraded due to a mix of economic and political concerns but could easily be upgraded in a future assessment, should these concerns abate. Meanwhile, the crisis in eastern [Ukraine](#) fueled downgrades in that country and neighboring [Russia](#).

Despite the "trifecta of tragedy" in [Japan](#) in 2011 -- the earthquake, the ensuing tsunami, and the resulting nuclear crisis -- and the appreciable destabilization of the economic and political terrain therein, this country has only slightly been downgraded. Japan's challenges have been assessed to be transient, the government remains accountable, and there is little risk of default. Both [India](#) and China retain their rankings; [India](#) holds a slightly higher ranking than [China](#) due to its record of democratic representation and accountability.

There were shifts in opposite directions for [Mali](#) and [Nigeria](#) versus the [Central African Republic](#), [Burkina Faso](#), and [Burundi](#). [Mali](#) was slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. Likewise, a new government in [Nigeria](#) generated a slight upgrade as the country attempts to confront corruption, crime, and terrorism. But the [Central African Republic](#) was downgraded due to the

takeover of the government by Seleka rebels and the continued decline into lawlessness in that country. Likewise, the attempts by the leaders of [Burundi](#) and [Burkina Faso](#) to hold onto power by by-passing the constitution raised eyebrows and resulted in downgrades.

Political unrest in [Libya](#) and [Algeria](#) have contributed to a decision to marginally downgrade these countries as well. [Syria](#) incurred a sharper downgrade due to the devolution into de facto civil war and the dire security threat posed by Islamist terrorists. [Iraq](#) saw a similar downgrade as a result of the takeover of wide swaths of territory and the threat of genocide at the hands of Islamist terrorists. [Yemen](#), likewise, has been downgraded due to political instability at the hands of secessionists, terrorists, Houthi rebels, and the intervention of external parties. Conversely, [Egypt](#) and [Tunisia](#) saw slight upgrades as their political environments stabilize.

At the low end of the spectrum, devolving security conditions and/or economic crisis have resulted in countries like [Pakistan](#), [Afghanistan](#), [Somalia](#), and [Zimbabwe](#) maintaining their low ratings.

The [United States](#) continues to retain its previous slight downgrade due to the enduring threat of default surrounding the debt ceiling in that country, matched by a conflict-ridden political climate. In the case of [Mexico](#), there is limited concern about default, but increasing alarm over the security situation in that country and the government's ability to contain it. In [Argentina](#), a default to bond holders resulted in a downgrade to that country. Finally, a small but significant upgrade was attributed to [Cuba](#) due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the United States.

Source:

CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

2015

Corruption Perceptions Index

Corruption Perceptions Index

Transparency International: [Corruption Perceptions Index](#)

Editor's Note:

Transparency International's [Corruption Perceptions Index](#) is a composite index which ranks countries in terms of the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials. This index indicates the views of national and international business people and analysts about the levels of corruption in each country. The highest (and best) level of transparency is indicated by the number, 10. The lower (and worse) levels of transparency are indicated by lower numbers.

Rank	Country/Territory	CPI 2009 Score	Surveys Used	Confidence Range
1	New Zealand	9.4	6	9.1 - 9.5
2	Denmark	9.3	6	9.1 - 9.5
3	Singapore	9.2	9	9.0 - 9.4
3	Sweden	9.2	6	9.0 - 9.3
5	Switzerland	9.0	6	8.9 - 9.1
6	Finland	8.9	6	8.4 - 9.4
6	Netherlands	8.9	6	8.7 - 9.0
8	Australia	8.7	8	8.3 - 9.0
8	Canada	8.7	6	8.5 - 9.0
8	Iceland	8.7	4	7.5 - 9.4
11	Norway	8.6	6	8.2 - 9.1
12	Hong Kong	8.2	8	7.9 - 8.5
12	Luxembourg	8.2	6	7.6 - 8.8

14	Germany	8.0	6	7.7 - 8.3
14	Ireland	8.0	6	7.8 - 8.4
16	Austria	7.9	6	7.4 - 8.3
17	Japan	7.7	8	7.4 - 8.0
17	United Kingdom	7.7	6	7.3 - 8.2
19	United States	7.5	8	6.9 - 8.0
20	Barbados	7.4	4	6.6 - 8.2
21	Belgium	7.1	6	6.9 - 7.3
22	Qatar	7.0	6	5.8 - 8.1
22	Saint Lucia	7.0	3	6.7 - 7.5
24	France	6.9	6	6.5 - 7.3
25	Chile	6.7	7	6.5 - 6.9
25	Uruguay	6.7	5	6.4 - 7.1
27	Cyprus	6.6	4	6.1 - 7.1
27	Estonia	6.6	8	6.1 - 6.9
27	Slovenia	6.6	8	6.3 - 6.9
30	United Arab Emirates	6.5	5	5.5 - 7.5
31	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	6.4	3	4.9 - 7.5

32	Israel	6.1	6	5.4 - 6.7
32	Spain	6.1	6	5.5 - 6.6
34	Dominica	5.9	3	4.9 - 6.7
35	Portugal	5.8	6	5.5 - 6.2
35	Puerto Rico	5.8	4	5.2 - 6.3
37	Botswana	5.6	6	5.1 - 6.3
37	Taiwan	5.6	9	5.4 - 5.9
39	Brunei Darussalam	5.5	4	4.7 - 6.4
39	Oman	5.5	5	4.4 - 6.5
39	Korea (South)	5.5	9	5.3 - 5.7
42	Mauritius	5.4	6	5.0 - 5.9
43	Costa Rica	5.3	5	4.7 - 5.9
43	Macau	5.3	3	3.3 - 6.9
45	Malta	5.2	4	4.0 - 6.2
46	Bahrain	5.1	5	4.2 - 5.8
46	Cape Verde	5.1	3	3.3 - 7.0
46	Hungary	5.1	8	4.6 - 5.7
49	Bhutan	5.0	4	4.3 - 5.6

49	Jordan	5.0	7	3.9 - 6.1
49	Poland	5.0	8	4.5 - 5.5
52	Czech Republic	4.9	8	4.3 - 5.6
52	Lithuania	4.9	8	4.4 - 5.4
54	Seychelles	4.8	3	3.0 - 6.7
55	South Africa	4.7	8	4.3 - 4.9
56	Latvia	4.5	6	4.1 - 4.9
56	Malaysia	4.5	9	4.0 - 5.1
56	Namibia	4.5	6	3.9 - 5.1
56	Samoa	4.5	3	3.3 - 5.3
56	Slovakia	4.5	8	4.1 - 4.9
61	Cuba	4.4	3	3.5 - 5.1
61	Turkey	4.4	7	3.9 - 4.9
63	Italy	4.3	6	3.8 - 4.9
63	Saudi Arabia	4.3	5	3.1 - 5.3
65	Tunisia	4.2	6	3.0 - 5.5
66	Croatia	4.1	8	3.7 - 4.5
66	Georgia	4.1	7	3.4 - 4.7

66	Kuwait	4.1	5	3.2 - 5.1
69	Ghana	3.9	7	3.2 - 4.6
69	Montenegro	3.9	5	3.5 - 4.4
71	Bulgaria	3.8	8	3.2 - 4.5
71	FYR Macedonia	3.8	6	3.4 - 4.2
71	Greece	3.8	6	3.2 - 4.3
71	Romania	3.8	8	3.2 - 4.3
75	Brazil	3.7	7	3.3 - 4.3
75	Colombia	3.7	7	3.1 - 4.3
75	Peru	3.7	7	3.4 - 4.1
75	Suriname	3.7	3	3.0 - 4.7
79	Burkina Faso	3.6	7	2.8 - 4.4
79	China	3.6	9	3.0 - 4.2
79	Swaziland	3.6	3	3.0 - 4.7
79	Trinidad and Tobago	3.6	4	3.0 - 4.3
83	Serbia	3.5	6	3.3 - 3.9
84	El Salvador	3.4	5	3.0 - 3.8
84	Guatemala	3.4	5	3.0 - 3.9

84	India	3.4	10	3.2 - 3.6
84	Panama	3.4	5	3.1 - 3.7
84	Thailand	3.4	9	3.0 - 3.8
89	Lesotho	3.3	6	2.8 - 3.8
89	Malawi	3.3	7	2.7 - 3.9
89	Mexico	3.3	7	3.2 - 3.5
89	Moldova	3.3	6	2.7 - 4.0
89	Morocco	3.3	6	2.8 - 3.9
89	Rwanda	3.3	4	2.9 - 3.7
95	Albania	3.2	6	3.0 - 3.3
95	Vanuatu	3.2	3	2.3 - 4.7
97	Liberia	3.1	3	1.9 - 3.8
97	Sri Lanka	3.1	7	2.8 - 3.4
99	Bosnia and Herzegovina	3.0	7	2.6 - 3.4
99	Dominican Republic	3.0	5	2.9 - 3.2
99	Jamaica	3.0	5	2.8 - 3.3
99	Madagascar	3.0	7	2.8 - 3.2
99	Senegal	3.0	7	2.5 - 3.6

99	Tonga	3.0	3	2.6 - 3.3
99	Zambia	3.0	7	2.8 - 3.2
106	Argentina	2.9	7	2.6 - 3.1
106	Benin	2.9	6	2.3 - 3.4
106	Gabon	2.9	3	2.6 - 3.1
106	Gambia	2.9	5	1.6 - 4.0
106	Niger	2.9	5	2.7 - 3.0
111	Algeria	2.8	6	2.5 - 3.1
111	Djibouti	2.8	4	2.3 - 3.2
111	Egypt	2.8	6	2.6 - 3.1
111	Indonesia	2.8	9	2.4 - 3.2
111	Kiribati	2.8	3	2.3 - 3.3
111	Mali	2.8	6	2.4 - 3.2
111	Sao Tome and Principe	2.8	3	2.4 - 3.3
111	Solomon Islands	2.8	3	2.3 - 3.3
111	Togo	2.8	5	1.9 - 3.9
120	Armenia	2.7	7	2.6 - 2.8
120	Bolivia	2.7	6	2.4 - 3.1

120	Ethiopia	2.7	7	2.4 - 2.9
120	Kazakhstan	2.7	7	2.1 - 3.3
120	Mongolia	2.7	7	2.4 - 3.0
120	Vietnam	2.7	9	2.4 - 3.1
126	Eritrea	2.6	4	1.6 - 3.8
126	Guyana	2.6	4	2.5 - 2.7
126	Syria	2.6	5	2.2 - 2.9
126	Tanzania	2.6	7	2.4 - 2.9
130	Honduras	2.5	6	2.2 - 2.8
130	Lebanon	2.5	3	1.9 - 3.1
130	Libya	2.5	6	2.2 - 2.8
130	Maldives	2.5	4	1.8 - 3.2
130	Mauritania	2.5	7	2.0 - 3.3
130	Mozambique	2.5	7	2.3 - 2.8
130	Nicaragua	2.5	6	2.3 - 2.7
130	Nigeria	2.5	7	2.2 - 2.7
130	Uganda	2.5	7	2.1 - 2.8
139	Bangladesh	2.4	7	2.0 - 2.8

139	Belarus	2.4	4	2.0 - 2.8
139	Pakistan	2.4	7	2.1 - 2.7
139	Philippines	2.4	9	2.1 - 2.7
143	Azerbaijan	2.3	7	2.0 - 2.6
143	Comoros	2.3	3	1.6 - 3.3
143	Nepal	2.3	6	2.0 - 2.6
146	Cameroon	2.2	7	1.9 - 2.6
146	Ecuador	2.2	5	2.0 - 2.5
146	Kenya	2.2	7	1.9 - 2.5
146	Russia	2.2	8	1.9 - 2.4
146	Sierra Leone	2.2	5	1.9 - 2.4
146	Timor-Leste	2.2	5	1.8 - 2.6
146	Ukraine	2.2	8	2.0 - 2.6
146	Zimbabwe	2.2	7	1.7 - 2.8
154	Côte d'Ivoire	2.1	7	1.8 - 2.4
154	Papua New Guinea	2.1	5	1.7 - 2.5
154	Paraguay	2.1	5	1.7 - 2.5
154	Yemen	2.1	4	1.6 - 2.5

158	Cambodia	2.0	8	1.8 - 2.2
158	Central African Republic	2.0	4	1.9 - 2.2
158	Laos	2.0	4	1.6 - 2.6
158	Tajikistan	2.0	8	1.6 - 2.5
162	Angola	1.9	5	1.8 - 1.9
162	Congo Brazzaville	1.9	5	1.6 - 2.1
162	Democratic Republic of Congo	1.9	5	1.7 - 2.1
162	Guinea-Bissau	1.9	3	1.8 - 2.0
162	Kyrgyzstan	1.9	7	1.8 - 2.1
162	Venezuela	1.9	7	1.8 - 2.0
168	Burundi	1.8	6	1.6 - 2.0
168	Equatorial Guinea	1.8	3	1.6 - 1.9
168	Guinea	1.8	5	1.7 - 1.8
168	Haiti	1.8	3	1.4 - 2.3
168	Iran	1.8	3	1.7 - 1.9
168	Turkmenistan	1.8	4	1.7 - 1.9
174	Uzbekistan	1.7	6	1.5 - 1.8
175	Chad	1.6	6	1.5 - 1.7

176	Iraq	1.5	3	1.2 - 1.8
176	Sudan	1.5	5	1.4 - 1.7
178	Myanmar	1.4	3	0.9 - 1.8
179	Afghanistan	1.3	4	1.0 - 1.5
180	Somalia	1.1	3	0.9 - 1.4

Methodology:

As noted above, the highest (and best) level of transparency with the least perceived corruption is indicated by the number, 10. The lower (and worse) levels of transparency are indicated by lower numbers.

According to Transparency International, the [Corruption Perceptions Index](#) (CPI) table shows a country's ranking and score, the number of surveys used to determine the score, and the confidence range of the scoring.

The rank shows how one country compares to others included in the index. The CPI score indicates the perceived level of public-sector corruption in a country/territory.

The CPI is based on 13 independent surveys. However, not all surveys include all countries. The surveys used column indicates how many surveys were relied upon to determine the score for that country.

The confidence range indicates the reliability of the CPI scores and tells us that allowing for a margin of error, we can be 90% confident that the true score for this country lies within this range.

Note:

Kosovo, which separated from the Yugoslav successor state of [Serbia](#), is not listed above. No calculation is available for [Kosovo](#) at this time, however, a future corruption index by Transparency International may include the world's newest country in its tally. Taiwan has been listed above despite its contested status; while Taiwan claims sovereign status, [China](#) claims ultimate jurisdiction over Taiwan. Hong Kong, which is also under the rubric of Chinese

sovereignty, is listed above. Note as well that Puerto Rico, which is a [United States](#) domain, is also included in the list above. These inclusions likely have to do with the size and fairly autonomous status of their economies.

Source:

Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index; available at URL: <http://www.transparency.org>

Updated:

Uploaded in 2011 using most recent ranking available; reviewed in 2015.

Competitiveness Ranking

Competitiveness Ranking

Editor's Note:

The Global Competitiveness Report's competitiveness ranking is based on the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI), which was developed for the World Economic Forum. The GCI is based on a number of competitiveness considerations, and provides a comprehensive picture of the competitiveness landscape in countries around the world. The competitiveness considerations are: institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, health and primary education, higher education and training, goods market efficiency, labour market efficiency, financial market development, technological readiness, market size, business sophistication, and innovation. The rankings are calculated from both publicly available data and the Executive Opinion Survey.

Country/Economy	GCI 2010 Rank	GCI 2010 Score	GCI 2009 Rank	Change 2009-2010
Switzerland	1	5.63	1	0
Sweden	2	5.56	4	2
Singapore	3	5.48	3	0

United States	4	5.43	2	-2
Germany	5	5.39	7	2
Japan	6	5.37	8	2
Finland	7	5.37	6	-1
Netherlands	8	5.33	10	2
Denmark	9	5.32	5	-4
Canada	10	5.30	9	-1
Hong Kong SAR	11	5.30	11	0
United Kingdom	12	5.25	13	1
Taiwan, China	13	5.21	12	-1
Norway	14	5.14	14	0
France	15	5.13	16	1
Australia	16	5.11	15	-1
Qatar	17	5.10	22	5
Austria	18	5.09	17	-1
Belgium	19	5.07	18	-1
Luxembourg	20	5.05	21	1
Saudi Arabia	21	4.95	28	7

Korea, Rep.	22	4.93	19	-3
New Zealand	23	4.92	20	-3
Israel	24	4.91	27	3
United Arab Emirates	25	4.89	23	-2
Malaysia	26	4.88	24	-2
China	27	4.84	29	2
Brunei Darussalam	28	4.75	32	4
Ireland	29	4.74	25	-4
Chile	30	4.69	30	0
Iceland	31	4.68	26	-5
Tunisia	32	4.65	40	8
Estonia	33	4.61	35	2
Oman	34	4.61	41	7
Kuwait	35	4.59	39	4
Czech Republic	36	4.57	31	-5
Bahrain	37	4.54	38	1
Thailand	38	4.51	36	-2
Poland	39	4.51	46	7

Cyprus	40	4.50	34	-6
Puerto Rico	41	4.49	42	1
Spain	42	4.49	33	-9
Barbados	43	4.45	44	1
Indonesia	44	4.43	54	10
Slovenia	45	4.42	37	-8
Portugal	46	4.38	43	-3
Lithuania	47	4.38	53	6
Italy	48	4.37	48	0
Montenegro	49	4.36	62	13
Malta	50	4.34	52	2
India	51	4.33	49	-2
Hungary	52	4.33	58	6
Panama	53	4.33	59	6
South Africa	54	4.32	45	-9
Mauritius	55	4.32	57	2
Costa Rica	56	4.31	55	-1
Azerbaijan	57	4.29	51	-6

Brazil	58	4.28	56	-2
Vietnam	59	4.27	75	16
Slovak Republic	60	4.25	47	-13
Turkey	61	4.25	61	0
Sri Lanka	62	4.25	79	17
Russian Federation	63	4.24	63	0
Uruguay	64	4.23	65	1
Jordan	65	4.21	50	-15
Mexico	66	4.19	60	-6
Romania	67	4.16	64	-3
Colombia	68	4.14	69	1
Iran	69	4.14	n/a	n/a
Latvia	70	4.14	68	-2
Bulgaria	71	4.13	76	5
Kazakhstan	72	4.12	67	-5
Peru	73	4.11	78	5
Namibia	74	4.09	74	0
Morocco	75	4.08	73	-2

Botswana	76	4.05	66	-10
Croatia	77	4.04	72	-5
Guatemala	78	4.04	80	2
Macedonia, FYR	79	4.02	84	5
Rwanda	80	4.00	n/a	n/a
Egypt	81	4.00	70	-11
El Salvador	82	3.99	77	-5
Greece	83	3.99	71	-12
Trinidad and Tobago	84	3.97	86	2
Philippines	85	3.96	87	2
Algeria	86	3.96	83	-3
Argentina	87	3.95	85	-2
Albania	88	3.94	96	8
Ukraine	89	3.90	82	-7
Gambia, The	90	3.90	81	-9
Honduras	91	3.89	89	-2
Lebanon	92	3.89	n/a	n/a
Georgia	93	3.86	90	-3

Moldova	94	3.86	n/a	n/a
Jamaica	95	3.85	91	-4
Serbia	96	3.84	93	-3
Syria	97	3.79	94	-3
Armenia	98	3.76	97	-1
Mongolia	99	3.75	117	18
Libya	100	3.74	88	-12
Dominican Republic	101	3.72	95	-6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	102	3.70	109	7
Benin	103	3.69	103	0
Senegal	104	3.67	92	-12
Ecuador	105	3.65	105	0
Kenya	106	3.65	98	-8
Bangladesh	107	3.64	106	-1
Bolivia	108	3.64	120	12
Cambodia	109	3.63	110	1
Guyana	110	3.62	104	-6
Cameroon	111	3.58	111	0

Nicaragua	112	3.57	115	3
Tanzania	113	3.56	100	-13
Ghana	114	3.56	114	0
Zambia	115	3.55	112	-3
Tajikistan	116	3.53	122	6
Cape Verde	117	3.51	n/a	n/a
Uganda	118	3.51	108	-10
Ethiopia	119	3.51	118	-1
Paraguay	120	3.49	124	4
Kyrgyz Republic	121	3.49	123	2
Venezuela	122	3.48	113	-9
Pakistan	123	3.48	101	-22
Madagascar	124	3.46	121	-3
Malawi	125	3.45	119	-6
Swaziland	126	3.40	n/a	n/a
Nigeria	127	3.38	99	-28
Lesotho	128	3.36	107	-21
Côte d'Ivoire	129	3.35	116	-13

Nepal	130	3.34	125	-5
Mozambique	131	3.32	129	-2
Mali	132	3.28	130	-2
Timor-Leste	133	3.23	126	-7
Burkina Faso	134	3.20	128	-6
Mauritania	135	3.14	127	-8
Zimbabwe	136	3.03	132	-4
Burundi	137	2.96	133	-4
Angola	138	2.93	n/a	n/a
Chad	139	2.73	131	-8

Methodology:

The competitiveness rankings are calculated from both publicly available data and the Executive Opinion Survey, a comprehensive annual survey conducted by the World Economic Forum together with its network of Partner Institutes (leading research institutes and business organizations) in the countries covered by the Report.

Highlights according to WEF --

- The [United States](#) falls two places to fourth position, overtaken by [Sweden](#) and [Singapore](#) in the rankings of the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011
- The People's Republic of [China](#) continues to move up the rankings, with marked improvements in several other Asian countries
- [Germany](#) moves up two places to fifth place, leading the Eurozone countries
- [Switzerland](#) tops the rankings

Source:

World Economic Forum; available at URL: <http://www.weforum.org>

Updated:

2011 using most recent ranking available; reviewed in 2015.

Taxation

Corporate income tax

Corporate income tax is applied at a statutory rate of 20 percent on taxable income.

Social security

Social security contributions (social insurance contributions) are applied at 26 percent on gross salaries.

Indirect tax

A value added tax (VAT) of 10 percent is applied to most transactions.

Stock Market

The Egypt Stock Exchange, now consisting of the Cairo Stock Exchange and the Alexandria Stock Exchange, was established in 1910. Egypt's exchanges listed 1,032 companies at the end of the 1990s. There are no restrictions on foreign investors.

For more information on the Cairo and Alexandria Stock Exchanges, see URL: <http://www.egyptse.com/>. fictitious

Partner Links

Partner Links

Chapter 5

Social Overview

People

Cultural Demography

With a population exceeding 80 million, Egypt is the most populous country in the Arab world and one of the most populous countries in Africa (Nigeria and Ethiopia being some of the others). Most of the Egyptian populace lives in Cairo and Alexandria, on the banks of the Nile, in the Nile delta, which fans out north of Cairo, or along the Suez Canal. These regions are among the world's most densely populated, containing an average of over 1,540 person per square kilometer (3,820 per square mile).

Small communities spread throughout the desert regions of Egypt are clustered around oases, historic trade and transportation routes. The government has tried with mixed success to encourage migration to newly irrigated land reclaimed from the desert. The proportion of the population living in rural areas has continued to decrease as people move to the cities in search of employment and a higher standard of living.

