

Mubarak's Role and Mideast Peace

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Jan 31, 2011

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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David Makovsky is the Ziegler distinguished fellow at The Washington Institute and director of the Koret Project on Arab-Israel Relations.

Articles & Testimony

The New York Times convened an online panel of four Middle East experts to discuss what the crisis in Egypt means for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

The New York Times convened an online panel of four Middle East experts to discuss the implications of the crisis in Egypt for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The following is a contribution by Washington Institute Ziegler distinguished fellow David Makovsky, director of the Institute's [Project on the Middle East Peace Process](#) (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateI02.php?SID=16&newActiveSubNav=Project%20on%20the%20Middle%20East%20Peace%20Process&activeSubNavLink=templateI02.php%3FSID%3D16&newActiveNav=researchPrograms>). Read (<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2011/01/31/mubaraks-role-and-mideast-peace/two-scenarios-for-israelis-and-palestinians>) the entire discussion on the New York Times website.

Two Scenarios

Although there are too many variables in the very fluid Egyptian upheaval to predict its consequences on the Israeli-Palestinian arena with any degree of certainty, there are two scenarios worth pondering.

Scenario One: The transition in Egypt is headed by the newly appointed vice president and representative of the military, Gen. Omar Suleiman. General Suleiman and the military are credited for not firing on protesters and for adroitly managing Hosni Mubarak's exit. The military ensures a transition that brings in constructive forces of Egyptian civil society and perhaps plays a role as a last-ditch guarantor. Moreover, since General Suleiman is respected by Israelis and the Palestinians for being the Egyptian point-man on a myriad of issues ranging from peace to Hamas, this Suleiman period reduces jitters on all sides.

Scenario Two: What starts as a Berlin revolution of 1989 morphs into a Tehran revolution of 1979. In this scenario, the Muslim Brotherhood no longer remains low profile and seeks to dictate the course of events in Egypt. The Brotherhood eschews the no-violence rule it maintained amid pressure from the Egyptian security state. Hamas, which was formed as the Gaza branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, feels emboldened. The Palestinian Authority fears this scenario certainly no less than Israel. In this context, Egypt no longer seeks to interdict weapons coming from the Sinai to Gaza, but rather foments radicalism. Israeli military planners begin re-assessing prospects of a potential war, worrying about Islamic encirclement: Hezbollah from the north (Lebanon), Hamas from the west (Gaza) and the Muslim Brotherhood from the south (Sinai).

The first scenario requires Israelis and Palestinians to make progress to avoid the very radicalization that emerges from pragmatists like Mahmoud Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority, being discredited for a lack of results. The second scenario will mean hunkering down, and will invariably lead to an Israeli-Islamist confrontation. ❖

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