

Egypt's New Realism: Challenges Under Sisi

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When Abdul Fattah al-Sisi became president in 2014, Egyptians were clamoring for stability after the chaos of the post-Arab Spring years and the failed leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood government. Emblematic of this stability, Sisi was at one point so highly regarded that his face adorned chocolate bars. Although he remains popular four years later, Sisi can no longer rest on prior achievements and promises of financial improvement. Grappling with a moribund economy, domestic unrest, jihadist threats, and foreign policy challenges, he will need even stronger support as he implements an austerity plan approved by the IMF in November 2016.

In this new study, Barak Barfi methodically sets the leadership of President Sisi in the context of his military predecessors Gamal Abdul Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak. He then examines trends in the country such as the growing role of the military, the need for reductions in subsidies, and the looming water crisis posed by the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. The U.S. role, as well, is subject to a much-needed assessment. Among the limited ways Washington can influence Cairo, he argues, is by tying increased aid to the enactment of essential economic reforms.

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