Cultural Heritage

Egypt's vast and rich literature constitutes an important cultural element in the life of the country and in the Arab world as a whole. Egyptian novelists and poets were among the first to experiment with new styles of Arabic literature, and the forms they developed have been widely imitated. Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz is the only Arab to win the Nobel Prize for literature. Egyptian books and films are available throughout the Middle East.

Egypt has endured as a unified state for more than 5,000 years, and archeological evidence indicates that a developed Egyptian society has existed for much longer. Egyptians take pride in their Pharaonic heritage and in their descent from what they consider mankind's earliest civilization. The Arabic word for Egypt is Misr, which originally connoted "civilization" or "metropolis."

Ethnicity, Language and Religion

The Egyptians are a fairly homogeneous people of Hamitic origin-people originally from the northern and north-eastern Africa and the Canary Islands, including the Berbers of North Africa; the Fulas, Tuaregs and Tibbus of the Sudan; the ancient Egyptians; as well as the major Ethiopian peoples. Mediterranean and Arab influences appear in the north, and there is some mixing in the south with the Nubians of northern Sudan.

Ethnic minorities include a small number of Bedouin Arab nomads in the eastern and western deserts and in the Sinai, Berbers to the west, some 50,000-100,000 Nubians clustered along the upper Nile, as well as Greeks, Armenians and Europeans such as French and Italians.

In terms of religion, most Egyptians practice Sunni Islam, while Coptic Christianity is the major non-Islamic religion practiced.

Although Arabic is the official language, English and French are also widely understood by educated classes.

Human Development

In terms of population trends, the population growth rate is 1.721 percent. The birth rate is 22.53 births per 1,000 and the death rate is 5.11 deaths per 1,000. The fertility rate is 2.77 children born per woman.

In terms of health and welfare, the infant mortality rate is 28.36 deaths per 1,000 live births. Life expectancy at birth for the total population is 71.85 years of age, according to recent estimates (69.3 years for males and 74.52 years for females). The population growth is estimated at 1.78 percent per year.

The literacy rate is about 71 percent of the adult population, although the rates per gender are not balanced. The literacy rate for males is 83 percent, while it is 59 percent for females.

Education is compulsory from ages six through twelve and free through university. About 87 percent of children enter primary school, but half drop out after their sixth year. There are 20,000 primary and secondary schools with some 10 million students; 12 major universities with about 500,000 students; and 67 teacher colleges. Major universities include Cairo University (100,000 students), Alexandria University, the American University in Cairo, and the 1,000-year-old Al-Azhar University, one of the world's major centers of Islamic learning.

About 6.4 percent of GDP in this country is spent on health expenditures; about 3.8 percent of GDP in this country is spent on education. Access to water and sanitation in this country is regarded to be good, although the quality may be less than optimal in certain rural areas.

A notable measure of human development is the Human Development Index (HDI), which is formulated by the United Nations Development Program. The HDI is a composite of several indicators, which measure a country's achievements in three main areas of human development: longevity, knowledge and education, as well as economic standard of living. In a ranking of 169 countries, the HDI places Egypt in the medium human development category, at 101st place.

Note: Although the concept of human development is complicated and cannot be properly captured by values and indices, the HDI, which is calculated and updated annually, offers a wide-ranging assessment of human development in certain countries, not based solely upon traditional economic and financial indicators.

Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, www.countrywatch.com . See Bibliography for list of general research sources.

Human Development Index

Human Development Index

Human Development Index (Ranked Numerically)

The [Human Development Index](#) (HDI) is used to measure quality of life in countries across the world. The HDI has been compiled since 1990 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on a regular basis. The HDI is a composite of several indicators, which measure a country's achievements in three main arenas of human development: longevity, education, and economic standard of living. Although the concept of human development is complicated and cannot be properly captured by values and indices, the HDI offers a wide-ranging assessment of human development in certain countries, not based solely upon traditional economic and financial indicators. For more information about the methodology used to calculate the HDI, please see the "Source Materials" in the appendices of this review.

Very High Human Development	High Human Development	Medium Human Development	Low Human Development

1. Norway	43. Bahamas	86. Fiji	128. Kenya
2. Australia	44. Lithuania	87. Turkmenistan	129. Bangladesh
3. New Zealand	45. Chile	88. Dominican Republic	130. Ghana
4. United States	46. Argentina	89. China	131. Cameroon
5. Ireland	47. Kuwait	90. El Salvador	132. Myanmar (Burma)
6. Liechtenstein	48. Latvia	91. Sri Lanka	133. Yemen
7. Netherlands	49. Montenegro	92. Thailand	134. Benin
8. Canada	50. Romania	93. Gabon	135. Madagascar
9. Sweden	51. Croatia	94. Suriname	136. Mauritania
10. Germany	52. Uruguay	95. Bolivia	137. Papua New Guinea
11. Japan	53. Libya	96. Paraguay	138. Nepal
12. South Korea	54. Panama	97. Philippines	139. Togo
13. Switzerland	55. Saudi Arabia	98. Botswana	140. Comoros
14. France	56. Mexico	99. Moldova	141. Lesotho
15. Israel	57. Malaysia	100. Mongolia	142. Nigeria
16. Finland	58. Bulgaria	101. Egypt	143. Uganda
17. Iceland	59. Trinidad and Tobago	102. Uzbekistan	144. Senegal

18. Belgium	60. Serbia	103. Micronesia	145. Haiti
19. Denmark	61. Belarus	104. Guyana	146. Angola
20. Spain	62. Costa Rica	105. Namibia	147. Djibouti
21. Hong King	63. Peru	106. Honduras	148. Tanzania
22. Greece	64. Albania	107. Maldives	149. Cote d'Ivoire
23. Italy	65. Russian Federation	108. Indonesia	150. Zambia
24. Luxembourg	66. Kazakhstan	109. Kyrgyzstan	151. Gambia
25. Austria	67. Azerbaijan	110. South Africa	152. Rwanda
26. United Kingdom	68. Bosnia and Herzegovina	111. Syria	153. Malawi
27. Singapore	69. Ukraine	112. Tajikistan	154. Sudan
28. Czech Republic	70. Iran	113. Vietnam	155. Afghanistan
29. Slovenia	71. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	114. Morocco	156. Guinea
30. Andorra	72. Mauritius	115. Nicaragua	157. Ethiopia
31. Slovakia	73. Brazil	116. Guatemala	158. Sierra Leone
32. United Arab Emirates	74. Georgia	117. Equatorial Guinea	159. Central African Republic

33. Malta	75. Venezuela	118. Cape Verde	160. Mali
34. Estonia	76. Armenia	119. India	161. Burkina Faso
35. Cyprus	77. Ecuador	120. East Timor	162. Liberia
36. Hungary	78. Belize	121. Swaziland	163. Chad
37. Brunei	79. Colombia	122. Laos	164. Guinea-Bissau
38. Qatar	80. Jamaica	123. Solomon Islands	165. Mozambique
39. Bahrain	81. Tunisia	124. Cambodia	166. Burundi
40. Portugal	82. Jordan	125. Pakistan	167. Niger
41. Poland	83. Turkey	126. Congo RC	168. Congo DRC
42. Barbados	84. Algeria	127. Sao Tome and Principe	169. Zimbabwe
	85. Tonga		

Methodology:

For more information about the methodology used to calculate the HDI, please see the "Source Materials" in the appendices of this Country Review.

Reference:

As published in United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report 2010.

Source:

United Nations Development Programme's [Human Development Index](http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/) available at URL: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>

Updated:

Uploaded in 2011 using ranking available; reviewed in 2015

Life Satisfaction Index

Life Satisfaction Index

Life Satisfaction Index

Created by Adrian G. White, an Analytic Social Psychologist at the University of Leicester, the "Satisfaction with Life Index" measures subjective life satisfaction across various countries. The data was taken from a metastudy (see below for source) and associates the notion of subjective happiness or life satisfaction with qualitative parameters such as health, wealth, and access to basic education. This assessment serves as an alternative to other measures of happiness that tend to rely on traditional and quantitative measures of policy on quality of life, such as GNP and GDP. The methodology involved the responses of 80,000 people across the globe.

Rank	Country	Score
1	Denmark	273.4
2	Switzerland	273.33
3	Austria	260
4	Iceland	260
5	The Bahamas	256.67

6	Finland	256.67
7	Sweden	256.67
8	Iran	253.33
9	Brunei	253.33
10	Canada	253.33
11	Ireland	253.33
12	Luxembourg	253.33
13	Costa Rica	250
14	Malta	250
15	Netherlands	250
16	Antiguaand Barbuda	246.67
17	Malaysia	246.67
18	New Zealand	246.67
19	Norway	246.67
20	Seychelles	246.67
21	Saint Kitts and Nevis	246.67
22	United Arab Emirates	246.67
23	United States	246.67

24	Vanuatu	246.67
25	Venezuela	246.67
26	Australia	243.33
27	Barbados	243.33
28	Belgium	243.33
29	Dominica	243.33
30	Oman	243.33
31	Saudi Arabia	243.33
32	Suriname	243.33
33	Bahrain	240
34	Colombia	240
35	Germany	240
36	Guyana	240
37	Honduras	240
38	Kuwait	240
39	Panama	240
40	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	240
41	United Kingdom	236.67

42	Dominican Republic	233.33
43	Guatemala	233.33
44	Jamaica	233.33
45	Qatar	233.33
46	Spain	233.33
47	Saint Lucia	233.33
48	Belize	230
49	Cyprus	230
50	Italy	230
51	Mexico	230
52	Samoa	230
53	Singapore	230
54	Solomon Islands	230
55	Trinidad and Tobago	230
56	Argentina	226.67
57	Fiji	223.33
58	Israel	223.33
59	Mongolia	223.33

60	São Tomé and Príncipe	223.33
61	El Salvador	220
62	France	220
63	Hong Kong	220
64	Indonesia	220
65	Kyrgyzstan	220
66	Maldives	220
67	Slovenia	220
68	Taiwan	220
69	East Timor	220
70	Tonga	220
71	Chile	216.67
72	Grenada	216.67
73	Mauritius	216.67
74	Namibia	216.67
75	Paraguay	216.67
76	Thailand	216.67
77	Czech Republic	213.33

78	Philippines	213.33
79	Tunisia	213.33
80	Uzbekistan	213.33
81	Brazil	210
82	China	210
83	Cuba	210
84	Greece	210
85	Nicaragua	210
86	Papua New Guinea	210
87	Uruguay	210
88	Gabon	206.67
89	Ghana	206.67
90	Japan	206.67
91	Yemen	206.67
92	Portugal	203.33
93	Sri Lanka	203.33
94	Tajikistan	203.33
95	Vietnam	203.33

96	Bhutan	200
97	Comoros	196.67
98	Croatia	196.67
99	Poland	196.67
100	Cape Verde	193.33
101	Kazakhstan	193.33
102	South Korea	193.33
103	Madagascar	193.33
104	Bangladesh	190
105	Republic of the Congo	190
106	The Gambia	190
107	Hungary	190
108	Libya	190
109	South Africa	190
110	Cambodia	186.67
111	Ecuador	186.67
112	Kenya	186.67
113	Lebanon	186.67

114	Morocco	186.67
115	Peru	186.67
116	Senegal	186.67
117	Bolivia	183.33
118	Haiti	183.33
119	Nepal	183.33
120	Nigeria	183.33
121	Tanzania	183.33
122	Benin	180
123	Botswana	180
124	Guinea-Bissau	180
125	India	180
126	Laos	180
127	Mozambique	180
128	Palestinian Authority	180
129	Slovakia	180
130	Myanmar	176.67
131	Mali	176.67

132	Mauritania	176.67
133	Turkey	176.67
134	Algeria	173.33
135	Equatorial Guinea	173.33
136	Romania	173.33
137	Bosnia and Herzegovina	170
138	Cameroon	170
139	Estonia	170
140	Guinea	170
141	Jordan	170
142	Syria	170
143	Sierra Leone	166.67
144	Azerbaijan	163.33
145	Central African Republic	163.33
146	Republic of Macedonia	163.33
147	Togo	163.33
148	Zambia	163.33
149	Angola	160

150	Djibouti	160
151	Egypt	160
152	Burkina Faso	156.67
153	Ethiopia	156.67
154	Latvia	156.67
155	Lithuania	156.67
156	Uganda	156.67
157	Albania	153.33
158	Malawi	153.33
159	Chad	150
160	Côte d'Ivoire	150
161	Niger	150
162	Eritrea	146.67
163	Rwanda	146.67
164	Bulgaria	143.33
165	Lesotho	143.33
166	Pakistan	143.33
167	Russia	143.33

168	Swaziland	140
169	Georgia	136.67
170	Belarus	133.33
171	Turkmenistan	133.33
172	Armenia	123.33
173	Sudan	120
174	Ukraine	120
175	Moldova	116.67
176	Democratic Republic of the Congo	110
177	Zimbabwe	110
178	Burundi	100

Commentary:

European countries, such as [Denmark](#), [Iceland](#), [Finland](#), [Sweden](#), [Switzerland](#), [Austria](#) resided at the top of the ranking with highest levels of self-reported life satisfaction. Conversely, European countries such as [Latvia](#), [Lithuania](#), [Moldova](#), [Belarus](#) and [Ukraine](#) ranked low on the index. African countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo, [Zimbabwe](#) and [Burundi](#) found themselves at the very bottom of the ranking, and indeed, very few African countries could be found in the top 100. [Japan](#) was at the mid-way point in the ranking, however, other Asian countries such as [Brunei](#) and [Malaysia](#) were in the top tier, while [Pakistan](#) was close to the bottom with a low level of self-identified life satisfaction. As a region, the Middle East presented a mixed bag with Saudi Arabians reporting healthy levels of life satisfaction and Egyptians near the bottom of the ranking. As a region, Caribbean countries were ranked highly, consistently demonstrating high levels of life satisfaction. The findings showed that health was the most crucial determining factor in life satisfaction, followed by prosperity and education.

Source:

White, A. (2007). A Global Projection of Subjective Well-being: A Challenge To Positive Psychology? Psychtalk 56, 17-20. The data was extracted from a meta-analysis by Marks, Abdallah, Simms & Thompson (2006).

Uploaded:

Based on study noted above in "Source" ; reviewed in 2015

Happy Planet Index

Happy Planet Index

The Happy Planet Index (HPI) is used to measure human well-being in conjunction with environmental impact. The HPI has been compiled since 2006 by the New Economics Foundation. The index is a composite of several indicators including subjective life satisfaction, life expectancy at birth, and ecological footprint per capita.

As noted by NEFA, the HPI "reveals the ecological efficiency with which human well-being is delivered." Indeed, the index combines environmental impact with human well-being to measure the environmental efficiency with which, country by country, people live long and happy lives. The countries ranked highest by the HPI are not necessarily the ones with the happiest people overall, but the ones that allow their citizens to live long and fulfilling lives, without negatively impacting this opportunity for either future generations or citizens of other countries. Accordingly, a country like the [United States](#) will rank low on this list due to its large per capital ecological footprint, which uses more than its fair share of resources, and will likely cause planetary damage.

It should be noted that the HPI was designed to be a counterpoint to other well-established indices of countries' development, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which measures overall national wealth and economic development, but often obfuscates the realities of countries with stark variances between the rich and the poor. Moreover, the objective of most of the world's people is not to be wealthy but to be happy. The HPI also differs from the [Human Development Index](#) (HDI), which measures quality of life but not ecology, since it [HPI] also includes sustainability as a key indicator.

Rank	Country	HPI
1	Costa Rica	76.1
2	Dominican Republic	71.8
3	Jamaica	70.1
4	Guatemala	68.4
5	Vietnam	66.5
6	Colombia	66.1
7	Cuba	65.7
8	El Salvador	61.5
9	Brazil	61.0
10	Honduras	61.0
11	Nicaragua	60.5
12	Egypt	60.3
13	Saudi Arabia	59.7
14	Philippines	59.0
15	Argentina	59.0
16	Indonesia	58.9

17	Bhutan	58.5
18	Panama	57.4
19	Laos	57.3
20	China	57.1
21	Morocco	56.8
22	Sri Lanka	56.5
23	Mexico	55.6
24	Pakistan	55.6
25	Ecuador	55.5
26	Jordan	54.6
27	Belize	54.5
28	Peru	54.4
29	Tunisia	54.3
30	Trinidad and Tobago	54.2
31	Bangladesh	54.1
32	Moldova	54.1
33	Malaysia	54.0
34	Tajikistan	53.5

35	India	53.0
36	Venezuela	52.5
37	Nepal	51.9
38	Syria	51.3
39	Burma	51.2
40	Algeria	51.2
41	Thailand	50.9
42	Haiti	50.8
43	Netherlands	50.6
44	Malta	50.4
45	Uzbekistan	50.1
46	Chile	49.7
47	Bolivia	49.3
48	Armenia	48.3
49	Singapore	48.2
50	Yemen	48.1
51	Germany	48.1
52	Switzerland	48.1

53	Sweden	48.0
54	Albania	47.9
55	Paraguay	47.8
56	Palestinian Authority	47.7
57	Austria	47.7
58	Serbia	47.6
59	Finland	47.2
60	Croatia	47.2
61	Kyrgyzstan	47.1
62	Cyprus	46.2
63	Guyana	45.6
64	Belgium	45.4
65	Bosnia and Herzegovina	45.0
66	Slovenia	44.5
67	Israel	44.5
68	South Korea	44.4
69	Italy	44.0
70	Romania	43.9

71	France	43.9
72	Georgia	43.6
73	Slovakia	43.5
74	United Kingdom	43.3
75	Japan	43.3
76	Spain	43.2
77	Poland	42.8
78	Ireland	42.6
79	Iraq	42.6
80	Cambodia	42.3
81	Iran	42.1
82	Bulgaria	42.0
83	Turkey	41.7
84	Hong Kong	41.6
85	Azerbaijan	41.2
86	Lithuania	40.9
87	Djibouti	40.4
88	Norway	40.4

89	Canada	39.4
90	Hungary	38.9
91	Kazakhstan	38.5
92	Czech Republic	38.3
93	Mauritania	38.2
94	Iceland	38.1
95	Ukraine	38.1
96	Senegal	38.0
97	Greece	37.6
98	Portugal	37.5
99	Uruguay	37.2
100	Ghana	37.1
101	Latvia	36.7
102	Australia	36.6
103	New Zealand	36.2
104	Belarus	35.7
105	Denmark	35.5
106	Mongolia	35.0

107	Malawi	34.5
108	Russia	34.5
109	Chad	34.3
110	Lebanon	33.6
111	Macedonia	32.7
112	Republic of the Congo	32.4
113	Madagascar	31.5
114	United States	30.7
115	Nigeria	30.3
116	Guinea	30.3
117	Uganda	30.2
118	South Africa	29.7
119	Rwanda	29.6
120	Democratic Republic of the Congo	29.0
121	Sudan	28.5
122	Luxembourg	28.5
123	United Arab Emirates	28.2
124	Ethiopia	28.1

125	Kenya	27.8
126	Cameroon	27.2
127	Zambia	27.2
128	Kuwait	27.0
129	Niger	26.9
130	Angola	26.8
131	Estonia	26.4
132	Mali	25.8
133	Mozambique	24.6
134	Benin	24.6
135	Togo	23.3
136	Sierra Leone	23.1
137	Central African Republic	22.9
138	Burkina Faso	22.4
139	Burundi	21.8
140	Namibia	21.1
141	Botswana	20.9
142	Tanzania	17.8

143	Zimbabwe	16.6
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Source: This material is derived from the Happy Planet Index issued by the New Economics Foundation (NEF).

Methodology: The methodology for the calculations can be found at URL: <http://www.happyplanetindex.org/>

Status of Women

Overview

The law in Egypt explicitly calls for equality of the sexes. That said, many aspects of legislation, coupled with traditional practices, overtly discriminate against women. For example, Muslim female heirs receive half the amount of a male heir's inheritance, while a Christian widow of a Muslim man automatically has no inheritance rights. While male heirs face strong social pressure to provide for all family members needing assistance, in practice, this does not always occur and most women are left to fend for themselves.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) remains a serious problem despite the government's attempts to eliminate the practice. An estimated 94 percent of married women have undergone the practice. The Ministry of Health estimates that 50 percent of girls age 10 to 18 were subjected to the practice last year. Many in society, whether Muslim or Christian, feel that genital mutilation is an important part of maintaining female chastity.

According to a recent survey by the Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Affairs, an estimated 67 percent of women in urban areas and 30 percent of women in rural areas have been involved in some form of domestic violence situation at least once during the one year period of the study. However, due to the value attached to family privacy, fewer than half of the incidences were ever discussed within the family. Fewer than that are ever reported to the authorities. Spousal rape is not illegal in Egypt and, therefore, the authorities will not intervene if it is reported.

Gender Related Development Index (GDI) Rank:

Not Ranked

Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) Rank:

77th out of 80

Female Population:

37.5 million

Female Life Expectancy at birth:

74.52 years

Total Fertility Rate:

3.2

Maternal Mortality Ratio:

84

Total Number of Women Living with HIV/AIDS:

430-2,300

Ever Married Women, Ages 15-19 (%):

15%

Mean Age at Time of Marriage:

22

Contraceptive Use Among Married Women, Any Method (%):

60%

Female Adult Literacy Rate:

59%

Combined Female Gross enrollment ratio for Primary, Secondary and Tertiary schools:

N/A

Female-Headed Households (%):

12%

Economically Active Females (%):

36%

Female Contributing Family Workers (%):

33%

Female Estimated Earned Income:

\$1,614

Seats in Parliament held by women (%):

Lower or Single House: 2.9%

Upper House or Senate: 6.8%

Year Women Received the Right to Vote:

1956

Year Women Received the Right to Stand for Election:

1956

*The Gender Development Index (GDI) is a composite index which measures the average achievement in a country. While very similar to the Human Development Index in its use of the same variables, the GDI adjusts the average achievement of each country in terms of life expectancy, enrollment in schools, income, and literacy in accordance to the disparities between males and females.

*The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is a composite index measuring gender inequality in three of the basic dimensions of empowerment; economic participation and decision-making, political participation and decision-making, and power over economic resources.

*Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is defined as the average number of babies born to women during their reproductive years. A TFR of 2.1 is considered the replacement rate; once a TFR of a population reaches 2.1 the population will remain stable assuming no immigration or emigration takes place. When the TFR is greater than 2.1 a population will increase and when it is less than 2.1 a population will eventually decrease, although due to the age structure of a population it will take years before a low TFR is translated into lower population.

*Maternal Mortality Rate is the number of deaths to women per 100,000 live births that resulted from conditions related to pregnancy and or delivery related complications.

*Economically Active Females are the share of the female population, ages 15 and above, whom supply, or are able to supply, labor for the production of goods and services.

*Female Contributing Family Workers are those females who work without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a relative living in the same household.

*Estimated Earned Income is measured according to Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) in US dollars.

