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Education reform in Egypt: reinforcement & resistance

Heather K. Browne
Northeastern University

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EDUCATION REFORM IN EGYPT: REINFORCEMENT & RESISTANCE

A dissertation presented

by

Heather K Browne

to

The Department of Political Science

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the field of

Public and International Affairs

Northeastern University

Boston, Massachusetts

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This dissertation is dedicated to two of my favorite Egyptians,

NOUREEN AND RYAN

I have learned this, at least, by my experiment; that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. Henry David Thoreau

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

The education system in Egypt is widely regarded as corrupt and ineffective, and calls for drastic reform are long-standing. Education reform has taken on a heightened importance due to the political developments that began in 2011. This study attempts to contribute to an understanding of the political, social and economic challenges that need to be overcome in order for education to better promote an environment for social justice and equitable economic growth as Egyptians work towards establishing a free, stable and prosperous society. There are many studies written about education reform in Egypt, but this study is unique in the way it utilizes all three strands of the neo-institutionalist approach: the historical, rational and cultural.

The study analyzed the role of education reform in the Egyptian state from Muhammad Ali until Mubarak, within the context of a state-society framework. The central argument is that elite and mass resistance to education reform was due principally to a desire to maintain the *status quo*. Each did so for their own reasons. The ruling elite wanted to maintain economic and political privileges and prevent the masses from exercising self-determination, whereas the masses were suspicious of changes that might increase state power and make greater demands upon their limited resources. Many were also suspicious of changes that would “contaminate” their culture with “Western” values that had historically been promoted by the elite.

The underlying purpose of the study is to show how education reform has prevented liberalization of the political system. Since the 19th century, Egyptian leaders have been largely unsuccessful in maintaining legitimacy. Though Egypt saw many different rulers and political changes during this time period, one notable feature is continuous: the lack of education reforms that would promote freedom and engagement. Despite nearly a century of criticism for its system

being overly centralized and its curriculum being insufficiently critical, the leaders have not made any significant progress towards alleviating these problems. Reforms supported by the elite tend to be superficial reforms that bolster their authority with minimal risk to a change in the *status quo*.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	5
Acknowledgements	7
Table of Contents	10
List of Tables	11
Introduction	12
Chapter 1 Background to the Problem	14
Chapter 2 Conceptual Underpinnings for the Study	39
Chapter 3 Legitimacy and the Authoritarian Dilemma	68
Chapter 4 A Historical Analysis of Education Reform in Egypt from Mohammad Ali to Mubarak	112
Chapter 5 Education Reform for Stability or Development?	145
Chapter 6 Egypt after Mubarak	168
Conclusion	176
Bibliography	182

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1	Rate of Crimes Reported per 100,000 people	94
Table 3.2	Statistics Related to Private and Public Corruption	95
Table 4.1	Egypt's Three Track System	119
Table 5.1	Unemployment Rate by Educational Level	155
Table 5.2	Impediments to Ministry Influence on School and Classroom Practice	158

INTRODUCTION

The events of January and February 2011 brought into clear relief the Mubarak regime's preoccupation with self-preservation. While hundreds of thousands of Egyptians peacefully protested in the streets, the state security apparatus unleashed criminals to create chaos and sow fear among the protesters and the millions of others who believed the regime's argument that the protest would destroy the country and lead it into anarchy.¹ The regime quickly blamed the protestors despite substantial evidence that the violence was being perpetrated by members of the ruling party and the state security apparatus. When that deception did not work, the government portrayed the protesters as a small group of traitors trained and funded by foreign agents. The claims being made on state TV became so incongruous with reality that prominent members of the state media defected in protest (Shenker 2011).

But this incongruity between the rhetoric of the regime and the reality of its practices is not a new story. In every area of policy, Mubarak's regime spoke of reform and improving the lives of average Egyptians. But in reality, many, if not most, reforms were self-serving. One area in which this is abundantly clear is education reform. The regime's rhetoric sounded progressive, and some superficial reforms were successfully implemented, but the reality was that Egypt's education system is still antiquated and reinforces divisions within society. This work traces the incongruity between the rhetoric and reality of education reform in Egypt since the turn of the previous century, with a special emphasis on the reforms enacted during the Mubarak regime,

¹ During the early days of protests in Tahrir Square, there were widespread reports of protesters capturing undercover policemen who had been causing problems. In addition, street thugs were allegedly hired by prominent members of the ruling party to go into Tahrir with weapons and create further chaos. The police force was ordered off the streets, leading to a general sense of lawlessness that was exacerbated by a number of jail breaks. There is also evidence that these jail breaks were the work of undercover state security agents, acting on orders from the Minister of Interior. See Abouzeid 2011 for details about these allegations and the public prosecutor's investigation.

and argues that the primary goal of education reform was maintaining the stability of the regime, not development of the capabilities of the Egyptian people.

Throughout nearly all of its history, Egypt's political system has been characterized by authoritarian regimes that pursued their interests at the expense of popular political expression. Those interests have varied, but one factor has consistently been present: the use of education to reinforce elite interests. In some cases, education reform brought about positive results for the masses, but this did not necessarily mean that the elite were taking the masses' preferences into account or that the masses appreciated the effort. It is argued that successes have been a result of convergence of elite and mass interests, and that a major reason for the failure of education reform has been resistance from both the elite and the masses.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

“The state must realize that education is as necessary to life as food and drink.”²

Taha Hussein, Egyptian intellectual and Minister of Knowledge, 1950 – 1952

Education and Modernization

Mass education has been described as a tool to indoctrinate and subordinate the masses (Barber 1992, 82). Even Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau³ and John Stuart Mill conceived of education as a way to produce citizens who know their place in society, put the common good first and make appropriate choices (Hirschmann 2008). Progressive philosophers like John Dewey would agree that education should produce citizens that put the common good ahead of the good of a minority, but Dewey would reject as elitist Locke’s suggestion that only certain individuals had the intellectual or moral capacity to fully participate in a democratic society. For Dewey, every human has the ability to think “scientifically” if the social conditions in which they develop are conducive to “reflective intelligence” (Whipple 2004, 5). Horace Mann (1867), a leading American educational reformer in the 19th century argued that universal public education was essential for combatting

² This is considered Taha Hussein’s motto. It comes from his 1938 work *The Future of Culture in Egypt*.

³ It should be noted that this is just one interpretation of the Enlightenment thinkers’ views on education. Barber interprets Rousseau in a somewhat more progressive way. Everyone is born equal, but in this naturally equal state people are free in the absolute sense, but not in the sense of being citizens capable of free choice. Education paradoxically “force[s] students to be free” by instilling in them the values to obey laws *that they make themselves* [emphasis in the original] (Barber 1992, 210). “This is perhaps what the philosopher Rousseau meant when he described freedom as obedience to a law we prescribe to ourselves, thus reminding us of the intimacy of rights and responsibilities, of freedom and limits, of liberation and self-government” (Barber 1992, 264).

selfishness and ignorance and producing a virtuous, compassionate, tolerant and conscientious self-governing citizenry.

Dewey's philosophy echoed the sentiments of America's founding fathers and is considered a cornerstone of progressive education policy by many scholars of modern education and political systems. Paulo Freire is perhaps the best known expert on progressive education in the 20th century. Freire (2006, 72) adamantly rejected traditional methods of education, which he referred to as "banking" methods because they view students as repositories for information deemed useful by the powerful. This type of approach dehumanizes students and ultimately leads to an oppressed society (Freire 2006, 48). For Freire, education is an essential tool in the process of liberation. Fraser (1997) sums up Freire's philosophy beautifully:

It is not enough for democratic schools to successfully transmit a static culture to all students, or to give all students the skills needed for successful future employment. A democratic education enterprise in Freire's vision must always be in the business of preparing a new generation to reshape the culture, economy, and polity of the society in ways which build on the best which every citizen has to offer and which constantly expand the very notion of democracy itself. (Fraser 1997, 62-63)

An education system which fails to provide this atmosphere cannot be described as democratic or progressive. Likewise, a society which lacks this sort of educational system would also fail to qualify as a democratic or progressive society.

In non-democratic political systems like the Egyptian state, there is widespread acceptance that education is a way to ensure a complacent and stable populace. Locke's suggestion that the masses were incapable of becoming full active participants in the social

contract but could, through education, become “sufficiently rational to know to follow their leaders” (Hirschmann 2008, 87) seems more in line with the philosophy of Egypt’s elite than with the liberal philosophy with which he is typically associated. For at least the last century, political elites in charge of education reform in Egypt have used education reform to their advantage in two ways: to gain public support and to preserve their own power. Education reform has been viewed from the top down, and with generally short-term goals. Reform-minded politicians asked: What do we (the elite) think Egyptian students need? How can public education be used to promote the immediate goals of the Egyptian state? The result was superficial reform that left festering problems, or that was resisted by overworked teachers, stressed students and skeptical parents. Despite decades of effort, little was accomplished aside from increasing primary school enrollment and increasing basic literacy rates.

Mubarak’s government was internationally acclaimed for its achievements in expanding access to education. Hundreds of new school buildings were built all over the country. Literacy rates dropped significantly, with particularly notable improvement in female literacy rates. Enrollment rates in primary school climbed and Egypt appeared to be on track towards meeting its Millennium Development Goal [MDG] for universal access to primary education. However these successes should be tempered with some criticism. According to the United Nations Population Fund, progress in education was merely acceptable, with significant levels of inequality between men and women, urban and rural areas and Upper and Lower Egypt. Moreover, based on the 2008 Egypt Human Development Report, Egypt was judged as unlikely to meet its goal for universal access to education by 2015 (United Nations Population Fund n.d.). While many new school buildings were built, serious problems with safety, location, overcrowding, inappropriate layout and outdated design remained largely unaddressed, even

though these problems were pointed out decades earlier (Aboul-Kheir 1967). While basic literacy grew, there was still a worryingly high level of illiteracy among older rural women and functional illiteracy among those who were officially literate.⁴ Though enrollment in primary school was officially nearly 100% in many governorates,⁵ there were serious issues with student absenteeism and even more serious issues with teachers not teaching.

Although mass education has the potential of being a social equalizer, it has drastically failed to meet this potential in Egypt. As the income gap between rich and poor grew during Mubarak's rule, so did the education gap. The elite always managed to make sure their children received a better education than the masses; better in terms of quantity and quality, and better in terms of securing employment after graduation (World Bank 2007). It should be noted, however, that nearly all private schools suffer from the same pedagogical and philosophical maladies that affect public schools, and students often graduate with equally poor critical thinking ability.⁶ Students from both systems suffer from the poor planning and an overemphasis on tertiary education that began in the 1950s and led to a wide disparity between labor demand and supply. Education Plans were clearly biased towards formal, diploma-driven education which was an inappropriate model with questionable goals (Murray 1992). Increasing cognitive capacity was not as important as ensuring the output of sufficient numbers of certified citizens, and the curriculum lead to what Dore (1976) calls "Diploma Disease".⁷

⁴ Basic literacy refers to the ability to read and write at a very low level. A person with basic literacy can read and write but will generally struggle with day to day tasks. Functional literacy refers to the ability to read and write at a level that allows one to perform everyday tasks without difficulty. See UNESCO's 2004 position paper entitled "The Plurality of Literacy and its Implications for Policies and Programmes" for a more nuanced explanation of literacy.

⁵ Governorate is a term used regularly in the Middle East to refer to administrative divisions of the country under the direction of a governor. It is similar to the terms province and state used elsewhere.

⁶ Of course, there are a few notable exceptions, but these schools are extremely expensive and highly selective, making them inaccessible for all but a very small elite cadre of Egyptian families.

⁷ It is unclear whether this phenomenon is a cause for the overemphasis on tertiary education or a result of this overemphasis. Regardless of the direction of causality, it is important to note that this phenomenon does lead to a great deal of social resistance to any reforms that would impede mass access to higher education. It also contributes

“Diploma Disease” manifests itself in an exaggerated demand for expert credentials giving inflated value to certain types of education. It generally occurs when newly independent states emphasize a need for quickly producing officially credentialed local professionals to replace foreign experts. The result is a flood of credentials awarded without ensuring sufficient training in important skills like problem solving, critical thinking and communication (Dore 1976). Despite an excess of officially certified but woefully under-qualified Egyptians, this problem does not seem to have been addressed. In fact recent one study of national curricula in math and reading found that the level of cognitive challenge in Egypt’s math curriculum actually drops between 5th and 6th grade (Benavot 2011, 30). Egyptian exams are based on the ability to memorize, regardless of whether the subject is geometry or literature.

An overabundance of university graduates lacking the skills and knowledge needed in today’s market has exacerbated an already chronic unemployment and underemployment problem (Galal 2002, UNDP 2002). Educated but unemployed youth contribute to instability (Huntington 1968, Lipset 1985). This situation was considered an issue of national security by both the Egyptian government as well as foreign governments (Weaver 1999). A book published by the semi-official Rose el Youssef Press celebrating the achievements of President Mubarak in the area of education discussed the need to distance certification from employment and reflected an awareness of how the problems with higher education were affecting stability (*Mubarak and Education* 1992). Egypt’s foreign allies were also concerned with the state of Egypt’s education system and emphasized the importance of education reform for improving global security. In a speech to the American think-tank, the Heritage Foundation, then U.S. Secretary of State Colin

to employment problems since too many graduates find themselves woefully underprepared for challenging careers in their chosen fields.

Powell emphasized the importance of education in overcoming the many challenges faced by Middle Eastern states, in particular the threat posed by terrorism (Powell 2002).

Egypt's leaders recognized that education has the ability to improve the quality of life for their countrymen, and that fixing the education system was a matter of national security. They invested heavily in increasing the scope of primary education enrollment and closing the gender gap in illiteracy. Despite their efforts, little changed. This is largely because the type of education that they expanded does not engage students and teach them to contribute to their society. Instead, it sustains a neopatriarchal culture (Sharabi 1988) by teaching them to accept the *status quo*, to avoid questioning authority and to depend on the state as father-figure.⁸ Not only did the educational system largely maintain the *status quo*, it failed to engage Egyptian teachers, parents and children in the learning process. This situation reflected the reality of the political system as well. Elites were largely unwilling to give up their privileged status, and thus the masses were suspicious of any changes that were ostensibly in their best interest.

The Mubarak regime's failure to achieve real change in education reform led to more people educated poorly. Now that Mubarak has been forced out of power, Egyptian reformers have an opportunity to effect real change in their society.⁹ To do this, they have a huge challenge ahead to create what Manning Marable called "a political vision of emancipation" (Fraser 1997, 50). For this vision to develop, Egyptians must eradicate the sources of resistance to education reform which come from a fundamental fear of change which can be conscious or subconscious. The elite need to recognize that their ability to maintain the *status quo* is limited and put the

⁸ Any feelings that this cultural paradigm had been abandoned by the young, "reform-minded" members of the regime were quickly removed by the tone of Mubarak's final speeches, written by his own son Gamal, calling upon his "sons and daughters," advising them to return home and not listen to the 'foreign elements' trying to push their subversive agendas (Mubarak 2011).

⁹ To be sure, there is no guarantee that the new government and constitution will be democratic, but there has been a general awakening of civic pride and many have stated that it is the first time they feel this way about their country.

interests of the country ahead of their own. The masses need to overcome their fear of challenging the hegemonic political culture that allowed the elite to act with virtual impunity and manipulate the system to their economic and political advantage. It seems that many Egyptians have overcome some of their apathy and fear and are willing to risk change, but it is still too soon to tell if this movement will continue and if it will spill over into the area of education reform. This new post-Mubarak scenario has generated more questions than it has answered. The most significant problems that need to be resolved are why education reform in Egypt has been so ineffective despite decades of planning and effort and what the new leaders can do to make education reform more effective.

Relevance of the Problem

Education reform is a contentious topic of public debate. Some educators feel strongly that politicians are unqualified to discuss pedagogy and thus have no place interfering in educational methods or content. However, education is clearly a political issue. In fact, it is hard to imagine a more inherently political subject than education reform. Public education has become one of the defining features of the modern state (Hobsbawm 1983). Education is changed by the political system and at the same time can change the political system. If we accept Lasswell's (1936) famous definition that politics is 'who gets what, when and how', then politics entails the methods and processes by which public goods and resources are divided. And education directly affects and is affected by the *distribution of public goods and resources* (i.e. politics), and education is what gives people the ability to participate in the production and *distribution of those goods and resources* (Brock-Utne 2000).

Not only is education constituted by and constitutive of struggles over the distribution of symbolic and natural resources, but education implies and confers structural and ideological power used to control the means of producing, reproducing, consuming and accumulating symbolic and material resources (Ginsberg 2001, ix).

Education has the potential to change the future of a society, and is arguably one of the most political areas of policy-making. It can be argued that there is no other policy issue that has such significant repercussions for a country's development. Education is at the heart of social, economic and political reform and the policy decisions made by a country's leaders affect its ability to promote social and economic justice and civic engagement. "Mass education is by definition socialization within, and on behalf of, a particular political order" (Kaplan 2006, xv). In short, education reform is essential to a successful transition to democracy.

Beyond the question of distributing public goods, education is also a vital matter to state survival. State education ministries are not only concerned with distributing the benefits of educational wealth, but also educating, if not indoctrinating, future citizens who will be loyal to the *status quo*. "Men and women must be socialized into a uniform and shared way of life and belief-system" (Smith 1987, 136) and the education system offers the most effective means of achieving this socialization.

Progressive educational philosophy sees education as having a vital role in a tolerant, stable and successful society (Dewey 1916; Barber 1992). A progressive education encourages students to think critically, solve problems creatively and fully engage with the learning process. For a society that is truly committed to discarding authoritarianism and embracing democracy, education is perhaps the most vital factor in ensuring its consolidation. "The more educated are

more likely to embrace democracy, *even when many other factors are controlled for* [emphasis added]” (Diamond 1999, 199). Liberal education can help deepen political institutionalization, which is a necessary factor of consolidation. By practicing democracy in the classroom, students learn the values and habits that instill a general sense of trust and engender a civil society where political conflict can be dealt with in a non-violent manner (Heslep 1989). In short, “education makes citizens [and] only citizens can forge freedom. ... Education teaches them the liberty that makes self-government possible” (Barber 1992, 265).

Unfortunately, the pressures of industrialization and globalization have pushed the modern education system to emphasize maintenance of state security over the democratic emphasis on civility and justice (Barber 1992; Spring 2006). In what Spring calls an educational security-state, national economic and military needs are prioritized. Strict control of the textbooks and teachers and integration of patriotic activities are also features of the educational security state. “As national school systems became increasingly dedicated to serving economic interests, their civic education policies were increasingly tied to nationalism and social control” (Spring 2006, 228). Education was one of the elite’s most powerful tools for maintaining legitimacy and ensuring its own survival.

This goal of the education security state was especially important for post-colonial societies as the consolidation of loyalty was crucial to their ability to maintain power. Opposition to the state had to be “physically and symbolically garroted, lest the elite [lose] its new power” (Doob 1964). The institutionalization of national education provides an ideal environment in which leaders can influence and gain the loyalty of the most malleable members of society: the youth. One way that the elite use education to enhance their legitimacy is by ensuring that the curriculum contains a heavy dose of ‘tradition’ pointing to them as the legitimate leaders of the

state. Traditions are not a static reality towards which societies yearn to return. Rather, traditions are the ideas, the values and the customs that are easily adapted to the purposes of societal leaders. If an appropriate tradition does not exist, it is also just as possible to invent a new tradition. States are constantly attempting to manage a balance between modernization and tradition to add to their legitimacy.

Just because a state purports to be working towards a modern-looking educational system, this does not mean that the state wholeheartedly supports the entire modernization paradigm. In fact, more often than not, they fabricate a false dichotomy between liberalism and excellence and imply that too much freedom will lead to mediocrity (Barber 1992, 265) or instability (Huntington and Nelson 1976). In the early to mid-twentieth century, the Egyptian state had been busy creating a pseudo-modern state education system by replacing traditional oral teaching methods with Western style classrooms with desks and blackboards, by enthusiastically adopting the then-recommended central-planning platform and by adding math, science and history to the educational canon which had formerly been focused mostly on reading and memorizing religious texts.

In the second half of the twentieth century the Egyptian state continued to “modernize” its education system by welcoming donations of modern technology and developing a standardized school building that was built throughout the country. What was noticeably lacking in these efforts was a commitment to modern education in the progressive, liberal sense, and in fact a perceptible opposition to such reforms. As one prominent Egyptian academic wrote: “despite glowing statements about democracy and openness, schools in Egypt are unfortunately quite undemocratic and patriarchal. Violations of human rights, obscurantism, despotic approach of teachers towards students are all present” (Makram Ebeid 2006, n.p.). Instead of promoting

democracy, the Egyptian state has used a pseudo-modern form of mass-education to promote their (sometimes invented) traditions, or more frankly, to secure control of society.

There is no doubt that the ruling classes from Mohammad Ali to the British, from Nasser to Mubarak, have used education to groom military officers and civil servants to build a strong state, and whose legitimacy was inevitably bound up with some sort of tradition. They “combined Islamic traditions, Euroamerican [sic] influences, and Arab nationalism” and what resulted was a traditional authoritarian system in which progressive ideas had no relevance (Spring 2006, 161-162). Education’s role was to support nationalism and economic and military strength. Religious education was given a place of priority since it would reinforce a unified code of behavior that would promote social control (Cook 2000).

By most measures, Egypt qualifies as an educational security state with a pseudo-modern education system. Analysis of reforms enacted over the last few decades clearly shows that Egypt’s leaders were not interested in a truly modern educational system that empowers citizens and cultivates civic engagement. This would have conflicted with their goal of maintaining the *status quo* because it would delegitimize the claim – one used by autocrats for centuries – that their monopoly over power was necessary due to the incompetence of the masses. Likewise, an empowered or engaged populace would be dangerous to the stability of the regime. Dewey (1937, 461) once argued that “the countries in which autocratic government prevails are just those in which there is least public spirit and the greatest indifference” and a simple way to produce this indifference is by preventing or discouraging participation. A less straightforward method is grooming a deferential and detached society via the educational system.

According to Diamond (1999, 280), the best way to describe the *status quo* of Egypt’s political system was a “pseudo-democracy”, a state with the minimal characteristics of

democracy that can sometimes obscure the true authoritarian nature of the regime. Egypt has been on the extreme end of the spectrum, due to the presence of an entrenched ruling party which, before its demise, made “extensive use of coercion, patronage, media control and other features to deny formally legal opposition parties a fair and authentic chance to compete for power” (Diamond 1999, 15). Egypt has only developed the most minimal features of democracy such as the legalization of opposition parties and tolerance of civil society. Though one could see these as the groundwork for future democratic development, the existence of a foundation for democracy does not guarantee movement towards democratic consolidation. In fact, in Egypt it seems that these factors did not generate genuine political development, but rather were tactics employed by a rapidly failing regime to attempt to boost internal and external legitimacy.

Egyptian leaders expressed a desire to change Egyptian society by increasing access to education. Though an admirable goal and one of the MDGs, educational expansion is not sufficient, since elites will generally manage to make sure their children still get more education than the masses. Education reform can be framed in a way that transforms political and social reality, or it can simply replicate, reinforce and give legitimacy to existing structures. (Ginsberg 2001, ix) The factor that allows education to transform society is broader access to education that promotes civic responsibility and civic engagement. In other words, social change can occur if the politics of education mandates increased quality, not simply increased quantity (Mare 1981; UNESCO 2004; UNICEF 2010). The type of education that promotes civic responsibility and engagement is civic education. “Civic education requires not only formal schooling but public discussion, deliberation, debate, controversy, the ready availability of reliable information, and other institutions of a free society” (Dahl 2000, 79).

