



Mubarak's Legacy

The sight of the former president of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, lying in a hospital bed in a courtroom cage reminds me of the saying, "how the mighty have fallen." It could also be said of the United States, "How the mightiest, richest, most advanced capitalist nation in the history of the world has fallen into a bumbling, dysfunctional confused, debt-ridden state run by the most corrupt government in its history." In the case of Mubarak, it was the Egyptian people who brought the dictator down. In the case of the United States, it was the American people, who put their trust and faith in the hands of anti-constitutional politicians, who brought America down. To put it bluntly: treason is the reason.



For 30 years Mubarak was America's best friend in the Middle East. He was the recipient of valuable U.S. military aid, and he maintained Egypt's peace treaty with Israel to the letter. For Israel, Egypt meant stability on its southern border. But for the Egyptian people it meant an authoritarian regime with little political freedom. Mubarak was not like Saddam Hussein of Iraq — he didn't commit the kind of atrocities against his own people that Saddam was known for. Nor were Mubarak's sons the kind of pathological sadists that Saddam's were.

Yet, the Egyptian people, suffering from the ills of a stagnant economy, high unemployment, and a lack of true freedom of expression and political choice, decided to rebel and force Mubarak to resign. He had offered to make reforms, but they weren't good enough. To them Mubarak symbolized everything they hated about the system. They wanted change they could believe in, and whether or not they will get it is still up in the air.

Meanwhile, we must not forget that Mubarak was good for American interests: the need for stability, repression of Islamic extremism, and peaceful relations with Israel. And considering how the Egyptian economy has gotten worse since this great uprising of the people, I imagine that there are many Egyptians who yearn for the good old days of Mubarak's stability. But you can't go back. That's the nature of history. It moves on for better or for worse, and at this moment we don't know which way it will go in Egypt.

It was Mubarak who inherited the legacy of his great, lamented predecessor, Anwar al-Sadat, who appointed Mubarak Vice President in 1975. Mubarak had made his way up the political ladder by his long career in the Egyptian Air Force. He gained his commission as a pilot in 1950, and from 1959 to 1961 underwent further training in the Soviet Union when Nasser's Egypt was closely allied with communist Russia.

In September 1970, when Abdul Nasser died of a heart attack, Anwar al-Sadat became President. He launched the Yom Kippur war in an attempt to retrieve the Sinai Peninsula from the Israelis, but lost.



Written by [Sam Blumenfeld](#) on August 11, 2011

After much reflection, Sadat made a remarkably daring decision. He would go to Israel himself, which no Arab leader had ever done, address the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset, and offer a peace treaty if Israel would return the Sinai to Egypt. The Israeli Prime Minister, hard-liner Menachem Begin, accepted the deal. During his visit, Sadat said that he hoped “we can keep the momentum in Geneva, and may God guide the steps of Premier Begin and Knesset, because there is a great need for hard and drastic decision.”

Thus the Egypt-Israel peace treaty became a reality. But the extremist jihadists in Egypt would never forgive Sadat for making peace with the Israelis. Nevertheless, in his eleven years as president Sadat changed Egypt’s direction, departing from some of the socialist economic and political policies of Nasserism by re-instituting the multi-party system, and launching Intifah economics, an “open door” policy, which eased government controls and encouraged private investment.

But the benign reign of Sadat’s presidency came to a sudden and tragic end when he was assassinated in 1981. Mubarak, who was Vice President, became President of Egypt. From that moment on Mubarak ruled Egypt with an iron hand, knowing full well that he too was the target of assassination by the radical Islamists and some members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Indeed, according to the BBC, Mubarak has survived six assassination attempts. There was even an attempt in June 1995 to use poison gas to kill him while he was at a conference in Ethiopia. He was also injured by a knife-wielding assailant in Port Said in September 1999. Thus he had good reason to put as many of these potential assassins behind bars as he could find.

In 2004, in an attempt to improve the economy, Mubarak appointed Ahmed Nazif as the new Prime Minister. The appointment was viewed with optimism. Economic conditions started to improve. The Egyptian stock market had the greatest percentage increase of all emerging markets in the fiscal year 2004-2005. However, unemployment persisted, and Mubarak was criticized by Egyptian socialists for favoring big business and privatization by selling shares in government owned companies.

Just as in the U.S., socialists in Egypt hate private enterprise as much as their American counterparts. We imagine that socialist opposition to Mubarak’s economic policies also helped stir up the popular revolution against him.

So now what will they do with Mubarak now that they have him in a cage? Nasser died of a heart attack. Sadat was killed by assassination. Will Mubarak be executed for crimes against the Egyptian people? We shall soon find out. Meanwhile, not a word from the socialist in the White House.



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