Global Gender Gap Index

Global Gender Gap Index

Editor's Note:

The Global Gender Gap Index by the World Economic Forum ranks most of the world's countries in terms of the division of resources and opportunities among males and females. Specifically, the ranking assesses the gender inequality gap in these four arenas:

1. Economic participation and opportunity (salaries and high skilled employment participation levels)
2. Educational attainment (access to basic and higher level education)
3. Political empowerment (representation in decision-making structures)
4. Health and survival (life expectancy and sex ratio)

	2010 rank	2010 score	2010 rank among 2009 countries	2009 rank	2009 score	2008 rank	2008 score	2007 rank
Country								
Iceland	1	0.8496	1	1	0.8276	4	0.7999	4
Norway	2	0.8404	2	3	0.8227	1	0.8239	2
Finland	3	0.8260	3	2	0.8252	2	0.8195	3
Sweden	4	0.8024	4	4	0.8139	3	0.8139	1

New Zealand	5	0.7808	5	5	0.7880	5	0.7859	5
Ireland	6	0.7773	6	8	0.7597	8	0.7518	9
Denmark	7	0.7719	7	7	0.7628	7	0.7538	8
Lesotho	8	0.7678	8	10	0.7495	16	0.7320	26
Philippines	9	0.7654	9	9	0.7579	6	0.7568	6
Switzerland	10	0.7562	10	13	0.7426	14	0.7360	40
Spain	11	0.7554	11	17	0.7345	17	0.7281	10
South Africa	12	0.7535	12	6	0.7709	22	0.7232	20
Germany	13	0.7530	13	12	0.7449	11	0.7394	7
Belgium	14	0.7509	14	33	0.7165	28	0.7163	19
United Kingdom	15	0.7460	15	15	0.7402	13	0.7366	11
Sri Lanka	16	0.7458	16	16	0.7402	12	0.7371	15
Netherlands	17	0.7444	17	11	0.7490	9	0.7399	12
Latvia	18	0.7429	18	14	0.7416	10	0.7397	13
United States	19	0.7411	19	31	0.7173	27	0.7179	31
Canada	20	0.7372	20	25	0.7196	31	0.7136	18
Trinidad and Tobago	21	0.7353	21	19	0.7298	19	0.7245	46

Mozambique	22	0.7329	22	26	0.7195	18	0.7266	43
Australia	23	0.7271	23	20	0.7282	21	0.7241	17
Cuba	24	0.7253	24	29	0.7176	25	0.7195	22
Namibia	25	0.7238	25	32	0.7167	30	0.7141	29
Luxembourg	26	0.7231	26	63	0.6889	66	0.6802	58
Mongolia	27	0.7194	27	22	0.7221	40	0.7049	62
Costa Rica	28	0.7194	28	27	0.7180	32	0.7111	28
Argentina	29	0.7187	29	24	0.7211	24	0.7209	33
Nicaragua	30	0.7176	30	49	0.7002	71	0.6747	90
Barbados	31	0.7176	31	21	0.7236	26	0.7188	n/a
Portugal	32	0.7171	32	46	0.7013	39	0.7051	37
Uganda	33	0.7169	33	40	0.7067	43	0.6981	50
Moldova	34	0.7160	34	36	0.7104	20	0.7244	21
Lithuania	35	0.7132	35	30	0.7175	23	0.7222	14
Bahamas	36	0.7128	36	28	0.7179	n/a	n/a	n/a
Austria	37	0.7091	37	42	0.7031	29	0.7153	27
Guyana	38	0.7090	38	35	0.7108	n/a	n/a	n/a
Panama	39	0.7072	39	43	0.7024	34	0.7095	38

Ecuador	40	0.7072	40	23	0.7220	35	0.7091	44
Kazakhstan	41	0.7055	41	47	0.7013	45	0.6976	32
Slovenia	42	0.7047	42	52	0.6982	51	0.6937	49
Poland	43	0.7037	43	50	0.6998	49	0.6951	60
Jamaica	44	0.7037	44	48	0.7013	44	0.6980	39
Russian Federation	45	0.7036	45	51	0.6987	42	0.6994	45
France	46	0.7025	46	18	0.7331	15	0.7341	51
Estonia	47	0.7018	47	37	0.7094	37	0.7076	30
Chile	48	0.7013	48	64	0.6884	65	0.6818	86
Macedonia, FYR	49	0.6996	49	53	0.6950	53	0.6914	35
Bulgaria	50	0.6983	50	38	0.7072	36	0.7077	25
Kyrgyz Republic	51	0.6973	51	41	0.7058	41	0.7045	70
Israel	52	0.6957	52	45	0.7019	56	0.6900	36
Croatia	53	0.6939	53	54	0.6944	46	0.6967	16
Honduras	54	0.6927	54	62	0.6893	47	0.6960	68
Colombia	55	0.6927	55	56	0.6939	50	0.6944	24
Singapore	56	0.6914	56	84	0.6664	84	0.6625	77

Thailand	57	0.6910	57	59	0.6907	52	0.6917	52
Greece	58	0.6908	58	85	0.6662	75	0.6727	72
Uruguay	59	0.6897	59	57	0.6936	54	0.6907	78
Peru	60	0.6895	60	44	0.7024	48	0.6959	75
China	61	0.6881	61	60	0.6907	57	0.6878	73
Botswana	62	0.6876	62	39	0.7071	63	0.6839	53
Ukraine	63	0.6869	63	61	0.6896	62	0.6856	57
Venezuela	64	0.6863	64	69	0.6839	59	0.6875	55
Czech Republic	65	0.6850	65	74	0.6789	69	0.6770	64
Tanzania	66	0.6829	66	73	0.6797	38	0.7068	34
Romania	67	0.6826	67	70	0.6805	70	0.6763	47
Malawi	68	0.6824	68	76	0.6738	81	0.6664	87
Paraguay	69	0.6804	69	66	0.6868	100	0.6379	69
Ghana	70	0.6782	70	80	0.6704	77	0.6679	63
Slovak Republic	71	0.6778	71	68	0.6845	64	0.6824	54
Vietnam	72	0.6776	72	71	0.6802	68	0.6778	42
Dominican Republic	73	0.6774	73	67	0.6859	72	0.6744	65

Italy	74	0.6765	74	72	0.6798	67	0.6788	84
Gambia, The	75	0.6762	75	75	0.6752	85	0.6622	95
Bolivia	76	0.6751	76	82	0.6693	80	0.6667	80
Brueni Darussalem	77	0.6748	77	94	0.6524	99	0.6392	n/a
Albania	78	0.6726	78	91	0.6601	87	0.6591	66
Hungary	79	0.6720	79	65	0.6879	60	0.6867	61
Madagascar	80	0.6713	80	77	0.6732	74	0.6736	89
Angola	81	0.6712	81	106	0.6353	114	0.6032	110
Bangladesh	82	0.6702	82	93	0.6526	90	0.6531	100
Malta	83	0.6695	83	88	0.6635	83	0.6634	76
Armenia	84	0.6669	84	90	0.6619	78	0.6677	71
Brazil	85	0.6655	85	81	0.6695	73	0.6737	74
Cyprus	86	0.6642	86	79	0.6706	76	0.6694	82
Indonesia	87	0.6615	87	92	0.6580	93	0.6473	81
Georgia	88	0.6598	88	83	0.6680	82	0.6654	67
Tajikistan	89	0.6598	89	86	0.6661	89	0.6541	79
El Salvador	90	0.6596	90	55	0.6939	58	0.6875	48

Mexico	91	0.6577	91	98	0.6503	97	0.6441	93
Zimbabwe	92	0.6574	92	95	0.6518	92	0.6485	88
Belize	93	0.6536	93	87	0.6636	86	0.6610	94
Japan	94	0.6524	94	101	0.6447	98	0.6434	91
Mauritius	95	0.6520	95	96	0.6513	95	0.6466	85
Kenya	96	0.6499	96	97	0.6512	88	0.6547	83
Cambodia	97	0.6482	97	104	0.6410	94	0.6469	98
Malaysia	98	0.6479	98	100	0.6467	96	0.6442	92
Maldives	99	0.6452	99	99	0.6482	91	0.6501	99
Azerbaijan	100	0.6446	100	89	0.6626	61	0.6856	59
Senegal	101	0.6414	101	102	0.6427	n/a	n/a	n/a
Suriname	102	0.6407	102	78	0.6726	79	0.6674	56
United Arab Emirates	103	0.6397	103	112	0.6198	105	0.6220	105
Korea, Rep.	104	0.6342	104	115	0.6146	108	0.6154	97
Kuwait	105	0.6318	105	105	0.6356	101	0.6358	96
Zambia	106	0.6293	106	107	0.6310	106	0.6205	101
Tunisia	107	0.6266	107	109	0.6233	103	0.6295	102
Fiji	108	0.6256	108	103	0.6414	n/a	n/a	n/a

Guatemala	109	0.6238	109	111	0.6209	112	0.6072	106
Bahrain	110	0.6217	110	116	0.6136	121	0.5927	115
Burkina Faso	111	0.6162	111	120	0.6081	115	0.6029	117
India	112	0.6155	112	114	0.6151	113	0.6060	114
Mauritania	113	0.6152	113	119	0.6103	110	0.6117	111
Cameroon	114	0.6110	114	118	0.6108	117	0.6017	116
Nepal	115	0.6084	115	110	0.6213	120	0.5942	125
Lebanon*	116	0.6084	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Qatar	117	0.6059	116	125	0.5907	119	0.5948	109
Nigeria	118	0.6055	117	108	0.6280	102	0.6339	107
Algeria	119	0.6052	118	117	0.6119	111	0.6111	108
Jordan	120	0.6048	119	113	0.6182	104	0.6275	104
Ethiopia	121	0.6019	120	122	0.5948	122	0.5867	113
Oman	122	0.5950	121	123	0.5938	118	0.5960	119
Iran	123	0.5933	122	128	0.5839	116	0.6021	118
Syria	124	0.5926	123	121	0.6072	107	0.6181	103
Egypt	125	0.5899	124	126	0.5862	124	0.5832	120
Turkey	126	0.5876	125	129	0.5828	123	0.5853	121

Morocco	127	0.5767	126	124	0.5926	125	0.5757	122
Benin	128	0.5719	127	131	0.5643	126	0.5582	123
Saudi Arabia	129	0.5713	128	130	0.5651	128	0.5537	124
Côte d'Ivoire*	130	0.5691	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mali	131	0.5680	129	127	0.5860	109	0.6117	112
Pakistan	132	0.5465	130	132	0.5458	127	0.5549	126
Chad	133	0.5330	131	133	0.5417	129	0.5290	127
Yemen	134	0.4603	132	134	0.4609	130	0.4664	128
Belarus	n/a	n/a	n/a	34	0.7141	33	0.7099	23
Uzbekistan	n/a	n/a	n/a	58	0.6913	55	0.6906	41

*new country 2010

Commentary:

According to the report's index, Nordic countries, such as [Iceland](#), [Norway](#), [Finland](#), and [Sweden](#) have continued to dominate at the top of the ranking for gender equality. Meanwhile, [France](#) has seen a notable decline in the ranking, largely as a result of decreased number of women holding ministerial portfolios in that country. In the Americas, the [United States](#) has risen in the ranking to top the region, predominantly as a result of a decreasing wage gap, as well as higher number of women holding key positions in the current Obama administration. [Canada](#) has continued to remain as one of the top ranking countries of the Americas, followed by the small Caribbean island

nation of Trinidad and Tobago, which has the distinction of being among the top three countries of the Americans in the realm of gender equality. [Lesotho](#) and South African ranked highly in the index, leading not only among African countries but also in global context. Despite [Lesotho](#) still lagging in the area of life expectancy, its high ranking was attributed to high levels of female participation in the labor force and female literacy. The [Philippines](#) and [Sri Lanka](#) were the top ranking countries for gender equality for Asia, ranking highly also in global context. The [Philippines](#) has continued to show strong performance in all strong performance on all four dimensions (detailed above) of the index. Finally, in the Arab world, the [United Arab Emirates](#) held the highest-rank within that region of the world; however, its placement near the bottom of the global list highlights the fact that Arab countries are generally poor performers when it comes to the matter of gender equality in global scope.

Source:

This data is derived from the latest edition of The Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum.

Available at URL:

<http://www.weforum.org/en/Communities/Women%20Leaders%20and%20Gender%20Parity/Gende>

Updated:

Based on latest available data as set forth in chart; reviewed in 2014

Culture and Arts

Cultural Considerations

Egypt's rich, ancient history remains a large part of the country's modern existence. Many contrasts and contradictions between the old and the new can be found in this North African nation, which meshes the best of both worlds.

Egypt's population mainly consists of Sunni Muslims and Coptic Christians. People of both religions moderately follow their religious practices. Religious principles are quite noticeable in their

daily lives.

More than 90 percent of the country's population is Arabic-speaking Sunni Muslims. About 6 percent are Christians. In Egypt, there is a large discrepancy between the wealthy and very poor.

As Egypt is generally a conservative Muslim culture, Islamic behaviors and practices should be respected. For example, one should always be aware of how Islamic law, which is delineated in the Shari'a, is used as the basis for the legal and juridical structure in Islamic countries. While the violation of traditions may simply be rationalized as ignorance in other countries, they take on far greater meaning in countries where the Islamic religion textures all aspect of society and culture.

Naguib Mahfouz, a Nobel Prize-winning author, is perhaps the best known of Egypt's novelists and poets whose works have been translated. Egypt's film industry is one of the world's oldest.

Umm Kalthum was by far the most famous of Egyptian singers. Her songs remain broadcast all over the world. Egypt also boasts a Cairo Symphony Orchestra, a Cairo Opera Ballet, and other troupes producing classical music and dance.

Research sources include:

<http://www.mapsofworld.com/egypt/egypt-culture.html>

<http://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/Egypt.html>

Etiquette

Cultural Dos and Taboos

1. There are several styles of greetings in Egypt and thus, in the case of a first meeting, it is advisable to wait for one's Egyptian counterpart to initiate the greeting. Westernized Egyptian men shake hands with other men, whereas a more traditional Arab greeting between men involves each grasping the other's right hand, placing the left hand on the other's right shoulder, and exchanging kisses on the cheek. Note that in this conservative Muslim culture, men may kiss men, women may kiss women, but men and women may not kiss in public. Note also that a traditional Arab

male may not always introduce his wife. In the case of meetings involving both genders and across cultural lines, a Westernized businesswomen should wait for an Egyptian man to offer his hand rather than initiating the greeting herself.

2. Egyptian tradition demands that visitors be welcomed several times at your first greeting. Once welcomed, an Egyptian will typically be an attentive and considerate host since to be anything less than hospitable would be regarded as lacking in virtue. Emulating these practice will be well-regarded by locals.

3. In conversation, good topic choices include Egyptian history, current or modern Egyptian achievements, sports and culture. Egyptians appreciate jokes and frequently indulge in self-deprecating humor, however, non-locals should not interpret this tendency as an invitation to make critical remarks or jokes about Egypt. Generally, discussions about politics or anything related to Israel should be avoided. Men should be careful not to bring up the subject of women unless one's Egyptian counterpart does so first. A simple inquiry as to the health of a wife or daughter can be considered inappropriate.

4. Social space is a culturally determined trait and visitors should note that Egyptians speak to each other at a much closer distance than North Americans. Likewise, Egyptians naturally tend to gravitate toward others in public. For example, in a sparsely-inhabited auditorium or on an almost-empty bus, an Egyptian may well choose the seat next to you. Their choice is not to be viewed as an invitation for conversation but is merely an indicator that this culture has a different understanding of spatial dynamics.

5. There are a number of prohibitions and customs involving eating that one should adhere to in a Muslim country. For example, one should also note that the consumption of alcohol or pork is disallowed in strict Muslim circles. Meanwhile, all meats consumed by Muslims should adhere to "hallal" standards. When one is partaking of a meal, one should not eat everything on the plate. Leaving a little food is a sign that one has had enough to eat. Note that it is insulting to add salt to your food as it denotes that the food is insufficiently appetizing.

6. Visitors should be sure to acquaint themselves with the calendar and traditions of Islam - such as the fasting, prayer and practices that are mandated during the period of Ramadan. Similarly, one should always be aware of how Islamic law, which is delineated in the Shari'a, is used as the basis for the legal and juridical structure in Islamic countries. While the violation of traditions may simply be rationalized as ignorance in other countries, they take on far greater meaning in countries where the Islamic religions textures all aspect of society and culture.

7. One should always use the right hand in preference to the left. The left hand is considered unclean in the Arab world and as such, one should never eat with the left hand. Likewise, one should avoid gesturing with the left hand while making sure that gifts are received with the right

hand. Of course, it is acceptable to use both hands when one is insufficient. One should also avoid pointing at another person, and one should never use the North American "thumbs up" gesture as is is considered to be vulgar throughout the Arab world.

8. Normally, one should be prepared to remove one's shoes before entering a building. When one removes one's shoes, the soles of the shoes are placed together, preventing the sole from being pointed at anyone. Also, one should never show the bottom of one's feet as it is considered offensive.

9. If you are invited to an Egyptian home, it is customary to take a gift to the host or hostess. Baked goods or chocolates are good choices, while flowers are acceptable for very Westernized Egyptians. Note, however, that flowers are traditionally used at funerals and weddings. A beautiful ornament, possibly from one's own country, or fine crystal or china, would make better choices. A finely made compass, symbolizing the direction of Mecca to a devout Muslim, would constitute a thoughtful gesture on the part of the giver, and would most assuredly be treasured by the recipient.

10. Egypt is a conservative, Muslim culture and clothing should be appropriate to this environment. Business wear is typically more conventional; suits are the norm for both men and women, although some industries may allow more casual attire to be worn. Women generally should try to be more restrained in regard to makeup and jewelry. Both men and women should dress modestly. Tight, revealing clothing is simply not acceptable. Necklines should be high and sleeves should come to the elbows. Hemlines should be well below the knee, if not ankle length.

Business Customs

Business in Egypt is personal. Egyptian and foreign business community members who have broad experience in the market, give the following suggestions:

Have Patience:

Unfamiliar paperwork processes, and bureaucratic procedures make business conduct somewhat slow in Egypt. Don't expect to breeze in for a week in Cairo and leave with a contract. It may take a year or more, but in the end, it is usually profitable.

Get Acquainted With Local Culture:

Egyptians are a proud people who trace their civilization back 5,000 years. Take time to learn the culture, and develop an appreciation for the Islamic faith. All private business leaders and most high-level government officials have a good command of English. Learn as much Arabic as possible - it pleases Egyptians if you know key phrases in Arabic ... Good Morning (Sabah El Kheir), Good Evening (Messaa El Kheir), etc.

Be Personable:

When you visit with a business person, don't just walk in, shake hands and get down to business. If you have previously met with the person, chat about common friends, family, children, etc.

Do Your Homework:

The Egyptian market is a complex and highly competitive one. A good Egyptian agent will help you a great deal in directing you to success. Find yourself a good local representative with the help of the Foreign Commercial Service at an embassy or a reliable international business group.

Remain Flexible:

The Egyptian market, like anywhere in the Middle East, is a changing one. Don't always expect the terms of a contract to remain the same during its length. Explore different markets - be flexible to change from partnership to technology transfer or royalty provisions.

Send Your Best:

Your top experienced executive with knowledge of the area will do a better job with the Egyptian business community. Your young, enthusiastic representative may not be as effective with the local partner, particularly in a culture which venerates age and experience.

Business Rules:

When doing business in Egypt, be prepared to play it in the Egyptian tradition, or you may waste your time. A few foreign firms come to Egypt and give up after a short stay. Most foreign companies, however, once established with a base, find the Egyptian market a worthwhile and profitable place to do business.

Travel Information

Please Note: This is a generalized travel guide and it is intended to coalesce several resources, which a traveler might find useful, regardless of a particular destination. As such, it does not include travel warnings for specific "hot spot" destinations.

For travel alerts and warnings, please see the United States Department of State's listings available at URL:

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html>

Please note that travel to the following countries, based on these warnings, is ill-advised, or should be undertaken with the utmost precaution:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Honduras, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Palestinian Territories of West Bank and Gaza, Philippines areas of Sulu Archipelago, Mindanao, and southern Sulu Sea, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Yemen.

International Travel Guide

Checklist for Travelers

1. Take out travel insurance to cover hospital treatment or medical evacuation. Overseas medical costs are expensive to most international travelers, where one's domestic, nationalized or even private health insurance plans will not provide coverage outside one's home country. Learn about "reciprocal insurance plans" that some international health care companies might offer.
2. Make sure that one's travel insurance is appropriate. If one intends to indulge in adventurous activities, such as parasailing, one should be sure that one is fully insured in such cases. Many traditional insurance policies do not provide coverage in cases of extreme circumstances.
3. Take time to learn about one's destination country and culture. Read and learn about the place one is traveling. Also check political, economic and socio-cultural developments at the destination by reading country-specific travel reports and fact sheets noted below.
4. Get the necessary visas for the country (or countries) one intends to visit - but be aware that a visa does not guarantee entry. A number of useful sites regarding visa and other entry requirements are noted below.
5. Keep in regular contact with friends and relatives back at home by phone or email, and be sure to leave a travel itinerary.
6. Protect one's personal information by making copies of one's passport details, insurance policy, travelers checks and credit card numbers. Taking copies of such documents with you, while leaving another collection copies with someone at home is also good practice for travelers. Taking copies of one's passport photograph is also recommended.
7. Stay healthy by taking all possible precautions against illness. Also, be sure to take extra supplies of prescription drugs along for the trip, while also taking time to pack general pharmaceutical supplies, such as aspirin and other such painkillers, bandages, stomach ailment medication, anti-inflammatory medication and anti-bacterial medication.
8. Do not carry illicit drugs. Understand that the punishment for possession or use of illegal drugs in some countries may be capital punishment. Make sure your prescription drugs are legal in the countries you plan to visit.
9. Know the laws of one's destination country and culture; be sure to understand the repercussions

of breaking those laws and regulations. Often the transparency and freedoms of the juridical system at home is not consistent with that of one's destination country. Become aware of these complexities and subtleties before you travel.

10. For longer stays in a country, or where the security situation is volatile, one should register one's self and traveling companions at the local embassy or consulate of one's country of citizenship.

11. Women should take care to be prepared both culturally and practically for traveling in a different country and culture. One should be sure to take sufficient supplies of personal feminine products and prescription drugs. One should also learn about local cultural standards for women, including norms of dressing. Be aware that it is simply inappropriate and unsafe for women to travel alone in some countries, and take the necessary precautions to avoid risk-filled situations.

12. If one is traveling with small children, one should pack extra supplies, make arrangements with the travel carrier for proper seating that would adequately accommodate children, infants or toddlers. Note also that whether one is male or female, traveling with children means that one's hands are thus not free to carry luggage and bags. Be especially aware that this makes one vulnerable to pickpockets, thieves and other sorts of crime.

13. Make proper arrangements for accommodations, well in advance of one's arrival at a destination. Some countries have limited accommodation, while others may have culturally distinctive facilities. Learning about these practicalities before one travels will greatly aid the enjoyment of one's trip.