Unfortunately, that type of education is not being offered to most Egyptians. There is a serious disjunction between what Egyptian students learn and the reality they face as they grow up. Students who are fortunate enough to graduate often do so ill-prepared intellectually and practically for the future that awaits them. They are often undertrained or over-qualified for the few jobs available. The educational system in Egypt is a traditional system common to the Arab world. It is a formal, authoritarian style system based largely on rote learning and memorization of facts (Spring 2006, 162). Knowledge is bestowed upon students by their teachers and students are expected to repeat those facts exactly as they were presented. Any deviation from the model answer is penalized in exams.¹⁰ This type of education, devoid of critical thinking and analysis, generally leads to unengaged students. Unengaged students generally make unengaged citizens. On the whole, the educational system is producing students who are woefully unprepared to compete in the “real world”.

After its founding in 1945, the Arab League began a program of education expansion. Education was a central facet of economic plans and Muslim citizens were reminded that it was their religious duty to seek knowledge¹¹ and all citizens were reminded of their duty as Arabs to become educated in order to support the cause of Arab nationalism (Spring 2006, 163). And yet, despite the revolutionary fervor, the Arab world still lags far behind the rest of the world in many education-related measures such as number of internet users, rates of scientific papers published and number of books translated each year (El Din 2003). Such statistics provide a telling portrait of the quality of the education systems in the Arab world. The authors of the 2002 Arab Human

¹⁰ Even essays are memorized and many students have been penalized for incorrectly reproducing the teacher’s “model essay”.

¹¹ There are numerous *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) that invoke the duty to seek knowledge. One that is often cited is from *Sunan Al Tirmidhi’s* (Al Tirmidhi’s collection of *hadith*) and it is translated as “the seeking of knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim.”

Development Report wrote, “Poor quality has become the Achilles heel of education in the Arab world, a flaw that undermines its quantitative achievements” (UNDP 2002, 54).

But even when one considers the quantitative data, there are a number of worrisome trends. A UNESCO report prepared for an AMIDEAST conference in 2002 found that the Arab world has the lowest average enrollment for college-age women (Wheeler 2002). Instead of reducing poverty and inequality, education has been serving to reinforce these patterns in society. A World Bank report in 2008 noted that despite constitutional guarantees for universal access to education, Arab states still have relatively low net enrollment rates and high illiteracy rates (Zaher 2010). While enrollment rates have increased overall, patterns of inequality between urban and rural and poor and non-poor have not changed (World Bank 2008, 26). Moreover, the standard deviation for average years of schooling for the population aged 15 and over increased from 3.42 in 1975 to 5.24 in 2000 (World Bank 2008, 25).

Regrettably, Arab intellectuals calling for reform of the educational system complain that they face a populace that is loath to self-criticize and consumed by visions of the past glory of the Muslim civilization (El Din 2003). Although these intellectuals have been described as their own toughest critics, there are still many intellectuals who are revered as clerics and professors who expect their students to accept their teaching as infallible. Moreover, calls for a liberal education system are viewed with great suspicion in many circles.

In Egypt, conspiracy theories abound (Heggy 2003), and suggestions for reform are taken by many educators, as well as parents, as attempts at cultural imperialism or subversion (Sayed 2006, 2010). Egyptian officials and intellectuals who support United States Agency for International Development [USAID] suggestions for, or contributions to, the reform of the educational system have been charged by the media with towing the American line, and

American politicians or technocrats who call for modernization of the curriculum and methodology in Egypt are charged with attempting to “purge the Egyptian school curricula of its Islamic flavor” in order to promote Western values (El Din 2003). Because of this resistance, reforms that have great potential for creating meaningful improvement to Egypt’s educational system have been largely disregarded in favor of more noticeable programs that emphasize quantity over quality. Moreover, there is a clear tendency to favor education that promotes market needs over people’s needs (Zaalouk 2004, 181).

According to one author, the Arab world needs “an education in modernity” (Latif, 26). By this, the author did not mean learning how to Westernize, a term many equate with modernization, but rather how to relate better to the realities of the modern world. By failing to educate their citizens in a way that helps them compete globally, the education systems in the region have contributed to the intellectual and emotional isolation of the region. This isolation is “no longer just an academic issue that decides how Arabs fare vis-à-vis other people, but also has political consequences for the region’s links with the rest of the world” (Latif 2003, 26).

This isolation was painfully apparent after the uproar over cartoons critical of Islam which were published by a Danish newspaper in September 2005 (“Muhammeds Ansigt” 2005). Many, if not most, Egyptians had a knee-jerk reaction of indignation, as if Danes should have known better than to do what they did. The entire Danish society was blamed for the actions of a few cartoonists, and calls for boycotts of Danish products and demands for official apologies from the Danish government quickly gained widespread support. Even students at the most prestigious university in Egypt, graduates of some of Egypt’s most reputable schools, could not easily accept the logic that the Danish value for freedom of speech was just as real and vital to Danish identity as Egyptian’s respect for their prophet. Few Egyptians could see that the reality

of their reaction was that Egyptians felt their values were more important than Danish values. The extent of indignation was not only hypocritical, given Egyptian cartoonists' fame for their own lampooning of foreigners, Americans and Israelis in particular, it highlighted that Egyptian students at all levels of society are not being taught to think critically.

The crisis of education, if not reversed, will have dire consequences for Egypt and the rest of the Arab world (UNDP 2002). It is imperative that Arab leaders support the development of liberal educational systems that engage students in critical thinking and emphasize civic engagement, if Arab students are to gain the skills and knowledge needed to compete in the global economy. This is not to say that Arab leaders should focus only on civic engagement and ignore the teaching of practical skills and knowledge. Even the father of civic education, John Dewey, (1915) recognized that to increase students' engagement in education, the curriculum needed to engage them with practice in the skills and knowledge that would be applicable to a future career.

But as recent events in the Middle East have shown, people want to have a more active role in determining their futures. They want access to both economic and political opportunities, not just economic hand-me-downs from the wealthy. Liberal education can tap into these newfound aspirations and instill students with a sense of civic responsibility that can create social and economic dividends for the entire society in the future (Mare 1981). Overcoming resistance to modern education will be in the best interests of the elite and the masses in the long run.

Huntington (1991, 29) calculated that authoritarian governments' days were numbered in today's "increasingly interdependent world". Globalization has greatly increased the speed and penetration of the spread of ideas and the complexity and power of economic ties. Given the

increasingly globalized world in which we live, a state's success depends upon how well its citizens are equipped to deal with the pressures of global exchange and interaction, and how well the state balances its need for legitimacy with responding to citizen demands.

There is a great deal of evidence suggesting that education has a strong potential for providing citizens with the skills they need to succeed in the modern world. But it cannot simply be a pseudo-modern education that reproduces and reinforces the existing social and political system. A modern educational system is one that "broadens man's outlook, enables him to understand the need for norms of tolerance, restrains him from adhering to extremist doctrines, and increases his capacity to make rational electoral choices" (Lipset 1959, 79-80). This type of educational system can bring long-term benefits to the country if it is complemented by a political system in which citizens have the freedom to make their own laws and choose their own leaders, and have developed a sense of responsibility to ensure that these laws and leaders serve the common good. Sustainable stability comes with transferring legitimacy to the system, not the individual leaders, and training responsible, engaged citizens.

Contribution of the Study

There are many studies written about education reform in Egypt, and hundreds of studies about the political situation, but few connect the two issues (Baraka 2008). There are studies about the role of foreign aid in education reform (Sayed 2006; Cochran 2008), the role of religion in education reform (Starrett 1998; Cook 2000), the role of culture in education reform (Sayed 2010; Mehrez 2010), numerous descriptive studies of the condition of Egypt's educational system (Galt 1936; Szyliowicz 1973; Hyde 1978; Cochran 1986; Hargreaves 1997;

Herrera and Torres 2006), reports by official and semi-official bodies (World Bank 2002; *Mubarak and Education* 1992; National Democratic Party Policies Secretariat 2003; World Bank 2007; World Bank 2008; Handoussa, 2010) and reforms undertaken by the government or international organizations (Zaalouk 2004). There are studies which have a clear theoretical framework such as Starrett (1998), which applies an institutional framework, and Cook (2000), which applies a political culture framework. However, most have no clearly stated theoretical framework and none of the studies examines education reform within a neo-institutional framework.

This study is unique in the way it utilizes all three strands of the neo-institutionalist approach: the historical, rational and cultural. Most studies using a neo-institutionalist framework apply only one of these three threads, when an integrated approach can increase the rigor and depth of a study (Hall and Taylor 1996, 955). Essentially, the approach adopted here is based on a historical state-society analysis that incorporates techniques similar to those used in the rational choice and political culture approaches. The strength of this approach is that it allows the researcher to examine sources of resistance that emanate from both the elite and the masses, as well as the “core social patterns of interaction” in Arab societies; something which is often not fully considered by traditional institutional approaches (Schlumberger 2000). Of course, it would be possible to examine resistance to reform and focus only on the sources of elite resilience and legitimacy, but education affects and is affected by the masses’ level of compliance and participation, and those in turn are influenced by mass orientation to the political system. Investigating elite political and economic support for education reform according to the rational strand of the neo-institutional framework can show how the elite in Egypt have used education to pursue not only national goals but also individual goals. Examining the issue according the

cultural strand can help explain why society resisted a number of education reforms that were implemented by the Mubarak regime.¹²

As Egyptians potentially transition from being a pseudo-democracy to a developing democracy, education reform takes on a whole new significance. It is hoped that this analysis of past attitudes towards and support for education reforms in Egypt will help clarify why past education reforms have been largely ineffective in promoting social justice and economic equity. At the very least, this study will contribute to an understanding of the political, social and economic challenges that need to be overcome in order for education to better promote an environment for social justice and equitable economic growth. It is hoped that this study will provide a clear understanding of the challenges Egyptians face in achieving their goals of a free, stable and prosperous country and offer some recommendations for achieving that goal.

This study will ask:

- 1) What factors have affected the legitimacy of the Egyptian state?
- 2) What factors contributed to the durability of authoritarianism in Egypt?
- 3) What factors contributed to mass resistance in Egypt?
- 4) How and why has the Egyptian elite used education reform to increase its internal and external legitimacy, maintain its durability and overcome mass resistance?
- 5) How and why have the masses resisted education reform implemented by the elite?
- 6) What are the implications of the regime failure for the future of Egyptian education reform and political development?

¹² This adopts the definition of political culture elaborated by Nicola Pratt (2005, 71-72). She contends that Verba and Putnam's work adds academic rigor to the conceptualizations of Arab political culture posited by Orientalists. However, she notes that the assumption that the culture affects the political system is not necessarily supported by the evidence. Instead, she suggests that culture can "be a product of the nature of the political system" and that ignore culture reduces politics to "economics, institutions and externalities" that fail to account for the social aspects of politics.

This research takes the form of a historical case study, with a focus on institutional analysis. The study analyzes expectations, behaviors, beliefs and attitudes within the context of the institutions and culture that shape them. Sources of analysis for historical case studies generally include historical documents, primary source content analysis and interviews or surveys with stakeholders (Greif 1994). Due to the difficult nature of political research in Egypt, sources were restricted to historical documents, transcribed speeches, statistics, and eyewitness accounts from newspaper and magazine articles.¹³ The sample consists of all readily available news reports, transcribed speeches and debates about education reform. Data was collected from the Egypt State Information Service, the Middle East News Agency, the Lexis-Nexis database and the Egyptian People's Assembly archives. Translations were double-checked by a native Arabic speaking research assistant to ensure accuracy of translation. Secondary sources are more numerous and include manuscripts, journal articles and official reports written by experts in the field of education reform in Egypt. The reports were published by USAID, UNESCO, UNICEF, the UNDP, the World Bank, the National Democratic Party (NDP) and Egypt's Ministry of Education (MoE).

The study analyzes the role of education reform in the Egyptian state from Muhammad Ali until Mubarak, though major focus of this analysis will be the years 1981 to 2011. In addition, the study contextualizes the topic of education reform within an analysis of factors related to compliance, participation and legitimacy. This includes an examination of how economic, social and security issues challenged the state, creating a need for legitimacy-building policies. The study also explores elite and mass attitudes towards political liberalization and

¹³ In addition, this project will draw on informal discussions held with experts and stakeholders in Egypt. The experts included a member of the NDP policy secretariat, a World Bank employee, a USAID specialist and an MoE consultant. The stakeholders were educators, parents and students from private and public schools, from the preschool level to postgraduate.

modernization and the relationship between those attitudes and measures that support a transition to democracy.

A central hypothesis running through this project is that elite and mass resistance to education reform was due principally to a desire to maintain *status quo*. Each did so for their own reasons. The elite wanted to maintain economic and political privileges, whereas the masses were suspicious of changes that might increase state power and make greater demands upon their limited resources. Non-elites were also suspicious of changes that would “contaminate” their culture with “Western” values. The population for this study is divided into two broad groups: the elite and the masses. In this study the term elite refers to those who wielded extensive economic or political power, or both as was the case under Sadat and even more so under Mubarak. A large number of the economic elite under Mubarak were members of the ruling National Democratic Party and thus had enormous political clout. High-ranking government officials who were not members of the economic elite wielded some influence by virtue of the prestige associated with their academic background or professional success, but the most promising method to gain influence was by aligning with the military or economic elite. While some of the technocratic and academic elite have been able to influence the political and economic elite, more often than not, their goals and values seem in direct conflict. Like the elite, the Egyptian masses defy a simple characterization. Members of the masses may be educated members of the small middle class, or illiterate farmers from the countryside. The main unifying feature for what this study refers to as “the masses” is a lack of political or economic clout.

Elite preferences can be discovered by examining the actual decisions made by ruling and other elites. This would involve a study of policies made or promoted by the elites, statements explaining those decisions and responses justifying the criticism of those decisions. Sources of

information could include party or group platforms or manifestos, speeches, news releases, press conference transcripts, personal interviews and reports from secondary informants. Elite decisions are shaped by personal beliefs, but more importantly, by the perceived payoff. Therefore, it is important to look at voting patterns, polls, opinion pieces in the local newspapers and reports of interactions with members of opposition groups to assess whether or not elite decisions were based on compromise with an opposition, confidence of invincibility or fear of defeat. Throughout this analysis, it is important to keep Tsebelis's (1990) concept of 'nested games' in mind because what might seem like an irrational decision is more likely the result of a compromise made for greater gain in the long run. Understanding nested games primarily requires an understanding of inter-elite dynamics, but in a democracy or democratizing country, it also involves understanding the way the elites are responding to mass preferences.

Mass preferences are generally more accessible than elite preferences, but are more difficult to gather than elite preferences because of the sheer magnitude of subjects involved. This is particularly true in Egypt, where an organization named the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics [CAPMAS] is responsible for approving all research projects that involve public gathering of statistics, and make getting this permission very difficult. In a situation like this, the most efficient way to understand mass preferences is to review public records like past voting records, and other publicly available texts such as opinion polls and statements made by interest groups. A combination of these sources can give the researcher a great deal of information about the demands (or lack thereof) that the masses are placing upon the elite, and the reasons for their resistance to demands made by the elite.

Chapter Synopses

The second chapter explains the theoretical framework for this study. As the study is examining both elite and mass attitudes and behaviors, a framework that would fit with a state-society analysis was necessary. The neo-institutionalist approach offers this, and also draws attention to the roles played by culture, history and preferences, three factors that are closely interrelated with education reform. The second chapter also draws attention to the underlying purpose of the study, which is to show how education reform has prevented liberalization of the political system.

Chapter 3 provides the historical context for the study. It traces the relationship between the Egyptian state and society since the 1952 revolution, establishing a pattern that helps explain education reform choices. It examines a variety of factors that affect the strength of a state and the attitudes that citizens have towards their leaders, and asserts that despite manipulating the social contract, Egyptian leaders have been largely unsuccessful in maintaining legitimacy. Moreover, it contends that the Mubarak regime was particularly weak and was unable to compel its citizens to comply or participate without force or tangible reward. This growing weakness was behind Mubarak's increased reliance on the security forces and need to cater to the economic elite. Both of these groups were inherently opposed to any political liberalization, and would not have backed education reform that undermined their interests. At the same time, the masses and politically irrelevant elite were growing increasingly alienated and frustrated with the situation and viewed many reform efforts with cynicism and resentment.

Chapter 4 traces the historical pattern of education reforms in Egypt from the days of Mohammad Ali Pasha until Hosni Mubarak. Though Egypt saw many different rulers and political changes during this time period, one notable feature is continuous: the lack of education

reforms that would promote freedom and engagement. Despite nearly a century of criticism for its system being overly centralized and its curriculum being insufficiently critical, the leaders have not made any significant progress towards alleviating these problems.

Chapter 5 discusses and analyzes the reforms enacted under Mubarak in more detail. Some reforms were strongly supported by Mubarak's regime and deemed successful by international standards. These reforms include reduction of illiteracy rates and an increase in primary enrollment, which are reforms that have the potential of boosting the regime's legitimacy both domestically and internationally. In addition, the reforms enacted and fully supported by the elite tend to bolster their authority with minimal risk to a change in the *status quo*. They also tend to be remedial in nature, focusing on narrowing a gap that grew larger with decades of ineffective education policy. Those reforms which could be characterized as proactive tend to be more favorable to the economic elite: focusing on developing a work force that would better meet the needs of the "world market" and allowing increased privatization of education.

Chapter 5 also investigates progressive education reforms that were instituted on a small scale during the Mubarak era. What makes these reforms different from the previously discussed reforms is that they have the potential for fostering civic competence, a necessary component of democratic development and maintenance. These reforms include the community school project led by UNICEF and the development of critical thinking schools spearheaded by Dr. Hossam Badrawi. These projects respond to declared goals of the ruling regime, but received little more than lip service. What is particularly interesting about these reforms is that they are low-cost and effective means of delivering education, at least in terms of the financial investment. But they carry the risk of upsetting the *status quo*, since both have the explicit goal of encouraging independent thinkers and engaged citizens.

Chapter 6 concludes with recommendations for future policy makers. In particular, it discusses the need to fully engage all Egyptian stakeholders in the policy-making process in order to foster the civic competence needed to sustain a transition to democracy. The conclusion builds on these recommendations and also emphasized the need to look more closely at the public debate regarding education reform in Egypt in order to better understand the failure of education reform thus far.

CHAPTER 2

Conceptual Underpinnings for the Study

Introduction

Education is one of the most, if not the single most, important factors in a country's path of development. Education has the potential to reduce poverty and inequality, improve public health, and foster the growth of civic engagement (UNESCO 2009, 9-10). Its importance was recognized by Egyptian leaders who made free mass education a constitutional right early in the 20th century. More recently, former president Hosni Mubarak asserted that "continued reform of our educational system is indeed a major and timely prerequisite for Egypt's development. All our policies and endeavors have to envision the Egyptian citizen being the engine and ultimate goal of our national development" (UNESCO Egypt 2008, 5).

It can also be argued that democratic freedom is just as crucial to human development as is education. Amartya Sen argued that democracy is central to development because "human beings live and interact in societies, and are, in fact, societal creatures. It is not surprising that they cannot fully flourish without participating in political and social affairs, and without being effectively involved in joint decision making" (2002, 79). It is not that development cannot occur without democracy, but that development of humans' full capabilities requires that they have the freedom to be engaged in making choices that affect their lives. Sen delineated five types of freedoms which interact and reinforce each other: "economic empowerment, political freedoms, social opportunities, protective security and transparency guarantees" (2006, 161). Each of these

freedoms is vital to providing humans with the capabilities necessary for overcoming structural inequalities, but it takes a very strong, legitimate state to provide all of these freedoms. Egyptian leaders have done little to increase freedom. Not only is economic freedom decreasing due to slower growth and increased inequality, the most recent Freedom House report shows that Egypt is rated 6 on a scale where 1 equals free and 7 equals not free. Overall, the country has been getting less and less free as repression and corruption escalate and opportunities for transparency and competition shrink. At the same time, the state has been growing gradually weaker and less likely to support the type of reforms that would foster meaningful and widespread development.

Sen's human capability approach emphasizes the importance of mass engagement in the development process. Based on this interpretation of development, it seems that understanding a country's failure to overcome inequality and provide for universal development would require examination of mass attitudes not simply elite preferences.¹⁴ Institutionalism has often been used to explain unequal outcomes and is a useful approach in our investigation, particularly since education itself is a type of institution (Kamens 1988). However, education and freedom are complex topics that both affect inequalities and are affected by inequalities. They affect political socialization and are affected by political socialization. After considering a number of approaches, it was determined that an institutionalist framework that incorporates the strengths of rational choice and political culture was necessary for comprehensively examining the multiple layers of this topic.

¹⁴ While it is true that regime survival depends primarily on elite support, and that mass support is generally secondary (Skocpol 1979), if mass resistance to the regime intensifies sufficiently, the regime can quickly lose elite support. This is what happened in Egypt in 2011 when the military elite abandoned its support for Mubarak's regime, despite the fact the Mubarak was a highly decorated officer who had long enjoyed the military's full backing.

Neo-Institutionalism's Three Threads

In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the nation-state received praise in both traditional and modern political projects in the Arab world either as the agent for securing stability or as the impetus for change. ... In the political discourse of the post-independence era the centrality of the nation-state was sacralized (Hamzawy 2006, 54).

In the face of acute social and economic problems, Arab intellectuals criticized the politics of their leaders, and even anticipated that these leaders would lose legitimacy, but they never questioned the centrality of the state. Likewise, decades of studies of regime success and failure often implicitly or explicitly suggest that states can single-handedly regulate and revitalize their societies. This state-centric view tends to blur distinctions within the state apparatus and sets improbable standards for states. Even when elites support the same policies, they may do so for different reasons and with different intensities. These studies also discount the capacity that the masses have for resisting and challenging state authority and capability (Migdal 2001). For example, Migdal criticized Talcott Parson's social systems theory because he felt that it "subsumed both state and society in a broad conception of the so-called social system, whose various parts are bound together by an overarching and unified set of values" (Migdal 2001, 4). Furthermore, he felt that this theory assumed that once a general consensus about values and norms is reached, a system would begin to effect change.

The politics of education reform in Egypt is a multifaceted topic that requires a comprehensive theoretical framework. Neo-institutionalism offers such a framework, depending on how it is defined. In one view, neo-institutionalism is actually the name given to three different varieties of institutionalist theoretical approaches: historical, rational and sociological

(Hall and Taylor 1996). Most studies that use a neo-institutionalist framework are applying one of these three constructions. But each of the three constructions has a weakness. Historical institutionalism often suffers from a lack a precision in describing how institutions affect behavior. Rational institutionalism, on the other hand is very precise, but the very precision that allows it to be generalizable also means that it can tend to be overly simplistic or deterministic (Hall and Taylor 1996, 950-951). Both of these approaches fail to give sufficient consideration to culture's influence on social and political transformation (S. V. Nasr 2001, 5).

Sociological institutionalism does a better job at explaining the underlying, often multidimensional dynamics that influence preferences (Hall and Taylor 1996). In particular it can offer a compelling cultural explanation for institutional inefficiencies or failures. But some would say it underestimates the potential for competing interests to prevent compromise or derail reform initiatives. Hall and Taylor (1996) recommend a more sophisticated approach that incorporates the strengths of all three versions of new institutionalism because "an actor's behavior may be influenced by both strategic calculation about the likely strategies of others and by reference to a familiar set of moral or cognitive templates, each of which may depend on the configuration of existing institutions"(955). Such an approach would incorporate a rationalist framework to analyze the preferences that influence decisions made by the elites as well as a historical perspective to investigate the relationships between institutions within a society. Finally, it would incorporate a sociological viewpoint to explore the ways culture influences human behavior.

