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AMERICAN IMPACT ON THE STABILIZATION OF THE EGYPTIAN AUTHORITARIAN RULE BEFORE 2011

The Egyptian Political System before 2011

The Egyptian political system of the last three decades was often labeled as semi-authoritarian as on the institutional level it included a set of democratic features (such as multiparty elections to the parliament).² The real character of the regime was, however, far from the Dahl's polyarchy³. In fact, those democratic elements were purely a facade and served the mere purpose of legitimization of the authorities.⁴ From the 1950s the real political power has been in the hands of the president (in 1981-2011 it was Muhammad Hosni Mubarak (1928-) who came to power after the assassination of Anwar as-Sadat (1918-1981))⁵ and his political environment – military and intelligence officers as well as other prominent members of National Democratic Party.

During this period the Egyptian authoritarianism was perceived as stable thanks to the strong ties between the state and the economy. It efficiently employed a complex

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² Bruce K. Rutherford, *Egypt after Mubarak: Liberalism, Islam, and Democracy in the Arab World* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 1-31.

³ Robert A. Dahl, *Demokracja i jej krytycy* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1995), 310-311.

⁴ Marina Ottaway, "Evaluating Middle East Reform: Significant or Cosmetic?," in *Beyond the Façade: Political Reform in the Arab World*, ed. Marina Ottaway, Julia Choucair-Vizoso (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 1-15; Michele Dunne and Amr Hamzawy, *The Ups and Downs of Political Reform in Egypt*, in *Beyond the Façade: Political Reform in the Arab World*, ed. Marina Ottaway, Julia Choucair-Vizoso (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 17-44.

⁵ Anwar as-Sadat was murdered on October 6, 1981 in assassination led by a group of army officers employed by one of the fundamentalist religious organizations. The assassination was followed by a statement that as-Sadat had been responsible for degradation of Muslim culture and had lacked qualifications to rule the country. The attack took place during an army parade. The assassins having caused a malfunction in one of the parading trucks used the moment of confusion to open fire and killed the president on the spot. Mass arrests followed the assassination as well as death sentences for the assassins and imprisonment for people related with the assassination. See Jerzy Zdanowski, *Bracia Muzułmanie i inni* (Szczecin: Glob, 1986), 142-146.

network resulting in a large number of regime's beneficiaries, what provided considerable support for the president and his party, not to mention numerous machinations and vote rigging to guarantee absolute domination in parliamentary elections. The first cracks in the foundation of this political system appeared as a result Islamist movements as well as secular opposition, increasing in strength both inside and outside the parliament and demanding real democracy, abolishment of emergency law and abidance to human rights. The regime condoned moderate contestation that the authoritarian ways of exercising power were slowly being balanced by pluralization of political life. Pressures came from many different groups across the Egyptian society – Islamists, secular opposition, students, non-governmental organizations (mainly acting as human rights activists), lawyers and judges supporting independent judicial system, journalists, business people as well as the progressive wing of National Democratic Party.

Since the beginning of the 1990s the government continued to strengthen its position towards the society. On the other hand those times were also marked with activation of political opposition, which was realized by parliamentary successes of Islamists (being able to cope with political repressions), as well as increased political awareness among the Egyptian youth and generational changes within the ruling party. It all led to polarization of state-society relations.

Legitimization of power, typically for authoritarian states, was not the strongest suit of the Egyptian regime. Whereas Gamal Abd an-Naser (1918-1970) held high prestige among the Egyptians, his successors have been having more severe problems in validating their supremacy. During Mubarak's presidency different methods were employed to deal with this issue. First of all, emphasis on Islam as an important factor in shaping national policy, limited liberalization of the political system, extensive democratic rhetoric often according to notions such as rule of law or constitutionalism. Foreign affairs, including policy aiming at settling the Palestinian issue, were also employed as one of the important methods of validating Egyptian elites' authority. So was (less officially) control over information and religious institutions.⁶

There were many factors influencing persistence of the Egyptian authoritarianism. Internally, the most important were expanded bureaucracy, hegemonic political party and the army. In this essay, however, emphasis will lay on the external factors, which had significant impact on the whole spectrum of what affected stability of the political system. Namely, the issue of the remaining pages is the considerable economic, technological, logistical and political support given to the Egyptian authorities by the United States. It is worth emphasizing that it was one of the main reasons why the Egyptian authorities exploited the terrorist threat, using it both as means for gradual liquidation of the indicated political freedoms and to obtain support from Washington.