14. Travel with different forms of currency and money (cash, traveler's checks and credit cards) in anticipation that venues may not accept one or another form of money. Also, ensuring that one's financial resources are not contained in one location, or by one person (if one is traveling with others) can be a useful measure, in the event that one loses a wallet or purse.

15. Find out about transportation in the destination country. In some places, it might be advisable to hire a local driver or taxi guide for safety reasons, while in other countries, enjoying one's travel experience may well be enhanced by renting a vehicle and seeing the local sights and culture independently. Costs may also be prohibitive for either of these choices, so again, prior planning is suggested.

Tips for Travelers

- Bring enough funds for your stay and your return journey, and ensure that if necessary you can arrange for extra funds to be sent to you.
- Check with your embassy, consulate, or appropriate government institution related to travel before traveling.
- Respect local laws and customs. Women should dress modestly. Drunkenness can lead to arrest. Don't take photographs of, or near, military or other official installations. Don't photograph

individuals without their permission.

- Take care of your passport and valuables. Use hotel safes and be aware of pickpockets and bag snatchers as you should in any busy tourist area. The loss of your passport or money can take at least a week to rectify. Enter next of kin details into the back of your passport.
- Visas. Tourist visas are valid for a stay of one month. You cannot leave Egypt with an out-of-date visa. Applications for extension should be made at the Passport and Immigration Office.
- Customs. Certain valuables such as electrical equipment, video cameras, etc must be declared on arrival. Items noted in passports must be produced on exit from the country. Failure to do so will result in payment of high rates of customs duty.
- Driving in Egypt? Driving conditions and habits are wholly different from those in Britain and extra care should be taken. Make sure you have valid local insurance. Observe speed limits and avoid driving on country roads at night. Don't travel unescorted off the beaten track to areas not usually frequented by tourists.
- Come prepared for the heat. This especially applies in Upper Egypt during the summer months. Guard against dehydration and excessive exposure to the sun - the consequences can be serious. Bottled mineral water is available locally.
- Don't come to Egypt without medical insurance. Make sure it covers the costs of local hospitalization and medical repatriation to your home country.
- Don't get involved with drugs. Personal use is no excuse. Heavy sentences (including death in some cases) are applicable to all types of drugs offences. The minimum sentence for the illegal importation of drugs is 25 years imprisonment.

Note: This information is directly quoted from the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Sources: *United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office*

Business Culture: Information for Business Travelers

Business in Egypt is personal. Egyptian and foreign business community members who have broad experience in the market, give the following suggestions:

1. Have Patience:

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2. Get Acquainted With Local Culture:

Egyptians are a proud people who trace their civilization back 5,000 years. Take time to learn the culture, and develop an appreciation for the Islamic faith. All private business leaders and most high-level government officials have a good command of English. Learn as much Arabic as possible - it pleases Egyptians if you know key phrases in Arabic ... Good Morning (Sabah El Kheir), Good Evening (Messaa El Kheir), etc.

3. Be Personable:

When you visit a businessperson, don't just walk in, shake hands and get down to business. If you have previously met with the person, chat about common friends, family, children, etc.

4. Do Your Homework:

The Egyptian market is a complex and highly competitive one. A good Egyptian agent will help you a great deal in directing you to success. Find yourself a good local representative with the help of your country's embassy or a reliable business group.

5. Remain Flexible:

The Egyptian market, like anywhere in the Middle East, is a changing one. Don't always expect the terms of a contract to remain the same during its length. Explore different markets - be flexible to change from partnership to technology transfer or royalty provisions.

6. Send Your Best:

Your top, experienced executive with knowledge of the area will do a better job with the Egyptian business community. Your young, enthusiastic representative may not be as effective with the local partner, particularly in a culture that respects age and experience.

7. Business Rules:

When doing business in Egypt, be prepared to play it in the Egyptian tradition, or you may waste your time. A few foreign firms come to Egypt and give up after a short stay. But most foreign companies, once established with a base here, find the Egyptian market a worthwhile and profitable place to do business.

Sources: *United States Department of State Commercial Guides*

Online Resources Regarding Entry Requirements and Visas

Foreign Entry Requirements for Americans from the United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

Visa Services for Non-Americans from the United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html

Visa Bulletins from the United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/bulletin/bulletin_1360.html

Visa Waivers from the United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html - new

Passport and Visa Information from the Government of the United Kingdom

<http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

Visa Information from the Government of Australia

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/visas/index.html>

Passport Information from the Government of Australia

<https://www.passports.gov.au/Web/index.aspx>

Passport Information from the Government of Canada

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/passport_passeport-eng.asp

Visa Information from the Government of Canada

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/visas-eng.asp

Online Visa Processing by Immigration Experts by VisaPro

<http://www.visapro.com>

Sources: United States Department of State, United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Government of Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government of Canada Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Useful Online Resources for Travelers

Country-Specific Travel Information from United States

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

Travel Advice by Country from Government of United Kingdom

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/>

General Travel Advice from Government of Australia

<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/General>

Travel Bulletins from the Government of Australia

<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/TravelBulletins/>

Travel Tips from Government of Australia

<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/tips/index.html>

Travel Checklist by Government of Canada

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/checklist_sommaire-eng.asp

Travel Checklist from Government of United Kingdom

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/staying-safe/checklist>

Your trip abroad from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures_1225.html

A safe trip abroad from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1747.html

Tips for expatriates abroad from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/residing/residing_1235.html

Tips for students from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/studying/studying_1238.html <http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/broc>

Medical information for travelers from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1185.html

US Customs Travel information

<http://www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/travel/>

Sources: United States Department of State; United States Customs Department, United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Government of Australia; Government of Canada: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Other Practical Online Resources for Travelers

Foreign Language Phrases for Travelers

<http://www.travlang.com/languages/>

<http://www.omniglot.com/language/phrases/index.htm>

World Weather Forecasts

<http://www.intellicast.com/>

<http://www.wunderground.com/>

<http://www.worldweather.org/>

Worldwide Time Zones, Map, World Clock

<http://www.timeanddate.com/>

<http://www.worldtimezone.com/>

International Airport Codes

<http://www.world-airport-codes.com/>

International Dialing Codes

<http://www.kropla.com/dialcode.htm>

<http://www.countrycallingcodes.com/>

International Phone Guide

<http://www.kropla.com/phones.htm>

International Mobile Phone Guide

<http://www.kropla.com/mobilephones.htm>

International Internet Café Search Engine

<http://cybercaptive.com/>

Global Internet Roaming

<http://www.kropla.com/roaming.htm>

World Electric Power Guide

<http://www.kropla.com/electric.htm>

<http://www.kropla.com/electric2.htm>

World Television Standards and Codes

<http://www.kropla.com/tv.htm>

International Currency Exchange Rates

<http://www.xe.com/ucc/>

Banking and Financial Institutions Across the World

<http://www.123world.com/banks/index.html>

International Credit Card or Automated Teller Machine (ATM) Locator

<http://visa.via.infonow.net/locator/global/>

<http://www.mastercard.com/us/personal/en/cardholderservices/atmlocations/index.html>

International Chambers of Commerce

<http://www.123world.com/chambers/index.html>

World Tourism Websites

<http://123world.com/tourism/>

Diplomatic and Consular Information

United States Diplomatic Posts Around the World

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

United Kingdom Diplomatic Posts Around the World

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/embassies-and-posts/find-an-embassy-overseas/>

Australia's Diplomatic Posts Around the World

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/missions/>

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/embassies.html>

Canada's Embassies and High Commissions

<http://www.international.gc.ca/ciw-cdm/embassies-ambassades.aspx>

Resources for Finding Embassies and other Diplomatic Posts Across the World

<http://www.escapeartist.com/embassy1/embassy1.htm>

Safety and Security

Travel Warnings by Country from Government of Australia

<http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/>

Travel Warnings and Alerts from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1766.html

Travel Reports and Warnings by Government of Canada

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/menu-eng.asp

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/updates_mise-a-jour-eng.asp

Travel Warnings from Government of United Kingdom

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/>

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/?action=noTravelAll#noTravelAll>

Sources: United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the United States Department of State, the Government of Canada: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Government of Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Other Safety and Security Online Resources for Travelers

United States Department of State Information on Terrorism

<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/>

Government of the United Kingdom Resource on the Risk of Terrorism

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?>

[pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1044011304926](http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1044011304926)

Government of Canada Terrorism Guide

<http://www.international.gc.ca/crime/terrorism-terrorisme.aspx?lang=eng>

Information on Terrorism by Government of Australia

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/icat/index.html>

FAA Resource on Aviation Safety

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

In-Flight Safety Information for Air Travel (by British Airways crew trainer, Anna Warman)

<http://www.warman.demon.co.uk/anna/inflight.html>

Hot Spots: Travel Safety and Risk Information

<http://www.airsecurity.com/hotspots/HotSpots.asp>

Information on Human Rights

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/hr/>

Sources: The United States Department of State, the United States Customs Department, the Government of Canada, the Government of United Kingdom, the Government of Australia, the Federal Aviation Authority, Anna Warman's In-flight Website, Hot Spots Travel and Risk Information

Diseases/Health Data

Please Note: Most of the entry below constitutes a generalized health advisory, which a traveler might find useful, regardless of a particular destination.

As a supplement, however, reader will also find below a list of countries flagged with current health notices and alerts issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Please note that travel to the following countries, based on these 3 levels of warnings, is ill-advised, or should be undertaken with the utmost precaution:

Level 3 (highest level of concern; avoid non-essential travel) --

Guinea - Ebola

Liberia - Ebola

Nepal - Earthquake zone

Sierra Leone - Ebola

Level 2 (intermediate level of concern; use utmost caution during travel) --

Cameroon - Polio

Somalia - Polio

Vanuatu - Tropical Cyclone zone

Throughout Middle East and Arabia Peninsula - MERS ((Middle East Respiratory Syndrome)

Level 1 (standard level of concern; use practical caution during travel) -

Australia - Ross River disease

Bosnia-Herzegovina - Measles

Brazil - Dengue Fever

Brazil - Malaria

Brazil - Zika

China - H7N9 Avian flu

Cuba - Cholera

Egypt - H5N1 Bird flu

Ethiopia - Measles

Germany - Measles

Japan - Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD)

Kyrgyzstan - Measles

Malaysia -Dengue Fever

Mexico - Chikungunya

Mexico - Hepatitis A

Nigeria - Meningitis

Philippines - Measles

Scotland - Mumps

Singapore - Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD)

South Korea - MERS ((Middle East Respiratory Syndrome)

Throughout Caribbean - Chikungunya

Throughout Central America - Chikungunya

Throughout South America - Chikungunya

Throughout Pacific Islands - Chikungunya

For specific information related to these health notices and alerts please see the CDC's listing available at URL:

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>

Health Information for Travelers to Egypt

Food and waterborne diseases are the number one cause of illness in travelers. Travelers' diarrhea can be caused by viruses, bacteria, or parasites, which are found throughout the region and can

contaminate food or water. Infections may cause diarrhea and vomiting (*E. coli*, *Salmonella*, cholera, and parasites), fever (typhoid fever and toxoplasmosis), or liver damage (hepatitis). Make sure your food and drinking water are safe. (See below.)

Malaria is a preventable infection that can be fatal if left untreated. Prevent infection by taking prescription antimalarial drugs and protecting yourself against mosquito bites (see below). Most travelers to malaria risk areas in this region should take chloroquine to prevent malaria. A limited risk for malaria exists in certain parts of Algeria, Egypt (El Faiyum area only), Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Western Sahara, and Morocco. There is no risk for travelers visiting the major tourist areas in North Africa, including Nile cruises. For more detailed information about the risk in specific locations, see *Malaria in North Africa* (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/regionalmalaria/nafrica.htm>).

A certificate of yellow fever vaccination may be required for entry into certain of these countries if you are coming from a country in tropical South America or sub-Saharan Africa. (There is no risk for yellow fever in North Africa.) For detailed information, see *Comprehensive Yellow Fever Vaccination Requirements* (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/yelfever.htm>).

Dengue, filariasis, leishmaniasis, and onchocerciasis are diseases carried by insects that also occur in this region. Protecting yourself against insect bites (see below) will help to prevent these diseases.

Schistosomiasis, a parasitic infection, is found in fresh water in the region, including the Nile River. Do not swim in fresh water (except in well-chlorinated swimming pools) in these countries. (For more information, please see the *Swimming Precautions on the Making Travel*

Safe page at URL <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/safety.htm>.)

Because motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of injury among travelers, walk and drive defensively. Avoid nighttime travel if possible and always use seat belts.

CDC Recommends the Following Vaccines (as Appropriate for Age):

See your doctor at least 4-6 weeks before your trip to allow time for shots to take effect.

- Hepatitis A or immune globulin (IG).
- Hepatitis B if you might be exposed to blood (for example, health-care workers), have sexual contact with the local population, stay longer than 6 months in the region, or be exposed through medical treatment.
- Rabies, if you might be exposed to wild or domestic animals through your work or recreation.
- Typhoid, particularly if you are visiting developing countries in this region.
- As needed, booster doses for tetanus-diphtheria, measles, and a one-time dose of polio vaccine for adults. Hepatitis B vaccine is now recommended for all infants and for children ages 11-12

years who did not complete the series as infants.

To Stay Healthy, Do:

- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated (bubbly) drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes. If this is not possible, make water safer by BOTH filtering through an "absolute 1-micron or less" filter AND adding iodine tablets to the filtered water. "Absolute 1-micron filters" are found in camping/outdoor supply stores.
- Eat only thoroughly cooked food or fruits and vegetables you have peeled yourself. Remember: boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it.
- If you will be visiting an area where there is risk for malaria, take your malaria prevention medication before, during, and after travel, as directed. (See your doctor for a prescription.)
- Protect yourself from insects by remaining in well-screened areas, using repellents (applied sparingly at 4-hour intervals) and permethrin-impregnated mosquito nets, and wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants from dusk through dawn.
- To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, keep feet clean and dry, and do not go barefoot.
- Always use latex condoms to reduce the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

To Avoid Getting Sick:

- Don't eat food purchased from street vendors.
- Don't drink beverages with ice.
- Don't eat dairy products unless you know they have been pasteurized.
- Don't share needles with anyone.
- Don't handle animals (especially monkeys, dogs, and cats), to avoid bites and serious diseases (including rabies and plague). (For more information, please see the Animal-Associated Hazards on the Making Travel Safe page.)
- Don't swim in fresh water, including the Nile. Salt water is usually safer. (For more information, please see the Swimming Precautions on the Making Travel Safe page.)

What You Need To Bring with You:

- Long-sleeved shirt and long pants to wear while outside whenever possible, to prevent illnesses carried by insects (e.g., malaria, dengue, filariasis, leishmaniasis, and onchocerciasis).
- Insect repellent containing DEET (diethylmethyltoluamide), in 30%-35% strength for adults and 6%-10% for children. Unless you are staying in air-conditioned or well-screened housing, purchase a bed net impregnated with the insecticide permethrin. (Bed nets can be purchased in camping or military supply stores.)
- Over-the-counter antidiarrheal medicine to take if you have diarrhea.
- Iodine tablets and water filters to purify water if bottled water is not available. See Do's above for

more detailed information about water filters.

- Sunblock, sunglasses, hat.
- Prescription medications: make sure you have enough to last during your trip, as well as a copy of the prescription(s).

After You Return Home:

If you have visited an area where there is risk for malaria, continue taking your malaria medication weekly for 4 weeks after you leave the area.

If you become ill after your trip-even as long as a year after you return-tell your doctor where you have traveled.

For More Information:

Ask your doctor or check the CDC web sites for more information about how to protect yourself against diseases that occur in North Africa, such as:

For information about diseases-

Carried by Insects

Dengue, Malaria, Plague

Carried in Food or Water

Cholera, *Escherichia coli*, diarrhea, Hepatitis A, Schistosomiasis, Typhoid Fever

Person-to-Person Contact

Hepatitis B, HIV/AIDS

For more information about these and other diseases, please check the Diseases (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/diseases.htm>) section and the Health Topics A - Z (<http://www.cdc.gov/health/diseases.htm>).

Note:

Egypt is located in the North Africa health region.

Sources:

The Center for Disease Control Destinations Website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/indianrg.htm>

Chapter 6

Environmental Overview

Environmental Issues

General Overview:

With the exception of its northern and eastern coastlines, as well as the Nile Valley, Egypt is predominantly desert. Because of the intensive irrigation needed to support this kind of landscape, Egypt has developed a host of environmentally related problems. Indeed, its very irrigation waters suffer from pollution, which then encroaches upon almost every other aspect of the country's environment. These challenges have been exacerbated by the high population density which places a further strain upon resources.

Current Issues:

- Loss of agricultural land, as a result of urbanization and windblown sands
- Desertification
- Increased soil salinization below the Aswan High Dam
- Soil erosion, as a consequence of intensive irrigation and waterlogging
- Habitat degradation, as a result of human activities, including tourism
- Coastline and marine degradation, and concomitant threats to coral reefs, beaches, and marine habitats- Oil pollution, as a result of offshore oil facilities, pipelines, and petroleum residuals from shipping vessels
- Water pollution from agricultural pesticides, raw sewage, and industrial effluents
- Very limited natural fresh water resources, with the exception of the River Nile (the only perennial water source)
- Waterborne diseases, as a result of poor sanitation
- Population growth and depleting natural resources

Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Mtc):

48.6

Country Rank (GHG output):

32nd

Natural Hazards:

- periodic droughts
- earthquakes
- flash floods
- landslides
- volcanic activity
- hot, driving, springtime windstorms ("khamsin")
- dust storms
- sandstorms

Environmental Policy

Regulation and Jurisdiction:

The regulation and protection of the environment in Egypt is under the jurisdiction of the following:

- The Ministry of the Environment
- The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Land Reclamation
- The Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency
- The National Research Centre-Environmental Section

Major Non-Governmental Organizations:

- The Egyptian Association for the Conservation of Natural Resources
- The National Research Institute of Astronomy and Geophysics at the Solar and Space Research Branch
- The Focal Research and Training Programme Support Unit of the Supreme Council of Universities.

International Environmental Accords:

Party to:

- Biodiversity
- Climate Change
- Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol
- Desertification
- Endangered Species
- Environmental Modification
- Hazardous Wastes
- Law of the Sea
- Marine Dumping
- Nuclear Test Ban
- Ozone Layer Protection
- Ship Pollution
- Tropical Timber 83
- Tropical Timber 94
- Wetlands
- Whaling

Signed but not ratified:

- None

Kyoto Protocol Status (year ratified):

2005

Greenhouse Gas Ranking

Greenhouse Gas Ranking

GHG Emissions Rankings

Country Rank	Country
1	United States
2	China
4	Russia
5	Japan
6	India
7	Germany
8	United Kingdom
9	Canada
10	Korea, South
11	Italy
12	Mexico
13	France
14	South Africa

15	Iran
16	Indonesia
17	Australia
18	Spain
19	Brazil
20	Saudi Arabia
21	Ukraine
22	Poland
23	Taiwan
24	Turkey
25	Thailand
26	Netherlands
27	Kazakhstan
28	Malaysia
29	Egypt
30	Venezuela
31	Argentina
32	Uzbekistan

33	Czech Republic
34	Belgium
35	Pakistan
36	Romania
37	Greece
38	United Arab Emirates
39	Algeria
40	Nigeria
41	Austria
42	Iraq
43	Finland
44	Philippines
45	Vietnam
46	Korea, North
47	Israel
48	Portugal
49	Colombia
50	Belarus

51	Kuwait
52	Hungary
53	Chile
54	Denmark
55	Serbia & Montenegro
56	Sweden
57	Syria
58	Libya
59	Bulgaria
60	Singapore
61	Switzerland
62	Ireland
63	Turkmenistan
64	Slovakia
65	Bangladesh
66	Morocco
67	New Zealand
68	Oman

69	Qatar
70	Azerbaijan
71	Norway
72	Peru
73	Cuba
74	Ecuador
75	Trinidad & Tobago
76	Croatia
77	Tunisia
78	Dominican Republic
79	Lebanon
80	Estonia
81	Yemen
82	Jordan
83	Slovenia
84	Bahrain
85	Angola
86	Bosnia & Herzegovina

87	Lithuania
88	Sri Lanka
89	Zimbabwe
90	Bolivia
91	Jamaica
92	Guatemala
93	Luxembourg
94	Myanmar
95	Sudan
96	Kenya
97	Macedonia
98	Mongolia
99	Ghana
100	Cyprus
101	Moldova
102	Latvia
103	El Salvador
104	Brunei

105	Honduras
106	Cameroon
107	Panama
108	Costa Rica
109	Cote d'Ivoire
110	Kyrgyzstan
111	Tajikistan
112	Ethiopia
113	Senegal
114	Uruguay
115	Gabon
116	Albania
117	Nicaragua
118	Botswana
119	Paraguay
120	Tanzania
121	Georgia
122	Armenia

123	Congo, RC
124	Mauritius
125	Nepal
126	Mauritius
127	Nepal
128	Mauritania
129	Malta
130	Papua New Guinea
131	Zambia
132	Suriname
133	Iceland
134	Togo
135	Benin
136	Uganda
137	Bahamas
138	Haiti
139	Congo, DRC
140	Guyana

141	Mozambique
142	Guinea
143	Equatorial Guinea
144	Laos
145	Barbados
146	Niger
147	Fiji
148	Burkina Faso
149	Malawi
150	Swaziland
151	Belize
152	Afghanistan
153	Sierra Leone
154	Eritrea
155	Rwanda
156	Mali
157	Seychelles
158	Cambodia

159	Liberia
160	Bhutan
161	Maldives
162	Antigua & Barbuda
163	Djibouti
164	Saint Lucia
165	Gambia
166	Guinea-Bissau
167	Central African Republic
168	Palau
169	Burundi
170	Grenada
171	Lesotho
172	Saint Vincent & the Grenadines
173	Solomon Islands
174	Samoa
175	Cape Verde
176	Nauru

177	Dominica
178	Saint Kitts & Nevis
179	Chad
180	Tonga
181	Sao Tome & Principe
182	Comoros
183	Vanuatu
185	Kiribati
Not Ranked	Andorra
Not Ranked	East Timor
Not Ranked	Holy See
Not Ranked	Hong Kong
Not Ranked	Liechtenstein
Not Ranked	Marshall Islands
Not Ranked	Micronesia
Not Ranked	Monaco
Not Ranked	San Marino
Not Ranked	Somalia

Not Ranked

Tuvalu

* European Union is ranked 3rd

Cook Islands are ranked 184th

Niue is ranked 186th

Global Environmental Snapshot

Introduction

The countries of the world face many environmental challenges in common. Nevertheless, the nature and intensity of problem vary from region to region, as do various countries' respective capacities, in terms of affluence and infrastructure, to remediate threats to environmental quality.

Consciousness of perils affecting the global environment came to the fore in the last third or so of the 20th century has continued to intensify well into the new millennium. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, considerable environmental progress has been made at the level of institutional developments, international cooperation accords, and public participation. Approximately two-dozen international environmental protection accords with global implications have been promulgated since the late 1970s under auspices of the United Nations and other international organizations, together with many additional regional agreements. Attempts to address and rectify environmental problems take the form of legal frameworks, economic instruments, environmentally sound technologies and cleaner production processes as well as conservation efforts. Environmental impact assessments have increasingly been applied across the globe.