This study adopts this tri-faceted approach, but draws upon literature from three relevant approaches to construct a more detailed framework. First, it applies a state-society framework to investigate issues of legitimacy that affect elite and mass beliefs and behaviors. Second, it

applies a rational choice approach to further elucidate elite behavior. Finally, this study turns to the theory of political culture to help explain the relationship between the elite and the masses and the rationale behind certain policy choices.

The Dilemma of the Idealized State

In its idealized form, a state is an organization that has autonomy from domestic and external influences, differentiated agencies that coordinate their agendas according to the vision of the leadership and the authority to use coercion to maintain social control (Migdal 1988). Social control has three levels: compliance, participation and legitimacy (Migdal 2001). Compliance means ensuring that society follows the rules set by the state, and it is often achieved through the use of punishments or force. Participation refers to the extent of the society's involvement in programs established by the state and can be achieved through the use of incentives or penalties. Legitimacy represents the society's acceptance of the state's authority to maintain social control, and it does not require the use of coercion. When a state has legitimacy, members of the society develop a sense that "their personal identities are inextricably tied to the existence of a bigger unit..." (Migdal 2001, 256). Social control is unforced because members of the society view obedience to the rules established by the state as essential for the collective identity to be maintained, and by extension, for their own identity to be maintained.

Most states do not resemble the idealized type. In reality, many states, particularly newer states, are unable to maintain social control. This is due to a number of factors, including a lack of autonomy, problems with coordination among various agencies, challenges to state authority from other groups within the society, and an inability to transform society according to the

state's vision. Rotberg pointed out that many weak states are ruled by despots who are able to control discord through the use of coercion and therefore the states appear deceptively stable and strong (2003). "If the military is the main pillar behind an authoritarian regime, as long as it remains united, the regime can withstand low levels of legitimacy" (Mainwaring 1989, 13-14). This is certainly the case in the Middle East, where authoritarian leaders are propped up by the army or state security. Thus, most Middle Eastern states should be categorized as weak states, though many scholars of Middle Eastern politics have incorrectly described them as strong states (Schwarz 2004).

A weak state is unable to penetrate society because it has been unable to coerce or co-opt citizen loyalty. Compliance with state laws and demands is low, participation of the masses is minimal, and the legitimacy of the state is untenable (Migdal 1988). Because of this, weak states are unable to effectively deliver political goods. Political goods include security, rule of law, an open political system and public goods such as healthcare and education. Security, according to Rotberg (2003), is the most important political good. Weak states are unable to provide adequate security, generally due to friction caused by cultural, religious or class divides. The lack of security usually results in high levels of political and criminal violence, which weakens the state and can lead to state failure. Rotberg (2003) characterized a weak state as one in which:

- Rule of law is violated regularly
- Crime rate is high and/or increasing
- Corruption is appallingly widespread
- Public facilities and infrastructure are inadequate and/or dilapidated

When the situation degenerates so far that the society is convulsed with protracted violence, particularly directed against the state, but also among competing groups in the society,

it can be considered a “failed” state (Rotberg 2003, 5). A key feature in failed states is civil strife. This is not referring to minor discord among ethnic, religious, economic, or linguistic groups, but protracted or recurrent violence. Discordant diversity is a characteristic of weak states, but the inability to control certain regions or protect state borders from external incursion indicates state failure.

Migdal’s model for evaluating the strength or weakness of a state requires an analysis of all social organizations, both state and non-state. This includes an investigation of the nature of the relationship between the state and non-state organizations. If the relationship is complimentary, then a strong society can give rise to a strong state, or strengthen a relatively weak state. But if non-state actors compete with the state, this can weaken a state, or push an already weak state over the brink to failure.

A strong society is highly mobilized, with effective non-state leaders who capitalize on the salient issues or characteristics of their group, and provides group members with “alternative strategies for survival” (Migdal 1988, 189). A strong society is characterized by an exceptional intensity of inter-group competition, and can have either a positive or negative affect on the political system. If the competing groups work in cooperation with the state, a strong society can actually strengthen a society by opening up the system and making it more democratic. In contrast, a strong society that has been co-opted by the state will likely contribute to the consolidation of authoritarian regimes. Finally, a strong society that competes with the state for allegiance, resources and power will greatly weaken a state and can lead to state failure.

On the other hand, a weak society is characterized by disorganization and a lack of cohesion. Because leadership is either ineffectual or non-existent, sub-state mobilization is low. Therefore, there are no viable groups in the society that can compete with the state. The most

likely scenario in this type of situation is an authoritarian regime and maintenance of the *status quo* (Migdal 1988). Egypt, at least until the mid-1980s when the structure of a nascent civil society began to become more noticeable, would be characterized as having a weak society. Even opposition leaders and anti-regime intellectuals did not formulate their critiques and solutions as “alternative strategies” (Migdal 1988, 189) but simply “alternate state models” such as “the reformed nation-state, the Islamic state, the pan-Arab state, the secular state, the democratic state, the socialist state, and the modern state” which were expected to lead the charge for reform and progress (Hamzawy 2006, 54).

Understanding Resistance to Reform

State-society theory offers a simple, yet powerful model for understanding the various sources of resistance to reforms. An analysis of education reforms in Egypt shows that the lack of success that the state has had in enacting reforms is partly the result of resistance to reform from within the society, but there is also resistance from within the state apparatus. This can also be explained through the lens of rational behavior. One explanation for elite resistance to certain education reforms is that the reforms do not serve their best interests. According to the Downsian model, politicians in a democracy are vote-maximizers, and thus behave in a way that will increase the number of votes they will receive (Downs 1957; Dray 1999). In an authoritarian system like Egypt, however, politicians are not vote-maximizers *in the traditional sense*. Their preference is for policies and actions that increase their legitimacy, promote stability and the *status quo* (Sullivan 1990, 317; Wintrobe 1998). In fact, many years ago, a noted scholar of Arab politics argued that the elite in the Arab world were actively resisting democratization (Harik

1994). The patron-client system makes it easier for them to buy votes, so they would resist any policies that reduce their power as patrons (Blaydes 2006). This would explain the lack of support for certain reforms that make important contributions to the success of democratization. Reforms such as decentralization and critical pedagogies undermine the power and prestige of the elite, and did not gain much support, despite evidence of their effectiveness in improving educational outcomes (Zaalouk 2004).

In order to explain political phenomena from a rational perspective one must examine the reasons why people are involved; what they hope to gain or accomplish. In other words, the researcher must try to discern (i.e. from interviews, discourse analysis) logical, rational causes for a historical agent's course of action, based on the actor's preferences. Identification of these preferences is often made through analysis of speeches, personal interviews, published statements or other written materials. However, such empirical data regarding an actor's preferences is insufficient, since as Dray (1999) noted, an actor could later on give justification that did not truly reflect the grounds for choices made.

To better understand human affairs, one must look at the external relevance, not only the internal interpretation (Martin 1994). In other words, preferences must be related to the society at large, not only analyzed at the individual level. Preferences are shaped by external forces, and rational choice explanations are dependent on an understanding of cultural and structural external forces. Individuals are guided by more than self-interest; institutional political culture and networks can limit and support individual strategies. Martin cautioned that a researcher's interpretation of the rational explanation could be completely wrong; that simply interpreting from an agent's point of view is not enough to ensure reliable interpretation. Tsebelis (1990) noted that politicians often play "nested games", which could mean that the actions appear to be

in pursuit of a particular preference, when in reality the actors are pursuing something completely different. Tsebelis (1990) also pointed out that political actors' behavior is "an optimal response to other players' behavior *and to the existing institutional structure* [emphasis in the original] institutions"(92).

Institutions are "social practices" as opposed to concrete units and are defined by their observable rules or norms that govern the relationships among individual or group actors (Young 1989). Institutions, according to Young, provide us with "order or predictability to human affairs"(32). Thus it is argued that a clear picture of the culture and institutions in which Egypt's politically relevant elite are making decisions is necessary to discern whether or not a nested game is indeed being played. Thus the proposed study will be framed in terms of the strategic choices of the elite, as they try to strike a balance between the demands of the competing cultures and institutions of local government and international donors.

The rational choice approach yields great explanatory value if one can determine elite preferences. Preferences can be explained at a superficial level by the Downsian principle, but in some cases it is necessary to also examine them in terms of the culture which informs them and the structures which constrain them. Unlike the traditional rational choice theory, which perceives of institutions and political culture as external factors in individual preference setting, this study will follow Portz, Stein and Jones (1999) and consider institutions and political culture a fundamental dynamic in preference setting. This is particularly true when trying to understand the nature of democratization in developing countries (Kamrava 1993).

Early political studies that referenced culture as a variable were generally superficial accounts of a hypothesized national culture or ethos that was static and only allowed for certain political outcomes. These studies considered culture to be *the* decisive factor in determining

whether or not a country would be a stable democracy. The definitive work in this area is “Comparative Political Systems” by Gabriel Almond (1956, 392) who argued that structural approaches to political system were insufficient, particularly in “pre-industrial areas”. In his essay, he defines political culture as “a particular pattern of orientations to political action” (Almond 1956, 396). Drawing on Parsons and Shils’s (1951) theory of action, Almond outlines three elements to political orientation: perception, preference and evaluation. Perception refers to how a person understands something. Preference refers to the way something influences a person. Finally, evaluation refers to the way a person determines political behavior, based on preferences and perceptions (Almond 1956, 396). Although Almond’s work contributed valuable insight by attaching importance to individual behavior and beliefs, it was criticized for over-idealizing the Protestant/Anglo-American system. Moreover, his framework was overly deterministic and envisaged political stability and predictability as “inescapable consequences” of political culture.

Shortly after introducing his concept of political culture, Almond edited a volume that utilized the political culture approach.¹⁵ *The Civic Culture*, which Almond wrote with Sidney Verba (1963) is considered another seminal work on political culture. As with Almond’s previously mentioned work, this book was criticized by many for assuming that the culture-political system is a one way causal relationship (Lane 1997). But Almond roundly rejected that criticism, noting that the study had treated political culture as both a dependent and an independent variable (Almond and Verba 1989, 29). Lijphart, in the same volume, labeled it as an intermediary variable that has an effect on democratic stability (dependent variable) and is influenced by the social system (independent variable) (Almond and Verba 1989, 38). He further

¹⁵ Though Almond is often credited with introducing the term “political culture” to the field of political science, he is not the first to use the term. It had been in use since at least the early 18th century (Almond and Verba 1989, 32).

noted that although Almond and Verba tended to treat political culture as an independent variable, they were careful to use causally neutral terms and specifically state that it is just one variable a multi-directional relationship (Almond and Verba 1989, 47-49).

Almond and Verba's approach is particularly relevant for this study. It emphasizes the roles of political socialization on political behavior. They argue that there is a great deal of evidence that adult experience with the political system is more influential than childhood socialization in determining citizens' levels of participation. As one writer put it, citizens do not always "behave in the manner to which they have been exhorted" (Lane 1997, 33). However, their findings did show that level of education does affect level of participation, so it seems that at least in terms of schooling, childhood experiences can have some effect on political orientation and behavior. If a child is socialized to accept information without questioning it, it is highly unlikely that he or she will develop the type of competence that Almond and Verba see as an important factor in a citizen's level of participation.

Acknowledging the central role that culture plays in politics allows for a more comprehensive understanding of politics (Inglehart 1988). But culture is not always an easily observable variable. Kamrava (1995) pointed out that this is especially problematic "in non-democratic countries [where] there are often sharp differences between what political subjects really think and what they are willing to admit"(693). In order to avoid the ambiguity associated with anthropologists' and sociologists' use of the term culture, Almond and Verba (1963) explained that their definition of the variable was based on the "psychocultural" approach and emphasized citizens' "*psychological orientation towards social objects* [emphasis in the original]"(14). Because it draws upon anthropology, sociology and psychology, Almond and Verba (1963, 13) argued that the political culture approach enhances our understanding of

political systems and political change in way that more traditional structural methods could not.¹⁶ However, in the original version of the *Civic Culture* study, Almond and Verba did not acknowledge the variable nature of political orientation, and this has been one of the more enduring criticisms of the work. But in 1989, they returned to the topic and revised their definition of political culture to recognize that political attitudes are not static, and by extension, neither is political culture.

They defined three areas of orientation, or attitudes that comprise the political culture of a country: system culture, process culture and policy culture. The system culture is based on Easton's (1965) definition of the political system and includes "sense of national identity, attitudes toward the legitimacy of the regime and its various institutions, and attitudes toward the legitimacy and effectiveness of the incumbents..." (Almond and Verba 1989, 28).¹⁷ The process culture includes citizens' attitudes toward their own role in the political process and attitudes toward other citizens. The policy culture involves the distribution of preferences and values related to outputs of the political system.

For the political culture approach to provide useful insights, it must acknowledge the dynamic and diverse nature of culture (Eckstein 1988) and conceptualize culture "as a social practice, rather than a reified system of beliefs, values and personality traits" (Pratt 2005, 72).¹⁸

Politics and culture are interactive processes in which individuals participate in shaping identity

¹⁶ In the follow up book to *The Civic Culture*, Almond and Verba stated that political culture is not a theory. Rather, it is better described as an approach to theory-building in which political culture is one of the many variables which can affect the dependent variable of democratic stability.

¹⁷ Almond admitted his tremendous debt to Easton's definition of the political system, and criticized himself for failing to incorporate it into the original volume *The Civic Culture*. In particular, the work would have benefited from Easton's recognition of the dynamic nature of the political system. One of the major criticisms of *The Civic Culture* was its implication that political culture is static, an idea that drew upon Talcott Parson's static model of the social system (Almond 1997).

¹⁸ Pratt's definition challenges one of the most famous definitions of political culture. That definition comes from Almond and Verba's seminal work *The Civic Culture*. They defined political culture as the "political system as internalized in the cognitions, feelings and evaluations of its population" (Almond and Verba 1963, 14).

and power relationships which in turn contribute to determining individuals' preferences and behaviors and general orientation to politics. Thus, to 'measure' culture, one should examine preferences and behaviors to the extent that they are observable, as well as understood behavioral norms and expectations.

Another strength of the political culture approach is that it does consider the individual level in its analysis of the political system, something early rational choice and structuralists disregarded. In order to have a clearer picture of the potential for democracy, political culturalists investigate the role of civil society and political socialization. By analyzing the ways in which individual members of a society are involved in the political system fits the pattern of a 'civic culture' (i.e. Are citizens tolerant, active, informed?), we can predict, to a certain extent, if a democracy will be broadly supported or not. To get a clear picture of the "civic culture" that is conducive to democracy requires more than looking at national averages on a values survey. Although a survey or a cultural analysis might reveal predominant values and sub-divisions within the society, one must look at the structures within society to see how the society is organized. Thus, it seems that the strength of the new school of political culturalists lies in the fact that they have adopted a partially structuralist approach.

Even Almond's (1956) early typology of political systems is not a pure political culture approach, but a political culturalist approach with a structuralist slant. The way that members of a society interact (or do not interact) can help explain the presence or absence of stability and consensus. The social webs determine whether or not a society will have a consensual or conflictual political culture. Societies in which members are actively involved in social organizations and are members of a wide variety of groups, foster important civic characteristics such as openness and community involvement. The problem with this approach is that it is not

entirely clear whether the social webs are actually generating this civic culture, or if they are merely a reflection that democratic norms and values are already existing in the culture. This is because the structures in a society interact with the culture and have a reciprocal relationship, each reinforcing or reinventing the other.

As noted earlier, the political culture approach has been rejected by some as being overly deterministic and lacking in intellectual objectivity or clarity (Reisinger 1995). Orientalists and early adopters of the political culture approach essentialized Arab culture in a way that devalued the entire body of political culture literature (Pratt 2005). Kedourie (1992), Lewis (1993, 1996), Huntington (1993) and others assumed that Arab countries had failed to democratize because Islamic culture was not amenable to the Western ideas of liberty and secularism. While liberty certainly is restricted by traditional interpretations of Islam, other democratic ideals are compatible with Islam, or are part of the historical body of jurisprudence (Black 2001). Even asking if democracy and Islam are compatible is an overly simplistic question, since both terms are extremely complex, and there is nothing inherent in either that precludes the other (Bayat 2007). It is just these types of sweeping generalizations that Almond (1956, 396) had in mind when he wrote: “Indeed, it is the failure to give proper weight to the cognitive and evaluative factors, and to the consequent autonomy of political culture, that has been responsible for the exaggerations and over-simplifications of the ‘national character’ literature of recent years”.

“The abuse and misuse of the political culture concept to ‘explain’ Arab politics has been so egregious that it is hard to resist the temptation to consign it without further ado to the dustbin of political science” (Hudson 1995, 61). Much of this has to do with methodological laxity and unsystematic investigations of behaviors or generalizations related to poorly defined “realms of belief and behavior – notably religion” (L. Anderson 1995, 79). But Hudson (1995) believes that

despite these problems, it is an important element to understanding the resilience of authoritarian regimes and discarding it would be unwise, not to mention unacceptable to most Middle East studies scholars.

A purely structuralist approach would argue that the institutions in a society either promote democracy or inhibit it. To a certain extent, this is true, since there are a number of institutional checks and balances that can be written into the constitution of a country that hinder would-be dictators and require consensus-building. Likewise, the presence of a huge bureaucracy can breed political apathy and dependence on the state. In the same vein, a number of sub-state actors can divide the loyalty of the citizens and prevent consensus if the state is not strong enough to overcome the non-state competition. Nevertheless, an analysis of a country's structures alone can not provide an explanation of why the structures developed in that way. Structures do not appear on their own, so there must be other factors involved. "Despite its conceptual untidiness and empirical difficulties, political culture is an important variable; it cannot be reduced to other factors such as economics, institutions, or externalities; it is necessary for helping explain how authoritarianism is losing its legitimacy" (Hudson 1995, 62).

Hudson (1995, 73) outlines five ways to increase the potential value of culture as an explanatory variable. First, avoid the reductionism and essentialism that characterized much early work applying this approach. Second, view culture from a multifaceted perspective; investigate mass culture as well as elite culture and recognize the presence of sub-cultures. Third, examine all levels of the political culture, from the ideological level, down through the levels of opinions, attitudes and orientations. Fourth, give attention to group identity and orientation towards the political leadership and towards ideals of justice. Fifth, rely on a multiplicity of

sources for evidence, but try to incorporate primary sources such as interviews and surveys whenever possible.

Both the political culture and structuralist approach typically have failed to give enough emphasis to the role played by elite decision makers in societies, and the rational choice approach tends to overlook the important role of mass attitudes and behaviors. The neo-institutionalist framework builds on the strengths of all of these theoretical approaches and, if applied carefully, can overcome some of their weaknesses. In particular, the neo-institutionalist framework pays attention to the various levels and divisions within a political system and the society in which it functions, an approach in harmony with the recommendations made by Hudson (1995). Decisions made by the elite do not necessarily reflect the values and beliefs of the society at large. Nor do social or governmental structures unavoidably control elite decisions. “Class-based models are inadequate to deal fully with the political and ideological implications of modern educational systems, because these systems continually erase and redraw the boundaries between social groups...” (Starrett 1998, 11).

The ruling elite in any system, whether democratic or authoritarian, are primarily interested in one of two things: maintaining power or gaining power. Therefore, their decisions are based on whatever course of action will maximize their chance of attaining these goals. If democracy is in the best interests of the ruling elite, then they will support democratization and support whatever policy best diminishes the structural or cultural barriers to the transition. Egyptian leaders have both undertaken and avoided reforms in a bid to maintain their hegemony and prevent a transition to democracy, and the masses have resisted many reforms due to an environment of oppression and unfulfilled promises. Rather than following through with its promises for gradual reform, the Egyptian state seemed “to be isolating itself, relying more

heavily on the security apparatuses and insisting that solutions to the country's many quandaries [were to] be found exclusively in economic reform without any true political change" (Osman 2010, 195).

Explaining Egypt's Resistance to Democratization

While more than half of the world's states have transitioned to some form of electoral democracy, not one of the members of the Arab League has a consolidated electoral democracy (Zakaria 2004, 7). Conflicts, colonialism, development and 'political culture' have been given as reasons for the Middle East's shocking lack of democratization (Aliboni and Guazzone 2004, 83). But these explanations offer inadequate or inaccurate logic and do not satisfactorily explain the entrenched nature of the autocratic systems in the Arab world. It is the "entrenched regimes" themselves that are the major impediment to democratization (Albrecht and Schlumberger 2003; Brumberg 2003). This makes a neo-institutional analysis more compelling, especially given the fact that:

...things have moved from one extreme to the other. Those who have resorted to such cultural stereotypes, the "Orientalists," have been succeeded by a new generation of politically correct scholars who will not dare to ask why it is that Arab countries seem to be stuck in a social and political milieu very different from that of the rest of the world. (Zakaria 2004, 7).

The stereotypes have not yet disappeared. In the tradition of the "Orientalist", Huntington (1984, 208) wrote that "Islam ... has not been hospitable to democracy", and he attributed the lack of democracy in the Muslim world to Islamic doctrine and the structure of the religion. A

somewhat more nuanced, albeit parochial, view is promoted by Bernard Lewis (1996), who argued that it is only the fundamentalist strand of Islam that is antithetical to liberal democracy. Another trend in Western academic and political thought is to acknowledge the parochialism associated with Westernization, but then exhibit this parochialism. One sociologist criticized the legacy of Orientalist scholarship, but then wrote “Middle Easterners, more than ever, want the modern package... What the West is, the modernizing Middle East seeks to become” (Lerner 2000, 121)”. In his narrative, Middle Easterners wanted nothing more than to become modern. And from the author’s (Western) perspective, the only way to be modern was to emulate Western values and practices. But this was impossible because of the Arab world’s inability to overcome its deep-seated distrust of the West. “The hatred sown by anti-colonialism is harvested in the rejection of every appearance of foreign tutelage. Wanted are modern institutions but not modern ideologies, modern power but not modern purposes, modern wealth but not modern wisdom...” (Lerner 2000, 121). The Middle Eastern rejection of foreign interference was viewed as simply irrational and, so the argument went, they were being held back by their inability to be objective and creative.

This distrust should not simply be overlooked as an irrational symptom of a post-colonial society with a victim complex. There are a number of compelling reasons for this skepticism. Lerner’s patronizing attitude is exhibited in the discourse of some foreign aid programs like those sponsored by the United States government (Wilkins 2010). At the same time that Western countries bemoaned the slow pace of political and economic reform in the Arab world, they also provided support for the regimes that were resisting the very reforms needed to change those problematic political and economic conditions. This behavior was seen as duplicitous and made many Arabs view the promotion of democracy with skepticism.