⁶ More on the functioning of the political system of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Islamist opposition see Maye Kassem, *Egyptian politics. The Dynamics of Authoritarian Rule* (Boulder-London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004); Tamir Moustafa, *The Struggle for Constitutional Power. Law, Politics, and Economic Development in Egypt* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Jerzy Zdanowski, *Współczesna muzułmańska myśl społeczno-polityczna. Nurt Braci Muzułmanów*, (Warszawa: Askon, 2009).

The American-Egyptian Relations before 2011

American governments have been continuously providing the Egyptian regime with funds and goods in exchange for their support for the American interests in the Middle East and Northern Africa. American aid has ensured this strategic alignment with Egypt as a loyal ally in realizing American foreign policy. Obtaining privileged position in the relations with the United States became possible after the previous change of the political course made by Anwar as-Sadat in the early 1970s.⁷ Especially after the Yom Kippur war (1973), when Cairo began peaceful negotiations with Israel (established and finished with the active mediation of the U.S. diplomacy). The achievement of peace between Egypt and Israel was the way to achieve two main goals of Washington's Middle Eastern strategy – security of Israel as the main priority of the American Middle Eastern policy and protection of the oil deliveries from the Gulf.⁸

According to Gilles Kepel the peace with Egypt paralyzed all potential military offensives against Israel. From that moment any effective war without Egypt was actually not possible. This is the reason why the Camp David agreement – which sealed the Egyptian-Israeli peace in March 1979 – was widely regarded as a great success of the American diplomacy. Washington assured the victory for Israel because – as Kepel said – it “has bought” its main opponent (pulled out from its former alliance with the Soviet Union).⁹

The Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, as well as establishing a closer relationship with Washington, greatly rearranged priorities within the Egyptian foreign affairs, what indirectly resulted in being ruled out from Arab League for many years. Despite the difficult position and occasional tensions – as in 1982 when Israel, having taken advantage of the Egyptian peace treaty, invaded Lebanon (the treaty guaranteed security of Israeli western border) – the Washington-Cairo-Jerusalem triangle survived until the first decade of XXI century. The relations between these three countries also endured the 1990's and the first years of XXI century with American invasions on Iraq, Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations and the war with terrorism.¹⁰

Not before the presidency of Mubarak, who maintained his image as a great reformer and the one to stabilize the sphere of Egyptian political life, did Egypt return to Arab League while maintaining alliance with the USA and Israel. It secured its strong position among Middle Eastern and North African countries but also triggered unrest among a large part of Egyptian society and resulted in boost of terrorist activity. Terrorism, however, was skillfully used by the government to strengthen its control over the

⁷ See Michał Lipa, Aleksandra Wilczura, “The political implications of liberalization of the Egyptian economy,” in *Transformation in Poland and in the Southern Mediterranean: Sharing Experiences*, ed. Katarzyna Żukrowska (Warszawa: Szkoła Główna Handlowa, 2010), 244-257.

⁸ Peter Calvocoressi, *Polityka Międzynarodowa 1945-2000* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 2002), 427-442; Georges Corm, *Bliski Wschód w Ogniu. Oblicza Konflikty 1956-2003* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, 2003), 273-277 and Jerzy Zdanowski, *Historia Bliskiego Wschodu w XX Wieku* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 2010), 196-205.

⁹ Gilles Kepel, *Fitna. Wojna w Sercu Islamu* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, 2006), 36.