Environmental degradation affects the quality, or aesthetics, of human life, but it also displays potential to undermine conditions necessary for the sustainability of human life. Attitudes toward the importance of environmental protection measures reflect ambivalence derived from this bifurcation. On one hand, steps such as cleaning up pollution, dedicating parkland, and suchlike, are seen as embellishments undertaken by wealthy societies already assured they can successfully perform those functions deemed, ostensibly, more essential-for instance, public health and education, employment and economic development. On the other hand, in poorer countries, activities causing environmental damage-for instance the land degradation effects of unregulated logging, slash-and-burn agriculture, overgrazing, and mining-can seem justified insofar as such activities provide incomes and livelihoods.

Rapid rates of resource depletion are associated with poverty and high population growth, themselves correlated, whereas consumption per capita is much higher in the most developed countries, despite these nations' recent progress in energy efficiency and conservation. It is impossible to sequester the global environmental challenge from related economic, social and political challenges.

First-tier industrialized countries have recently achieved measurable decreases in environmental pollution and the rate of resource depletion, a success not matched in middle income and developing countries. It is believed that the discrepancy is due to the fact that industrialized countries have more developed infrastructures to accommodate changes in environmental policy, to apply environmental technologies, and to invest in public education. The advanced industrialized countries incur relatively lower costs in alleviating environmental problems, in comparison to developing countries, since in the former even extensive environmental programs represent a rather minuscule percentage of total expenditures. Conversely, budget constraints, lagged provision of basic services to the population, and other factors such as debt service and militarization may preclude institution of minimal environmental protection measures in the poorest countries.

A synopsis for the current situation facing each region of the world follows:

Regional Synopsis: Africa

The African continent, the world's second-largest landmass, encompasses many of the world's least developed countries. By global standards, urbanization is comparatively low but rising at a rapid rate. More heavily industrialized areas at the northern and southern ends of the continent experience the major share of industrial pollution. In other regions the most serious environmental problems typically stem from inefficient subsistence farming methods and other forms of land degradation, which have affected an increasingly extensive area under pressure of a widely impoverished, fast-growing population. Africa's distribution of natural resources is very uneven. It is the continent at greatest risk of desertification, especially in the Sahel region at the edge of the Sahara but also in other dry-range areas. Yet at the same time, Africa also harbors some of the earth's richest and most diverse biological zones.

Key Points:

Up to half a billion hectares of African land are moderately to severely degraded, an occurrence reflecting short-fallow shifting cultivation and overgrazing as well as a climatic pattern of recurrent droughts.

Soil degradation is severe along the expanse directly south of the Sahara, from the west to the east coasts. Parts of southern Africa, central-eastern Africa, and the neighboring island of Madagascar

suffer from serious soil degradation as well.

Africa contains about 17 percent of the world's forest cover, concentrated in the tropical belt of the continent. Many of the forests, however, are severely depleted, with an estimated 70 percent showing some degree of degradation.

Population growth has resulted in continuing loss of arable land, as inefficient subsistence farming techniques affect increasingly extensive areas. Efforts to implement settled, sustainable agriculture have met with some recent success, but much further progress in this direction is needed. Especially in previously uninhabited forestlands, concern over deforestation is intensifying.

By contrast, the African savanna remains the richest grassland in the world, supporting a substantial concentration of animal and plant life. Wildlife parks are sub-Saharan Africa's greatest tourist attraction, and with proper management-giving local people a stake in conservation and controlling the pace of development-could greatly enhance African economies.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of northern, southern and eastern Africa are currently threatened, while the biological diversity in Mauritania and Madagascar is even further compromised with over 20 percent of the mammal species in these two countries currently under threat.

With marine catch trends increasing from 500,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 3,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Water resource vulnerability is a major concern in northeastern Africa, and a moderate concern across the rest of the continent. An exception is central Africa, which has plentiful water supplies.

Many Africans lack adequate access to resources, not just (if at all) because the resources are unevenly distributed geographically, but also through institutional failures such as faulty land tenure systems or political upheaval. The quality of Africa's natural resources, despite their spotty distribution, is in fact extraordinarily rich. The infrastructure needed to protect and benefit from this natural legacy, however, is largely lacking.

Regional Synopsis: Asia and the Pacific

Asia-earth's largest landmass-and the many large and nearly innumerable small islands lying off its Pacific shore display extraordinarily contrasting landscapes, levels of development, and degrees of environmental stress. In the classification used here, the world's smallest continent, Australia, is also included in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to 9 of the world's 14 largest urban areas, and as energy use for utilities, industry and transport increases in developing economies, urban centers are subject to worsening air quality. Intense population density in places such as Bangladesh or Hong Kong is the quintessential image many people have of Asia, yet vast desert areas such as the Gobi and the world's highest mountain range, the Himalayas, span the continent as well. Forested areas in Southeast Asia and the islands of Indonesia and the Philippines were historically prized for their tropical hardwood, but in many places this resource is now severely depleted. Low-lying small island states are extremely vulnerable to the effects of global warming, both rising sea levels and an anticipated increase in cyclones.

Key Points:

Asian timber reserves are forecast to be depleted in the next 40 years. Loss of natural forest is irreversible in some areas, but plantation programs to restore tree cover may ameliorate a portion of the resulting land degradation.

Increased usage of fossil fuels in China and other parts of southern Asia is projected to result in a marked increase in emissions, especially in regard to carbon dioxide. The increased usage of energy has led to a marked upsurge in air pollution across the region.

Acidification is an emerging problem regionally, with sulfur dioxide emissions expected to triple by 2010 if the current growth rate is sustained. China, Thailand, India, and Korea seem to be suffering from particularly high rates of acid deposition. By contrast, Asia's most highly developed economy, Japan, has effected substantial improvements in its environmental indicators.

Water pollution in the Pacific is an urgent concern since up to 70 percent of the water discharged into the region's waters receives no treatment. Additionally, the disposal of solid wastes, in like manner, poses a major threat in a region with many areas of high population density.

The Asia-Pacific region is the largest expanse of the world's land that is adversely affected by soil degradation.

The region around Australia reportedly suffers the largest degree of ozone depletion.

The microstates of the Pacific suffer land loss due to global warming, and the consequent rise in the levels of ocean waters. A high-emissions scenario and anthropogenic climate impact at the upper end of the currently predicted range would probably force complete evacuation of the lowest-elevation islands sometime in this century.

The species-rich reefs surrounding Southeast Asia are highly vulnerable to the deleterious effects of

coastal development, land-based pollution, over-fishing and exploitative fishing methods, as well as marine pollution from oil spills and other activities.

With marine catch trends increasing from 5,000,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 20,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of China and south-east Asia are currently threatened, while the biological diversity in India, Japan, Australia, the Philippines, Indonesia and parts of Malaysia is even further compromised with over 20 percent of the mammal species in these countries currently under threat.

Water resource vulnerability is a serious concern in areas surrounding the Indian subcontinent.

Regional Synopsis: Central Asia

The Central Asian republics, formerly in the Soviet Union, experience a range of environmental problems as the result of poorly executed agricultural, industrial, and nuclear programs during the Soviet era. Relatively low population densities are the norm, especially since upon the breakup of the U.S.S.R. many ethnic Russians migrated back to European Russia. In this largely semi-arid region, drought, water shortages, and soil salinization pose major challenges.

Key Points:

The use of agricultural pesticides, such as DDT and other chemicals, has contributed to the contamination of soil and groundwater throughout the region.

Land and soil degradation, and in particular, increased salinization, is mostly attributable to faulty irrigation practices.

Significant desertification is also a problem in the region.

Air pollution is prevalent, mostly due to use of low octane automobile fuel.

Industrial pollution of the Caspian Sea and the Aral Sea, as a result of industrial effluents as well as mining and metal production, presents a challenge to the countries bordering these bodies of water.

One of the most severe environmental problems in the region is attributable to the several billion tons of hazardous materials stored in landfills across Central Asia.

Uzbekistan's particular problem involves the contraction of the Aral Sea, which has decreased in size by a third, as a consequence of river diversions and poor irrigation practices. The effect has been the near-total biological destruction of that body of water.

Kazakhstan, as a consequence of being the heartland of the former Soviet Union's nuclear program, has incurred a high of cancerous malignancies, biogenetic abnormalities and radioactive contamination.

While part of the Soviet Union, the republics in the region experienced very high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, as a consequence of rapid industrialization using cheap but dirty energy sources, especially coal.

By contrast, however, there have recently been substantial reductions in the level of greenhouse gas emissions, especially those attributable to coal burning, with further decreases anticipated over the next decade. These changes are partially due to the use of cleaner energy technologies, such as natural gas, augmented by governmental commitment to improving environmental standards.

Regional Synopsis: Europe

Western Europe underwent dramatic transformation of its landscape, virtually eliminating large-scale natural areas, during an era of rapid industrialization, which intensified upon its recovery from World War II. In Eastern Europe and European Russia, intensive land development has been less prevalent, so that some native forests and other natural areas remain. Air and water pollution from use of dirty fuels and industrial effluents, however, are more serious environmental problems in Eastern than in Western Europe, though recent trends show improvement in many indicators. Acid rain has inflicted heavy environmental damage across much of Europe, particularly on forests. Europe and North America are the only regions in which water usage for industry exceeds that for agriculture, although in Mediterranean nations agriculture is the largest water consumer.

Key Points:

Europe contributes 36 percent of the world's chlorofluorocarbon emissions, 30 percent of carbon dioxide emissions, and 25 percent of sulfur dioxide emissions.

Sulfur and nitrogen oxide emissions are the cause of 30 to 50 percent of Central and Eastern Europe's deforestation.

Acid rain has been an environmental concern for decades and continues to be a challenge in parts of Western Europe.

Overexploitation of up to 60 percent of Europe's groundwater presents a problem in industrial and urban areas.

With marine catch trends increasing from 5,000,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 20,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of western Europe, Eastern Europe and Russia are currently threatened, while the biological diversity on the Iberian Peninsula is even further compromised with over 40 percent of the mammal species in this region currently under threat. As a result, there has been a 10 percent increase in protected areas of Europe.

A major environmental issue for Europe involves the depletion of various already endangered or threatened species, and most significantly, the decline of fish stocks. Some estimates suggest that up to 50 percent of the continent's fish species may be considered endangered species. Coastal fisheries have been over-harvested, resulting in catch limits or moratoriums on many commercially important fish species.

Fortunately, in the last few years, these policies have started to yield measurable results with decreasing trends in marine fish catch.

Recently, most European countries have adopted cleaner production technologies, and alternative methods of waste disposal, including recycling.

The countries of Eastern Europe have made air quality a major environmental priority. This is exemplified by the Russian Federation's addition to the 1995 "Berlin Mandate" (transnational legislation based on resolutions of the Rio Earth Summit) compelling nations to promote "carbon sinks" to absorb greenhouse gases.

On a relative basis, when compared with the degree of industrial emissions emitted by many Eastern European countries until the late 1980s, there has been some marked increase in air quality in the region, as obsolete plants are closed and a transition to cleaner fuels and more efficient energy use takes place.

Regional Synopsis: The Middle and Near East

Quite possibly, the Middle East will exemplify the adage that, as the 20th century was a century fixated on oil, the 21st century will be devoted to critical decisions about water. Many (though far from all) nations in the Middle East rank among those countries with the largest oil and gas

reserves, but water resources are relatively scarce throughout this predominantly dry region. Effects of global warming may cause moderately high elevation areas that now typically receive winter "snowpack" to experience mainly rain instead, which would further constrain dry-season water availability. The antiquities and religious shrines of the region render it a great magnet for tourism, which entails considerable economic growth potential but also intensifies stresses on the environment.

Key Points:

Water resource vulnerability is a serious concern across the entire region. The increased usage of, and further demand for water, has exacerbated long-standing water scarcity in the region. For instance, river diversions and industrial salt works have caused the Dead Sea to shrink by one-third from its original surface area, with further declines expected.

The oil industry in the region contributes to water pollution in the Persian Gulf, as a result of oil spills, which have averaged 1.2 million barrels of oil spilt per year (some sources suggest that this figure is understated). The consequences are severe because even after oil spills have been cleaned up, environmental damage to the food webs and ecosystems of marine life will persist for a prolonged period.

The region's coastal zone is considered one of the most fragile and endangered ecosystems of the world. Land reclamation, shoreline construction, discharge of industrial effluents, and tourism (such as diving in the Red Sea) contribute to widespread coastal damage.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of the Middle East are currently threatened.

Since the 1980s, 11 percent of the region's natural forest has been depleted.

Regional Synopsis: Latin America and the Caribbean

The Latin American and Caribbean region is characterized by exceedingly diverse landforms that have generally seen high rates of population growth and economic development in recent decades. The percentage of inhabitants residing in urban areas is quite high at 73.4 percent; the region includes the megacities of Mexico City, Sao Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro. The region also includes the world's second-highest mountain range, the Andes; significant expanses of desert and grassland; the coral reefs of the Caribbean Sea; and the world's largest contiguous tropical forest in the Amazon basin. Threats to the latter from subsistence and commercial farming, mineral exploitation and timbering are well publicized. Nevertheless, of eight countries worldwide that still retain at least 70 percent of their original forest cover, six are in Latin America. The region accounts for nearly half (48.3 percent) of the world's greenhouse gas emissions derived from land clearing, but as yet a

comparatively minuscule share (4.3 percent) of such gases from industrial sources.

Key Points:

Although Latin America is one of the most biologically diverse regions of the world, this biodiversity is highly threatened, as exemplified by the projected extinction of up to 100,000 species in the next few decades. Much of this loss will be concentrated in the Amazon area, although the western coastline of South America will also suffer significant depletion of biological diversity. The inventory of rainforest species with potentially useful commercial or medical applications is incomplete, but presumed to include significant numbers of such species that may become extinct before they are discovered and identified.

Up to 50 percent of the region's grazing land has lost its soil fertility as a result of soil erosion, salinization, alkalinization and overgrazing.

The Caribbean Sea, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Pacific Ocean have all been contaminated by agricultural wastes, which are discharged into streams that flow into these major waters. Water pollution derived from phosphorous, nitrates and pesticides adversely affects fish stocks, contributes to oxygen depletion and fosters overgrowth of aquatic vegetation. Marine life will continue to be severely compromised as a result of these conditions.

Due to industrial development in the region, many beaches of eastern Latin America and the Caribbean suffer from tar deposits.

Most cities in the region lack adequate sewage treatment facilities, and rapid migration of the rural poor into the cities is widening the gap between current infrastructure capacity and the much greater level needed to provide satisfactory basic services.

The rainforest region of the Amazon Basin suffers from dangerously high levels of deforestation, which may be a significant contributory factor to global warming or "the greenhouse effect." In the late 1990s and into the new millennium, the rate of deforestation was around 20 million acres of rainforest being destroyed annually.

Deforestation on the steep rainforest slopes of Caribbean islands contributes to soil erosion and landslides, both of which then result in heavy sedimentation of nearby river systems. When these sedimented rivers drain into the sea and coral reefs, they poison the coral tissues, which are vital to the maintenance of the reef ecosystem. The result is marine degradation and nutrient depletion. Jamaica's coral reefs have never quite recovered from the effects of marine degradation.

The Southern Cone of Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay) suffers the effects of greatly increased ultraviolet-B radiation, as a consequence of more intense ozone

depletion in the southern hemisphere.

Water resource vulnerability is an increasingly major concern in the northwestern portion of South America.

Regional Synopsis: North America

North American nations, in particular the United States and Canada, rank among the world's most highly developed industrial economies—a fact which has generated significant pollution problems, but also financial resources and skills that have enabled many problems to be corrected. Although efforts to promote energy efficiency, recycling, and suchlike have helped ease strains on the environment in a part of the world where per capita consumption levels are high, sprawling land development patterns and recent preferences many households have demonstrated for larger vehicles have offset these advances.

Meanwhile, a large portion of North America's original forest cover has been lost, though in many cases replaced by productive second-growth woodland. In recent years, attitudes toward best use of the region's remaining natural or scenic areas seem to be shifting toward recreation and preservation and away from resource extraction. With increasing attention on the energy scarcity in the United States, however, there is speculation that this shift may be short-lived. Indeed, the energy shortage on the west coast of the United States and associated calls for energy exploration, indicate a possible retrenchment toward resource extraction. At the same time, however, it has also served to highlight the need for energy conservation as well as alternative energy sources.

Despite generally successful anti-pollution efforts, various parts of the region continue to suffer significant air, water and land degradation from industrial, vehicular, and agricultural emissions and runoff. Mexico, as a middle-income country, displays environmental problems characteristic of a developing economy, including forest depletion, pollution from inefficient industrial processes and dirty fuels, and lack of sufficient waste-treatment infrastructure.

Key Points:

Because of significantly greater motor vehicle usage in the United States (U.S.) than in the rest of the world, the U.S. contribution of urban air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, especially carbon dioxide, is disproportionately high in relation to its population.

Acid rain is an enduring issue of contention in the northeastern part of the United States, on the border with Canada.

Mexico's urban areas suffer extreme air pollution from carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, sulfur

dioxide, and other toxic air pollutants. Emissions controls on vehicles are in their infancy, compared to analogous regulations in the U.S.

The cities of Mexico, including those on the U.S. border, also discharge large quantities of untreated or poorly treated sewage, though officials are currently planning infrastructure upgrades.

Deforestation is noteworthy in various regions of the U.S., especially along the northwest coastline. Old growth forests have been largely removed, but in the northeastern and upper midwestern sections of the United States, evidence suggests that the current extent of tree cover probably surpasses the figure for the beginning of the 20th century.

Extreme weather conditions in the last few years have resulted in a high level of soil erosion along the north coast of California; in addition, the coastline itself has shifted substantially due to soil erosion and concomitant landslides.

Agricultural pollution-including nitrate contamination of well water, nutrient runoff to waterways, and pesticide exposure-is significant in various areas. Noteworthy among affected places are California's Central Valley, extensive stretches of the Midwest, and land in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Inland waterways, especially around the Great Lakes, have substantially improved their water quality, due to concentrated efforts at reducing water pollution by governmental, commercial and community representatives. Strict curbs on industrial effluents and near-universal implementation of sewage treatment are the chief factors responsible for this improvement.

A major environmental issue for Canada and the United States involves the depletion of various already endangered or threatened species, and most significantly, the decline of fish stocks. Coastal fisheries have been over-harvested, resulting in catch limits or moratoriums on many commercially important fish species. In the last few years, these policies have started to yield measurable results with decreasing trends in marine fish catch.

Due to the decay of neighboring ecosystems in Central America and the Caribbean, the sea surrounding Florida has become increasingly sedimented, contributing to marine degradation, nutrient depletion of the ecosystem, depletion of fish stocks, and diseases to coral species in particular.

Polar Regions

Key Points:

The significant rise in sea level, amounting 10 to 25 centimeters in the last 100 years, is due to the melting of the Arctic ice sheets, and is attributed to global warming.

The Antarctic suffers from a significant ozone hole, first detected in 1976. By 1985, a British scientific team reported a 40 percent decrease in usual regeneration rates of the ozone. Because a sustained increase in the amount of ultraviolet-B radiation would have adverse consequences upon all planetary life, recent environmental measures have been put into effect, aimed at reversing ozone depletion. These measures are projected to garner significant results by 2050.

Due to air and ocean currents, the Arctic is a sink for toxic releases originally discharged thousands of miles away. Arctic wildlife and Canada's Inuit population have higher bodily levels of contaminants such as PCB and dioxin than those found in people and animals in much of the rest of the world.

Global Environmental Concepts

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1. Global Warming and Greenhouse Gases

The Greenhouse Effect:

In the early 19th century, the French physicist, Jean Fourier, contended that the earth's atmosphere functions in much the same way as the glass of a greenhouse, thus describing what is now understood as the "greenhouse effect." Put simply, the "greenhouse effect" confines some of the sun's energy to the earth, preserving some of the planet's warmth, rather than allowing it to flow back into space. In so doing, all kinds of life forms can flourish on earth. Thus, the "greenhouse effect" is necessary to sustain and preserve life forms and ecosystems on earth.

In the late 19th century, a Swedish chemist, Svante Arrhenius, noticed that human activities, such as the burning of coal and other fossil fuels for heat, and the removal of forested lands for urban development, led to higher concentrations of greenhouse gases, like carbon dioxide and methane, in the atmosphere. This increase in the levels of greenhouse gases was believed to advance the "greenhouse effect" exponentially, and might be related to the trend in global warming.

In the wake of the Industrial Revolution, after industrial development took place on a large scale and the total human population burgeoned simultaneously with industrialization, the resulting

increase in greenhouse gas emissions could, many scientists believe, be significant enough to have some bearing on climate. Indeed, many studies in recent years support the idea that there is a linkage between human activities and global warming, although there is less consensus on the extent to which this linkage may be relevant to environmental concerns.

That said, some scientists have argued that temperature fluctuations have existed throughout the evolution of the planet. Indeed, Dr. S. Fred Singer, the president of the Science and Environment Policy Project has noted that 3,000-year-old geological records of ocean sediment reveal changes in the surface temperature of the ocean. Hence, it is possible that climate variability is merely a normal fact of the planet's evolution. Yet even skeptics as to anthropogenic factors concur that any substantial changes in global temperatures would likely have an effect upon the earth's ecosystems, as well as the life forms that inhabit them.

The Relationship Between Global Warming and Greenhouse Gases:

A large number of climatologists believe that the increase in atmospheric concentrations of "greenhouse gas emissions," mostly a consequence of human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels, are contributing to global warming. The cause notwithstanding, the planet has reportedly warmed 0.3°C to 0.6°C over the last century. Indeed, each year during the 1990s was one of the very warmest in the 20th century, with the mean surface temperature for 1999 being the fifth warmest on record since 1880.

In early 2000, a panel of atmospheric scientists for the National Research Council concluded in a report that global warming was, indeed, a reality. While the panel, headed by Chairman John Wallace, a professor of atmospheric sciences at the University of Washington, stated that it remained unclear whether human activities have contributed to the earth's increasing temperatures, it was apparent that global warming exists.

In 2001, following a request for further study by the incoming Bush administration in the [United States](#), the National Academy of Sciences again confirmed that global warming had been in existence for the last 20 years. The study also projected an increase in temperature between 2.5 degrees and 10.4 degrees Fahrenheit by the year 2100. Furthermore, the study found the leading cause of global warming to be emissions of carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels, and it noted that greenhouse gas accumulations in the earth's atmosphere was a result of human activities.

Within the scientific community, the controversy regarding has centered on the difference between surface air and upper air temperatures. Information collected since 1979 suggests that while the earth's surface temperature has increased by about a degree in the past century, the atmospheric temperature five miles above the earth's surface has indicated very little increase. Nevertheless, the panel stated that this discrepancy in temperature between surface and upper air does not invalidate the conclusion that global warming is taking place. Further, the panel noted that natural events,

such as volcanic eruptions, can decrease the temperature in the upper atmosphere.