“Western countries and especially the USA [are viewed with suspicion] because of their longstanding support for Arab autocracies, ... their double standards in managing regional security ... and the perceived instrumental use of democracy promotion to pressure regimes failing to fall in line with western policy requests. (Aliboni and Guazzone 2004, 85)

Not all scholars of Arab or Muslim origin viewed the West's obsession with democracy so cynically. Rather, they viewed their own societies with disdain and skepticism. Elie Kadourie (1992) argued that Islamic societies are inherently resistant to democracy. Fouad Ajami wrote that careful analysis of public opinion is unnecessary in understanding Arab resistance to democracy. He explained that “a good deal of this anti-Americanism [is] the "road rage" of a thwarted Arab world -- the congenital condition of a culture yet to take full responsibility for its self-inflicted wounds” (Ajami 2003, 2). Fareed Zakaria, an American of Muslim descent, implied that democracy was unlikely to appear in the Arab world because:

The ... Arab social structure is deeply authoritarian. The ... same patriarchal relations and values that prevail in the Arab family seem also to prevail at work, at school, and in religious, political, and social organizations. In all of these, a father figure rules over others, monopolizing authority, expecting strict obedience, and showing little tolerance of dissent. ... Those in positions of ... securely occupy the top of the pyramid of authority. Once in this position, the patriarch cannot be dethroned except by someone who is equally patriarchal (Zakaria 2004, 7)

Though this is a fairly accurate representation of the social structure, it misrepresents Arabs' values regarding the need for a strong leader and the desirability of democracy. It also

mistakenly conflates the two strands in Arab society, and underestimates the effect of “cultural dualism” caused by the Islamists vs. ‘modernists’ dialectic (Mustafa, Shukor and Rabi’ 2005, 15). The stagnation of the reform movement in Egypt should not simply be attributed to the presence of an intractable patriarchal culture, though this certainly exists and is one source of resistance to reform. Primary research combined with public opinion research is vital to understanding Middle East politics (Tessler 2002; Zogby 2010) and provides a more erudite understanding of the multifaceted culture and resistance to reform.¹⁹

Although little research done to investigate mass attitudes towards democracy in the Arab world, polls that have been conducted found positive attitudes towards democracy and a belief that Islam has a positive effect on politics. In 2011, the Pew Global Attitudes Project found that 71% of Egyptians believed that democracy was preferable to any other kind of government, up 11% from 60% in 2010 (Pew Research Center 2011). According to other public opinion polls, the stereotype about the anti-democratic nature of the Islamic fundamentalist movement is also inaccurate, according to Mark Tessler (2002). Understanding mass attitudes towards democracy and towards democracy promotion efforts is important in determining the potential for democratization (Ottoway 2003).

Explaining Democratization in General

As the third wave of democratization began to slow and in some cases reverse (Diamond 1999), many studies examined what factors seem to produce and sustain democracy. These studies also shed light on what prevented states like Egypt from transitioning to democracy. It is

¹⁹ Zogby is actively involved in conducting and analyzing public opinion polls, both in the Arab world and elsewhere. But he argues that the Arab world cannot be fully understood only from second hand knowledge. Firsthand experience is essential in elaborating and elucidating the data provided by polls and in reports.

important to note, as did Huntington (1991, 38) that “no single factor is sufficient to explain the development of democracy in all countries or in a single country.” Likewise, a country’s failure to democratize is generally the result of a complex combination of forces that can change along with the shifting political landscape. The one thing that can be stated with certainty is that “democracy developed in various ways and in various local contexts...but it never came easily, peacefully or in some straightforward, stage-like progression” (Berman 2007, 37).

For decades scholars of democratization have debated whether it is a structure or a process and whether there are preconditions or if it is potentially a universal phenomenon (Berman 2007). There are several credible theories, and certainly just as many that have been discarded. Of 27 alleged factors, Huntington (1991, 37-38) narrowed the causes for the first wave of democratization to these: rapid economic development and a decrease in economic inequality, industrialization and urbanization, the organization of the working class and the growth of the middle class and a cultural dialogue shaped by Enlightenment ideals. The second wave, which occurred after World War Two, was largely a result of the pressure exercised by the victorious Western democracies upon newly decolonized states, as well as some of the factors involved in the first wave (Huntington 1991, 39-40).

The third wave is generally thought to have begun in the mid-1970s. Huntington (1991, 45-46) points to five possible reasons for this stage of democratic expansion. The first factor was the growing acceptance of democratic values worldwide accompanied by decreasing legitimacy of authoritarian regimes. The second factor was record economic growth accompanied by growth of the urban middle class and increased standards of living. The third factor concerns states in which the Catholic Church had a prominent role. As the church’s focus shifted to social and economic justice, church leaders became staunch opponents of the authoritarian leaders they had

once defended. Though this factor might seem irrelevant to Egypt's case, since there is no Catholic Church in Egypt, the role of the Islamic scholars and activist movements have played a similar role in both defending the ruling regime and challenging its legitimacy.

Unlike the first three factors, which were internal factors, the fourth and fifth factors were external. The fourth factor is related to shifts in the foreign policy of the U.S., European Community and the Soviet Union. The U.S. began to emphasize human rights and democracy, the European Community signaled willingness to accept new members, and the Soviet Union began to loosen its grip on its empire. The fifth factor is what Huntington calls "snowballing" or the effect that early transitions to democracy had upon later transitions. As global information sharing became faster and easier, fledgling democracies had greater access to models they could emulate (Huntington 1991, 46).

The first factor identified by Huntington, authoritarianism's loss of legitimacy and democracy's increasing influence, is not because the countries which had transitioned to democracy were perfect. In fact, studies show that democracies are not necessarily more efficient at governing than autocracies (Diamond 1999, 18, Gerring, et al. 2005). In the 1960s, many scholars went as far as to claim that "democracy was a luxury that could be afforded only after the hard task of development had been accomplished" (A. Przeworski, M. E. Alvarez, et al. 2000, 2). Even Huntington himself warned that too much political participation would be detrimental to economic growth (Huntington and Nelson 1976, 23).

But since then studies have found that democracies are more stable and effective (Diamond 1999, A. Przeworski, M. E. Alvarez, et al. 2000). Because citizens have a voice in a democracy, their rights can be protected and there is real potential for long term improvement based on an inclusive public debate if citizens have learned the values and habits of democratic

engagement.²⁰ In terms of economic stability, Rodrik and Wacziarg (2005) found that democratic transitions did not lead to noticeable losses but rather tended to reduce economic instability and in some cases produced short term improvement to the economy. Regardless of the outcome, democracy is a more stable system because it has a mechanism for “self-renewal” if the elected leaders fail to fulfill election promises (Huntington 1991, 48). Whereas authoritarian leaders gradually lose legitimacy as they are blamed for repeated failures, leaders in a democracy can be replaced with promising alternatives in elections.

While an economic shock can be the trigger for democratic transition, a number of studies have showed a positive correlation between higher levels of economic development and presence of democracy (Dahl 1971, Lipset 1959, A. Przeworski, M. Alvarez, et al. 1996). In particular, medium to strong growth with moderate inflation seem to provide a strong basis for the transition to democracy. Countries at a very low level of economic development are unlikely to transition to democracy, as are countries at a very high level of economic development²¹ (Diamond 1999). One reason that economic development supports the consolidation of democracy is that there are generally lower levels of overall dissatisfaction that would otherwise lead to political conflict and destabilization or reversal of democratic consolidation (Sørensen 2008). However, although it is clear that higher per capita income is generally associated with a higher chance of democratic consolidation, there is no clear threshold at which one can predict a transition to democracy (A. Przeworski, M. E. Alvarez, et al. 2000, 137).

²⁰ Here learning implies engagement with and internalization of these values and habits. It is based on John Dewey’s philosophy of education that a school served as a microcosm of society and that effective instruction involved active learning (J. W. Fraser 1997, 60).

²¹ This is generally because the system has already transitioned or the regime maintains legitimacy through generous, rent-financed, social welfare programs. This second scenario is common in the countries of the Arabian Peninsula who suffer from the “resource curse” (Auty 1993).

Another way that economic growth is ostensibly connected with increased likelihood of a transition to democracy is if the growth leads to development of a significant middle class (Huntington 1991). Others point to the growing influence of the bourgeoisie as a necessary requirement for democratic consolidation, one scholar going so far as to write “No bourgeoisie, no democracy” (B. Moore 1993, 418). But there is no conclusive evidence that either of these groups is automatically predisposed to supporting democracy. In fact, it could be argued that the global spread of a consumerist mindset has worked against democracy and created a new class that is more concerned with consumer choices than political choices (Barber 1996).

Education’s Role in Democratization

The political modernization school posited that education has a strong influence on the successfulness of democracy (Kamens 1988). In fact, some would argue that it is the single most important variable in a successful transition to and institutionalization of democracy (Diamond 1999). Early studies found a correlation between literacy and democracy (Lipset 1963; Cutright 1969) but did not establish causality. Certainly, literacy is a first step towards increased agency and political awareness, and growing literacy rates, especially among women, is a fundamental measure that has the potential for broadening political engagement (Mustafa, Shukor and Rabi’ 2005, Sen 1999). Although it would be spurious to say that an advanced educational system would actually trigger a democratic transition, it is widely agreed that modern [liberal] education is a fundamental factor in a society’s potential for transitioning to democracy. Lipset (1963) wrote, “If we cannot say that a 'high' level of education is a *sufficient* [emphasis in the original]

condition for democracy, the available evidence suggests that it comes close to being a *necessary* [emphasis in the original] one"(80).

A liberal education system is based on the progressive “philosophy of education that empowers individuals with broad knowledge and transferable skills, and that cultivates social responsibility and a strong sense of ethics and values” (Humphreys 2006, 3). A liberal education achieves its mission by presenting students with opportunities to grapple with age old questions as well as modern problems instead of simply presenting them with facts. Education in the progressive sense requires action since “a purely passive student logically cannot learn anything” (Heslep 1989, 81). Students should be involved in activities that help them develop the skills of inquiry and information literacy and apply these skills to a variety of problems and topics. For students to learn, Dewey (1902) argued, “there is no substitute for the having of individual experiences”(27). Working individually and as part of a team, students should develop social competence and consciousness, which creates a foundation for lifelong learning and civic engagement.

For democracy to take root, an essential characteristic of society is that the citizens be able to make reasoned choices (Lupia and McCubbins 1998). This does not mean that citizens must be fully informed of every aspect of political life, but rather that they have the skills needed to make choices based on an evaluation of the consequences of their choices. As Dewey (1916) wrote, “Unless we know the end, the good, we shall have no criterion for rationally deciding what the possibilities are which should be promoted...”(88). Like Plato, Dewey believed that the purpose of education was to prepare citizens for participation in a democratic society, and this participation requires citizens to make rational decisions based on an evaluation of available

information. This is not to argue that the sole purpose of education should be to increase civic competence, but that education plays a vital role in political development.

Numerous studies have also shown that education can affect attitudes towards civic responsibility (Kingston, et al. 2003). But in an authoritarian, or “pseudo-democratic”, system, sources of information are highly restricted or highly altered by the official press, making it hard for citizens to make informed evaluations. The internet revolution has changed this to a certain extent, for the privileged few who have access. But access to information is not enough. Even in a reasonably well functioning democracy, where citizens have unrestricted access to many sources of information, there is a danger that the general public will not make reasoned choices if they do not learn the skills to sort through and analyze the available information in order to overcome irrational biases or preconceived notions (Lupia 2004).

The existence of a civic culture is seen as another important factor for the successful evolution of a democratic system. It is not necessarily a requirement, but it can make the transition smoother (Schnabel 2003). A robust civil society is needed to help promote political engagement and to encourage public opinion to be open to change. As was discussed earlier, the Egyptian government severely limited the activities of civil society, and it can thus be argued that it actively opposed the development of a democratic civic culture.

An important factor in the development of a civic culture is ‘increasing citizen competence’ (Diamond, 1999). Having superior knowledge does not make one citizen more competent than another. It is the ability to make enlightened decisions that matters. And the development of this enlightenment is “not just part of the definition of democracy. [It is] a requirement for democracy.” (Dahl 2000, 79) Citizens must be aware of the public interest, and understand how their individual interests are interconnected with that of the public (Heslep 1989,

108). Education has an essential role in raising citizen awareness and learning the habits and values necessary to sustain a democratic society. This cannot simply be done by presenting facts in a textbook or through patriotic rituals, but must include cognitive engagement with the subject matter through discussion and service to the community (Dewey 1902, Heslep 1989, Barber 1992). “The best way to produce [civic] initiative and constructive power is to *exercise* it [emphasis added]” (Dewey 1937, 461).

Conclusion

Nearly one hundred years ago, American philosopher and education reformer John Dewey argued that education was the key to promoting the type of civic attitudes that are necessary for deepening and sustaining an inclusive, democratic society. But the relationship is not automatic. For civic attitudes to grow and for democracy to be safe, educational institutions had to promote “democratic habits of thought and action” (Dewey 1937, 462). This can support the creation of civil society, or as Almond and Verba described it, a “civic culture”. But Almond and Verba discounted the importance of childhood socialization and argued that political culture is influenced primarily by adults’ experiences with the political system. This is the primary point of disagreement that this study has with Almond and Verba’s approach to understand political culture’s role in political development.

For a society to reduce inequality, all members of the society must be empowered to contribute to the definition of the society’s values and determination of the future of the society (Deneulin and Shahani 2009, Sen 1999). Literacy is one fundamental source of empowerment, and it underscores the need for quality universal education. But the type of literacy that

empowers refers to more than basic literacy. It refers to critical literacy that surpasses the ability to read, write or do basic math (J. W. Fraser 1997, 53). Critical literacy includes the skills necessary to gather information, critically assess ideas and engage in thoughtful debate. Moreover, this literacy must be cultivated in an environment that fosters the multiple freedoms outlined by Sen.

Education which engages students – and parents – is more likely to produce citizens prepared for an inclusive and tolerant dialogue of reform than traditional forms of education that view students as vessels to be filled. While economic freedom is certainly an integral part of the development equation, it is not sufficient for charting a just and inclusive course for the country's immediate needs as well as long-term socio-economic and political development. Without the capability and freedom to make choices, humans cannot meet their full potential. Education is the key to “employability, dignity, security and self-respect” (Gellner 1983, 36). But the state is the only institution in society that is large enough to realistically ensure that the outcome of education is empowerment not inequality and oppression (Gellner 1983, 38). Despite their progressive rhetoric, the leaders of the Egyptian state have failed to empower the Egyptian people. The following chapters examine why this is the case, looking at the situation through the lens of neo-institutionalism's three strands: historical, rational and cultural.

CHAPTER 3

Legitimacy and the Authoritarian Dilemma

“For the majority of Egyptians, legitimacy is not the key issue; the government long has had very little of it” (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999, 129).

Introduction

Empowering citizens is a vital element to inclusive, sustainable development, but it requires a strong state to enact the necessary reforms and a system with enough legitimacy to maintain stability. State-centric models presume a strong, legitimate state; but the post-colonial heritage left the Egyptian state unconsolidated and needing to establish legitimacy in the eyes of the society. Since the revolutionary fervor of the 1950s and 1960s faded, the Egyptian state has had difficulty penetrating the society and “transforming public policies into successful social change” (Migdal 2001, i). Even then there were challenges to the state’s legitimacy. Members of the former aristocracy resented and resisted the nationalization and divvying up of their properties, with some even being forced into temporary exile. The disastrous results of the 1967 war with Israel left many Egyptians disillusioned with their leaders, and serious divisions began to appear within society.

Sadat’s peace treaty with Israel in 1979 angered many Egyptians and destroyed what little legitimacy remained and gave ammunition to the state’s opponents. Leaders that seemed unable to curb rising prices and increasing unemployment despite remarkable economic growth created a sense of frustration and distrust throughout Egypt. Apathy became endemic, and many

Egyptians lost hope that the leaders could or would improve living conditions for the masses. One of the most significant challenges came from the powerful indigenous Islamist movement, represented by the Muslim Brotherhood. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, extremist groups splintered from the mainstream movement and presented the most serious internal challenge the regime had faced until that point (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999).

In addition to branding Mubarak's regime as illegitimate and ungodly, they advocated open opposition to the regime and even set up a virtually independent mini-state in the working-class Cairo neighborhood of Imbaba. The extremists also engaged in terrorist acts, including assassinating President Anwar Sadat and other political leaders, killing the liberal thinker Farag Foda, attempting to kill President Hosni Mubarak and multiple fatal attacks on tourists. In a more indirect tactic to challenge the authority of the regime, the extremists allegedly infiltrated the educational system to spread their ideas to the most susceptible members of society. Former Minister of Higher Education Dr. Baha Al Din spoke of his shock at finding out how many Islamist teachers had been discovered in the school system, and how that meant the government could not follow through on plans for decentralization (Weaver 1999).

The alarm over fundamentalist²² educators played nicely into the regime's desire to avoid any reforms that might undermine their ability to maintain control. In fact, the threat of an Islamist takeover became a refrain that Mubarak and his supporters echoed whenever the topic of political liberalization was brought up by Egyptian activists or foreign representatives. The standard response was one that avowed the regime's desire to push forward democratic reforms and empower the society, but that reforms had to be introduced slowly so as to avoid Egypt

²² Though a fundamentalist is not necessarily an extremist, it was part of the regime's mindset that a fundamentalist automatically qualifies as an extremist. Thus, any man who had a beard and wears a *galabiyya* (gown) or any woman who wore a *niqab* (face veil) must be an extremist and posed a threat to society. Because of this mentality, many men who would have liked to have followed the Islamic teaching of wearing beards did not do so because they feared harassment by the police.

turning into another Iran. Because the society was allegedly not ready for democracy yet, the only way to avoid a one-man, one-vote, one-time theocracy was to closely control the process. This type of rhetoric was typical for authoritarian leaders as nationalistic and non-democratic ideologies were becoming less and less powerful as means for conferring legitimacy upon a country's unsuccessful leaders. Huntington remarked that "even those whose actions were clearly anti-democratic often justified their actions by democratic values" (Huntington 1991, 47).

Egyptian leaders have espoused democratic values in speeches and reform platforms for decades, but their actions belied their words and few believed the rhetoric. Since cloaking their autocratic practices with democratic rhetoric was unsuccessful in distracting the public's attention from the regime's failures, the remaining alternatives for maintaining control included outright repression or the existence of "a credible enemy" (Huntington 1991, 46 & 55). The first option is almost universally rejected and is an untenable course of action in this increasingly interconnected world. It has become increasingly difficult for states to control access to information and to divert attention from their failures, corruption and human rights violations. As the Mubarak regime found out in February 2011, it is impossible for them to prevent citizen organization, even if they take the unprecedented step of shutting off the entire internet and cell phone network for days. But for years, Mubarak and his predecessors were able to successfully use coercion to maintain compliance. Even so, this technique is not a viable option for the long term because it cannot boost legitimacy.²³

Huntington's second solution, creating a "credible enemy", is also one that Egyptian leaders have used extensively to bolster their legitimacy. Egyptian leaders have been constantly saving the Egyptian people from assured destruction at the hands of their primary enemies, the

²³ The events in Syria, Yemen and Bahrain since early 2011 show that there are still some regimes willing to take the risk, and time will tell if they manage to subdue their increasingly vocal populations or if those leaders will suffer the fate of the leaders of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya.

Israelis and the Islamists. This technique is more credible and acceptable than the previous techniques, but it presents a dilemma for an authoritarian regime. If the regime cannot defeat the enemy, it loses legitimacy. But if the regime does successfully defeat the enemy, its *raison d'être* disappears, undermining its already fragile legitimacy. After making peace with their primary enemy, the state of Israel, Egyptian leaders were able to address this dilemma by tolerating Egyptians' pro-Palestinian protests against their enemy-by-proxy. By tolerating and even encouraging the popular perception of Israel as an enemy, even after signing the peace treaty in 1979, the Egyptian government hoped to reduce popular resentment.

But the Egyptians were constrained by their dependence on U.S. foreign aid that required them to maintain a cold peace with the Israelis, so they could not play this enemy card too often. The Islamist movement, on the other hand, was viewed as a threat by both the Egyptian leadership and the U.S.. The Islamists were a double threat because they threatened the peace treaty with Israel and self-described *mujahiddeen* or Islamic Holy Warriors had begun to carry out terrorist attacks all over the globe. The Egyptian regime was well aware of the dilemma associated with defeating these enemies so it worked behind the scenes to ensure that its biggest enemy, militant Islam, did not completely disappear, but only reared its ugly head often enough for the regime to maintain its *raison d'être*.²⁴

The authoritarian dilemma also affects a regime if it is too successful at fulfilling its promises, in particular, those promises related to economic development. One of the major factors in the first and third waves of democratization was an increased standard of living. It is widely agreed that increased wealth generally contributes to better educational systems,

²⁴ Recent evidence disclosed by British intelligence indicates that a secret group was allegedly created by the former Minister of Interior, Habib Al Adly, to mastermind terrorist attacks whenever the regime's legitimacy was critically undermined. This group is said to have been behind a number of attacks, including the 2010 New Year's Eve attack on a Coptic Church in Alexandria (F. Ismail 2011).

increased literacy and more active mass media (Sørensen 2008, 30). Although it is far from “beyond dispute” that higher levels of economic development lead to democratic transition (Dahl 1971, 65), it is widely agreed that economic development leads to a better educated and informed populace, and a better educated and more informed populace are more likely to make demands of their leaders. An improved economic situation can raise expectations and establish “performance criteria” for the regime (Huntington 1991, 55). Because the regime is equated with the system in an autocracy, the entire system would lose legitimacy if the criteria are not met. In a consolidated democracy, this destabilizing situation is avoided since unsuccessful leaders can simply be voted out.

This authoritarian dilemma helps explain why authoritarian leaders fail to completely defeat their enemies and why the benefits of economic growth and modern infrastructure only trickle down to the masses in small, controlled doses. Because they lack the legitimacy to ensure their political survival in a competitive system, they must restrict any activities or policies that would introduce or encourage competition. Moreover, they must compensate for a lack of legitimacy by enacting policies that will allow them to maintain at least an illusion of competence. This sheds light on Egyptian leaders’ failure to enact certain seemingly positive reforms and also explains their inability to solve certain intractable problems. The following section investigates the institutional reality that shaped the behavior of the Egyptian state from its independence in 1952 until the uprising in 2011.

The Roots of the Crisis

The Egyptian government has used nationalist and egalitarian rhetoric to gain the support of the workers and peasants since the 1952 revolution, but it has relied on a social contract to establish and sustain legitimacy. The social contract established in 1952 instituted a system of universal welfare which included generous subsidies, land grants, free higher education, guaranteed jobs to college graduates and other basic goods and services in return for “political docility and acquiescence” (King 2009, 14). In addition, the state established a parliamentary quota ensuring representation of peasants and workers in the parliament. These reforms created a new elite, loyal to the revolutionary leaders, but ultimately dysfunctional. Though this social contract reinforced popular support for the new regime, it harmed and disenchanting the private sector and hindered the development of civil society.

In the mid-1960s, the social contract established by Nasser was threatened. The state budget could not sustain the level of welfare promised in the contract and maintain the nationalized industries (C. H. Moore 1986). Benefits extended to the military officers were creating a noticeably privileged class that contradicted the revolutionary goals of justice and equality. There was an oversupply of university graduates, and an already over-grown public sector could not even provide meaningful or gainful employment for those who had already been appointed (Ajami 1981). After Egypt’s defeat by Israel in 1967, members of Nasser’s inner circle began to dissent, and his position as the leader in the Arab world was called into question. On one hand, he relied on increasingly draconian measures to ensure that he was able to maintain power. On the other hand, he began to change his rhetoric and policies to renegotiate the social contract with his people.

The late 1960s and early 1970s were a time of gradual opening to the international economy. And as the government began to shift away from its socialist past towards a free-market future, there were secret political groups forming that included communist, liberal, Marxist, Arab nationalist and Islamist organizations. Eventually, the government declared a multi-party system in 1976, but in reality it had created a system of “controlled pluralism” (Mustafa, Shukor and Rabi’ 2005, 11). Only three parties were allowed under this system: the centrist Egypt Arab Socialist Party, the leftist National Progressive Unionist Party (*Tagammu’*) and the rightist Socialist Liberal Party (*Ahrar*) (Mustafa, Shukor and Rabi’ 2005, 32). Such a system is a top-down system in which any moves towards greater pluralism are determined by the regime and the president is the dominant power figure in the government. This means that whichever party is closest to the regime will remain in power for as long as the regime goes unchanged. The year after the multi-party system was introduced the government introduced the Political Parties Law which further guaranteed the ruling party’s supremacy as it required all parties to abide by certain principles and gave the ruling party de facto power over approving the formation of new parties.

