

Political Islam and Regime Survival in Egypt

Jan 31, 2006



In-Depth Reports

The year 2005 may mark a turning point in Egyptian history. For the first time in decades, and after much internal pressure, the regime seemed to acknowledge the need for political reform. The year culminated in presidential and parliamentary elections characterized by unprecedented openness, at least on the surface. Although the elections themselves were marred by glaring irregularities and low voter turnout, their prelude and aftermath gave new momentum to Egyptian political life.

What are the long-term implications of these events? Will they in fact provide impetus toward constitutional reform in Egypt? In this new Washington Institute Policy Focus, Khairi Abaza examines these questions in detail, assessing the prospects for substantive change in Cairo. Drawing on his past service with one of Egypt's principal opposition parties, he offers unique insight into the key questions facing the Mubarak regime, including the seeming revival of Islamism and religion within Egyptian politics and the potentially altered roles of both the Muslim Brotherhood and the liberal opposition in light of the former's electoral gains. Given entrenched Egyptian skepticism about American intentions in the region, such analysis is essential to determining Washington's best means of encouraging deeper reform.

- 30 pages

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