

Egypt's Enduring Challenges: Shaping the Post-Mubarak Environment

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Although the Papyrus Revolution was a remarkable accomplishment for the Egyptian people, the ongoing transition has spurred trepidation as well as hope in the United States. Past transfers of power in Cairo have led to dramatic policy shifts, giving Washington little reason to believe that the latest leadership change will be different. And while the Mubarak regime may be gone, much of the security apparatus, bureaucracy, and economic dysfunction that sparked the revolution remain in place. As a new, presumably liberal-led government takes shape, these and other challenges will place tremendous pressure on both Cairo and the U.S.-Egyptian relationship.

In this new Policy Focus, Washington Institute senior fellow and former Pentagon official David Schenker describes the concrete steps Washington can take to shore up Egypt's next leaders, preserve the revolution's democratic direction, and prevent the sort of stagnation that could foster Islamist ascendance. This effort entails investing heavily and quickly in the new government's success by maintaining current aid levels while increasing engagement between U.S. and Egyptian NGOs on electoral, governance, and civil-society issues. Washington should also encourage Egypt to reinvigorate its waning regional role through stabilization efforts in Sudan, Libya, and Gaza. By improving Cairo's standing at home and abroad, the United States can help ensure that Egypt's democratic experiment succeeds.

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David Schenker is the Aufzien fellow and director of the Program on Arab Politics at The Washington Institute. Previously, he served in the Office of the Secretary of Defense as Levant country director, the Pentagon's top policy aide on the Arab countries of the Levant; in that capacity he was responsible for advising the secretary and other senior Pentagon leadership on the military and political affairs of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and the Palestinian territories.

Awarded the Office of the Secretary of Defense Medal for Exceptional Civilian Service in 2005, he is a highly regarded media commentator and publishes regularly in prominent scholarly journals and newspapers such as the Wall Street Journal, the Los Angeles Times, the Weekly Standard, and the New Republic.

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