¹⁰ Michael Doran, “Egypt,” in *Diplomacy in the Middle East. The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers*, ed. L. Carl Brown (London-New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 116-119.

society and extend the scale of repressions towards political opposition. Thanks to the American aid, Egypt succeeded in modernizing and greatly expanding the army, which not only served as a fundament of authoritarian rule, but also was one of the most important elements of Middle Eastern balance of power. Cairo played an important role in mediating in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Egyptian diplomacy succeeded in rebuilding its position in the Arab World and at the same time maintaining very good relations with the USA and proper with the State of Israel.¹¹

Supporting Egypt was also beneficial to the USA – especially in the times of the Cold War. On one hand the Egyptian regime was in desperate need for help in order to rescue its drowning economy and was forced to open itself to Western and international aid. On the other hand, internal reforms and, to some extent liberalization, as well as improving laws of private possession were necessary to attract foreign and domestic investors, who had preferred to do business abroad, usually in the counties of the Persian Gulf, without the fear of nationalization and bounds of extensive bureaucratic apparatus. In order to realize such economical open-up to international free market – Cairo did not have a choice and had to become one of the key-allies of the United States in the Middle East and North Africa.¹²

In the following years Egypt started to receive the second largest (after Israel and as a non-NATO state) support for the military and economic purposes. Americans began to render the financial aid to Egypt in 1975 with the transfer of \$370 million for the purpose of the Egyptian economy. American aid for Egypt was successively growing and amounted \$943 million in 1978. Subsequently (in 1979) it reached – after a signature of the peace treaty with Israel – the sum of \$1.1 billion for economic purposes and \$1.5 billion for military expenses. In next 20 years the American financial assistance for Egypt – for both economic aims and the army – reached the average sum of \$2.2 billion annually. At the end of XX century Washington began to reduce this economic support by about 5% per year in order to decrease the subsidizing of the Egyptian economy about 50% within the next 10 years. It was related to the strategy called „aid to trade,” where the military support has remained on the level of \$1.3 billion. Thereby, in 2008 the scale of the financial support for the Egyptian economy amounted only \$411 million. Until 2008 – within more than 30 years – Washington transferred to the Arab Republic of Egypt more than \$66 billion. It is proper to mention that Americans did not use an appropriate financial encouragement to support the political reforms during the Cold War, because Washington was afraid that successful establishment of political freedoms would force the communists to double their efforts in Egypt.¹³

¹¹ Raymond A. Hinnebusch, “The Foreign Policy of Egypt,” in *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, ed. Raymond A. Hinnebusch, Anoushiravan Ehteshami (Boulder-London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 107-106.

¹² Eberhard Kienle, *A Grand Delusion. Democracy and Economic Reform in Egypt* (London-New York: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 131-153; Rutherford, *Egypt after Mubarak*, 133-218; Robert Springborg “An Evaluation of the Political System at the End of the Millennium,” in *Egypt in the Twenty First Century: Challenges for Development*, ed. M. Riad El-Ghonemy (London-New York: Routledge-Curzon, 2003), 191.

¹³ Rutherford, *Egypt after Mubarak*, 4-6; Denis J. Sullivan, “Bureaucratic Politics in Development Assistance: The Failure of American Aid in Egypt,” *Administration & Society* 23, no. 1 (1991): 29-53, <http://aas.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/23/1/29> (accessed December 20, 2010).