One of the major economic changes Nasser initiated was to make economic concessions to the middle class, effectively laying the foundation for Sadat’s *infitah*, or economic opening. Changes introduced by Nasser included reducing import restrictions so that consumption of consumer goods could spread outside the privileged classes (Ajami 1981). Nasser also introduced privatization by giving more independence to a few large nationalized contractors, most notably Osman Ahmed Osman, the head of Arab Contractors (C. H. Moore 1986). Sadat continued on this path of economic liberalization, introducing his ‘open-door’ (*infitah*) economic

program in June 1974.²⁵ But his *infitah* policies went much farther than Nasser's and challenged the bourgeoisie nationalist rhetoric of "local achievement, self-reliance and independence from international trade and foreign domination" (Shechter 2008, 572).

Two results of the *infitah* policies helped cushion Sadat's fall from grace during the rough period following the peace treaty with Israel. One was the growth of an elaborate and widespread "hidden", or informal, economy (Shechter 2008). The other was a shift towards a rent-driven economy. The informal economy was present in all areas of the economy, from housing to banking. One of the biggest contributions to this informal economy came from the salaries of expatriates working abroad in the Gulf. Most of the remittances did not go through formal banking channels, and Egyptians relied on a number of informal methods for transferring and saving their earnings (Shechter 2008). For example, neighbors, mostly women, set up informal saving/lending schemes called *gam'iyyat*, where each member contributes a set amount weekly or monthly, and the pool gets distributed among the members on a rotating basis.

The growth of the informal economy reduced the pressure on the government to honor its social contract, even as it created further competition for public loyalty. Alongside the informal economy grew another source of competition for public loyalty: private voluntary organizations (PVOs). Egyptians have a long history of volunteerism, but this had traditionally had been the prerogative of the upper class (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999; Abdelrahman 2004; Handoussa 2008). The *infitah* led to the development of a small but growing middle class. As the middle class grew, so did a new type of volunteerism that emphasized "self-help" (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999, 24; Handoussa, 2008, 72) and professionalism (Abdelrahman 2004). According to

²⁵ For a detailed discussion of Law 43 of 1974, which established the *infitah* agenda, see Salacuse 1975.

Ministry of Social Affairs statistics, in 1976 there were 7,593 (ostensibly²⁶) non-governmental organizations that worked in the areas of health care, education, child and elder care, legal, financial and technical assistance and a myriad of other social or economic services (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999; Abdelrahman 2004).

The opening of Egypt's economy to the international market cemented the country as a rentier system. Oil exports, Suez Canal receipts, tourism earnings and remittances from expatriates became the country's primary sources of foreign exchange (Waterbury 1985). But instead of this wealth being directed towards production and industrial development, the *infatih* policies meant that much of the income was used to satisfy the growing demands of a consumer class who had previously been denied such access due to forced austerity and boycotts of goods from imperialist states. Because of the increased rent gained from *infatih* policies, the state had more resources available to pay for subsidies, cost-of-living allowances, salary increases, and other social welfare programs that were guaranteed by the social contract. This meant the state could maintain the social contract without relying on the citizens for revenue (Waterbury 1985).

A growing middle class exposed to an ever expanding range of imported consumer goods was a recipe for the growth of conspicuous consumption (Oweiss 1990). Unfortunately, it was also a recipe for "a society lacking discipline or supervision, distribution without production, promises without obligation, [and] freedom without responsibility" according to the authors of the 1978-1982 Five Year Plan (Waterbury 1985, 69). Some believed that the conspicuous consumption being exhibited day after day had replaced the belief that status was based on

²⁶ Many organizations which are officially non-governmental were actually created by or are funded by the government or officials close to members of the regime. Even those that are independently founded and funded are seriously constrained by strict government regulations. Law 32 of 1964 gives the government the prerogative to restrict funding, make appointments, suspend groups, takeover assets and forcibly merge organizations at will (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999, 26). An additional concern comes from the fact that many NGOs rely on foreign funding and are thus beholden to their foreign donors (Abdelrahman 2004).

learning and hard work with the idea that status was based on the ability to acquire material goods.

Earlier, middle class-ness was often based on education, which led to management, especially through the hierarchical civil service and public sector, of things and needs of fellow citizens. With the coming economic transition, however, social stratification became determined more on the ability to consume private commodities than to produce and allocate public goods (Shechter 2008, 578)

In other words, the new social contract prompted by the *infitah* contributed to the weakening of the Egyptian work ethic that had established by Nasser's social contract that promised a working wage and state welfare programs in exchange for loyalty and austerity (Shechter 2008). Others would argue that Egyptians were working harder than ever to keep up with increasing levels of consumption, so it seems that the motivation for hard work had shifted from national improvement to personal improvement (Waterbury 1985).

Perhaps one of the most ill-fated decisions related to Sadat's *infitah* policy was his encouraging exiled members of the Muslim Brotherhood to return to Egypt to take part in the economic agenda that he hoped would increase his legitimacy. Sadat advocated "Islamic socialism" which "recognized the right of private ownership of property, but in the context that God was the real owner" (Spring 2006, 161). Communism, with its atheistic philosophy, was an anathema to religious Egyptians. Capitalism, with its emphasis on profit-making, was seen as overly materialistic. Socialism was seen "as midway between the extremes of Euroamerican [sic] capitalism and Soviet-style communism" (Spring 2006, 161). Islamic socialism allowed for a balance between authenticity and modernity. Theoretically, it also meant that property owners

were merely guardians of their own wealth, and that as guardians they were obligated to support the poor.

Sadat hoped that the riches and connections the Islamists had acquired in exile would also support his economic agenda (Kepel 2002). In a further effort to ensure that the Islamists did not corner the market on authenticity and morality, he cloaked himself in religious rhetoric, referring to himself as *al Ra'is al Mu'min* (The True Believer President) (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999, 21). He made his attendance at Friday prayers a public spectacle and emphasized the special relationship among the three Abrahamic faiths, and how he had played a special role in bringing together Muslims with the *People of the Book* (Christians and Jews) (Reed 1981). He encouraged the growth of non-militant Islamist groups and their associations and for a short period he even allowed the groups to openly publish their Islamist magazines *Al Da'awa* (The Call) and *Al I'tisam* (Holding Fast to the Sunnah) (Reed 1981; Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999). But when the groups grew too strong and their anti-peace and anti-government diatribes proved to be too threatening to state security, the state cracked down with a vengeance (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999). In September 1981, thousands of Islamists were arrested and tortured, and a month later, Sadat was assassinated by a reputed²⁷ Islamic militant, Khalid al Islambuli.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s the Egyptian government allowed for some liberalization of the economy and political system, bowing to pressure from foreign donors (Aliboni and Guazzone 2004). In 1992, the United States Agency for International Development, in a report pushing economic reform, also announced its "Democracy Initiative", with the hopes

²⁷ There has long been speculation that Mubarak had a hand in the murder, but recently Sadat's daughter has requested an investigation into this matter (Al Bawaba News 2011). Past theories point to the delay in protection of Sadat at the moment of the shooting. Others point to the fact that Khalid was not originally meant to march in the parade but was chosen at a late date to replace another officer. These theories are strongly discredited by a member of the viewing party who was invited by Mubarak's relatives to join the parade. It seems highly unlikely to this person that Mubarak would allow his own sons and his relatives' sons to invite their friends to the parade if he had prior knowledge of what would transpire.

that Egyptians and their government could negotiate a new social contract (Miskin 1992). In October 1993, President Mubarak called for such a dialogue (S. Ismail 1995), but this rang hollow given that year's passing of the notorious Law 100, which effectively put the governing boards of professional syndicates under direct government control (Masonis-ElGawhary 2000; Kassem 2004).

At the same time that Mubarak was sending this mixed message about the government's intentions for civil society, the government was sending another mixed message about its intentions for the economy. While calling for increased privatization and other liberal economic policies, the government was "simultaneously [presiding] over further expansion of the state's role in the economy" (Springborg 1993, 157). Mubarak made superficial changes to the legal system that reinforced the central role of the state instead of trying to make the prevailing atmosphere more business friendly through reforms of the underlying structure of the system. Early efforts to reform the economy were unsuccessful because the Egyptian government was not convinced that this was the best course of action to deal with its enormous debt and budget deficit. But economic stagnation eventually drove Mubarak to consider the advice of liberal technocrats and accept an IMF-World Bank program of structural adjustment in 1991 (Wurzel 2009).

At least one-third of state-owned businesses were privatized, at least partially, between 1993 and 1999 (Langohr 2005, 199). New banking laws and trade liberalization was also enacted in the early 1990s, and lucrative state-owned assets were sold off at below-market rates. The primary beneficiaries of these were a small influential group of business magnates, including friends and relatives of regime members (Wurzel 2009). The emphasis on efficiency that was part of the structural adjustment paradigm led to large-scale layoffs and a weakening of workers'

bargaining power. While well-connected tycoons were reaping the benefits of economic liberalization, poverty reportedly jumped from 21 percent in 1990 to 44 percent in 1996 (Langohr 2005, 200). Anti-corruption and bureaucracy-reduction efforts did little to reduce the inequality and fraud in the system, and major scandals involving high-ranking bureaucrats and government officials tarnished the regime's reputation and threatened the stability that was vital to the regime's survival.

The hybrid economic system Mubarak had inherited from Sadat was flawed, but security concerns took priority. When Mubarak took power in 1981, he had pledged to tackle the rampant profiteering that had resulted from Sadat's *infitah* policies (Waterbury 1985). But Mubarak ultimately maintained many of Sadat's policies, with the goal of maintaining stability, "a euphemism for the power of the ruling authoritarian regime" (Wurzel 2009, 97). One writer sagely predicted that "the high-handed security measures that kept the public away from [Sadat's] funeral augur a period of frustration and violence" (Reed 1981, 433).

The government's *raison d'être* was strongly questioned in the early 1990s when its ability to provide even the most basic public good, security, was directly challenged by resurgent militant radical Islamist groups.²⁸ After Sadat's assassination, Mubarak had followed a policy of careful appeasement, permitting non-militant Islamic organizations to function and even allowing known members of the Muslim Brotherhood to run for office (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999). The continued growth of Islamist private voluntary organizations which provided a number of social services such as education, job-training, health care and even day care,

²⁸ Security, according to Rotberg (2003), is the most important political good. Weak states are unable to provide adequate security, and the lack of security usually results in high levels of political and criminal violence, which increases the chance of state failure. Although a relatively nonviolent state might indicate strength, Rotberg pointed out that many weak states are ruled by despots who are able to control discord through the use of coercion and therefore the states appear deceptively stable and strong (Rotberg 2003).

reflected the growing popularity of the Islamist movement, but even more so, it underscored the government's inability to maintain the social contract (D. J. Sullivan 1990).

After he began his third term as president, the state was in crisis mode. Mubarak came to power when President Anwar Sadat was assassinated (ostensibly) by members of the militant Islamist Egyptian Jihad while he was watching a military parade on October 6, 1981. Indigenous extremist Islamist organizations like Takfir wal Hijra, Al Gama'a al Islamiyya and al GiHad al Islami al Masri had been challenging the state for over a decade. By the 1990s "Islamists had escalated their attacks on the regime, carrying out violent acts claiming the lives of many senior police officers, targeting tourist sites and culminating in assassination attempts on high profile government figures (S. Ismail 1995, n.p.)". The Islamist attacks did not gain popular support for the Islamist movement, but they did manage to destabilize the regime. Fear of attacks severely reduced tourist income and the unstable environment was unfavorable for the economic liberalization policies adopted by the regime.

Mubarak's response to the challenge posed by the Islamists was to call for a national dialogue. Despite the fact that this national dialogue was meant to begin a period of political reform that would engage the opposition, the 1990's brought increased presidentialism and a reversal of the liberalization that began in the 1980's (Brownlee 2002). By the late 1990's, many Egyptians had given up hope that the changes first ushered in by the 1952 revolution would ever bring a revolution of the society (Tessler 2002). According to Brownlee (2002), in 2002, participation and pluralism were at their lowest point since Mubarak became president in 1981. The skepticism of the general public was shared by foreign donors, who, at the turn of the century, saw little evidence of political liberalization, but mounting evidence of human rights abuses. Granted, there were officially 17 political parties in 2002, but these were viewed by

outsiders as a pressure regulator more than evidence of meaningful liberalization. But when these donors would come to Egypt to meet with President Mubarak and eventually bring up the subject of human rights and political reform, Mubarak would unfailingly divert attention from his own regime's flaws with a justification that strict measures were necessary to prevent an Islamist takeover (Zakaria 2004).

The government needed to find a way to combat the rising popularity of the Islamists. One way they attempted to pacify the public was through "coerced charity" (King 2009, 14). Coerced charity was meant to help the Mubarak government "maintain a patina of continued populism" (King 2009, 125). Members of the economic elite who were members of the ruling party and often members of parliament, were 'encouraged' to participate in social works such as building schools or supporting charity hospitals. This, along with increased state control of the media, served to partially obscure the fact that the economic elite were essentially directing government policies in their favor by painting the new economic elite as champions of the poor. Mubarak, who had long scorned the International Monetary Fund [IMF], and even once referred to the IMF as a "quack doctor", was suddenly enthusiastically supportive of its agenda (King 2009, 121).

In 2007, the IMF named Egypt as the best reformer in the world for changing regulations to make it easier for business to be established and flourish (The World Bank 2007). But at the same time, the percent of Egyptians living in poverty was growing. According to a recent study by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics [CAPMAS], poverty grew by two percent from 2004/2005 until 2008/2009 (CAPMAS 2011). Clearly, pro-poor reform was not occurring at the same level or speed at which liberalizing measures were taking place and civil society was growing more and more concerned. Despite the government's attempts to suppress

criticism, civil society began to increasingly voice its grievances in the opposition press and through organizing workers strikes and sit-ins (Handoussa 2008).

The government's reaction was rhetorically appropriate, but woefully inconsequential. In the preface to the 2008 Human Development Report for Egypt, the Minister for Economic Development called for a new social contract "that would better engage citizens to help make and shape those public policies that affect them most" (Handoussa 2008, vii). That same year the ruling party made poverty the priority at their annual convention, but it appears to have done little good in changing the attitudes of its most powerful members. In 2010, the head of Egypt's Central Auditing Agency, Gawdat El Malt, reported that poverty had risen from 20% in 2008 to 23.4% in 2010, and inflation had exploded from 5% in 2005 to 16.2% in 2009. Two elite members of the ruling party, Ahmed Ezz and Youssef Boutros-Ghali, took issue with El Malt's assessment and questioned the reliability of El Malt's sources.²⁹ Boutros-Ghali mockingly retorted, "It has become [an] annual tradition. El Malt has become fond of launching attacks on the government and its ministers just to be the focus of newspaper headlines and television screens," (Hassan 2010).

El Malt argued that the government had "lost the confidence of people because it doesn't care about poor Egyptians." He accurately predicted that the people would grow increasingly angry with the government's arrogant attitude and this would trigger protests (Hassan 2010). Egyptians were growing increasingly frustrated. Despite remarkable growth, the gap between the rich and poor was continuing to grow. A recently leaked secret U.S. Embassy cable noted that the high rate of growth had not brought benefit to the most impoverished Egypt, but that they had

²⁹ It is significant that both Youssef Boutros-Ghali and Ahmed Ezz were indicted on corruption charges shortly after Mubarak stepped down in February 2011. Youssef Boutros-Ghali had fled the country just before Mubarak stepped down. He was found guilty *in absentia* in June 2011 and sentenced to 30 years imprisonment. Ahmed Ezz was awaiting trial as of August 2011 (BBC News 2011).

seen an increase in extreme poverty and job losses (Scobey, Scenesetter for President Mubarak's Visit 2009). According to a World Bank study, the Gini Coefficient for Egypt grew from 28.67 in 2005 to 30.46 in 2008 (Marotta, et al. 2011, 12). Though that study argues that economic development had been pro-poor, it also shows that more Egyptians suffered “deep falls in welfare” than those who had a “big jump ahead in welfare” (Marotta, et al. 2011, 19). In addition to income inequality, there was growing inequality of opportunity. CAPMAS statistics show that poor people had higher levels of unemployment and illiteracy, and lower levels of university education than among the non-poor (CAPMAS 2011).

The government's seemingly willful inability to curb the growing inequality led to widespread and profound hopelessness. Even citizens dedicated to improving the lives of their fellow citizens were frustrated. The government's insecurity and inefficiency in delivering public goods led it to view non-governmental organizations [NGOs] as competitors. NGOs could not be too successful or they would garner unwanted attention from a government seeking to capitalize on NGO gains in order to monopolize the market for citizen loyalty (Page 2011).³⁰ The government's increasing control over civil society was stifling NGO innovation.

Not only did the government stifle innovation in its ‘competitors’, it seemed unable or unwilling to try creative approaches in its own policy making. The team who wrote Egypt's Human Development Report for 2010, led by an advisor for the government, repeated the conventional reason for the lack of social mobility. The problem was not blamed on a lack of political will or insufficient funding for innovative educational programs. The problem was not tied to the economic policies that invariably favored the economic elite. The problem, so the report claimed, was because the educational system was not producing students that met the

³⁰ This was especially true if the NGO was receiving funds from foreign governments or institutions (Carapico 2002).

needs of Egyptian business owners (Handoussa 2010). While the mismatch between education and employment does need to be addressed, the government's solution is cliché and unconvincing, not to mention oversimplified. When the labor supply consistently exceeds the number of jobs being created and unemployment among the youth hovers in the 80 percent range (Bilgin and Kilicarslan 2008), the problem requires radical changes, not a reiteration of timeworn policy statements.

One of the messages of the revolution has been that the old solutions are no longer adequate. A primary challenge facing the new government is job creation and inclusive economic growth. Egypt's past experience has shown that high level of economic growth alone is not necessarily a solution to economic problems. Nor is this type of growth desirable for the establishment of democracy. In fact, high levels of income can actually impede social and political development (Deneulin and Shahani 2009).

In fact, economic stability and equality have been shown to be more important to the maintenance of democracy than economic growth alone. Inequality and unemployed educated youth can create instability (Huntington 1968; Lipset 1985). Instability makes it almost impossible for a government to maintain legitimacy through democratic means. It can also diminish the ability to demand compliance with state rules and require participation in state programs.

In the face of low mass compliance and participation, the regime relies on the elite for durability. Inter-elite negotiation and compromises help maintain crucial elite buy-in, especially as external expectations for political liberalization grows. By accommodating elite aspirations, particularly economic aspirations, Egypt's leaders have been able to assure their preferences are reinforced. "As autocratic incumbents learned to garb themselves in elections and thereby

entrenched themselves further, the trend toward electoral democracy slowed” (Brownlee 2007, 16). In fact, many scholars would argue that there was no slowing, or even reversal of democratization, because there was no democratization in the first place and the much trumpeted liberalization of Arab regimes had merely been a façade (Aliboni and Guazzone 2004).

Explaining Mubarak’s Crisis of Compliance from a State-Society Perspective

Before Mubarak was forced from power in February 2011, Egypt was characterized by some as a strong state (Migdal 1988). But a close analysis of the state’s ability to maintain social control over the last 60 years makes this characterization seem questionable. The record of Egypt’s last three presidents displays clear indications of a state repeatedly in crisis.³¹ Nasser can be described as having earned a great deal of legitimacy during his years in power, but shortly after he died, that legitimacy was questioned. Sadat never enjoyed widespread legitimacy, though he did earn respect from external forces and a small, but powerful, cadre of domestic forces. Mubarak, who ruled for longer than any other Egyptian president, also had less legitimacy than any other Egyptian president. His expulsion from power in February 2011 is emphatic confirmation of his inability to maintain even the most basic level of social control: compliance.

Although it is too early to tell what changes the January 25th revolution will bring to Egypt, one thing is certain: it has changed the character of political discourse in Egypt. The millions who joined the protests throughout the country idea challenged the *status quo*, where elite ‘experts’ could disregard the desires of the masses or establish policies without including

³¹ This study uses the term crisis to refer to a “crisis with transformative potential”, not a “phase of limited instability”, a distinction emphasized by Held (1987, 229). Such a crisis is one that poses a threat to the foundations of the political, economic and/or social system.

stakeholders from the masses in a civil dialogue. During and after the protests, many Egyptians declared that this was the first time they felt a sense of ownership and responsibility for the future of their country.

For many, the decision to join the protest was made for primarily economic reasons.³² For too long, the country's economic growth had been benefitting too few, and the majority were facing a rapidly rising cost of living with no hope of influencing the minds of Egypt's decision makers. This is not to say that the Egyptian government did not attempt to reduce poverty. In fact, a number of reforms were enacted to improve the quality of life for the poorest Egyptians and protect them from the effects of structural adjustment programs demanded by the International Monetary Fund [IMF] and World Bank. For example, in the last 50 years, the Egyptian government established subsidies, pensions, the Productive Families Project, the Social Bank, the Social Fund for Development and the Social Solidarity program. However, over half of the people benefiting from these programs were not poor (Attia 2008).

The failure of its economic policies resulted in a crisis of compliance for the Egyptian state. This crisis was building for a long time. In the early 1990s, many Egyptians felt that Mubarak's regime was "illegitimate, always [had] been, and always [would] be" (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999, 129). Not only did Mubarak fail to gain legitimacy during his rule, he was scarcely able to maintain social control even at the more basic levels of compliance and participation. But this failure cannot simply be blamed on his will, nor solely on his inadequate policies or reliance on corrupt officials. To begin with, the leader of even an authoritarian state cannot alone determine the course a state will pursue. Leaders must strike a balance between

³² A 2009 public opinion survey found that 73% of Egyptians named economic problems (unemployment, the cost of living and poverty) the most serious type of problems facing Egypt. It also found that Egyptians felt that unemployment, poverty and corruption were the top three areas which the government needed to improve first (Sullivan, et al. 2009, 6-7).

opposing coalitions without alienating one group, suppress subversive movements while avoiding provoking dangerous confrontations (Migdal 1988), and mobilize the public behind whatever plans are determined to be in the state's best interests (Migdal 2001). But, the majority of Egyptians simply tolerated the government, and even their limited tolerance for the state's restrictive and ineffective policies was finite. Exacerbating the situation was the growth of non-state actors involved in providing social services creating competition for the public's loyalty and support (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999), which made the government's rhetoric of reform seem ever more hollow and insincere.

Mubarak's crisis of compliance was due to the growing weakness of the Egyptian state. In 2009 Tareq Abbas wrote in *Al Masry al Youm* (the Egyptian Daily) that, although living conditions were not the worst Egyptians had ever suffered from, Egyptians had never seen such a high level of brutality and criminality. He blamed it on the disgraceful educational and cultural institutions, the high level of corruption, nepotism and injustice, as well as the lack of a good role model for society (El-Bey 2009, n.p.). Under Mubarak, Egypt experienced all of the characteristics of a weak or failing state: regular violations of the rule of law, increasing crime rate, appallingly widespread corruption and inadequate public facilities and infrastructure (Rotberg 2003). The following section provides a detailed analysis of these characteristics in order to establish a context for the analysis of education reforms in the past decades.

Rule of Law

Domestic and international human rights organizations repeatedly censured the Mubarak regime for failing to curtail the human rights violations committed by the security forces of the state. Reports of torture and excess were widespread, including the use of torture on the family

and friends of suspected criminals. There are accusations of rape, electrocution, beatings and even death at the hands of the police or state security.