The major consequences of global warming potentially include the melting of the polar ice caps, which, in turn, contribute to the rise in sea levels. Many islands across the globe have already experienced a measurable loss of land as a result. Because global warming may increase the rate of evaporation, increased precipitation, in the form of stronger and more frequent storm systems, is another potential outcome. Other consequences of global warming may include the introduction and proliferation of new infectious diseases, loss of arable land (referred to as "desertification"), destructive changes to existing ecosystems, loss of biodiversity and the isolation of species, and concomitant adverse changes in the quality of human life.

International Policy Development in Regard to Global Warming:

Regardless of what the precise nature of the relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and global warming may be, it seems that there is some degree of a connection between the phenomena. Any substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and global warming trends will likely involve systematic changes in industrial operations, the use of advanced energy sources and technologies, as well as global cooperation in implementing and regulating these transformations.

In this regard, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) stipulated the following objectives:

1. To stabilize "greenhouse gas" concentrations within the atmosphere, in such a manner that would preclude hazardous anthropogenic intervention into the existing biosphere and ecosystems of the world. This stabilization process would facilitate the natural adaptation of ecosystems to changes in climate.
2. To ensure and enable sustainable development and food production on a global scale.

*** See section on "International Environmental Agreements and Associations" for information related to international policies related to limiting greenhouse gases and controlling climate change emanating from historic summits at Kyoto, Copenhagen, Doha, and Paris. ***

2. Air Pollution

Long before global warming reared its head as a significant issue, those concerned about the environment and public health noted the deleterious effects of human-initiated combustion upon the atmosphere. Killer smogs from coal burning triggered acute health emergencies in London and

other places. At a lower level of intensity motor vehicle, power plant, and industrial emissions impaired long-range visibility and probably had some chronic adverse consequences on the respiratory systems of persons breathing such air.

In time, scientists began associating the sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides released from coal burning with significant acid deposition in the atmosphere, eventually falling as "acid rain." This phenomenon has severely degraded forestlands, especially in Europe and a few parts of the [United States](#). It has also impaired some aquatic ecosystems and eaten away the surface of some human artifacts, such as marble monuments. Scrubber technology and conversion to cleaner fuels have enabled the level of industrial production to remain at least constant while significantly reducing acid deposition. Technologies aimed at cleaning the air and curtailing acid rain, soot, and smog may, nonetheless, boomerang as the perils of global warming become increasingly serious. In brief, these particulates act as sort of a sun shade -- comparable to the effect of volcanic eruptions on the upper atmosphere whereby periods of active volcanism correlate with temporarily cooler weather conditions. Thus, while the carbon dioxide releases that are an inevitable byproduct of combustion continue, by scrubbing the atmosphere of pollutants, an industrial society opens itself to greater insolation (penetration of the sun's rays and consequent heating), and consequently, it is likely to experience a correspondingly greater rise in ambient temperatures.

The health benefits of removing the sources of acid rain and smog are indisputable, and no one would recommend a return to previous conditions. Nevertheless, the problematic climatic effects of continually increasing emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases pose a major global environmental challenge, not as yet addressed adequately.

3. Ozone Depletion

The stratospheric ozone layer functions to prevent ultraviolet radiation from reaching the earth. Normally, stratospheric ozone is systematically disintegrated and regenerated through natural photochemical processes. The stratospheric ozone layer, however, has been depleted unnaturally as a result of anthropogenic (man-made) chemicals, most especially chlorine and bromide compounds such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), halons, and various industrial chemicals in the form of solvents, refrigerants, foaming agents, aerosol propellants, fire retardants, and fumigants. Ozone depletion is of concern because it permits a greater degree of ultraviolet-B radiation to reach the earth, which then increases the incidences of cancerous malignancies, cataracts, and human immune deficiencies. In addition, even in small doses, ozone depletion affects the ecosystem by disturbing food chains, agriculture, fisheries and other forms of biological diversity.

Transnational policies enacted to respond to the dangers of ozone depletion include the 1985 Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The Montreal Protocol was subsequently amended in

London in 1990, Copenhagen in 1992 and Vienna in 1995. By 1996, 155 countries had ratified the Montreal Protocol, which sets out a time schedule for the reduction (and eventual elimination) of ozone depleting substances (OPS), and bans exports and imports of ODS from and to non-participant countries.

In general, the Protocol stipulates that developed countries must eliminate halon consumption by 1994 and CFC consumption by 1996, while developing countries must eliminate these substances by 2010. Consumption of methyl bromide, which is used as a fumigant, was to be frozen at the 1995 in developed countries, and fully eliminated in 2010, while developing countries are to freeze consumption by 2002, based on average 1995-1998 consumption levels. Methyl chloroform is to be phased out by 2005. Under the Montreal Protocol, most ODS will be completely eliminated from use by 2010.

4. Land Degradation

In recent decades, land degradation in more arid regions of the world has become a serious concern. The problem, manifest as both "desertification" and "devegetation," is caused primarily by climate variability and human activities, such as "deforestation," excessive cultivation, overgrazing, and other forms of land resource exploitation. It is also exacerbated by inadequate irrigation practices. Although the effects of droughts on drylands have been temporary in the past, today, the productivity and sustainability of these lands have been severely compromised for the long term. Indeed, in every region of the world, land degradation has become an acute issue.

Desertification and Devegetation:

"Desertification" is a process of land degradation causing the soil to deteriorate, thus losing its nutrients and fertility, and eventually resulting in the loss of vegetation, known as "devegetation." As aforementioned, "desertification" and "devegetation" are caused by human activities, yet human beings are also the greatest casualties. Because these forms of land degradation affect the ability of the soil to produce crops, they concomitantly contribute to poverty. As population increases and demographic concentrations shift, the extent of land subject to stresses by those seeking to wrest subsistence from it has inexorably risen.

In response, the United Nations has formed the Convention to Combat Desertification-aimed at implementing programs to address the underlying causes of desertification, as well as measures to prevent and minimize its effects. Of particular significance is the formulation of policies on transboundary resources, such as areas around lakes and rivers. At a broader level, the Convention has established a Conference of Parties (COP), which includes all ratifying governments, for directing and advancing international action.

To ensure more efficacious use of funding, the Convention intends to reconfigure international aid to utilize a consultative and coordinated approach in the disbursement and expenditure of donor funds. In this way, local communities that are affected by desertification will be active participants in the solution-generation process. In-depth community education projects are envisioned as part of this new international aid program, and private donor financing is encouraged. Meanwhile, as new technologies are developed to deal with the problem of desertification, they need to be distributed for application across the world. Hence, the Convention calls for international cooperation in scientific research in this regard.

Desertification is a problem of sustainable development. It is directly connected to human challenges such as poverty, social and economic well-being and environmental protection as well. Broader environmental issues, such as climate change, biological diversity, and freshwater supplies, are indirectly related, so any effort to resolve this environmental challenge must entail coordinated research efforts and joint action.

Deforestation:

Deforestation is not a recent phenomenon. For centuries, human beings have cut down trees to clear space for land cultivation, or in order to use the wood for fuel. Over the last 200 years, and most especially after World War II, deforestation increased because the logging industry became a globally profitable endeavor, and so the clearing of forested areas was accelerated for the purposes of industrial development. In the long term, this intensified level of deforestation is considered problematic because the forest is unable to regenerate itself quickly. The deforestation that has occurred in tropical rainforests is seen as an especially serious concern, due to the perceived adverse effects of this process upon the entire global ecosystem.

The most immediate consequence of deforestation is soil degradation. Soil, which is necessary for the growth of vegetation, can be a fragile and vital property. Organically, an extensive evolution process must take place before soil can produce vegetation, yet at the same time, the effects of natural elements, such as wind and rain, can easily and quickly degrade this resource. This phenomenon is known as soil erosion. In addition, natural elements like wind and rain reduce the amount of fertile soil on the ground, making soil scarcity a genuine problem. When fertile topsoil that already exists is removed from the landscape in the process of deforestation, soil scarcity is further exacerbated. Equally significant is the fact that once land has been cleared so that the topsoil can be cultivated for crop production, not only are the nutrient reserves in the soil depleted, thus producing crops of inferior quality, but the soil structure itself becomes stressed and deteriorates further.

Another direct result of deforestation is flooding. When forests are cleared, removing the cover of

vegetation, and rainfall occurs, the flow of water increases across the surface of land. When extensive water runoff takes place, the frequency and intensity of flooding increases. Other adverse effects of deforestation include the loss of wildlife and biodiversity within the ecosystem that supports such life forms.

At a broader level, tropical rainforests play a vital role in maintaining the global environmental system. Specifically, destruction of tropical rainforests affects the carbon dioxide cycle. When forests are destroyed by burning (or rotting), carbon dioxide is released into the air, thus contributing to an intensified "greenhouse effect." The increase in greenhouse gas emissions like carbon dioxide is a major contributor to global warming, according to many environmental scientists. Indeed, trees themselves absorb carbon dioxide in the process of photosynthesis, so their loss also reduces the absorption of greenhouse gases.

Tropical rainforest destruction also adversely affects the nitrogen cycle. Nitrogen is a key nutrient for both plants and animals. Plants derive nitrogen from soil, while animals obtain it via nitrogen-enriched vegetation. This element is essential for the formation of amino acids, and thereby for proteins and biochemicals that all living things need for metabolism and growth. In the nitrogen cycle, vegetation acquires these essential proteins and biochemicals, and then cyclically returns them to the atmosphere and global ecosystem. Accordingly, when tropical rainforest ecosystems are compromised, not only is vegetation removed; the atmosphere is also affected and climates are altered. At a more immediate level, the biodiversity within tropical rainforests, including wildlife and insect species and a wealth of plant varieties, is depleted. Loss of rare plants is of particular concern because certain species as yet unknown and unused could likely yield many practical benefits, for instance as medicines.

As a result of the many challenges associated with deforestation, many environmental groups and agencies have argued for government policies on the sustainable development of forests by governments across the globe. While many countries have instituted national policies and programs aimed at reducing deforestation, and substantial research has been advanced in regard to sustainable and regenerative forestry development, there has been very little progress on an international level. Generally speaking, most tropical rainforests are located in developing and less developed countries, where economic growth is often dependent upon the exploitation of tropical rainforests. Timber resources as well as wildlife hunting tend to be particularly lucrative arenas.

In places such as the Amazon, where deforestation takes place for the construction of energy plants aimed at industrialization and economic development, there is an exacerbated effect on the environment. After forests are cleared in order to construct such projects, massive flooding usually ensues. The remaining trees then rot and decay in the wake of the flooding. As the trees deteriorate, their biochemical makeup becomes more acidic, producing poisonous substances such as hydrogen sulphide and methane gases. Acidified water subsequently corrodes the mechanical equipment and operations of the plants, which are already clogged by rotting wood after the

floodwaters rise.

Deforestation generally arises from an economically plausible short-term motivation, but nonetheless poses a serious global concern because the effects go beyond national boundaries. The United Nations has established the World Commission on Forest and Sustainable Development. This body's task is to determine the optimal means of dealing with the issue of deforestation, without unduly affecting normal economic development, while emphasizing the global significance of protecting tropical forest ecosystems.

5. Water Resources

For all terrestrial fauna, including humans, water is the most immediate necessity to sustain life. As the population has increased and altered an ever-greater portion of the landscape from its natural condition, demand on water resources has intensified, especially with the development of industrialization and large-scale irrigation. The supply of freshwater is inherently limited, and moreover distributed unevenly across the earth's landmasses. Moreover, not just demand for freshwater but activities certain to degrade it are becoming more pervasive. By contrast, the oceans form a sort of "last wilderness," still little explored and in large part not seriously affected by human activity. However, coastal environments - the biologically richest part of the marine ecosystem-are experiencing major depletion due to human encroachment and over-exploitation.

Freshwater:

In various regions, for instance the Colorado River in the western [United States](#), current withdrawals of river water for irrigation, domestic, and industrial use consume the entire streamflow so that almost no water flows into the sea at the river's mouth. Yet development is ongoing in many such places, implying continually rising demand for water. In some areas reliant on groundwater, aquifers are being depleted at a markedly faster rate than they are being replenished. An example is the San Joaquin Valley in California, where decades of high water withdrawals for agriculture have caused land subsidence of ten meters or more in some spots. Naturally, the uncertainty of future water supplies is particularly acute in arid and semi-arid regions. Speculation that the phenomenon of global warming will alter geographic and seasonal rainfall patterns adds further uncertainty.

Water conservation measures have great potential to alleviate supply shortages. Some city water systems are so old and beset with leaking pipes that they lose as much water as they meter. Broad-scale irrigation could be replaced by drip-type irrigation, actually enhancing the sustainability of agriculture. In many areas where heavy irrigation has been used for decades, the result is deposition of salts and other chemicals in the soil such that the land becomes unproductive for

farming and must be abandoned.

Farming is a major source of water pollution. Whereas restrictions on industrial effluents and other "point sources" are relatively easy to implement, comparable measures to reform hydraulic practices at farms and other "nonpoint sources" pose a significantly knottier challenge. Farm-caused water pollution takes the following main forms:

- Nitrate pollution found in wells in intensive farming areas as a consequence of heavy fertilizer use is a threat to human health. The most serious danger is to infants, who by ingesting high-nitrate water can contract methemoglobinemia, sometimes called "blue baby syndrome," a potentially fatal condition.
- Fertilizer runoff into rivers and lakes imparts unwanted nutrients that cause algae growth and eventual loss of oxygen in the body of water, degrading its ability to support fish and other desirable aquatic life.
- Toxic agricultural chemicals - insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides - are detectable in some aquifers and waterways.

In general, it is much easier to get a pollutant into water than to retrieve it out. Gasoline additives, dry cleaning chemicals, other industrial toxins, and in a few areas radionuclides have all been found in water sources intended for human use. The complexity and long time scale of subterranean hydrological movements essentially assures that pollutants already deposited in aquifers will continue to turn up for decades to come. Sophisticated water treatment processes are available, albeit expensive, to reclaim degraded water and render it fit for human consumption. Yet source protection is unquestionably a more desirable alternative.

In much of the developing world, and even some low-income rural enclaves of the developed world, the population lacks ready access to safe water. Surface water and shallow groundwater supplies are susceptible to contamination from untreated wastewater and failing septic tanks, as well as chemical hazards. The occurrence of waterborne disease is almost certainly greatly underreported.

Marine Resources:

Coastal areas have always been desirable places for human habitation, and population pressure on them continues to increase. Many types of water degradation that affect lakes and rivers also affect coastal zones: industrial effluents, untreated or partially treated sewage, nutrient load from agriculture figure prominently in both cases. Prospects for more extreme storms as a result of global warming, as well as the pervasiveness of poorly planned development in many coastal areas,

forebode that catastrophic hurricanes and landslides may increase in frequency in the future. Ongoing rise in sea levels will force remedial measures and in some cases abandonment of currently valuable coastal property.

Fisheries over much of the globe have been overharvested, and immediate conservation measures are required to preserve stocks of many species. Many governments subsidized factory-scale fishing fleets in the 1970s and 1980s, and the resultant catch increase evidently surpassed a sustainable level. It is uncertain how much of the current decline in fish stocks stems from overharvesting and how much from environmental pollution. The deep ocean remains relatively unaffected by human activity, but continental shelves near coastlines are frequently seriously polluted, and these close-to-shore areas are the major biological nurseries for food fish and the smaller organisms they feed on.

6. Environmental Toxins

Toxic chemical pollution exploded on the public consciousness with disclosure of spectacularly polluted industrial areas such as Love Canal near Buffalo, New York. There is no question that pollutants such as organophosphates or radionuclides can be highly deleterious to health, but evidence to date suggests that seriously affected areas are a localized rather than universal problem.

While some explore the possibilities for a lifestyle that fully eschews use of modern industrial chemicals, the most prevalent remediative approach is to focus on more judicious use. The most efficient chemical plants are now able to contain nearly all toxic byproducts of their production processes within the premises, minimizing the release of such substances into the environment. Techniques such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) dictate limited rather than broadcast use of pesticides: application only when needed using the safest available chemical, supplemented as much as possible with nontoxic controls.

While heightened public awareness and growing technical sophistication suggest a hopeful outlook on limiting the damage from manmade environmental toxins, one must grant that previous incidents of their misuse and mishandling have already caused environmental damage that will have to be dealt with for many years to come. In the case of the most hazardous radioactive substances, the time scale for successful remediation actually extends beyond that of the recorded history of civilization. Moreover, in this era of high population density and rapid economic growth, quotidian activities such as the transport of chemicals will occasionally, seemingly inevitably result in accidents with adverse environmental consequences.

7. "Islandization" and Biodiversity

With increased awareness regarding the adverse effects of unregulated hunting and habitat depletion upon wildlife species and other aspects of biodiversity, large-scale efforts across the globe have been initiated to reduce and even reverse this trend.

In every region of the world, many species of wildlife and areas of biodiversity have been saved from extinction. Nationally, many countries have adopted policies aimed at preservation and conservation of species, and one of the most tangible measures has been the proliferation of protected habitats. Such habitats exist in the form of wildlife reserves, marine life reserves, and other such areas where biodiversity can be protected from external encroachment and exploitation.

Despite these advances in wildlife and biodiversity protection, further and perhaps more intractable challenges linger. Designated reserves, while intended to prevent further species decline, exist as closed territories, fragmented from other such enclaves and disconnected from the larger ecosystem. This environmental scenario is referred to as "islandization." Habitat reserves often serve as oversized zoos or game farms, with landscapes and wildlife that have effectively been "tamed" to suit. Meanwhile, the larger surrounding ecosystem continues to be seriously degraded and transformed, while within the islandized habitat, species that are the focus of conservation efforts may not have sufficient range and may not be able to maintain healthy genetic variability.

As a consequence, many conservationists and preservationists have demanded that substantially larger portions of land be withheld as habitat reserves, and a network of biological corridors to connect continental reserves be established. While such efforts to combat islandization have considerable support in the [United States](#), how precisely such a program would be instituted, especially across national boundaries, remains a matter of debate. International conservationists and preservationists say without a network of reserves a massive loss of biodiversity will result.

The concept of islandization illustrates why conservation and preservation of wildlife and biodiversity must consider and adopt new, broader strategies. In the past, conservation and preservation efforts have been aimed at specific species, such as the spotted owl and grizzly bear in North America, the Bengal tiger in Southeast Asia, the panda in [China](#), elephants in Africa. Instead, the new approach is to simultaneously protect many and varied species that inhabit the same ecosystem. This method, referred to as "bio-regional conservation," may more efficaciously generate longer-term and more far-reaching results precisely because it is aimed at preserving entire ecosystems, and all the living things within.

More About Biodiversity Issues:

This section is directly taken from the United Nations Environmental Program: "[Biodiversity Assessment](#)"

The Global Biodiversity Assessment, completed by 1500 scientists under the auspices of United Nations Environmental Program in 1995, updated what is known (or unknown) about global biological diversity at the ecosystem, species and genetic levels. The assessment was uncertain of the total number of species on Earth within an order of magnitude. Of its working figure of 13 million species, only 13 percent are scientifically described. Ecological community diversity is also poorly known, as is its relationship to biological diversity, and genetic diversity has been studied for only a small number of species. The effects of human activities on biodiversity have increased so greatly that the rate of species extinctions is rising to hundreds or thousands of times the background level. These losses are driven by increasing demands on species and their habitats, and by the failure of current market systems to value biodiversity adequately. The Assessment calls for urgent action to reverse these trends.

There has been a new recognition of the importance of protecting marine and aquatic biodiversity. The first quantitative estimates of species losses due to growing coral reef destruction predict that almost 200,000 species, or one in five presently contributing to coral reef biodiversity, could die out in the next 40 years if human pressures on reefs continue to increase.

Since Rio, many countries have improved their understanding of the status and importance of their biodiversity, particularly through biodiversity country studies such as those prepared under the auspices of UNEP/GEF. The [United Kingdom](#) identified 1250 species needing monitoring, of which 400 require action plans to ensure their survival. Protective measures for biodiversity, such as legislation to protect species, can prove effective. In the USA, almost 40 percent of the plants and animals protected under the Endangered Species Act are now stable or improving as a direct result of recovery efforts. Some African countries have joined efforts to protect threatened species through the 1994 Lusaka Agreement, and more highly migratory species are being protected by specialized cooperative agreements among range states under the Bonn Agreement.

There is an emerging realization that a major part of conservation of biological diversity must take place outside of protected areas and involve local communities. The extensive agricultural areas occupied by small farmers contain much biodiversity that is important for sustainable food production. Indigenous agricultural practices have been and continue to be important elements in the maintenance of biodiversity, but these are being displaced and lost. There is a new focus on the interrelationship between agrobiodiversity conservation and sustainable use and development practices in smallholder agriculture, with emphasis on use of farmers' knowledge and skills as a source of information for sustainable farming.

Perhaps even more important than the loss of biodiversity is the transformation of global biogeochemical cycles, the reduction in the total world biomass, and the decrease in the biological productivity of the planet. While quantitative measurements are not available, the eventual economic and social consequences may be so significant that the issue requires further attention.

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Online resources used generally in the Environmental Overview:

Environmental Protection Agency Global Warming Site. URL: <http://www.epa.gov/globalwarming>

Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations: Forestry. URL: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/sofo/en/>

Global Warming Information Page. URL: <http://globalwarming.org>

United Nations Environmental Program. URL: http://www.unep.org/GEO/GEO_Products/Assessment_Reports/

United Nations Global Environmental Outlook. URL: <http://www.unep.org/geo/geo4/media/>

Note on Edition Dates:

The edition dates for textual resources are noted above because they were used to formulate the original content. We also have used online resources (cited above) to update coverage as needed.

Information Resources

For more information about environmental concepts, CountryWatch recommends the following resources:

The United Nations Environmental Program Network (with country profiles)

[<http://www.unep.net/>](http://www.unep.net/)

The United Nations Environment Program on Climate Change

[<http://climatechange.unep.net/>](http://climatechange.unep.net/)

The United Nations Environmental Program on Waters and Oceans

[<http://www.unep.ch/earthw/Pdepwat.htm>](http://www.unep.ch/earthw/Pdepwat.htm)

The United Nations Environmental Program on Forestry: "Forests in Flux"

[<http://www.unep-wcmc.org/forest/flux/homepage.htm>](http://www.unep-wcmc.org/forest/flux/homepage.htm)

FAO "State of the World's Forests"

[<http://www.fao.org/forestry/FO/SOFO/SOFO99/sofo99-e.stm>](http://www.fao.org/forestry/FO/SOFO/SOFO99/sofo99-e.stm)

World Resources Institute.

[<http://www.wri.org/>](http://www.wri.org/)

Harvard University Center for Health and the Global Environment

[<http://www.med.harvard.edu/chge/the-review.html>](http://www.med.harvard.edu/chge/the-review.html)

The University of Wisconsin Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment

<http://sage.aos.wisc.edu/>

International Environmental Agreements and Associations

International Policy Development in Regard to Global Warming:

Introduction

Regardless of what the precise nature of the relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and global warming may be, it seems that there is some degree of a connection between the phenomena. Any substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and global warming trends will likely involve systematic changes in industrial operations, the use of advanced energy sources and technologies, as well as global cooperation in implementing and regulating these transformations.