Fiscal Year	Economic	Military	IMET	Total
1948-1997	23,288.6	22,353.5	27.3	45,669.4
1998	815.0	1,300.0	1.0	2,116.0
1999	775.0	1,300.0	1.0	2,076.0
2000	727.3	1,300.0	1.0	2,028.3
2001	695.0	1,300.0	1.0	1,996.0
2002	655.0	1,300.0	1.0	1,956.0
2003	911.0	1,300.0	1.2	2,212.2
2004	571.6	1,292.3	1.4	1,865.3
2005	530.7	1,289.6	1.2	1,821.5
2006	490.0	1,287.0	1.2	1,778.2
2007	450.0	1,300.0	1.3	1,751.3
2008	411.6	1,289.4	1.2	1,702.2
Total	30,320.8	36,611.8	39.8	66,972.4

Table 1: Recent U.S. Foreign Assistance to Egypt (USD – in millions).¹⁴

The Egyptian-American alliance cannot be reduced to the notions of Egyptian financial benefit, the Cold War or the security of the State of Israel, despite the fact that those three might have been the most important factors. In the eyes of Egyptian entrepreneurs the alliance with the USA resulted in including the Egyptian market in the world system of free economy. In turn, American diplomats have gained an important mediator in their talks with other Arab countries. The Egyptian authorities, as such ally, served as an extension of American and (to a lesser extent) Israeli interests in the Arab world and by doing so secured its own political position, for Anti-American environments also threatened the Egyptian regime itself.

During the next few years it also resulted in easing tensions between Israel and some of the countries like Morocco and Jordan.¹⁵ However, the Egyptian president had bigger ambitions – to free himself from his dependence on Washington by working on establishing relations with Europe. Moreover, the Egyptian army, vastly expanded and modernized thanks to the American aid, once again became a potential threat to Jerusalem or at least strengthened the position of Arab countries in case a confrontation with Israel occurs. What is worth to note is that Egypt achieved this without jeopardizing its alliance with the USA or its eastern neighbor and fulfilling all of its contracted obligations.¹⁶

The American attitudes towards Mubarak’s regime began to change after the fall of the Soviet empire. However, not before 9/11 have the Americans fully realized that it was the deficit of democracy what favored the terrorism.¹⁷ Issues of democracy and

¹⁴ Jeremy M. Sharp, “Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations,” *Congressional Research Service*, last modified May 12, 2009, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/124082.pdf>.

¹⁵ Hinnebusch, “The Foreign Policy of Egypt,” 108.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 108-112.

¹⁷ More on this issue in Dalia Dassa Kaye, Frederic Wehrey, Audra K. Grant, Dale Stahl, *More Freedom, Less Terror? Liberalization and Political Violence in the Arab World* (Santa Monica-Arlington-Pittsburgh: RAND Corporation, 2008), 29-55, http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG772.pdf (accessed December 10, 2011).

human rights had rarely been brought under debate in the context of the Middle East before that. The democratization of the Middle Eastern countries became one of the priorities of American foreign affairs after the Americans have felt on their own skin where to lead the social attitudes caused by Arab authoritarianisms. Therefore, the Administration of George W. Bush added another goal to the American Middle Eastern strategy – democratization of the Arab states.¹⁸ Americans acknowledged officially, that deficit of the political pluralism and lack of the democratic mechanisms of the power alternation favor the development of the extremist version of Islamism, as well as terrorism. They have also started to believe, that the democratic states should be more favorable to the United States. Condoleezza Rice – supporting the idea of democratization – ascertained in that time, that “for 60 years the United States pursued stability at the expense of democracy in the Middle East – and we achieved neither. Now, we are taking a different course. We are supporting the democratic aspirations of the people.”¹⁹ Thereafter, as recorded in The National Security Strategy from March 2006, an aim of the American diplomacy is “to help create a world of democratic, well-governed states that can meet the needs of their citizens and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system.”²⁰ It has been based on this notion that democratic states are more stable, richer and more diplomatic in relations with their neighbors than non-democratic countries. The actions did not take long to follow the words and in the period from 2002 until 2006 the American government transferred \$400 million to the Middle East Partnership Initiative, seeking ways to increase political involvement of civil society and reinforce the independent judiciary. Then the Congress spent another \$250 million for the similar purposes. Moreover, from 2001 to 2005 the general budget for promotion of democracy in the Middle East was expanded from \$27 million to \$105 million. Most resources have been directed to Iraq, where the idea of forced democratization did not bring the intended results. It is proper to emphasize that this amount was a drop in the bucket and looked rather poorly when compared to huge expenditures for military purposes. The statements both by the U.S. President Barack Obama and the Secretary of the State in his government Hillary Clinton suggest that the promotion of democracy will not be discontinued but will take different forms.²¹