While torture in Egypt has typically been used against political dissidents, in recent years it has become epidemic ... In the few cases where officers have been prosecuted for torture or ill-treatment, charges were often inappropriately lenient and penalties inadequate. This lack of effective public accountability and transparency has led to a culture of impunity (Human Rights Watch 2004, n.p.).

Much of the blame for this culture of impunity has to do with the continuation of the State of Emergency declared by Mubarak after he took power following Sadat's assassination in 1981. Under Emergency Law, the regime had wide ranging powers that effectively made Egypt's constitution irrelevant. In the fall of 2003, the government pledged to make some changes to reduce the scope of the Emergency Law, including abolishing one of the notorious security courts. However, most analysts observed that the most powerful and problematic provisions remained in effect, and accurately predicted that little progress would be made towards enhancing the rule of law (Ionides and Al Malky 2003). In 2005, Mubarak once again promised to amend the Emergency Law to restrict its application only to suspected terrorists and drug dealers and to allow for greater freedoms and respect for the constitution, but instead, things got much worse over the next few years.

In 2007, constitutional amendments were passed that gave some of the most egregious elements of the Emergency Law permanent status in the constitution. Amnesty International called these amendments the "greatest erosion of human rights in 26 years" that threatened to firmly root "the long-standing system of abuse" and "give the misuse of those powers a bogus legitimacy" (Amnesty International 2007, 1). The amendments cancelled judicial election

monitoring and gave the president the authority to dissolve parliament or order a military trial for any citizen *suspected* of terrorist acts. Another amendment prohibited the formation of political parties based on religion, gender or ethnicity. Further restricting the limits of freedom, the amendment created “a presidentially appointed committee” which was given the mandate to review all applications for new parties and approve or deny the applications (Freedom House 2011, n.p.). These amendments were meant to rein in the popular Muslim Brotherhood who had won 20% of the seats in the 2005 parliamentary elections, but they also ensured that no other realistic opponents to the president would be allowed to form parties.

The years 2007 and 2008 were also bad ones for freedom of the press. In 2007, one day before the world celebrated World Press Freedom day, a London-based journalist was allegedly imprisoned by Egyptian authorities for critically speaking out about Egypt’s numerous human rights violations and endemic torture (Global Integrity 2011). A few months later, seven other journalists were wrongfully imprisoned by the government. In 2008, this trend continued with well-known newspaper editor Ibrahim Eissa being found guilty and sentenced to six months in jail for writing an article that “fuelled malicious rumours and scared away foreign investors” by discussing the implications of President Mubarak’s ill health (C. Fraser 2008, n.p.). But in a surprise move, President Mubarak, likely in response to foreign pressure, but certainly in a bid to improve his public image, publicly pardoned Ibrahim Eissa in October 2008. Media professionals were not convinced by this tactic. They had seen far too many proclamations of supposed goodwill in the past to believe that the government’s motives and *modus operandi* had really changed.

In 2010 their suspicions were confirmed by another series of restrictions passed by the government. This new campaign was widely regarded as an attempt to control media coverage of

the upcoming elections and to quiet talk about Gamal Mubarak's future role in the country (Diab 2011), with new restrictions on the use of mobile networks to share news and the closing of a number of channels and satellite networks, ostensibly due to a failure to renew their licenses (Leyne 2010). More likely it was due to the fact the satellite channels were a primary source of criticism of the regime. One study found that 40% of Egyptians relied on these channels for news about official corruption, twice as much as local television and word of mouth (Sullivan, et al. 2009, 15).

The regime's disregard for the rule of law and the pervasive culture of impunity among the state security forces eventually led to its demise. In June 2010, two undercover police officers entered an internet café and began to question a young man named Khalid Said. The official story was that they were looking for drug dealers, but others allege that Khalid had managed to video tape these two officers conducting a drug deal. In the course of the investigation Khalid died and the Interior Ministry tried to pass off his death as a result of choking on a package of marijuana. Numerous witnesses confirmed what his family suspected when they were finally allowed to collect his body at the morgue; he had been beaten so brutally that his skull was shattered, his jaw was dislocated, his nose was broken and his body was covered with cuts and bruises.

When local youth went to the police station to protest this injustice, they were met with more injustice. The police shut off the street lights, set attack dogs and security forces on the group and arrested a number of the protesters (El Nadim Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence 2010). The regime's intransigence inflamed Egyptians from Alexandria all the way to the United Arab Emirates. Google executive Wael Ghonim set up an anonymous Facebook group to rally Egyptians around this cause and to tell the regime "We are all Khalid Said" and

we have had enough of your oppression.”³³ To evade regime restrictions on protests, thousands of Egyptians young and old and from all walks of life lined up along the Alexandria Corniche and elsewhere in Egypt, taking care to stand at least a meter away from the next protester. They stood in silence, prayed or read, but their message was loud and clear: Egyptians had reached a breaking point, reflected in this statement by leading Egyptian human rights activists:

We can no longer call for appropriate legal procedures to be undertaken... The country is not ruled by the law... The offenders are the same people who are in charge of the lives of citizens... Its parliament is incapable of questioning the Minister of Interior... and its laws are frozen by means of an emergency state that clearly defines security as the ultimate power in the country, granting immunity to whoever serves the regime (El Nadim Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence 2010, n.p.).

Revolution had been averted in the past because the state’s coercive apparatus was able to “face down popular disaffection and survive significant illegitimacy” (Bellin 2005, 25). But the government was in dangerous territory; “denial is too strong of a word for the Egyptian government’s response to transnational pressures to improve its human rights record. Indifference better captures the passivity that has been a hallmark of its actions” (Hicks 2006, 85). In 2010, one author warned that, despite a massive internal security force of nearly 2 million people, the situation was untenable and likely spin out of control in the near future. This prediction was echoed by Egyptian constitutional law expert Dr. Yehya al Gammal who went so far as to assert on live television that the state was heading for a major crisis (Osman 2010, 194). That crisis became a reality in 2011. The threat of force lost much of its power when Egyptians

³³ Wael Ghoneim’s identity remained a secret until he was arrested in January 2011. He had left his job and family in the United Arab Emirates to participate in the anti-regime protests taking place in Tahrir Square. Upon his release he became a rallying point

saw that the Tunisians were able to overthrow their own entrenched autocrat by taking to the streets *en masse* in January 2011. After years of promising to rescind the Emergency Law and reestablish constitutional rule of law, Mubarak was forced out of power in February 2011 without ever following through on that pledge.³⁴

Crime Rate & Corruption

Before the former Minister of the Interior abruptly ordered the entire police force off the streets on January 28, 2011, one thing that was extremely noticeable in Egypt was a high police presence on the streets of Egypt. Police conscripts³⁵ were posted throughout the city serving as human traffic lights, security monitors in affluent residential areas and in neighborhoods housing embassies, banks, government buildings or near the homes or offices of important public figures. The military also had a strong presence on the streets of the major cities, and there was generally a general feeling of safety even after dark throughout the 1990s and early 2000s.

Yet that feeling of safety had been noticeably decreasing in the years that led up to the 2011 revolution. In 2009 one Egyptian writer proclaimed to feel “as if he slept and woke up to find himself in a different land, [with different] air, people, language and behavior” (El-Bey 2009, n.p.). He noted that crime, particularly violent crimes, had never been so common. Statistics from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime confirm this disturbing trend [See Table 3.1 below]. Sexual harassment, which was virtually unheard of in the 1970s, had become a daily occurrence for at least half of Egyptian women, and on at least two occasions mobs of

³⁴ The military junta did repeal the Emergency Law shortly after taking over, however it has been a largely hollow victory since civilians are still being tried in military courts for minor acts such as ‘insulting’ the army. Moreover, they reinstated the Emergency Law in September 2011 after an attack on the Israeli embassy.

³⁵ All Egyptian men between the ages of 18 and 30 are required to serve in the armed forces for 1 to 3 years. Those who are deemed fit, but not fit for military service, are reportedly conscripted by the police.

men and boys violently attacked women in broad daylight in the middle of Egypt's largest city. Stories of people being robbed and even murdered in their own homes seemed to be growing more common in the last ten years. Although violent crimes are still rare, statistics show that they are gradually becoming more common. With the exception of drug-related crimes, reports of all types of criminal cases grew between 2003 and 2009. The most startling statistic shows that homicide cases have nearly tripled since 2003.

Table 3.1 Rate of Crimes Reported per 100,000 people

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Assault	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	n/a
Burglary	4.5	5.1	4.9	4.7	5.1	5.6	n/a
Drug-Related Crimes	40.2	35.0	31.7	37.8	38.0	38.0	n/a
Homicide	.45	.45	.47	.56	.62	.84	1.2
Kidnapping	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	n/a
Motor-Vehicle Theft	1.9	2.3	2.3	2.6	2.9	3.1	n/a
Robbery	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.9	n/a
Sexual Assault	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	n/a
Theft	40.5	42.6	43.5	44.5	45.0	46.7	n/a

Source: Homicide statistics are from UN, 2010; other data is from UNODC, 2011.

The data related to corruption highlight the state's inability to ensure compliance [See Table 3.2]. Compared to the rates of other crimes, fraud and corruption are clearly more widespread. But interestingly, they are also reported much less frequently. On average, 30 percent of Egyptians report incidents to the police or other authorities, but only a few percent report consumer fraud or corruption (UNODC 2005, 50).

Table 3.2 Statistics Related to Private and Public Corruption

	Frequency	Percentage	% reported to the police	% reported to other
Consumer fraud	1012	32.4	4.0	2.3
Corruption	554	17.7	1.3	1.3

Source: UNODC, 2005.

One reason for this low level of reporting is that Egyptians feel like the authorities cannot or will not do anything about this type of crime (Sullivan, et al. 2009). The obvious reason for that is because one of the most common types of corruption they encounter is when policemen and government officials directly or indirectly ask them for bribes (UNODC 2009, 3-4). Although only a very small percentage of Egyptians admitted to paying bribes in a national survey, many of those who did admit it said they believed it was a normal act done by the majority of the public (Sullivan, et al. 2009). Another survey found that to be a realistic perception. Nearly half of the small business owners that were surveyed said they had needed to bribe someone in order to get their licenses and nearly one third had needed to continue to bribe officials in order to continue operating (Sullivan, et al. 2009, 17).

Corruption is not limited to bribes given to low level police or government officials. As one report published by the Muslim Brotherhood described it, “Egypt’s state under Mubarak’s regime is an embodiment of corruption” (Kifaya 2006, 3). This statement indicates a primary reason why the elite did not to make any radical changes that would increase compliance: they benefit greatly from the corrupt environment. “Through a combination of patronage and graft [the regime] is able to secure overwhelming victories in electoral contests at both the local and national levels” (Rutherford 2008, 238). Stories of NDP candidates offering money and other

goods to voters were widespread. Every election cycle brought a new round of large signs with fawning messages of support for NDP candidates, especially the ever popular “Yes! Mubarak” signs that consistently plastered the country during the presidential “elections” where not a single opposition sign or “No Mubarak” sign could be seen. These signs were an obvious ploy to gain favor with the candidate; often the name of the sign’s sponsor was bigger than that of the candidate.

Members of Mubarak’s family and inner circle of advisors are known to have benefitted financially from their connections. Former Minister of Finance, Youssef Boutros-Ghali, and NDP party leader Ahmed Ezz were indicted on corruption charges shortly after Mubarak stepped down in February 2011. (BBC News 2011). On October 17, 2011, the public prosecutor announced that Swiss authorities had notified Egypt of \$340 million in assets owned by Hosni Mubarak’s two sons. In addition the prosecutor announced that \$4 billion in assets had been linked to Hosni Mubarak’s close friend, the prominent and infamously corrupt businessman Hussein Salem (Elyan 2011, n.p.).

“In 2002 alone, as many as 48 high-ranking officials -- including former cabinet ministers, provincial governors and MPs -- were convicted of influence peddling, profiteering and embezzlement” (El Din 2004). Three bills were introduced to the People’s Assembly in 2004, because the existing law had been deemed ineffective in holding politicians accountable. As for the private sector, the Administrative Control Authority (ACA) had been actively combating corruption. In 1995 harsh sentences were passed on 15 businessmen and 16 bankers involved in embezzling LE1.256 billion (at that time, approximately \$3.8 billion) of public funds (El Din 2002). And in 2002 the ACA carried out a successful sting operation on a corrupt media executive who was accepting payment in exchange for time on the public airwaves (Khattab

2002). Nevertheless, despite its efforts in combating corruption, Egypt dropped from 54 in 2002 to 63 in 2004 on Transparency International's list of most corrupt states (1 being least corrupt) (Khattab 2002; El Din 2002).

In fact, since it began monitoring the level of corruption and the efficacy of Egypt's anti-corruption institutions in 2006, Global Integrity (2010, n.p.) observed "a slow and steady decline in the country's anti-corruption framework" that has been intensified by Egypt's generally weak governance. Corruption is so pervasive in Egypt that it touches all aspects of governance, but perhaps nowhere as seriously as in the next factor of state strength to be discussed: facilities and infrastructure.

Facilities/Infrastructure

The Egyptian state has been unsuccessful in providing quality facilities for its citizens in ordinary circumstances and inept at preventing and responding to disasters when they occur. In emergency situations, such as after the 1992 earthquake, the 1994 flooding in Upper Egypt and the 2006 rockslide in Duweiqā (a low income neighborhood in Cairo) government emergency response teams were conspicuously late. After the earthquakes of 1992 and 1994, Islamist groups arrived on the scene first, making the government look woefully inadequate (Weaver 1999). In 2006 the army had to step in because the residents of Duweiqā became so angry with the government's poor response that violent clashes erupted. After the dust cleared, security forces demolished homes and began forcibly moving families to locations far from their friends, family and jobs (Amer 2009). Some whose homes had been demolished were still waiting for replacement residences four years later (Egypt News 2010). And some residents who said they had been promised public housing were living in makeshift homes because they were unable to

afford the bribes necessary to claim a neighborhood apartment from the 10,000 that were completed in July 2010. They claim that those homes had been wrongfully allocated to people from outside the neighborhood (Carr 2011).

The residents of this neighborhood are not the only ones to suffer from the lack of safe and adequate housing. Affordable housing has been an issue that the government also has had little success dealing with. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the government tried to encourage private investors to build more affordable housing. Instead, Egypt saw a huge surge in luxury compounds, especially in the newer cities on the outskirts of Cairo (U.S. Embassy Cairo 2009). There were public and private low-income compounds built in these areas, but for most part, the demand for affordable housing far surpassed supply. Moreover, most poor people could not afford the transportation needed to live in these outlying areas, so some public housing went unused despite the huge demand. Some homes were given to people who did not qualify for affordable housing, but used connections or bribes to acquire homes that they would rent out. More troubling is the all too common sight of buildings with illegal floors and additions that are ignored by local building inspectors – until a building collapses. Tragedy is an all too common theme in Egyptian lives, and much of it can be attributed to corruption and regime negligence.

The night of February 3, 2006 will likely be remembered as a turning point in the attitude Egyptians had to their president. That night, over 1,000 Egyptians died in a disaster at sea that could have been prevented if government had enforced its own regulations. An overcrowded, dilapidated ferry belonging to MP Mamdouh Ismail, one of Hosni Mubarak's friends, caught fire and capsized. This was Egypt's fourth major maritime disaster (Rashed 2006) and the third one involving a boat owned by Ismail's company (Shipwrecks of Egypt n.d.). Despite a travel ban, Ismail and his son managed to flee the country. The court later absolved them of guilt, but asked

them to pay restitution to the victims' families. They found the captain criminally negligent for his actions, but a transcript of the ship's communication recorder showed that Ismail refused the captain's request to turn around because of a fire on board (O. Nasr 2008).

This tragedy could have been averted if the ship's crew had been trained properly, if the company had an emergency procedures plan and if the boat had not been modified in such a way that it should have been considered illegal by Egyptian standards (Marsden 2006). But Ismail had the right connections, and in Egypt connections often mean that standards are inapplicable.³⁶ "For many Egyptians, the sinking of the overcrowded and unseaworthy ferry has come to symbolize the corruption and cronyism that mingles between the government of President Hosni Mubarak and well-connected businessmen" (Fleishman 2009, n.p.).

Later that month the People's Assembly was the site of heated debates and very pointed accusations against a number of regime figures whose corruption were seen as the number one cause of the Salam 98 ferry disaster (El Din 2009). This incident further damaged the regime's reputation and highlighted the way corruption has severely impacted the state's ability to provide safe and adequate public facilities and infrastructure. This reputation has also been damaged by the state's incompetent reaction to natural and man-made disasters. After a serious train crash in 2006, parliament members were enraged by the state's poor response and called for the immediate creation of a crisis-management team. The problem is that this team had actually been established years earlier under the leadership of the prime minister, but it was "so ineffective even MPs [were] ignorant of its existence" (Rashed 2006, n.p.).

Egypt's reaction in that crash exposed two vital problems in Egypt's infrastructure. The first is that the government lacks an emergency plan and either is delayed in reacting or comes

³⁶ Aside from being a member of parliament and a close friend of the president, the ship's owner also happened to be related to the owner of a state-licensed ship inspection company, which explains how the Panamanian registered ship that had been rejected by European authorities managed to get clearance to operate on the Red Sea.

up with short term, usually poorly thought out, solutions. The reaction to the Swine Flu is a good example of this lack of crisis-management. Though the government should be commended for its cooperation with international organizations in the worldwide outbreak of swine flu, its local reactions were imprudent at best, leading to major delays in the school year and even worse, the unnecessary and inhumane culling of thousands of citizens' pigs. Those pigs not only provided a source of income and food for their owners, they played a vital role in the trash recycling system run by their owners.

The second problem is that the government fails to take the necessary corrective action until it is too late, even if there have been dire warnings issued. For years engineers and residents warned the government that the Duweiqia neighborhood was at serious risk of being destroyed by a rockslide from the nearby Moqattam hills. There had been a rockslide in nearby and 1993, and all signs were showing that it would likely happen again. Official reports were filed with the relevant authorities that the lack of a sewer system were causing water leakage that was further compromising the ground below the neighborhood. Complaints were made that nearby building projects (one with connections to Gamal Mubarak) were exacerbating an already dangerous situation. Then, on the morning of September 6, 2008, the cliffs crumbled, killing tens of Egyptians and leaving hundreds more homeless.

Even when the regime did take action, it was often done in a way to garner approval while failing to adequately address the underlying problems. The railway system had been the subject of great criticism and ministers of transport had requested money for upgrading the tracks and signal systems for years. Between 1995 and 2006 there were 20 serious train crashes in Egypt (Rashed 2006). At least 800 had been killed since 1992, though the number could likely be more, given that one crash in 2002 reportedly killed as many as 1000. The official count was

around 370, but these 3rd class trains are notoriously overcrowded and there would be no passenger manifest for this type of travel to confirm the number. What is known is that fire had been burning in a rear car for two hours before the captain was notified and many people had apparently jumped to their deaths.

Train disasters in Egypt have been related to problems with tracks or signals, a lack of proper training and supervision as well as mechanical failure. But it was not until another serious accident in 2007 that the government finally pledged LE 9 billion to modernize railway system, with some of the money going to renew tracks but nothing for signals or new coaches and no mention of improved training and monitoring. Yet a large chunk of that money was dedicated to building two new lines and expanding a third, even though 85% of the signals were still manual and needed to be replaced and the passenger coaches were dangerously decrepit and lacking any sort of emergency facilities or emergency notification system. A World Bank grant of \$2 billion was given to supplement the government budget and the government pledged LE 3 billion (\$540 million) for replacing remaining manual signals and Arab countries pledged to support the purchase of new engines but even then there was no budget for modern coaches with emergency signals, just refurbishment – not upgrading - of the old inferior coaches.

The government's stated objectives for budgeting the money for the railway system were to increase safety and service standards (Hughes 2007). But with so much money being earmarked for expansion of the system, one cannot escape the conclusion that the money had a third, more accurate purpose of boosting the appearance of regime competence. A parallel can be drawn to the education reforms chosen by the government which also focused on expanding access before improving quality. Another pattern often seen in infrastructure development is the undertaking of projects that disproportionately favor the upper class or provide lucrative business

opportunities for regime cronies, because these are the people upon whom the regime relies for its support. For example, a series of tunnels was built to improve the traffic flow on a road leading downtown from the upper class neighborhood of Heliopolis, where interestingly enough, Mubarak and much of his family resides. Granted, this road leads from the airport, and makes a better welcome for foreign tourists, but the main beneficiaries of this very expensive public works project were the residents of Heliopolis. Another recently built high speed toll road leads from outside Heliopolis and the middle class neighborhood of Nasr City to the beach city of Ain Sukhna. The primary beneficiaries of this major project were wealthy Egyptians who owned property in Ain Sukhna, or farther south, in El Gouna or Hurghada.

A fourth, and more insidious, purpose for some reform choices is the enrichment of regime cronies. The nexus between corruption and infrastructure development is often flagrant, but sometimes more subtle. One of Egypt's major faces of corruption is Ahmed Ezz, the owner of Ezz Steel and the former head of the People's Assembly budget committee. Because of his influence, he was able to buy a majority stake in the Alexandria Iron and Steel Company *after* the government paid for extensive upgrades (Al Ahram Weekly 2011). His influence on the budget committee also likely explains the decision to earmark a large part of the railway budget for replacing the (steel) rails and adding a clause that they would be replaced on a regular basis.

Aside from a sinkhole that appeared in 2009 during construction of third subway line, the Cairo metro is actually an impressive feat and one of the Mubarak regime's greater achievements. However, it too is marred by poor choices made to benefit regime cronies. When the second subway line was built, a decision was made to decorate a number of the stations with garish tile work. This tile work was the "masterpiece" of the flamboyant Farouk el Gohary,

another well-connected Egypt with ties to the Mubarak family.³⁷ Given the tendency for Cairo's architecture to be either decrepit Art Nouveau or dusty Soviet-style architecture, simple concrete stations like those on the first subway line would like have been more than adequate. And given the often overwhelming heat and humidity in Cairo, it is safe to say that riders would have preferred decent ventilations systems on the world's busiest subways cars over garish tile work.

These examples show a regime that was out of touch with the people. Mubarak and his wife were shielded from many of the problems facing the society. Whenever Mubarak was due to visit a neighborhood, cleaning crews would descend a few days beforehand to ensure that the streets were clean. Any problems with paving would be immediately rectified; even problems that had been ignored for years. Sometimes trucks full of plants and trees would be brought in just ahead of Mubarak's visit, only to come back immediately after Mubarak's visit and collect the vegetation so it could be used elsewhere. Traffic was blocked well ahead of time when either Mubarak was due to travel down any road, allowing them to pass by with no delay, but leaving thousands of Egyptians seething and once even causing a number of high school seniors to be late for their year-end exams that determine college placement. When notified that his motorcade had caused those students to be late for this future-determining exam, Mubarak's reaction was not to look for a more efficient option for his travel, but to send the prime minister to make a point of informing the students of Mubarak's benevolence in allowing those students to retake the exam. One semi-official newspaper described it as "a humanitarian gesture by Father Mubarak" (Agence France Press 2008).

³⁷ Mr. el Gohary was known for his showy style, both in his personal dress (he favored loud, large bow-ties for formal occasions) and in his architectural style and interior design. For a sample the projects that Mr. el Gohary has completed, see Arch Net (n.d.). Many of the projects listed are government-funded projects; one of the projects listed her is the residence of Suzanne (Thabet) Mubarak's cousin.

After national disasters, the Mubaraks often visited Egyptians in the hospitals, but they were shielded from the reality. Getting approval for treatment in a decent public hospital often required bribes or special connections; sometimes even both. Patients in even the best public hospitals often had no nurses to care for them, unless they had connections or could afford generous tips. Even in the top university hospitals, rooms often would not meet international sanitary standards. But the Mubaraks would not know this since they would either be treated abroad or at the well-equipped army hospital outside the city.