In this regard, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) stipulated the following objectives:

1. To stabilize "greenhouse gas" concentrations within the atmosphere, in such a manner that would preclude hazardous anthropogenic intervention into the existing biosphere and ecosystems of

the world. This stabilization process would facilitate the natural adaptation of ecosystems to changes in climate.

2. To ensure and enable sustainable development and food production on a global scale.

Following are two discussions regarding international policies on the environment, followed by listings of international accords.

Special Entry: The Kyoto Protocol

The UNFCCC was adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, and entered into force in 1994. Over 175 parties were official participants.

Meanwhile, however, many of the larger, more industrialized nations failed to reach the emissions' reduction targets, and many UNFCCC members agreed that the voluntary approach to reducing emissions had not been successful. As such, UNFCCC members reached a consensus that legally binding limits were necessitated, and agreed to discuss such a legal paradigm at a meeting in Kyoto, [Japan](#) in 1997. At that meeting, the UNFCCC forged the Kyoto Protocol. This concord is the first legally binding international agreement that places limits on emissions from industrialized countries. The major greenhouse gas emissions addressed in the Kyoto Protocol include carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, sulfur hexafluoride, and methane.

The provisions of the Kyoto Protocol stipulate that economically advanced nations must reduce their combined emissions of greenhouse gases, by approximately five percent from their 1990 levels, before the 2008-2010 deadline. Countries with the highest carbon dioxide emissions, such as the [United States](#) (U.S.), many of the European Union (EU) countries, and [Japan](#), are to reduce emissions by a scale of 6 to 8 percent. All economically advanced nations must show "demonstrable progress" by 2005. In contrast, no binding limits or timetable have been set on developing countries. Presumably, this distinction is due to the fact that most developing countries - - with the obvious exceptions of [India](#) and [China](#) -- simply do not emit as many greenhouse gases as do more industrially advanced countries. Meanwhile, these countries are entrenched in the process of economic development.

Regardless of the aforementioned reasoning, there has been strong opposition against the asymmetrical treatment assigned to emissions limits among developed and developing countries. Although this distinction might be regarded as unfair in principle, associations such as the Alliance of Small Island States have been vocal in expressing how global warming -- a result of greenhouse gas emissions - has contributed to the rise in sea level, and thus deleteriously affected their very existence as island nation states. For this reason, some parties have suggested that economically advanced nations, upon returning to their 1990 levels, should be required to further reduce their

greenhouse gas emissions by a deadline of 2005. In response, interested parties have observed that even if such reductions were undertaken by economically advanced nations, they would not be enough to completely control global warming. Indeed, a reduction in the rate of fossil fuel usage by developing nations would also be necessary to have substantial ameliorative effect on global warming. Indeed, a reduction in the rate of fossil fuel usage by developing nations would also be necessary to have substantial ameliorative effect on global warming.

As such, the Protocol established a "Clean Development Mechanism" which permits developed countries to invest in projects aimed at reducing emissions within developing countries in return for credit for the reductions. Ostensibly, the objective of this mechanism is to curtail emissions in developing countries without unduly penalizing them for their economic development. Under this model, the countries with more potential emissions credits could sell them to other signatories of the Kyoto Protocol, whose emissions are forecast to significantly rise in the next few years. Should this trading of emissions credits take place, it is estimated that the Kyoto Protocol's emissions targets could still be met.

In 1999, the International Energy Outlook projected that Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and Newly Independent States, as well as parts of Asia, are all expected to show a marked decrease in their level of energy-related carbon emissions in 2010. Nations with the highest emissions, specifically, the U.S., the EU and [Japan](#), are anticipated to reduce their emissions by up to 8 percent by 2012. By 2000, however, the emissions targets were not on schedule for achievement. Indeed, the U.S. Department of Energy estimates forecast that by 2010, there will be a 34 percent increase in carbon emissions from the 1990 levels, in the absence of major shifts in policy, economic growth, energy prices, and consumer trends. Despite this assessment in the U.S., international support for the Kyoto Protocol remained strong, especially among European countries and island states, who view the pact as one step in the direction away from reliance on fossil fuels and other sources of greenhouse gases.

In 2001, U.S. President, George W. Bush, rejected his country's participation in the Kyoto Protocol, saying that the costs imposed on the global economic system, and especially, on the US, overshadowed the benefits of the Protocol. He also cited the unfair burden on developed nations to reduce emissions, as another primary reasons for withdrawal from the international pact, as well as insufficient evidence regarding the science of global warming. Faced with impassioned international disapproval for his position, the U.S. president stated that his administration remained interested in dealing with the matter of global warming, but would endorse alternative measures to combat the problem, such as voluntary initiatives limiting emissions. Critics of Bush's position, however, have noted that it was the failure of voluntary initiatives to reduce emissions following the Rio Summit that led to the establishment of the Kyoto Protocol in the first place.

In the wake of the Bush administration's decision, many participant countries resigned themselves to the reality that the goals of the Kyoto Protocol might not be achieved without U.S. involvement.

Nevertheless, in Bonn, [Germany](#), in July 2001, the remaining participant countries struck a political compromise on some of the key issues and sticking points, and planned to move forward with the Protocol, irrespective of the absence of the U.S. The key compromise points included the provision for countries to offset their targets with carbon sinks (these are areas of forest and farmland which can absorb carbon through the process of photosynthesis). Another compromise point within the broader Bonn Agreement was the reduction of emissions cuts of six gases from over 5 percent to a more achievable 2 percent. A third key change was the provision of funding for less wealthy countries to adopt more progressive technologies.

In late October and early November 2001, the UNFCCC's 7th Conference of the Parties met in Marrakesh, [Morocco](#), to finalize the measures needed to make the Kyoto Protocol operational. Although the UNFCCC projected that ratification of the Protocol would make it legally binding within a year, many critics noted that the process had fallen short of implementing significant changes in policy that would be necessary to actually stop or even slow climate change. They also maintained that the absence of U.S. participation effectively rendered the Protocol into being a political exercise without any substance, either in terms of transnational policy or in terms of environmental concerns.

The adoption of the compromises ensconced within the Bonn Agreement had been intended to make the provisions of the Kyoto Protocol more palatable to the U.S. In this regard, it failed to achieve its objective as the Bush administration continued to eschew participation in the international accord. Still, however, the Bonn Agreement did manage to render a number of other positive outcomes. Specifically, in 2002, key countries, such as [Russia](#), [Japan](#) and [Canada](#) agreed to ratify the protocol, bringing the number of signatories to 178. The decision by key countries to ratify the protocol was regarded as "the kiss of life" by observers.

By 2005, on the eve of a climate change conference in London, British Prime Minister Tony Blair was hoping to deal with the problems of climate change beyond the provisions set forth in the Kyoto Protocol. Acknowledging that the Kyoto Protocol could not work in its current form, Blair wanted to open the discussion for a new climate change plan.

Blair said that although most of the world had signed on to Kyoto, the protocol could not meet any of its practical goals of cutting greenhouse gas emissions without the participation of the United States, the world's largest polluter. He also noted that any new agreement would have to include India and China -- significant producers of greenhouse gas emissions, but exempt from Kyoto because they have been classified as developing countries. Still, he said that progress on dealing with climate change had been stymied by "a reluctance to face up to reality and the practical action needed to tackle problem."

Blair also touted the "huge opportunities" in technology and pointed toward the possibilities offered by wind, solar and nuclear power, along with fuel cell technology, eco-friendly biofuels, and

carbon capture and storage which could generate low carbon power. Blair also asserted that his government was committed to achieving its domestic goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 20 percent by 2010.

In the United States, President George W. Bush has said that global warming remained a debatable issue and despite conclusions reached by his own Environmental Protection Agency, he has not agreed with the conclusion that global warming and climate change are linked with human activities. Bush has also refused to ratify Kyoto on the basis of its economic costs.

Australia, an ally of the United States, has taken a similarly dim view of the Kyoto Protocol. Ahead of the November 2005 climate change meeting in Canada in which new goals for the protocol were to be discussed, Australia's Environment Minister, Ian Campbell, said that negotiating new greenhouse gas emission levels for the Kyoto Protocol would be a waste of time. Campbell said, "There is a consensus that the caps, targets and timetables approach is flawed. If we spend the next five years arguing about that, we'll be fiddling and negotiating while Rome burns." Campbell, like the Bush administration, has also advocated a system of voluntary action in which industry takes up new technologies rather than as a result of compelling the reduction of emissions. But the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) has called on its government to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, to establish a system of emissions trading, and to set binding limits on emissions. Interestingly, although it did not sign on to Kyoto, Australia was expected to meet its emissions target by 2012 (an 8 percent increase in 1990 levels in keeping with the country's reliance on coal). But this success has nothing to do with new technologies and is due to state-based regulations on land clearing.

Note: The Kyoto Protocol calls for developed nations to cut greenhouse emissions by 5.2 percent of 1990 levels by 2012.

Special Entry: Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen (2009) --

In December 2009, the United Nations Climate Change Summit opened in the Danish capital of Copenhagen. The summit was scheduled to last from Dec. 7-18, 2009. Delegates from more than 190 countries were in attendance, and approximately 100 world leaders, including British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and [United States](#) President Barack Obama, were expected to participate. At issue was the matter of new reductions targets on greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.

Despite earlier fears that little concurrence would come from the conference, effectively pushing significant actions forward to a 2010 conference in [Mexico](#) City, negotiators were now reporting that the talks were productive and several key countries, such as [South Africa](#), had pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The two main issues that could still lead to cleavages were questions of agreement between the industrialized countries and the developing countries of the

world, as well as the overall effectiveness of proposals in seriously addressing the perils of climate change.

On Dec. 9, 2009, four countries -- the [United Kingdom](#), [Australia](#), [Mexico](#) and [Norway](#) -- presented a document outlining ideas for raising and managing billions of dollars, which would be intended to help vulnerable countries dealing with the perils of climate change. Described as a "green fund," the concept could potentially help small island states at risk because of the rise in sea level. [Bangladesh](#) identified itself as a potential recipient of an assistance fund, noting that as a country plagued by devastating floods, it was particularly hard-hit by climate change. The "green fund" would fall under the rubric of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, for which developed countries have been committed to quantifying their emission reduction targets, and also to providing financial and technical support to developing countries.

The [United Kingdom](#), [Australia](#), [Mexico](#) and [Norway](#) also called for the creation of a new legal treaty that would replace the Kyoto Protocol. This new treaty, which could go into force in 2012, would focus largely on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. But [Australia](#) went even further in saying that the successor treaty to the Kyoto Protocol, should be one with provisions covering all countries. Such a move would be a departure from the structure of the Kyoto Protocol, which contained emissions targets for industrialized countries due to the prevailing view that developed countries had a particular historic responsibility to be accountable for climate change. More recently, it has become apparent that substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions demanded by scientists would only come to pass with the participation also of significant developing nation states, such as [China](#) and [India](#). Indeed, one of the most pressing critiques of the Kyoto Protocol was that it was a "paper tiger" that failed to address the impact of the actions of emerging economies like [China](#) and [India](#), with its focus on the developed economies.

Now, in 2009, [China](#) -- as the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitter -- was responding this dubious distinction by vocalizing its criticism of the current scenario and foregrounding its new commitments. Ahead of the Copenhagen summit, [China](#) had announced it would reduce the intensity of its carbon emissions per unit of its GDP in 2020 by 40 to 45 percent against 2005 levels. With that new commitment at hand, [China](#) was now accusing the [United States](#) and the European Union of shirking their own responsibilities by setting weak targets for greenhouse gas emissions cuts. Senior Chinese negotiator, Su Wei, characterized the goals of the world's second largest greenhouse gas emitter -- the [United States](#) -- as "not notable," and the European Union's target as "not enough." Su Wei also took issue with [Japan](#) for setting implausible preconditions.

On Dec. 11, 2009, [China](#) demanded that developed and wealthy countries in Copenhagen should help deliver a real agreement on climate change by delivering on their promises to reduce carbon emissions and provide financial support for developing countries to adapt to global warming. In so doing, China's Vice Foreign Minister He Yafei said his country was hoping that a "balanced outcome" would emerge from the discussions at the summit. Echoing the position of the Australian government, He Yafei spoke of a draft agreement as follows: "The final document we're going to

adopt needs to be taking into account the needs and aspirations of all countries, particularly the most vulnerable ones."

China's Vice Foreign Minister emphasized the fact that climate change was "a matter of survival" for developing countries, and accordingly, such countries need wealthier and more developed countries to accentuate not only their pledges of emissions reduction targets, but also their financial commitments under the aforementioned United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. To that end, scientists and leaders of small island states in the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, have highlighted the existential threat posed by global warming and the concomitant rise in sea level.

China aside, attention was also on [India](#) -- another major player in the developing world and a country with an industrializing economy that was impacting the environment. At issue was the Indian government's decision to set a carbon intensity target, which would slow emissions growth by up to 25 percent by the 2020 deadline. This strong position was resisted by some elements in [India](#), who argued that their country should not be taking such a strong position when developed wealthy countries were yet to show accountability for their previous commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The matter grew so heated that the members of the opposition stormed out of the parliament in protest as Indian Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh defended the policy. But the political pressure at home in [India](#) was leaving the Indian delegation in Copenhagen in a state of chaos as well. In fact, India's top environmental negotiator refused to travel to Copenhagen in protest of the government's newly-announced stance.

China and [India](#) were joined by [Brazil](#) and [South Africa](#) in the crafting of a draft document calling for a new global climate treaty to be completed by June 2010. Of concern has been the realization that there was insufficient time to find concurrence on a full legal treaty, which would leave countries only with a politically-binding text by the time the summit at Copenhagen closed. But Guyana's leader, President Bharrat Jagdeo, warned that the summit in [Denmark](#) would be classified as a failure unless a binding document was agreed upon instead of just political consensus. He urged his cohorts to act with purpose saying, "Never before have science, economics, geo-strategic self-interest and politics intersected in such a way on an issue that impacts everyone on the planet."

Likewise, [Tuvalu](#) demanded that legally binding agreements emerge from Copenhagen. Its proposal was supported by many of the vulnerable countries, from small island states and sub-Saharan Africa, all of whom warned of the catastrophic impact of climate change on their citizens. [Tuvalu](#) also called for more aggressive action, such as an amendment to the 1992 agreement, which would focus on sharp greenhouse gas emissions and the accepted rise in temperatures, due to the impact the rise in seas. The delegation from [Kiribati](#) joined the call by drawing attention to the fact that one village had to be abandoned due to waist-high water, and more such effects were likely to follow. Kiribati's Foreign Secretary, Tessie Lambourne, warned

that the people of [Kiribati](#) could well be faced with no homeland in the future saying, "Nobody in this room would want to leave their homeland." But despite such impassioned pleas and irrespective of warnings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that the rise in sea level from melting polar ice caps would deleteriously affect low-lying atolls such as such as [Tuvalu](#) and [Kiribati](#) in the Pacific, and the [Maldives](#) in the Indian Ocean, the oil-giant [Saudi Arabia](#) was able to block this move.

Meanwhile, within the developed countries, yet another power struggle was brewing. The European Union warned it would only agree to raise its target of 20 percent greenhouse gas emissions reductions to 30 percent if the [United States](#) demonstrated that it would do more to reduce its own emissions. It was unknown if such pressure would yield results. [United States](#) President Barack Obama offered a "provisional" 2020 target of 17 percent reductions, noting that he could not offer greater concessions at Copenhagen due to resistance within the [United States](#) Congress, which was already trying to pass a highly controversial "cap and trade" emissions legislation. However, should that emissions trading bill fail in the Senate, the [United States](#) Environment Protection Agency's declaration that greenhouse gases pose a danger to human health and the environment was expected to facilitate further regulations and limits on power plants and factories at the national level. These moves could potentially strengthen the Obama administration's offering at Copenhagen. As well, President Obama also signaled that he would be willing to consider the inclusion of international forestry credits.

Such moves indicated willingness by the Obama administration to play a more constructive role on the international environmental scene than its predecessor, the Bush administration. Indeed, ahead of his arrival at the Copenhagen summit, President Barack Obama's top environmental advisors promised to work on a substantial climate change agreement. To that end, [United States](#) Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson said at a press conference, "We are seeking robust engagement with all of our partners around the world." But would this pro-engagement assertion yield actual results?

By Dec. 12, 2009, details related to a draft document prepared by Michael Zammit Cutajar, the head of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action, were released at the Copenhagen climate conference. Included in the document were calls for countries to make major reductions in carbon emissions over the course of the next decade. According to the Washington Post, industrialized countries were called on to make cuts of between 25 percent and 40 percent below 1990 levels -- reductions that were far more draconian than the [United States](#) was likely to accept. As discussed above, President Obama had offered a provisional reduction target of 17 percent. The wide gap between the released draft and the United States' actual stated position suggested there was much more negotiating in the offing if a binding agreement could be forged, despite the Obama administration's claims that it was seeking greater engagement on this issue.

In other developments, the aforementioned call for financial support of developing countries to deal with the perils of climate change was partly answered by the European Union on Dec. 11, 2009.

The European bloc pledged an amount of 2.4 billion euros (US\$3.5 billion) annually from 2010 to 2012. Environment Minister Andreas Carlgren of [Sweden](#) -- the country that holds the rotating presidency of the European Union at the time of the summit -- put his weight behind the notion of a "legally binding deal." Meanwhile, Yvo de Boer, a top United Nations climate change official, focused less on the essence of the agreement and more on tangible action and effects saying, "Copenhagen will only be a success if it delivers significant and immediate action that begins the day the conference ends."

The division between developed and developing countries in Copenhagen reached new heights on Dec. 14, 2009, when some of the poor and less developed countries launched a boycott at the summit. The move, which was spurred by African countries but backed by [China](#) and [India](#), appeared to be geared toward redirecting attention and primary responsibility to the wealthier and more industrialized countries. The impasse was resolved after the wealthier and more industrialized countries offered assurances that they did not intend on shirking from their commitments to reducing greenhouse gases. As a result, the participating countries ceased the boycott.

Outside the actual summit, thousands of protestors had gathered to demand crucial global warming, leading to clashes between police and demonstrators elsewhere in the Danish capital city. There were reports of scattered violence across Copenhagen and more than 1,000 people were arrested.

Nevertheless, by the second week of the climate change summit, hopes of forging a strong deal were eroding as developed and developing nations remained deadlocked on sharing cuts in greenhouse gases, and particularly on the matters of financing and temperature goals. In a bid to shore up support for a new climate change, [United States](#) President Barack Obama joined other world leaders in Copenhagen. On Dec. 14, 2009, there was a standoff brewing between the [United States](#) and [China](#). At issue was China's refusal to accept international monitoring of its expressed targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The [United States](#) argued that China's opposition to verification could be a deal-breaker.

By the close of the summit, the difficult process eventually resulted in some consensus being cultivated. A draft text called for \$100 billion a year by 2020 to assist poor nations cope with climate change, while aiming to limit global warming to two degrees Celsius compared with pre-industrial levels. The deal also included specific targets for developed countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and called for reductions by developing countries as a share of their economies. Also included in the agreement was a mechanism to verify compliance. The details of the agreement were supported by President Barack Obama, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

This draft would stand as an interim agreement, with a legally-binding international pact unlikely to

materialize until 2010. In this way, the summit in Copenhagen failed to achieve its central objective, which was to negotiate a successor to the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gas emissions.

Editor's Note

In the background of these developments was the growing global consciousness related to global warming and climate change. Indeed, as the Copenhagen summit was ongoing, it was clear there was enormous concurrence on the significance of the stakes with an editorial on the matter of climate change being published in 56 newspapers in 45 countries. That editorial warned that without global action, climate change would "ravage our planet." Meanwhile, a global survey taken by Globescan showed that concern over global warming had exponentially increased from 1998 -- when only 20 percent of respondents believed it to be a serious problem -- to 64 percent in 2009. Such survey data, however, was generated ahead of the accusations by climate change skeptics that some climate scientists may have overstated the case for global warming, based on emails derived in an illicit manner from a British University.

Special Entry: Climate change talks in Doha in [Qatar](#) extend life of Kyoto Protocol (2012)

December 2012 saw climate talks ensue in the Qatari city of Doha as representatives from countries across the world gathered to discuss the fate of the Kyoto Protocol, which seeks to minimize greenhouse gas emissions. The summit yielded results with decisions made (1) to extend the Kyoto Protocol until 2020, and (2) for wealthier countries to compensate poorer countries for the losses and damage incurred as a result of climate change.

In regards to the second matter, Malia Talakai of [Nauru](#), a leading negotiator for the Alliance of Small Island States, explained the necessity of the compensation package as follows: "We are trying to say that if you pollute you must help us."

This measure was being dubbed the "Loss and Damage" mechanism, and was being linked with [United States](#) President Barack Obama's request for \$60 billion from Congress to deal with the devastation caused by Hurricane Sandy months before. The sight of a hurricane bearing down on the northern Atlantic seaboard, along with the reality of the scope of reconstruction, appeared to have illustrated the economic costs of climate change -- not so much as a distant environmental issue -- but as a danger to the quotidian lives of people. Still, there was blame to be placed on the [United States](#) and European countries -- some of world's largest emitters -- for failing to do more to reduce emissions.

To that latter end, there was in fact little progress made on the central issue of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Had those emissions been reduced, there would have been less of a need to financially deal with the devastation caused by climate change. One interpretation was that the

global community was accepting the fact that industrialization was contributing to global warming, which had deleterious effects on the polar ice caps and concomitantly on the rise of sea level, with devastating effects for small island nations. Thus, wealthier countries were willing to pay around \$10 billion a year through 2020, effectively in "damages," to the poor countries that could be viewed as the "collateral damage" of industrial progress. But damages today could potentially be destruction tomorrow, leaving in place the existential challenges and burdens to be born by some of the world's smallest and least wealthy island countries.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the representative for the small island nation states at the Doha summit responded with ire, characterizing the lack of progress on reducing emissions as follows: "We see the package before us as deeply deficient in mitigation (carbon cuts) and finance. It's likely to lock us on the trajectory to a 3,4,5C rise in global temperatures, even though we agreed to keep the global average temperature rise of 1.5C to ensure survival of all islands. There is no new finance (for adapting to climate change and getting clean energy) -- only promises that something might materialize in the future. Those who are obstructive need to talk not about how their people will live, but whether our people will live."

Indeed, in most small island countries not just in the Pacific, but also the Caribbean and Indian Ocean, ecological concerns and the climate crisis have been dominant themes with dire life and death consequences looming in the background for their people. Small island nations in these region are already at risk from the rise of sea-level, tropical cyclones, floods. But their very livelihoods of fishing and subsistence farming were also at risk as a result of ecological and environmental changes. Increasingly high storm surges can wipe out entire villages and contaminate water supplies. Accordingly, the very existence of island nations, such as [Kiribati](#) and [Tuvalu](#), are at severe risk of being obliterated from the map. Yet even with the existential threat of being wiped off the map in the offing, the international community has been either slow or restrictive in its efforts to deal with global warming, climate change, economic and ecological damage, as well as the emerging global challenge of environmental refugees.