In the first years of XXI century the American Congress was heated up by a debate whether aiding Cairo should depend on Egyptian progress in securing civil rights and liberties or rather securing the border with Gaza Strip. The main issue of the debate was illegal transit of goods including arms and explosives for Hamas militants in support of their armed struggle with the Jewish state. Many Congressmen reckoned that the American aid was not efficient in advocating liberal reforms in Egypt. It was suggested that treaties should be re-negotiated and made strictly dependent on fulfilling American demands. For instance, in 2008 it was proposed that the military aid should be lowered by a few millions of dollars until the Egyptian authorities succeed in imple-

¹⁸ More on the issue of American promotion of democracy in Andrzej Kapiszewski, *The Changing Middle East. Selected Issues in Politics and Society in the Gulf* (Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza AMF, 2006), 13-47.

¹⁹ Rutherford, *Egypt after Mubarak*, 7.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 7-11.

menting necessary respect for freedom and civil rights, securing independence of Egyptian judiciary and severely restraining weapon smuggling to the Gaza Strip. Despite Egyptian public opinion's protests and comments, warning that imposing unreasonable conditions on the Egyptian side might jeopardize the mutual relations, the Congress agreed to decrease the aid.

However, in the face of growing tensions in Palestine, Cairo had the advantage of exclusiveness in mediating in not only the conflict between the Israeli State and Palestinian Autonomy, but also the internal Palestinian conflict between Hamas and Fatah. Despite common doubts the U.S. government still allocates about \$1.3 billion annually for Egyptian military purposes (military aid is divided into 3 general components: acquisitions, upgrades to existing equipment, and follow-on support). It is estimated that about 30% of these funds are allocated in acquiring American military systems in order to replace old Soviet equipment. Moreover, Egypt benefits from a project called Excess Defense Articles. Egyptian officers also actively participate in Egyptian-American military trainings.²²

The most evident shift in American foreign policy towards Mubarak's regime since 1998 applied to the greatly reduced economic support. At the same time the U.S. government also lessened its support for Israeli economy, however, funds allocated in Israeli military have been relatively increased. It provoked tensions on the Egyptian side, which was receiving the same amount of money for military purposes (with prices of arms having been raised Egypt was *de facto* getting less support). At the same time the budget of the Egyptian Armed Forces was expanding over the years and reached \$4.5 billion in 2010.²³ The reasons of such a shift in American foreign policy can be found in the emphasis that the Americans wanted to put on civic reforms and education in order to stimulate civil society as well as processes of democratization and securing human rights. On the other hand Egyptian economy was itself – from the global crisis' and the macroeconomic point of view – undergoing a dynamic growth and did not need as much help as before. The Americans preferred to allocate the resources in intensifying trade and providing the growing Egyptian market with access to American goods and services.²⁴

Conclusion

In the first years of XXI century the biggest challenge for American diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa was to agree the strategic alliance with Egypt and promotion of civil rights and liberties. Pro-democratic postulates were gaining more and more notability in the Egyptian public opinion eventually resulting in the eruption of protests in January 2011. With the secular (liberal) opposition growing in strength the issue of democratic reforms could no longer be ignored. The Egyptian public opinion could not be as easily swayed by the supposed treat of the Muslim Brotherhood (at the

²² Sharp, "Egypt," 1-30.

²³ Michał Lipa, „Pat nad Nilem,” *Polska Zbrojna*, March 13, 2011, 50.