The Mubaraks' ignorance was not only due to the enormous efforts to shield them from reality. There was abundant evidence that they were willfully living in denial. In the late 1990s, a major television documentary was done on the state of public hospitals in Egypt. The findings were shocking: filthy wards, patients languishing in the halls waiting for treatment, severe shortages of supplies, accident victims dying because there was no ambulance to transport them, or no hospital willing or able to admit them. More recently, there was a story about five premature babies who died because power went out, and there was no backup generator to run the incubators. Although there are some adequate medical facilities, some provisions for free health care – in particular immunization and maternal health clinics – there is a shocking inequality between urban and rural facilities, and the level of care given in public hospitals is far below that given even in the most basic private hospitals (WHO 2011). Yet despite all of this evidence that the system is in dire need of a major upgrade, the government spends less money per capita on health care for its people than the regional average, and only about half the global average per capita (WHO 2011).

During the same period that Egyptian hospitals and clinics were falling apart, Mubarak visited a number of hospitals, and newspapers regularly carried stories of tragedies that could

have been averted if the health care system was in better shape. But, perhaps as he claimed during his trial in September 2011, Mubarak did not rely on the news for his information. During the riots, he claimed to get all of his updates from his confidants and cabinet members. If this is how he got his information during such a significant period, one can easily assume that this was his *modus operandi* at other times as well. Whether he was ignorant because his advisors and confidants recognized that this was in their best interests, or because he recognized that it was in his best interests to plead ignorance, the regime's behavior over the last few decades have left Egyptians believing that their leaders were indeed detached from reality.

Suzanne Mubarak was often painted in the official media as a well-informed and active first lady who cared about the Egyptian people. But her words and actions show why her nickname, Mama Suzanne, was scorned by many Egyptians. In 2008 a report was released showing that nearly 85% of Egyptian women said they had been sexually harassed, half on an almost daily basis, and that 62% of Egyptian men admitted to harassing women (Stack 2008). Shortly after this report came out, Suzanne Mubarak was at an international conference and was asked what she thought about Egypt's sexual harassment problem. She retorted that Egypt did not have a sexual harassment problem. This is especially troubling given the fact that prior to this report, two large-scale attacks had occurred in Cairo where mobs of men and boys sexually harassed and attacked women in the middle of the city streets. While she would have been personally shielded from such harassment, members of her extended family and circle of friends certainly had experienced it. It was universally acknowledged that harassment had become a problem under Mubarak's regime and that in recent years it had become so serious that the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights report called it a "cancer". The only plausible explanation

for Suzanne's obfuscation is that she was part of a regime so bent on maintaining an aura of competence that it would ignore reality in order to paint a pretty picture.

In 2009 the government of Egypt recognized that the Muslim Brotherhood's continued success in providing social services was making it impossible for them to paint a believable picture of competence. The Muslim Brotherhood had long been well-regarded by Egyptians in a large part because it provided social services more efficiently than the government (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999). Poor neighborhoods often have clinics and schools set up by Muslim Brotherhood associates, and for the last two decades, they have increasingly challenged the regime's fictional competence. Early in 2009, the government began to restrict Muslim Brotherhood social service projects. Meanwhile, the NDP began a number of efforts with their affiliated NGOs to bolster the party's image and counteract the popularity of the Muslim Brotherhood (Blome 2009). According to Mohamed Sabry, Chair of Alexandria's local NDP council, the council was working to rectify wide-spread problems with the sewage system, which had two years earlier been a source of many complaints and allegations of corruption. Moreover, he stated that the NDP and its affiliated NGOs were leading efforts to improve roads, investigate allegations of building code violations, clean up the city and even improve the school curriculum (Blome 2009). But as was characteristic of the regime, it was too little, too late.

Compliance

Egyptians' attitude towards their political system is contradictory. They complain bitterly about the government's inability to meet the challenges of a rapidly growing population, particularly in the country's largest city, Cairo, but they do not directly challenge the system. They expect the state to provide a basic level of services, yet at times it seems many Egyptians

are working in complete opposition to this goal. Statistics show that Cairo is better off than most other governorates in terms of its infrastructure and public services. But when the government does invest in urban renewal projects such as public gardens or pedestrian bridges, it is not long before they are destroyed or dismantled. Fences built to direct pedestrians towards marked crossings are quickly removed by Egyptians looking for a quicker, yet death-defying way across busy roads or a way to make a little extra income by selling pieces as scrap metal. Gardens are trashed by people who have become desensitized to garbage piles left behind by the government's 'state-of-the-art' garbage collection program meant to replace the ancient system run by the resourceful but overwhelmed *Zabaleen* (trash-collectors).

Egyptians' negative experiences with the state have established a pattern of noncompliance. Contributing to the growing sense of danger and lawlessness discussed earlier, there was a very low level of compliance with public safety laws such as restricting crossing to pedestrian bridges and marked crossings, wearing seat belts and not using cell phones while driving. A law passed in 2001 requiring Egyptians to wear seatbelts whenever riding in a car was widely enforced at first. There were approximately 7,000 fines levied on the first day it went into effect. But many Egyptians soon found ways to fool the police by installing fake seat belts or draping real belts across their laps whenever a policeman was in sight (MacFarquhar 2001). The law was soon largely disregarded by police, drivers and passengers alike despite the fact that Egyptian roads have long been among the most dangerous in the world. In 2008 the traffic authorities released a new set of laws that largely restated the previous set of laws but raised fines considerably. Again, these laws went largely unheeded because citizens had no respect for authority due to years of haphazard enforcement and widespread bribery (Kifaya 2006).

While the vast majority of Egyptians had avoided direct confrontations with the regime, resistance to the regime was evident in the daily behaviors of Egyptians from all walks of life. The general orientation to the regime was one of antipathy, while the general climate was one that fostered apathy and self-preservation rather than interpersonal trust or concern. The state did a poor job at trash collection, and Egyptians responded by littering everywhere; sometimes even throwing trash just feet from a trash container. The state failed to prevent builders from building high-rises and even malls on streets designed for two or three story homes, and Egyptians responded by double-parking everywhere; often using sidewalks for ‘reserved’ parking areas. The state failed to provide adequate hospitals or driver education, and Egyptians responded by regularly ignoring ambulance sirens and justifying it by saying that the ambulance driver was probably just using the siren to get home quickly.

The major factor in mass resistance was resentment of the elite reaping the benefits of modernization. Egypt is not a poor country, if looked at in comparison to world levels of per capita income. But this seemingly positive characteristic leads to two negative outcomes. First of all, since the government has access to reliable unearned revenue through Suez Canal receipts, gas and oil exports and foreign aid largesse, there is very little need to tax individuals. And since the government does not rely on taxes to fund its budgets, it has little accountability.³⁸ Moreover, the economic growth that has characterized Egypt since Sadat opened the country to the world economy in the 1970’s has led to a wider gap between the rich and the poor. To be sure, the masses have seen some benefits of economic liberalization. “But they do not see genuine

³⁸ This changed in 2004 when a new “reformist” cabinet took power. Changing the tax law was one of the priorities of the new minister of finance, Youssef Boutros-Ghali. It took less than a month to produce the first draft and shortly thereafter it was approved and distributed to the private sector and to international organizations for discussion. It was approved by the parliament in June 2005. The reason this happened so swiftly is “because the finance minister was committed to the project” (Ramalho 2007, 35) and because stakeholders were involved before the policy was approved.

liberalization in their societies, with ordinary opportunities and dynamism—just the same elites controlling things” (Zakaria 2004, 11). While a small cadre of Egyptians benefitted greatly since the 1952 revolution, there has been little development of the masses’ capabilities, and little reason for the masses to comply with the goals of the regime.

Participation

Kamrava’s description of participation in a society with a weak state-society bond fits Egypt perfectly. “Participation in the political process is often merely perfunctory, taking place out of fear or opportunism rather than a genuine sense of civic duty and obligation” (Kamrava 1993, 168). One study found that the percentage of Egyptian voters who are illiterate was approximately twice as high as literate voters in 2000 and 2005 elections. The author concluded that this was because “votes of illiterates tend to be cheaper to purchase by political entrepreneurs” (Blaydes 2006). This conclusion is based on Huntington and Nelson’s concept of clientelism, where elites use their leverage over the masses to gain electoral support (Huntington and Nelson 1976, 55). Blaydes (2006) noted that candidates tend to run personalized campaigns, as opposed to running on an ideological platform, which is indicative of the patron-client relationship. As parliamentarians have been less able to provide basic services for their constituencies, wealthy business men have gained an important advantage when it comes to the ability to buy votes.

The Muslim Brotherhood has long been the strongest opposition group, even though they were never allowed to field candidates directly, and their popularity is often tied to their vast array of social services throughout the country, as well as generous ‘campaigns’ run by Brotherhood-affiliated businessmen. The ruling party is somewhat more blatant when it comes to vote-buying; each election cycle brings out stories of candidates offering voters in poor

neighborhoods a sum of money to vote. One enterprising candidate even offered to throw in a chicken. News reports indicated that there was an organized campaign to get voters out, including admonition from the local *imams* (religious leaders), threats of fines for not voting and warnings to local mayors that low turnout would result in them losing their jobs. Moreover, some voters indicated that they had been told who to vote for and complied because they did not want trouble (Blaydes 2006, 10).³⁹

Despite these tangible rewards and punishments, voter turnout in Egyptian elections was extremely low. In 2005, when Egypt held a national referendum to have its first ostensibly multi-candidate presidential elections, Hosni Mubarak handily won with less than 25% of the electorate voting. The 2007 elections had an official turn-out around 25% of eligible voters, but election observers estimated that a more accurate count showed only 5% turned out (Global Integrity 2011, n.p.) Compare these figures to the reported 41% (MacFarquhar 2011, n.p.) who turned out for the post-revolutionary constitutional referendum and the message is clear: most Egyptians had given up on Mubarak's regime. During the aforementioned referendum, there was a widely shared sense that a multi-party election was pointless since the restrictions on potential opposition candidates virtually guaranteed that Mubarak would win handily. Moreover, the ruling party would be sure to pack the polls as they had done many times in the past, by promising rewards to constituents or threatening employees with punishments.

But the ruling party believed that the multi-party election really had the potential of imparting legitimacy upon Mubarak's rule by making the election a multi-candidate election rather than a simple yes or no referendum, so they wanted to make sure the referendum passed. Bus-loads of voters were brought to the polls by their employers who often happened to be

³⁹ See Blaydes 2006 for more details about vote-buying practices as well as a discussion of biased media coverage during the elections.

members of the ruling party. When asked what they were going to vote for, many replied resoundingly “YES!” But when one group was asked what they were voting yes for, they said they were voting for Mubarak. Even if this group represented just a small portion of the very small percentage of Egyptians who bothered to go out and vote, this story highlights the high level of ignorance and low level of competence among Egyptian citizens.

Conclusion

The previous chapter has attempted to establish that the Egyptian state never fully established legitimacy and that it struggled to achieve compliance and participation. It also delineated patterns of elite and mass behavior that provide evidence for a culture of impunity among the elite and resistance to the state among the masses. The purpose of this was to provide context for the argument that education reform has been a tool used by the regime to attempt to gain some legitimacy, and show that resistance to education reform can be explained through the lens of neo-institutionalism’s three strands: historical, rational and cultural.

CHAPTER 4

A Historical Analysis of Education Reform in Egypt: from Mohammad Ali to Mubarak

“Egypt’s education is a closed system, detached from contemporary realities and isolated from the common cultural heritage of mankind, without which no educational system can hope to produce individuals capable of enriching their nations. But where and when did this tragedy start, and who is responsible? To answer this, we must go back to the time when Mohammad Ali made education available to all Egyptians” (Heggy 2003, 154)

Heggy wrote this description of the Egyptian educational system decades after Sadat began Egypt’s rapprochement with the West and launched his Open Door policy. Although the *Infitah* was meant to reverse the effects of decades of economic and political isolation, it did not reverse the politicization of the educational system that led to its stagnation and deterioration. The door to innovation, critical thinking, and engagement with the West, which was effectively shut in the Middle Ages, was reopened in the 19th century by Mohammad Ali. Unfortunately, in the 20th century it was again closed, first partially by the British and later completely by Nasser. In the 1960s, Egyptian society was besieged by a xenophobic mentality that warned of a “cultural invasion” and rejected the intellectual contributions of foreigners (Heggy 2003, 128). By the 1970s, the Egyptian educational system had been “trampled into subservience by politics” (Heggy

2003, 156). Despite an appearance of rapprochement with the West under Sadat and Mubarak, Egypt has never fully reopened the door to the “contemporary realities” and “common cultural heritage” Heggy referred to in 2003.

The Reopening of the Door to the West

As Europe’s elite cultivated progress based on Renaissance ideas and values, the elite in the Middle East had survived on the vestiges of past glory and achievements. “While intellectual life was ossifying and stagnating in the Middle East, Europe emerged out of medieval times to undergo the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Industrial Revolution in rapid succession” (Szyliowicz 1973, 91). The Middle East went from being a center of learning and innovation to an intellectual backwater. The traditional educational system did nothing to reverse this. In fact the educational system contributed to the Middle East’s decline and isolation by discouraging *ijtihad* and encouraging a vision of the inherent superiority of their way of life. There was a virtual standstill in cultural exchange between the Middle East and Europe, but the rule of Mohammad Ali changed that. “Ali had always dreamed of making Egypt strong and great among the nations of the world, and he believed that this could not be achieved without an appreciation of modern science and contemporary culture” (Heggy 2003, 154).

The educational revolution was a major factor in the development of the modern Egyptian state. The spread of mass education transformed the traditional hierarchy in society by replacing religious authority and rewards with secular authority and rewards. Secular leaders (generally monarchs) wanted to be free of ecclesiastical influence. “To this end, they encouraged the growth of an intelligentsia schooled in the classics and versatile in secular learning, but

owning primary loyalty to the dynasty and state, and receiving rewards in the form of bureaucratic offices,” (Smith 1987, 133). This statement could as easily describe a European state as it could Egypt during the 19th and 20th centuries. Mohammad Ali sent many Egyptian students abroad to study to prepare them for a career in service to the state. When these students returned to Egypt they brought with them the knowledge and skills that helped establish Egypt’s modern educational system and produced some of Egypt’s greatest thinkers (Heggy 2003). From 1826, when the first delegation went to France, until the early 20th century, Egypt reestablished itself as an outstanding intellectual force.

The progress was nearly derailed in the middle of the 19th century. From 1848 – 1863, no national educational reforms were implemented although public opinion strongly favored the expansion of modern education. In fact, the Ministry of Education was closed in 1854. To meet the demand for modern education, a number of private schools were established by foreigners or ethnic minorities during this period (Szyliowicz 1973; Cochran 1986). Missionary schools were founded by French Catholics, British, Germans and Americans. Non-denominational schools were set up by some Frenchmen living in Egypt. Minority schools were instituted by the Greek, Jewish and Armenian communities. These schools taught a distinctly Western curriculum, and their graduates were in high demand. However, many Muslim parents still felt uncomfortable sending their children to these foreign schools and continued to press for more state-sponsored schools.

Nevertheless, foreign schools eventually became very popular with the Egyptian elite, and the upper class increasingly adopted Western manners and ideas. Having a Western-style education was the key to social advancement and it was available only to a limited circle of Egyptians. The majority of Egyptians only had access to traditional education, and thus,

traditional livelihoods. At the same time, Europeans were immigrating into Egypt in droves, attracted by business opportunities associated with the building of the Suez Canal and the lucrative cotton industry, and the high status automatically given to them because of their Western background. In particular, their educational credentials gave them an automatic advantage over most Egyptians.

At this point modern education was distinctly elitist and vastly different from the traditional religious schools (*kuttab*) in which boys were taught to read and recite the Quran, plus the three R's (reading, writing & arithmetic). There was a growing nationalist sentiment that called for an overhaul of the education system so as to promote broad-based Egyptian development and economic independence. As soon as he came to power in 1864, Khedive Ismail responded to these sentiments and reinstated the Department of Education and set about reorganizing the educational system. In 1867, Law 10 of Rajab 1284 was passed, calling for the modernization of the *kuttabs* to make a more unified education system, and in 1871 and 1872 further reforms were introduced to improve the quality of education. However, as was the case with most of Ismail's initiatives, he tried to accomplish much more than Egypt's treasury could support, and his reforms affected very little change. Instead of boosting his legitimacy, he managed to destroy it.

In 1879, facing a staggering debt of almost 100 million Egyptian pounds, Ismail was forced by England and France to step down in favor of his son Tawfiq. This state of affairs angered a zealous group of elite Egyptians. In addition to the humiliation of European interference and their leader's extravagance and incompetence, the nationalists were very unhappy with the abandonment of educational reforms and the continued dominance of Turks and Circassians in the officer corps. After mobilizing and gaining positions within the

government, they drew up a plan for the total overhaul and consolidation of the Egyptian educational system – including modernizing the *kutaabs* and expanding the reforms to rural areas in order to broaden their base of support. However, the plans had been only partially implemented when Colonel Ahmed Orabi led the nationalists in a revolt in 1881, leading the British to take ‘provisional’ control of Egypt in 1882 (Szyliowicz 1973). The promise brought about by Mohammad Ali’s opening of the door to the West was quickly dashed, as the British took control and reversed many of the accomplishments achieved by that opening.

Given that the stated goal of the British occupation was to restore stability and ensure that Egypt was able to repay its debts, it is not surprising that the modernization of education was not a top priority for the British consul general, Lord Cromer. In fact, support for education was reduced so drastically that 73 percent of students paid full tuition in 1892, compared to only 30 percent in 1881 (Szyliowicz 1973). However, economic concerns were not the only factors that led to Cromer’s drastic cuts in educational spending. Cromer had a very elitist view of education. “Cromer regarded tuition charges as a useful means of controlling inputs into the system,” (Szyliowicz 1973, 123). Essentially, the British wanted to restrict the quantity and quality of educated Egyptians, opening the system only as much as it suited their needs.

This policy was adopted for a number of reasons. First of all, the British wanted to limit the number of Egyptians involved in the colonial administration. Furthermore, they wished to restrict Egyptians to low-level positions, reserving high level posts for Europeans (Migdal 1988). Finally, they sought to avoid creating a pool of embittered graduates who could not find employment. All of this was to reduce the risks associated with the existence of an elite group of Egyptians that could effectively challenge British authority, either within the colonial bureaucracy or by promoting nationalist ideas among the masses (Szyliowicz 1973).

In addition to reducing financial support for the modern educational system, the British made a number of other changes designed to produce obedient, docile and unsophisticated subjects. Syllabi, schedules, regulations and examinations were harsh and inflexible. Teaching methods stressed memorization without necessarily understanding, especially since the language of instruction in was English. All of this combined to stifle Egyptian creativity and penalize independent thought (Starrett 1998).

Traditional schools fared a bit differently under British occupation, since Cromer wished to educate the masses in the rudimentary skills in order to facilitate control of the society. In 1898, the financial situation had stabilized enough that Cromer was able to allocate funds for bringing traditional schools under British control. In eight years, the number of such schools jumped from 301 to 4,432 (Szyliowicz 1973, 127). However, the numbers are deceptive, since few of these schools had qualified instructors or adequate facilities. School buildings were unsanitary, and it was even alleged that some teachers were illiterate! It seems that Cromer's goals had little to do with real education and much more to do with maintaining the *status quo* and suppressing discontent among the masses and stifling nationalist critiques of the system. Even a bad education was better than no education at all.

Unfortunately, none of Cromer's goals worked out as he planned. In addition to failing to expand state control over traditional schools, the British failed to avert the reemergence of a strong nationalist movement. "Fears concerning the link between education and nationalism proved well founded as the drive for independence was spearheaded by the educated elements [of Egyptian society]," (Szyliowicz 1973, 132). Led by an Egyptian lawyer, Mustafa Kamil, a reinvigorated nationalist movement called for universal free education, which was seen as a building block to a strong nation. In 1906, law students held a strike, the first of many during that

period. The movement mobilized both strands of the educational system: the students of modern secular schools and traditional religious schools, as well as professionals from many sectors. Eventually the movement swelled to include even the industrial and landed elite who had benefited greatly from the British rule.

By 1920 the British realized that the nationalist movement had become so intense and extensive that continuing the protectorate was untenable. It took another two years before that realization was acted upon, and another 14 years before Egypt attained true independence. During the early years of semi-independence, the nationalist fervor died down and was replaced by fragmentation and nepotism in the government. Even the widely popular Wafd party was unable to achieve much because it was unable to agree on an agenda. Exacerbating matters was the extensive constitutional power given to the King, who was keen to ensure that no individual or group was able to gain enough influence to challenge his power. Education was perhaps the one social issue that the various segments of society were able to come to an agreement on. In fact, education is the only social issue to which an entire constitutional clause was devoted. Although Article 19 made elementary education free and compulsory, it did not do away with the dual modern/secular and traditional/religious education system (Szyliowicz 1973).

Starrett (1998) argues that as far back as the rule of the Khedive Ismail (January 19, 1863 to June 26, 1879), the Egyptian elite have been attempting to use education to mold a new “breed” of Egyptian. Public education, however limited, has been seen as a way to prevent social disorder. Education reforms were not motivated by a desire to broaden the minds of the working classes. Rather, the goal was to “manage the outlook and behavior of the working class.” (Starrett 1998, 26). So, it should come as no surprise that public education in its earliest forms did not really change the class structure.

In 1929, the centralization of education was seen as a problem by “foreign experts brought ... to survey the system” (Galt 1936, 47). And for just as long, the Ministry of Education has called it “the root of trouble in Egyptian education” (Galt 1936, 3). “Egyptian education has expanded bureaucratically by government decree rather than by comparative and critical analysis, investigation and research” (Galt 1936, 3). The Final Report of the University Commission had found similar results in 1921 and warned of the dangers of not addressing these problems in a timely manner (Egypt Ministry of Education 1921).

Table 4.1 Egypt’s Three Track System

<i>Azharite Kuttabs</i>	For theology students
Elementary only	For peasants
European primary, secondary and tertiary	For the elite

Source: Szyliowicz 1973.

Although the British were triumphant in the political battle for Egypt, the French philosophy of centralized education was triumphant in the “educational and cultural battle” between the two states. The result was a three-track system based on an educational philosophy that was a mish-mash of Western philosophies superimposed on a traditional Eastern philosophy of education. This three track system fit perfectly with the colonial power strategy, described by Migdal (2001), of “divide and conquer”.

Elementary schools and kuttabs were largely a local affair, with little colonial oversight, whereas the elite track was highly centralized, making sure the core was strong, and the fringes made up by the masses were not going to develop a large-scale sense of community that is the

foundation for nationalistic feelings (Anderson 1991) and a democratic way of life (Barber 1992, 225).⁴⁰

A fourth track was established in 1933, as a follow up to the 1923 Constitutional clause that made elementary education free and compulsory. This fourth track, called “the compulsory schools” had as its goal, eradicating illiteracy and providing an education for all Egyptian children between the ages of 8 and 13. Despite these changes, the 1927 census found 86% illiteracy. Galt bemoaned this extensive ignorance for it prevented both “the growth of enlightened public opinion” as well as “the recommendation of educational solutions which depend on a literate and well-informed local public,” (Galt 1936, 12).