A 2012 report from the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the Pacific Regional Environment Program underlined the concerns of small island nations and their people as it concluded that the livelihoods of approximately 10 million people in Pacific island communities were increasingly vulnerable to climate change. In fact, low-lying islands in that region would likely confront losses of up to 18 percent of gross domestic product due to climate change, according to the report. The report covers 21 countries and territories, including [Fiji](#), [Kiribati](#), [Samoa](#) and [Tonga](#), and recommended environmental legislation intended to deal with the climate crisis facing the small island countries particularly. As noted by David Sheppard, the director general of the Pacific Regional Environment Program that co-sponsored this study: "The findings... emphasize the need more than ever to raise the bar through collective actions that address the region's environmental needs at all levels."

Regardless of the failures of the summit in [Qatar](#) (discussed above), the meeting did facilitate a process starting in 2015, which would bind both wealthy and poor countries together in the mission of forging a new binding treaty that would replace the Kyoto Protocol and tackle the central causes of climate change.

For more information on the threats faced in small island nations by climate change and the measures being undertaken to lobby for international action, please see the Alliance for Small Island States available online at the URL: <http://aosis.org/>

Special Report

COP 21 summit in Paris ends with historic agreement to tackle climate change; rare international consensus formed on environmental crisis facing the planet (2015) --

In mid-December 2015, the highly-anticipated United Nations climate conference of parties (COP) in Paris, [France](#), ended with a historic agreement. In fact, it would very likely be understood as the most significant international agreement signed by all the recognized countries of the world since the Cold War. Accordingly, the Paris Agreement was being distinguished as the first multilateral pact that would compel all countries across the world to cut its carbon emissions -- one of the major causes of increasing greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to global warming, and its deleterious effects ranging from the dangerous rise in sea level to catastrophic climate change.

The accord, which was dubbed to be the "Paris Agreement," was the work of rigorous diplomacy and fervent environmental advocacy, and it aimed to address the climate change crisis facing the planet. As many as 195 countries were represented in the negotiations that led to the landmark climate deal. Indeed, it was only after weeks of passionate debate that international concurrence was reached in addressing the environmental challenges confronting the world, with particular attention to moving beyond fossil fuels and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The success of the COP 21 summit in Paris and the emergence of the landmark Paris Agreement was, to some extent, attributed to the efforts of France's Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius who presided over the negotiations. The French foreign minister's experience and credentials as a seasoned diplomat and respected statesman paid dividends. He skillfully guided the delegates from almost 200 countries and interest groups along the negotiations process, with ostensibly productive results and a reasonably robust deal to show for it.

On Dec. 12, 2015, French Foreign Minister Fabius officially adopted the agreement, declaring: "I now invite the COP to adopt the decision entitled Paris Agreement outlined in the document. Looking out to the room I see that the reaction is positive, I see no objections. The Paris

agreement is adopted." Once Foreign Minister Fabius' gavel was struck, symbolically inaugurating the Paris Agreement into force, the COP delegate rushed to their feet with loud and bouyant cheers as well as thunderous applause.

In general, the Paris Agreement was being hailed as a victory for enviromental activists and a triumph for international diplomats, while at the same time being understood as simply an initial -- and imperfect -- move in the direction of a sustainable future. China's chief negotiator, Xie Zhenhua, issued this message, saying that while the accord was not ideal, it should "not prevent us from marching historical steps forward."

United States President Barack Obama lauded the deal as both "ambitious" and "historic," and the work of strenuous multilateral negotiations as he declared, "Together, we've shown what's possible when the world stands as one." The [United States](#) leader acknowledged that the accord was not "perfect," but he reminded the critics that it was "the best chance to save the one planet we have. "

Former [United States](#) Vice President Al Gore, one of the world's most well known environmental advocates, issued a lengthy statement on the accomplishments ensconced in the Paris Agreement. He highlighted the fact that the Paris Agreement was a first step towards a future with a reduced carbon footprint on Planet Earth as he said, "The components of this agreement -- including a strong review mechanism to enhance existing commitments and a long-term goal to eliminate global-warming pollution this century -- are essential to unlocking the necessary investments in our future. No agreement is perfect, and this one must be strengthened over time, but groups across every sector of society will now begin to reduce dangerous carbon pollution through the framework of this agreement."

The central provisions of the Paris Agreement included the following items:

- Greenhouse gas emissions should peak as quickly as possible, with a move towards balancing energy sources, and ultimately the decrease of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century
- Global temperature increase would be limited to 1.5 degrees Centigrade above pre-industrial levels and would be held "well below" the two degrees Centigrade threshold
- Progress on these goals would be reviewed every five years beginning in 2020 with new greenhouse gas reduction targets issued every five years
- \$100 billion would be expended each year in climate finance for developing countries to move forward with green technologies, with further climate financing to be advanced in the years beyond

It should be noted that there both legally binding and voluntary elements contained within the Paris Agreement. Specifically, the submission of an emissions reduction target and the regular review of that goal would be legally mandatory for all countries. Stated differently, there would be a system in place by which experts would be able to track the carbon-cutting progress of each country. At the same time, the specific targets to be set by countries would be determined at the

discretion of the countries, and would not be binding. While there was some criticism over this non-binding element, the fact of the matter was that the imposition of emissions targets was believed to be a major factor in the failure of climate change talks in Copenhagen, [Denmark](#), in 2009.

In 2015, the talks faced challenges as several countries, such as [China](#) and [India](#), objected to conditions that would stymie economic and development. In order to avoid that kind of landmine, a system Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) was developed and formed the basis of the accord. As such, the Paris Agreement would, in fact, facilitate economic growth and development, as well as technological progress, but with the goal of long-term ecological sustainability based on low carbon sources. In fact, the agreement heralded as "the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel era." As noted by Nick Mabey, the head of the climate diplomacy organization E3G, said, "Paris means governments will go further and faster to tackle climate change than ever before. The transition to a low carbon economy is now unstoppable, ensuring the end of the fossil fuel age."

A particular sticking point in the agreement was the \$100 billion earmarked for climate financing for developing countries to transition from traditional fossil fuels to green energy technologies and a low carbon future. In 2014, a report by the International Energy Agency indicated that the cost of that transition would actually be around \$44 trillion by the mid-century -- an amount that would render the \$100 billion being promised to be a drop in the proverbial bucket. However, the general expectation was that the Republican-controlled Senate in the [United States](#), which would have to ratify the deal in that country, was not interested in contributing significant funds for the cause of climate change.

A key strength of the Paris Agreement was the ubiquitous application of measures to all countries. Of note was the frequently utilized concept of "flexibility" with regard to the Paris Agreement. Specifically, the varying capacities of the various countries in meeting their obligations would be anticipated and accorded flexibility. This aspect presented something of a departure from the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which drew a sharp distinction between developed and developing countries, and mandated a different set of obligations for those categories of countries. Thus, under Kyoto, [China](#) and [India](#) were not held to the same standards as the [United States](#) and European countries. In the Paris Agreement, there would be commitments from all countries across the globe.

Another notable strength of the Paris Agreement was the fact that the countries of the world were finally able to reach consensus on the vital necessity to limit global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Centigrade. Ahead of the global consensus on the deal, and as controversy continued to surface over the targeted global temperature limits, the leaders of island countries were sounding the alarm about the melting of the Polar ice caps and the associated rise in sea level. Prime Minister Enele Sopoaga of [Tuvalu](#) issued this dismal reminder: "Tuvalu's future ... is already

bleak and any further temperature increase will spell the total demise of [Tuvalu](#). No leader in this room carries such a level of worry and responsibility. Just imagine you are in my shoes, what would you do?" It was thus something of a victory for environmental advocates that the countries of the world could find consensus on the lower number -- 1.5 degrees rather than 2 degrees.

A significant weak point with regard to the Paris deal was a "loss and damage" provision, which anticipates that even with all the new undertakings intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and move to a low carbon future, there would nonetheless be unavoidable climate change consequences. Those consequences ranged from the loss of arable land for farmers as well as soil erosion and contamination of potable water by sea water, to the decimation of territory in coastal zones and on small islands, due to the rise in sea level, with entire small island countries being rendered entirely uninhabitable. The reality was that peoples' homes across the world would be destroyed along with their way of life.

With that latter catastrophic effect being a clear and present danger for small island countries, the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) demanded that the developed world acknowledge its responsibility for this irreversible damage.. Despite the fact that greenhouse gas emissions and the ensuing plague of global warming was, indeed, the consequence of development in the West (the [United States](#) and Europe) and the large power house countries, such as [Russia](#), [China](#) and [India](#), there was no appetite by those countries to sign on to unlimited liability. Under the Paris Agreement, there was a call for research on insurance mechanisms that would address loss and damage issues, with recommendations to come in the future.

The call for research was being regarded as an evasion of sorts and constituted the weakest aspect of the Paris Agreement. Not surprisingly, a coalition of small island nations demanded a "Marshall Plan" for the Pacific. Borrowing the term "Marshall Plan" from the post-World War II reconstruction effort, the coalition of Pacific island nation, which included [Kiribati](#), [Tuvalu](#), [Fiji](#), and the [Marshall Islands](#), called for an initiative that would include investment in renewable energy and shoreline protection, cultural preservation, economic assistance for economies in transition, and a plan for migration and resettlement for these countries as they confront the catastrophic effects of the melting of the Polar ice caps and the concomitant rise in sea level. The precise contours of the initiative remained unknown, unspecified, and a mere exercise in theory at the time of writing. Yet such an initiative would, at some point, have to be addressed, given the realities of climate change and the slow motion calamity unfolding each day for low-lying island nations across the world.

As noted by Vice President Greg Stone of Conservation International, who also functions as an adviser to the government of [Kiribati](#), "Imagine living in a place where you know it's going to go away someday, but you don't know what day that wave's going to come over and wash your home away." He added, "It's a disaster we know is going to happen." Meanwhile, the intervening years promised to be filled with hardship for small island nations, such as [Kiribati](#).

Stone explained, “For every inch of sea-level rise, these islands lose 10 feet of their freshwater table to saltwater intrusion,” Stone explained. “So it’s not just about the day the water finally goes over the island; it’s also about the day that there’s just not enough water left and everyone has to move off the island.” Presaging the future for island nations that could face submersion, Stone said, “If you look ahead 50 years, a country like [Kiribati](#) could become the first aqueous nation. possibility of migration. That is, they own this big patch of ocean, and they administer it from elsewhere.”

Foreign Minister Minister Tony Debrum of the [Marshall Islands](#) emerged as the champion advocating on behalf of small island nation states and a loose coalition of concerned countries from the Pacific to the Caribbean, but with support from the [United States](#). He addressed the comprehensive concerns of small island nations regarding the weaknesses of the deal, while simultaneously making clear that the Paris Agreement signified hope for the countries most at risk. In a formal statement, Debrum declared: “We have made history today. Emissions targets are still way off track, but this agreement has the tools to ramp up ambition, and brings a spirit of hope that we can rise to this challenge. I can go back home to my people and say we now have a pathway to survival.” Debrum highlighted the imperatives of Pacific island nations, saying, “Our High Ambition Coalition was the lightning rod we needed to lift our sights and expectations for a strong agreement here in Paris. We were joined by countries representing more than half the world. We said loud and clear that a bare-bones, minimalist agreement would not fly. We instead demanded an agreement to mark a turning point in history, and the beginning of our journey to the post-carbon era.”

Debrum of the [Marshall Islands](#) espoused the quintessential synopsis of the accord and its effects for those most likely to be affected by climate change as he noted, “Climate change won’t stop overnight, and my country is not out of the firing line just yet, but today we all feel a little safer.”

Editor's Entry on [Environmental Policy](#):

The low-lying Pacific island nations of the world, including [Kiribati](#), [Tuvalu](#), the [Marshall Islands](#), [Fiji](#), among others, are vulnerable to the threats posed by global warming and climate change, derived from carbon emissions, and resulting in the rise in sea level. Other island nations in the Caribbean, as well as poor countries with coastal zones, were also at particular risk of suffering the deleterious effects of climate change.

Political policy in these countries are often connected to ecological issues, which have over time morphed into an existential crisis of sorts. Indeed, ecological concerns and the climate crisis have also been dominant themes with life and death consequences for the people of island nations in the Pacific. Indeed, the very livelihoods of fishing and subsistence farming remain at risk as a result of ecological and environmental changes. Yet even so, these countries are threatened by increasingly high storm surges, which could wipe out entire villages and contaminate water supplies. Moreover,

because these are low lying island nations, the sustained rise in sea level can potentially lead to the terrain of these countries being uninhabitable at best, and submerged at worst. Stated in plain terms, these countries are at severe risk of being obliterated from the map and their plight illuminates the emerging global challenge of environmental refugees. In these manifold senses, climate change is the existential crisis of the contemporary era.

Since the time of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, there have been efforts aimed at extending the life of that agreement, with an eye on minimizing greenhouse gas emissions, and thus minimizing the effects of climate change. Those endeavors have largely ended in failure, as exemplified by the unsuccessful Copenhagen talks in 2009 and the fruitless Doha talks in 2012 respectively. The success of the COP 21 talks in [France](#), with the adoption of the landmark Paris Agreement in 2015, was regarded as the first glimmer of hope. Not only did the Paris Agreement signify the triumph of international diplomacy and global consensus, but it also marked the start of the end of the fossil fuel era, with the path forward toward a low carbon future reliant on greener technologies. Most crucially, the Paris Agreement stood as the first significant response in recent times to the central challenge of climate change and its quotidian effects on the lives of real human beings across the world.

1. Major International Environmental Accords:

General Environmental Concerns

Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, Espoo, 1991.

Accords Regarding Atmosphere

Annex 16, vol. II (Environmental Protection: Aircraft Engine Emissions) to the 1044 Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation, Montreal, 1981

Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP), Geneva, 1979

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), New York, 1992

Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, Vienna, 1985 including the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Depleted the Ozone Layer, Montreal, 1987

Accords Regarding Hazardous Substances

Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movements and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa, Bamako, 1991

Convention on Civil Liability for Damage Caused during Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road, Rail and Inland Navigation Vessels (CRTD), Geneva, 1989

Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (Basel Convention), Basel, 1989

Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, Helsinki, 1992

Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Island Countries of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes and to Control the Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within the South Pacific Region (Waigani Convention), Waigani, 1995

European Agreement Concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR), Geneva 1957

FAO International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides, Rome, 1985

2. Major International Marine Accords:

Global Conventions

Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (London Convention 1972), London, 1972

International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by Protocol of 1978 relation thereto (MARPOL 73/78), London, 1973 and 1978

International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage 1969 (1969 CLC), Brussels, 1969, 1976, and 1984

International Convention on the Establishment of an International Fund for Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage 1971 (1971 Fund Convention), Brussels, 1971

Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea (HNS), London 1996

International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response, and Co-operation (OPRC), London, 1990

International Convention Relation to Intervention on the High Seas in Cases of Oil Pollution Casualties (Intervention Convention), Brussels, 1969

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Montego Bay, 1982

Regional Conventions

Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft (Oslo Convention), Oslo, 1972

Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution from Land-based Sources (Paris Convention), Paris, 1974

Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North East Atlantic (OSPAR Convention), Paris, 1992

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Conventions within the UNEP Regional Seas Programme

Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution, Bucharest, 1992

Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region, Cartagena de Indias, 1983

Convention for the Protection, Management, and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region, Nairobi, 1985

Kuwait Regional Convention for Co-operation on the Protection of the Marine Environment from Pollution, [Kuwait](#), 1978

Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment and Coastal Region of the Mediterranean Sea (Barcelona Convention), Barcelona, 1976

Regional Convention for the Conservation of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Environment, Jeddah, 1982

Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region, Noumea, 1986

Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Area of the South-East Pacific, Lima, 1981

Convention for Co-operation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region, Abidjan, 1981

3. Major Conventions Regarding Living Resources:

Marine Living Resources

Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), Canberra, 1980

International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), Rio de Janeiro, 1966

International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW), Washington, 1946

Nature Conservation and Terrestrial Living Resources

Antarctic Treaty, Washington, D.C., 1959

Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention), Paris, 1972

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Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), Bonn, 1979

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Washington, D.C., 1973

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FAO International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, Rome, 1983

International Tropical Timber Agreement, 1994 (ITTA, 1994), Geneva, 1994

Freshwater Resources

Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, Helsinki, 1992

4. Major Conventions Regarding Nuclear Safety:

Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency (Assistance Convention), Vienna, 1986

Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident (Notification Convention), Vienna, 1986

Convention on Nuclear Safety, Vienna, 1994

Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage, Vienna, 1963

5. Major Intergovernmental Organizations

Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)

European Union (EU): Environment

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Global Environment Facility (GEF)

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

International Labour Organization (ILO)

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds (IOPC Funds)

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Environment Policy Committee (EPOC)

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

World Bank

World Food Programme (WFP)

World Health Organization (WHO)

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

World Trade Organization (WTO)

6. Major Non-Governmental Organizations

Atmosphere Action Network East Asia (AANE)

Climate Action Network (CAN)

Consumers International (CI)

Earth Council

Earthwatch Institute

Environmental Liaison Centre International (ELCI)

European Environmental Bureau (EEB)

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

Friends of the Earth International (FoEI)

Greenpeace International

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)

International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)

International Solar Energy Society (ISES)

IUCN-The World Conservation Union

Pesticide Action Network (PAN)

Sierra Club

Society for International Development (SID)

Third World Network (TWN)

Water Environment Federation (WEF)

Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)

World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)

World Federalist Movement (WFM)

World Resources Institute (WRI)

World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF)

7. Other Networking Instruments

Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)

Global Legislators for a Balanced Environment (GLOBE)

Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC)

United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS)

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Methodology Note for Demographic Data:

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The demographic information for language, ethnicity and religion listed in CountryWatch content is

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Note on Edition Dates:

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Exceptions to this method were used for:

- Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Nauru
- Cuba
- Palau
- Holy See
- San Marino
- Korea, North
- [Serbia](#) & Montenegro
- Liberia
- Somalia
- Liechtenstein
- Tonga
- Monaco
- Tuvalu

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World Health Organization. URL: <http://www.who.int/home-page/>

World News Connection, National Technical Information Service. Springfield, Virginia, USA.

Internet News Service, Xinhua News Agency (U.S.) Inc. Woodside, New York. URL: <http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/>

Note on Edition Dates:

The earlier edition dates are noted above because they were used to formulate the original country reviews and serve as the baseline for some of the information covered. Later editions have been used in some cases, and are cited as such, while other more recent online resources (cited above) contain recent and ever-updated data sets used for research.

Methodology Notes for the HDI:

Since 1990, the United Nations Development Programme, in concert with organizations across the globe, has produced the [Human Development Index](#) (or HDI). According to the UNDP, the index measures average achievement in basic human development in one simple composite index, and produces from this index a ranking of countries. The HDI is a composite of three basic components of human development: longevity, knowledge and standard of living. Longevity is measured by life expectancy. Knowledge is measured by combination of adult literacy and mean

years of schooling. Standard of living is measured by purchasing power, based on real GDP per capita (in constant US\$) adjusted for differences in international living costs (or, purchasing power parity, PPP). While the index uses these social indicators to measure national performance with regard to human welfare and development, not all countries provide the same level of information for each component needed to compute the index; therefore, as in any composite indicator, the final index is predicated on projections, predictions and weighting schemes. The index is a static measure, and thus, an incomplete measure of human welfare. In fact, the UNDP says itself the concept of human development focuses on the ends rather than the means of development and progress, examining in this manner, the average condition of all people in a given country.

Specifically, the index is calculated by determining the maximum and minimum for each of the three components (as listed above) and then measuring where each country stands in relation to these scales-expressed as a value between 0 and 1. For example, the minimum adult literary rate is zero percent, the maximum is 100 percent, and the reading skills component of knowledge in the HDI for a country where the literacy rate is 75 percent would be 0.75. The scores of all indicators are then averaged into the overall index.

For a more extensive examination of human development, as well as the ranking tables for each participating country, please visit: <http://www.undp.org>

Note on [History](#) sections

In some CountryWatch Country Reviews, open source content from the State Department Background Notes and Country Guides have been used.

Environmental Overview

Environmental Profiles: A Global Guide to Projects and People. 1993. Linda Sobel Katz, Sarah Orrick, and Robert Honig. New York: Garland Publishing.

The Environment Encyclopedia and Directory, 2nd Edition. 1998. London: Europa.

Environmental Protection Agency Global Warming Site. URL: <http://www.epa.gov/globalwarming>

Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations: Forestry. URL: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/sofo/en/>

Global Warming Information Page. URL: <http://globalwarming.org>

Introduction to Global [Environmental Issues](#), 2nd Edition. 1997. Kevin Pickering and Lewis Owen.

London: Routledge.

Trends: Compendium of Data on Global Change. URL: http://cdiac.esd.ornl.gov/trends/emis/em_cont.htm

United Nations Environmental Program. URL: http://www.unep.org/GEO/GEO_Products/Assessment_Reports/

United Nations Global Environmental Outlook. URL: <http://www.unep.org/geo/geo4/media/>

United States Department of Energy, Country Analysis Briefs. URL: <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/contents.html>

World Climate Data Online. URL: <http://www.worldclimate.com>

World Directory of Country Environmental Studies. 1996. The World Resource Institute.

World Factbook. US Central Intelligence Agency. Washington, D.C.: Printing and Photography Group.

1998-1999 World Resources Guide to the Global Environment by the World Resources Institute. May, 1998.

1998/1999 Yearbook of International Cooperation on Environment and Development. 1998. London: Earthscan Publications.

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Other Sources:

General information has also been used in the compilation of this review, with the courtesy of governmental agencies from this country.

News Services:

CANA Daily Bulletin. Caribbean Media Agency Ltd., St. Michael, [Barbados](#).

Central and Eastern Africa Report, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Integrated Regional Information Network for Central and Eastern Africa.

Daily News, Panafrican News Agency. Dakar, [Senegal](#).

PACNEWS, Pacific Islands Broadcasting Association. Suva, [Fiji](#).

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Washington D.C. USA.

Reuters News. Thomson Reuters. New York, New York. USA.

Southern Africa Report, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Integrated Regional Information Network for Southern Africa.

Voice of America, English Service. Washington D.C.

West Africa Report, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Integrated Regional Information Network for West Africa. 1998-1999

Note: Some or all these news services have been used to research various sections of this Country Review.

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Youngblood-Coleman, Denise. *Country Review: France*. 2003. Houston, Texas: CountryWatch Publications, 2003. *Country Review:France*. Online. Available URL : http://www.countrywatch.com/cw_country.asp?vCOUNTRY=61 October, 12, 2003.

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Examples:

Youngblood-Coleman, Denise. "People." *CountryWatch.com: France*. 2003. Houston, Texas: CountryWatch Publications, 2003. *CountryWatch.com: France*. Online. Available URL : http://www.countrywatch.com/cw_topic.asp?vCOUNTRY=61&SECTION=SOCIAL&TOPIC=CLPEO&TYPE=TEXT. October 12, 2003.

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