²⁴ Sharp, "Egypt," 29-30.

time the most organized political opposition), whose actions for decades served the government as a convenient excuse for delaying democratic reforms. Young political activists demanded that the U.S. put more pressure on the Egyptian authorities, for whom democratization at that point was almost a certain ticket to losing all political power. In that perspective the Egyptian regime had no other way to escape the American pressure than to claim it „an external interference in Egyptian domestic affairs.”²⁵

This tendency, which we could observe in the actions of the U.S. government, seems to be aimed at the opponents of Arab – and the Egyptian – democracies. Time will tell whether the American administration has truly redefined the goals of its foreign policy in the long term. The support for the Egyptian army seems to calm the situation and provide loyalty of the Egyptian executive irrespectively of who is its actual leader (Mubarak or any other person representing the non-democratic elite) as long as the safety under the American umbrella is guaranteed. However, to turn on the democratic machine is to risk that – at least at the beginning – the political power is ceased by groups unwilling to cooperate (namely the Islamists), neither by realizing American personal recommendations nor by taking into account American interests in the long term.

It is hard to say whether this was a deliberate turn of events, but it cannot be denied that the American influence on the stabilization of the Egyptian authoritarianism has been gradually decreased in previous years. As the opposition grew in power the American government – knowing the public sentiments – must have realized that further support for the Egyptian authoritarian regime did not agree with their real goals. Arab societies tend to voice their demands of democratization and equal access to political power more and more openly, therefore supporting autocrats would not only disagree with the American image of a model democracy but also not serve its policy well. When the Americans realized that further support for a non-democratic regime is no longer of any benefit, they started to increase their support for democratic reforms and reinforcing the structures of civil society. However, it does not mean that the U.S gave up their role as an ally and supporter of Egypt as a state. It rather gives a signal that the one to be put aside is Mubarak and his regime. In the coming years it can be assumed that the U.S. government will continue to support democratic transformation of the largest Arab country and maintain good relations with the elites of Egyptian military and intelligence. A controlled and gradual democratization is to be expected – with army and security sectors as its key actors.

²⁵ Ibid.

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MIGRATION OF CHRISTIANS OUT OF IRAQ – SITUATION AND PERSPECTIVES

Since American troops invaded Iraq in 2003, the public opinion has regularly been receiving alarming reports on systematic deterioration of living conditions among the representatives of ethnic and religious minorities in the country – Christians, Yazidis, Mandaeans, as well as Turkmen, Shabaks, Baha'is, Yarsanis (Arabic: *Ahl e-Haqq*), Faili Kurds and others. For centuries, Iraq had been regarded as a rare example of successful and peaceful cohabitation and various national and religious groups in the Middle East. Recently, however, it has been gradually losing its syncretic character.

According to records of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, among 1.8 million Iraqis currently exiled in neighboring Jordan, Syria and other countries of the region, 30% are representatives of the minorities mentioned above. This article strives to present a brief review of the present situation of Iraqi Christians based on the reports of international organizations and Arabic sources.

Christians are the largest non-Muslim religious minority in Iraq, comprising currently about 2.3% of Iraqi population – predominantly the native Assyro-Chaldeans. Christians are traditionally divided into the Chaldean Catholic Church (originating from Nestorianism and maintaining full communion with Rome), the Assyrian Church of the East (as followers of Nestorius separated doctrinally from the Roman Catholic Church), the Syriac Church (Catholic and Orthodox rites), the Armenian Church (Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox), and other smaller religious communities (including Protestants, Presbyterians, Anglicans). The vast majority of Iraqis are Muslims comprising currently around 97% of Iraqi population.²

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² The largest Muslim minority in Iraq are the Turkmen - about 3-4% of the population. Turkmen are both Sunni and Shiite, followed by Kurds (Kurdish *feyli*) and Shabaks who are predominantly Shiites. The Iraqi religious mosaic is complemented by gnostic Mandaeans (Sabaeans), monotheistic Yazidis, Yarsanis as well as Baha'is and a small group of Jews. There are also a few communities of immigrants or refugees from abroad the biggest of which is the Palestinian diaspora numbering about 15 thousand people (35 thousand