

Winter or Spring: Islamists, the Military, and Post-Revolution Politics in Egypt

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Articles & Testimony

The following is an excerpt from an article that appeared in *Middle East Insights* (vol. 3, no. 3). To read the full article, download the PDF.

The so-called "Arab Spring" has forever changed the face of the Middle East, and it's not finished. While the revolts that toppled longtime autocrats in Tunisia and Libya were remarkable accomplishments, these states are of little strategic interest to the United States. Unlike Libya and Tunisia, what transpires in Syria -- an ally of Iran that possesses a substantial chemical weapons stockpile -- could have significant implications for Washington. But Syria remains a work in progress. To date, the most important development in the region for the United States has been the fall of Egypt's longtime president Hosni Mubarak.

Since 1977, Egypt has been a strategic partner of the United States -- providing essential political support to U.S. policies in the Middle East -- and an important peace partner of Israel in a hostile region. The fall of Mubarak heralds a change in the regional strategic architecture that had been in place since 1979. For decades, the regional balance of power pitted U.S.-oriented Egypt, Turkey, and Israel against anti-Western, terrorist-supporting regimes in Iraq and Iran. While the structure had changed slightly before February 2011 -- Iraq dropping off the "adversaries" list in 2003 about the same time that Turkey under Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) moved out of the pro-West camp -- Egypt remained a key friend to the United States. With the tectonic political and social shifts in post-Mubarak Egypt, however, it is unclear how long this friendship will continue, and what U.S.- Egyptian bilateral relations will look like going forward... ❖

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