One of the main reasons for the persistently high illiteracy rates was that little was done to modernize the village *maktabs* and *kuttabs*. According to Galt this is for two reasons. First, colonial official put emphasis on developing the Europeanized school system to train the elite. Second, Egyptian land-owners feared that education would shrink the pool of cheap laborers (Galt 1936, 13). The Report of the Elementary Education Commission concluded that “education in Egypt resembles an inverted pyramid...available funds have been utilized preferentially in developing ...schools for the wealthier classes, and ... little has been done ...for the masses...” (Galt 1936, 13). Despite the good intentions of the nationalist movement, little was done to produce an educational system that would be capable of supporting meaningful human development.

⁴⁰ Barber wrote that “the point where democracy and education intersect is the point we call community” and that without this community, there can be no learning of the social skills needed for the promotion of social cohesion and morality within a free society (Barber 1992, 225-227).

Nasser: Closing the Door on the Past

Carrying out a revolution and establishing a new republic were monumental achievements, but they would be meaningless if the new leaders could not secure legitimacy and obedience. Immediately, Egypt's revolutionary leaders implemented a reform of the school system to ensure support for the revolutionary agenda (Spring 2006, 163-164). It was crucial for the new state to suppress all opposition and increase the prestige and influence of the new elite (Doob 1964, 41). In order to achieve legitimacy and compliance with its social and political agenda, Nasser needed to use what Starrett called the second "weapon of state power": the "deployment of information" to promote the integration of the various communities within the state (Starrett 1998, 5).

Historically, the process follows this pattern:

- 1) Selection of the symbols of national identity such as a flag or an anthem
- 2) Creation of national institutions (i.e. parliament) that represent the people or symbolize the independence/modernity of the state (i.e. national airlines)
- 3) Establishment of an educational system that instills civic principles
- 4) Promotion of national pride

The last two are closely related, as the institutionalization of national education provides an environment in which leaders can influence and gain the loyalty of the most malleable members of society: the youth. Of course, the state can inspire adults by other means such as the media, national holidays and social benefits (Birch 1989, 9-10). But education offered the most effective route to reduce loyalty to local communities and consolidate loyalty to the embryonic Egyptian state. By establishing a new system of education with religious education and

nationalism as its primary tenets, the leaders created an efficient means of social control. Articles 12, 18 and 19 of the Egyptian Constitution establish primary education as “a right guaranteed by the state” as well as the means for ensuring that society upholds “high standards of ... moral and national values, the historic heritage of the people, scientific facts, socialist conduct and public manners within the limits of the law” (Spring 2006, 164)

Nasser’s goal in opening up the educational system was to promote loyalty to the state through the vehicle of Egyptian nationalism. “Nasser was never really a champion of the masses; he was “unquestionably an Egyptian nationalist first and foremost...” (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999, 10-11) and his socialist rhetoric “borrowed” from the masses to foster a feeling of national unity (Abdel Nasser 1959). One could even argue that he was a Nasserist first and foremost; students recited his speeches and chanted his name along with revolutionary slogans every morning in the courtyard of their schools (Starrett 1998, 79). He knew that in order to increase societal stability and solidarity, it was necessary to “homogenize” the populace (Hobsbawm 1992; Migdal 2001) He wrote in his memoirs:

As I consider one normal Egyptian family ... I find the following: the father, for example is a turbaned “fellah” (farmer) from the heart of the country; the mother a lady descended from Turkish stock; the sons of the family are at a school adopting the English system; the daughters the French. ... Then I say to myself ‘This society will crystallize ... it will form a homogenous entity (Abdel Nasser 1959, 51)

The need for homogeneity was realized immediately after the revolution, and was not only due to the need to strengthen Egypt against the ‘external enemy’ that Shukrallah wrote about in 1989. After toppling the monarchy in 1952, the primary goal of the Revolutionary

Command Council was to establish and consolidate its legitimacy. Nasser was shocked by how little mass support the Free Officers received in the days after the coup. In his memoirs he wrote:

We needed discipline but found chaos behind our lines. We needed unity but found dissensions. We needed action but found nothing but surrender and idleness. It was from this source and no other that the revolution derived its motto (Abdel Nasser 1959, 32).

The revolutionary motto was “Unity, Discipline, Work”, and education was the tool for following it through.

It was also important to the RCC to inculcate national pride, reduce European/Western influence and increase Egyptian influence in the Arab world and in the developing world. Nationalizing foreign-run educational institutions was just one way that Nasser sent the message that foreign influence would thereafter be strictly limited to ways that the government saw fit. Egypt was no longer a state that could be manipulated or dismissed. This attitude fits with Nasser’s overall approach to relations with the West and with the Soviets. He was renowned for his ability to play the two superpowers off one another in order to achieve his aims (i.e. the Aswan Dam).

One of the first changes made by the Revolutionary Command Council was to abolish the multi-track educational system and create a centralized system and standardized curriculum that emphasized Arabic, military training and technical education. Enrollment in private schools dropped, as many wealthy families curtailed their conspicuous consumption to avoid calling attention to themselves in the newly socialist state. After the nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956 and the ensuing crisis, enrollment in foreign language schools dropped even more drastically, from 97,000 to 17,000. Many foreign teachers left and the few schools that were

allowed to remain open were monitored closely by the government. On the other hand, enrollment in public schools soared. Between 1952 and 1962, enrollment increased from one million to three million pupils (Cochran 1986).

By radically expanding the scope of national education, by promising college graduates jobs and by enhancing the status of graduates of the military academy, Nasser created a new class, loyal to the revolutionary ideology. Although many of the families who were wealthy before 1952 still had a great deal of money, Nasser was able to advance the interests of the two groups he was part of: the military and the lower-middle class.

Nasser was arguably bent on increasing his own power and prestige. Though Nasser expanded the educational system, it cannot be said that he truly modernized it because he did not allow for the development of modern teaching methods that teach critical thinking skills. Nor did he tolerate dissent within the intelligentsia. The traditional intellectuals, largely from the pre-revolutionary elite, were particularly repressed under Nasser's rule. On the other hand, a new breed of Gramscian "organic intellectuals", loyal to Nasser and the revolution were created who gladly took the places of the traditional intellectuals.

According to Gramsci (1982), the intellectuals in a society are often the primary mythmakers. The status of the masses depends on the identity promoted by these intellectuals (Barreto 2001). And the status of the elite depends on its ability to establish a hegemonic ideology that subsumes and absorbs all other ideologies (Gramsci 1982). This can be done by taking control of the institutions of which they are in charge of or with which they associate. The educational system is one of the primary mechanism through which the elite can establish a hegemonic ideology in order to build consensus and command influence over the masses. Egyptian leaders from Mohammed Ali to Mubarak have tried to do this with the religious

scholars; but Nasser was the first to successfully wrench control of the prestigious Al Azhar University from the religious intellectuals. The establishment of hegemony can also be achieved by isolating the traditional intellectuals and neutralizing them by patronizing an alternative group of intellectuals.

Often, the intellectuals will promote an identity that raises the relative status of the masses in order to gain the support of the masses. Although this status may still be “low”, it is low within a new group with higher status than the old. Egyptian nationalists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century offered the masses chance to be independent of the humiliation of British occupation, but the masses by and large would still remain low class. By making primary and secondary education free to the masses, they also opened up the opportunity for some to advance socially and economically, but this was an insignificant percentage.

Nasser’s policies had a more conspicuous effect. He increased the prestige of Egyptian identity by promoting Arab nationalism, with Egyptians as the dominant group. More strikingly, he created an entirely new breed of intellectuals when he expanded access to free national education (and thereby neutralized the traditional elite). Gramsci (1982) described two types of intellectuals, the traditional intellectuals and the organic intellectuals. Traditional intellectuals come from elite classes and typically include intellectuals such as religious scholars (*ulema* in Egypt). In the case of Egypt, the traditional intellectuals included religious scholars, the landed gentry and their sons. Organic intellectuals are a broader category, although Gramsci mostly defines them as intellectuals of the working class. In the case of Egypt, I apply the term organic intellectual to the new breed of intellectual that was created by Nasser’s broad educational reforms. Most of this new breed came from the working class, but it also included the peasantry, a group which Gramsci joins with the traditional intellectuals.

Egypt's military defeat of 1967 revealed Nasser's dependence on the bourgeoisie when the doctrine of national unity against the external enemy had been proven ineffective. Nasser quickly lost mass support after 1967 war, and in 1968 his core supporters, students and workers, demonstrated against the regime, demanding political rights that they had been heretofore denied. Because he still had some mass-based support, Nasser's policies tended to give concessions to the bourgeoisie (Shukrallah 1989). Maintaining a socialist centrally planned system was one way to reduce costs and ensure an illusion of equity.

To be certain, there was greater equality of access in the educational system, but quality was sorely lacking. Even in one of the most modern educational institutions, The American University in Cairo, students expected to be told what to learn and were surprised when given the opportunity to question their instructor's ideas (Lippman 1989, 239-240). Because Arabic held such a prominent place in Nasser's nationalist rhetoric, students could fail two final exam subjects but still pass as long as they got a minimum of 50% on their Arabic exam (Cochran 1986, 30). The surge in enrollment exceeded the state's capability to provide facilities and teachers (Boktor 1963). In the late 1960's there was room for only 20 percent of primary school graduates in preparatory schools (Cochran 1986, 49). Nasser's expansionist/Arab-nationalist policy providing free education for all Arabs and Muslims, exporting Egyptian teachers to the Arab world and his massive expenditures on military exploits in Algeria and Yemen made an already dire situation even worse. The defeat to Israel in 1967 meant even less money was available for education.

Ironically, the 1967 defeat to Israel was attributed to inequalities within the educational system. A Moscow Radio broadcast blamed the defeat partly on the poor education among the rank and file members of the Egyptian army. These were mainly workers and peasants, and there

was a huge gap between them and the officers, many of whom had been trained abroad. The high-ranking officers “had become soft” after 15 years of privilege, pampering and indoctrination. (McDermott 1988, 159). Acquisitions of sophisticated weaponry and modern training had left the officers with a sense of invincibility but little practical knowledge about how to function during a crisis or how to prepare a professional corps of soldiers. Egyptian soldiers, poorly trained and poorly disciplined, were a poor match for the highly trained and well-disciplined Israeli forces (McDermott 1988, 158). On a positive note, the defeat led to some changes in the education of officers. No longer was the study of Hebrew viewed as a suspicious act; rather it was seen a valuable skill in accessing the mindset and strategies of the enemy. Moreover, there was an effort to strengthen the relationship between officers and soldiers while also improving discipline (McDermott 1988, 161).

But in other areas, the quality of education was deteriorating. Teachers were overworked or under qualified, and traditional methods like rote-learning remained pervasive. In its attempt to prepare Egyptian citizens to participate in the development, Egypt had created a poor copy of the western educational system that produced an overabundance of certified, but not necessarily skilled or qualified, professionals. As former Minister of Labor Dr. Abdel Meguid al Abd lamented, “We copied the educational system of advanced nations, and what happened? A lot of striving for certificates and diplomas that mean nothing in the world of work and experience. ... We have to meet the challenge of getting away from the snob appeal of university education. We must stress the importance of attitude training” (Lippman 1989, 74-75).

Dr. al-Abd had described “Diploma Disease” (Dore 1976) and it was worse than certificates that meant “nothing”. It was creating a class of professionals that were out of touch with the real needs of society and whose “incompetence and indifference” was wasting the vast

potential of the Arab world's largest and most "certified" workforce (Lippman 1989, 78). Teachers and government employees who were being trained to assist with construction projects in rural areas opposed the idea of actually visiting those areas and preferred to simply listen to lectures instead. When they did deign to go onsite they insisted on wearing suits and ties instead of appropriate work clothes and seemed "ashamed of dirt and disease and of the peasants among whom they will work in the future" (Peretz 1959, 16).

The atmosphere in the post-colonial world during the mid-20th century was one of heady celebration and patriotic pride, but it was also one of defensiveness and rejection of neo-colonial overtures that painted modernization as a unidirectional, inevitable march towards Western values and practices. Despite the prevalence of nationalist enthusiasm, the government could not translate this into a successful movement for reform and development. The ideas of pro-enlightenment scholars like Rifaat al Tahtawi, Taha Hussein and Qasem Amin, who had argued for integration between western principles and Islamic beliefs, were drowned out by nationalist fervor fed by reminders of colonial injustices and prejudices (Vatikiotis 1991). The intellectuals who had led calls for improvement to Egypt's education system were disparaged by the military elite who set about to fashion themselves as the new intelligentsia.

Undoubtedly, these men wanted to combine the power of their political roles with the prestige of the intellectual, thereby enjoying the [better] of two worlds. One should add that certain of the ruling officers did not even attempt to acquire doctorates, but simply assigned themselves the tasks of intellectuals. The outcome was the appearance of half-baked journalists, authors, ideologues, political scientists, economists (Dekmejian 1971, 268).

This negativity between the military elite and the traditional intellectuals spilled over to the general public and had an insidious effect on development. “Nationalist fervor [had] infected most middle class youth, but [was] more a fervor ‘against’ than ‘for’ something – against ‘imperialism,’ ‘Zionism,’ ‘oppression,’ ‘foreign occupation’ and the like” (Peretz 1959, 16). And this fervor was often full of hyperbole and misrepresentation, because the school curriculum was outdated and textbooks failed to give an accurate account about Egypt’s relations with Israel and other states (Dekmejian 1971, 266-267) Instead of confronting the systemic causes for stagnation and revealing the truth behind Egypt’s overwhelming defeat, the patriotic message conveyed by Nasser’s rhetoric and reinforced in the school system actually contributed to the “attitudes that crippled Egypt’s effort to develop”. Instead of leaving behind a legacy expected of such a revolutionary leader, Nasser left behind “a nation dragged down by opportunism, indifference, indiscipline and neglect” (Lippman 1989, 76), rather than a nation built on the revolutionary principles of unity, discipline and work.

Sadat: Between *Infitah* and Islamism

When Anwar Sadat took over the presidency in 1970, he took over a flawed educational system and a battered economy which he described as “below zero” (Lippman 1989, 90). Nasser’s government had made expensive promises to the peasants and workers and gotten Egypt involved in costly military endeavors against Israel and in Yemen. Sadat had to contend with one of the world’s fastest growing populations and another expensive war with Israel, yet he had less charisma and prestige than his predecessor, and thus less legitimacy. In order to

overcome this weakness, he declared a number of “corrective measures”, including the creation of “a political system that would look like participatory democracy, but would really be one-man rule” (Lippman 1989, 197-198), and to continue Nasser’s socialist agenda while gradually opening Egypt’s economy to the outside world. While Sadat called for “revolutionising the systems and concepts of general education...” (Sadat 1974, 69) he largely continued Nasser’s unsuccessful education policies (Hyde 1978, 21).

Sadat believed that foreign investment and an “outward-looking economic policy” (*infitah*) were the keys to economic and social development (Sadat 1974). Funding from friendly Arab states and unconditional aid from developed countries would give Egypt access to technology and materials that they desperately needed to build a basis for a secure future. Ironically, Sadat’s *infitah* policy created a new hurdle to achieve his goal “to eliminate the theory of the social difference between one form of education and another” (Sadat 1974, 71). The rapid growth of foreign-funded private enterprise led to a resurgence in the popularity of private foreign language schools and the “foreign ruler – Egyptian poor dichotomy” (Cochran 1986, 54). Although college graduates were still guaranteed jobs in the public sector, graduates of public schools were at a new disadvantage. Salaries in the public sector were a small fraction of what could be earned in the rapidly growing private sector, but private sector jobs usually went to graduates of foreign language schools.

Despite the injection of foreign cash into the educational system, the government did not have enough money to maintain the level of services established after the 1952 revolution. Although Sadat’s government spent \$1.5 billion a year on subsidies, even providing stipends of a few pounds a month to the best students, it was not enough to compensate for the extreme inflation rate of over 20 percent (Cleveland and Bunton 2009, 378). Expanding access to

education was one of Nasser's priorities but rapid population growth created an insurmountable challenge for the government. Between 1962 and 1972, the percent of students enrolled in schools "had increased by striking proportions": primary by 43 %, preparatory by an astounding 288%, secondary by an equally amazing 275% and higher by an exceptional 95% (McDermott 1988, 206). Unfortunately, the number of illiterate Egyptians had also increased, even though the percentage had dropped (from 70% in 1962 to roughly 50% by 1982).

Even though half of the population was officially literate by the early 1980s, approximately one quarter lacked formal credentials (McDermott 1988, 207). Such credentials, while not necessary to find gainful employment, were necessary to lose the stigmatism of illiteracy. In fact, many Egyptians workers who had made small fortunes working in the Arabian Gulf came back to Egypt in the 1980s only to find that they were "widely regarded by the educated classes as vulgar parvenus who [had] earned more than they [were] worth" (Lippman 1989, 75). And of the half that did have formal credentials, many lacked the qualifications indicated by their credentials, while the best left to pursue advanced degrees (McDermott 1988, 241) or lucrative employment opportunities abroad (Lippman 1989, 97).

Teachers were overworked yet underpaid and undertrained. Public school buildings were overcrowded yet under-supplied and under-maintained. University classrooms were so crowded that students would have to arrive hours early or pay an "agent" to reserve a spot and many more simply did not bother to attend classes (McDermott 1988, 206). Playgrounds and labs were an impossible luxury, and practical courses like home economics were taught in what Youssef Kotb described as "an imaginary sort of way [that] does not realize the object of founding such schools" (Cochran 1986, 57). And despite Sadat's acknowledgement that education reform was

long overdue (Sadat 1974, 69), education was not a priority among projects authorized under the 1974 foreign investment law, Law 43 (Waterbury 1985, 77).

One of the most distressing and long-lasting results of this situation was the appearance of the phenomena known as “private lessons”. For teachers who were making between LE 50 and LE 70 a month, and only teaching a half day, private lessons were a perfect fit (Cochran 1986, 59 & 61). In order to pressure parents into paying for private lessons, teachers purposely gave incomplete lessons in class or sent notes to the parents warning of their children’s weakness in a certain subject in which they just happened to offer tutoring. “Because students must pass their examinations in order to stay on track toward admission to a university, they are at the mercy of their teachers, and the teachers have taken advantage of this...[and] the students have responded by wide-scale cheating on the examinations” (Lippman 1989, 75).

According to one well-known Egyptian journalist, “Sadat could never resist the temptation to compare what he had done with what he alleged his predecessor had failed to do” (Haykal 1983, 272). But in reality, little had changed. In 1881 another well-known writer, Husain al-Marsafti noted that Egypt leaders “treated people as if they were ‘empty machines’, incapable of thinking for themselves and only fit for carrying out orders” (Ahmed 1960, 22). Over a century later, it was noted that this attitude still prevailed and that none of Egypt’s leaders had undertaken any reforms that would have “genuinely exposed [them] to criticism” (McDermott 1988, 281).

Sadat’s criticism of Nasser backfired because it came across as disingenuous and hypocritical (McDermott 1988, 280). Sadat was Nasser’s heir and prodigy and would likely not have become president had it not been for his close association with Nasser. Moreover, Sadat had pledged to continue to honor the goals and promises of Nasser’s socialist revolution but he

failed to keep that pledge. Sadat did continue Nasser's strategy of making concessions to the bourgeoisie but his emphasis on economic liberalization conflicted with his inherited socialist agenda.

Sadat's adoption of Islamic rhetoric and symbols further alienated the leftist intelligentsia that had essentially been created by the regime only to find itself increasingly disregarded (McDermott 1988). "The roots of this sour cultural discord are embedded ... in Egypt's historical choice to preserve its spiritual heritage while undergoing modernization..." (Polka 2003). The student movement of the 1970's, led by a new brand of leftist university students and scholars, was an elitist struggle that spurred virtually no mass involvement. This was largely because their secular ideology was viewed as untenable or irrelevant by the masses (Mitchell 2000).

Another major reason for the reversal of fortunes for the pro-modernization reform movement was that the nation's focus on external challenges (i.e. Israel) fostered the growth of anti-modernization intelligentsia – from Salafis to Marxists – who equated modernization with Westernization. The masses lacked an organized means of mobilization or channel through which they could effectively air their grievances. The Islamist movement, which had also been alienated by the regime, took advantage of this gap and managed to forge links with the urban petty bourgeoisie. The Islamist movement eventually surpassed the leftist movement on university campuses as well as among the masses (Tripp and Owen 1989).

Both forces have deep roots in the intellectual history of Egypt, but the traditionalists have an advantage, as they lay claim to the label of authenticity, in contrast to the (allegedly) Western imperialist origin of the 'modern' ideas of equality, rationalism and democratic rule.⁴¹

⁴¹ According to some scholars of Islamic history, these 'modern' ideas have historic local precedence in the body of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and concept of *ijtihad* (rational interpretation of the Quran). This idea was promoted by

Although the adoption of this label helped give the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups an advantage when it came to popular legitimacy, these groups did not encourage “grass-roots, “authentic” popular expression” (Zubaida 1992, 9). In fact, these groups can be seen as reinforcing the authoritarian nature of the political culture. Leadership of the groups is not localized and members are not given a voice. The groups “treat the masses as objects of religious reform and control” which stifles independent critical thought and action (Zubaida 1992, 9).

Mubarak: Controlled Opening

Like his predecessors, Mubarak needed to establish legitimacy, and the educational system was an important component of his approach. Also like his predecessors, it seems that he failed to achieve this goal. He made lofty pronouncements about education’s role in development and expressed frustration with the traditional education system. His promises and complaints were similar to those made by Nasser and Sadat, and like them, he too failed to achieve meaningful progress. What explains this series of failures? McDermott (1988, 242) argued that “the cultural manipulation of the academic system, weighed down so heavily by the problems of the economy, population growth and political restraint, provides some of the answers as to why this sector has not flourished.” While the manifestations of the manipulation may have been cultural, for example the nationalist and religious content infused into the system by Nasser and Sadat respectively, the manipulation was in fact political.

The conclusion of Mubarak’s decades in office may have come as surprise to some who, at the beginning of his rule, saw him as “unpretentious” and “incorruptible”; an ordinary Egyptian thrust into the public eye after his achievements during the 1973 war against Israel

noted Middle East scholar Edward Said, who also argued the *madrassa* (traditional religious school) was a source of liberal thought (Mehrez 2010, 91). But the prevailing understanding in Egypt is that the ‘door to *itjihad* was closed’ by the 9th century (Hallaq 1984, 3) and that liberal education is inappropriate for the local culture.

(McDermott 1988, 220). But the traditional intellectuals had misgivings about him from the beginning. They viewed him as a simpleton who lacked vision and intelligence; a character that would be more vulnerable to the corrupting influences of power and incapable of meeting the demands of modernizing the country. But even they did not look outside the state for a solution until the mid-1980s, when they began to “shift the discursive nexus of their discussions to democracy ... [and distance] themselves from their reliance on the state” (Hamzawy 2006, 54).

By the mid-1980s, even those Egyptians who had been impressed Mubarak’s ability to restore calm after Sadat’s assassination, were beginning to develop their own misgivings. “Fair or unfair, the mood was there and it was ... framed in a joke” (McDermott 1988, 87).⁴² Nasser was famous for nationalizing the Suez Canal, Sadat was famous for recapturing the Sinai from Israel, and Mubarak was famous for moving a tram line that was too close to his home and office, so the joke went. But Mubarak seemed nonplussed by this growing skepticism and ridicule. In a speech shortly before he completed his first term as president, his exposition on the topic of democracy seems to substantiate the misgivings of the intellectuals and those who had begun to doubt his sincerity and ability. He spoke of democracy in Egypt as if it were a *fait accompli*, and he rejected the idea of democracy as a cover for dictatorship or exploitation (McDermott 1988, 221-222). In his first speech after he began his second term, he echoed his full support for democratization when he said “Democracy is not only essential in itself but also predicts stability and ensures prosperity. It is a requisite for the growth of the economy and the welfare of the people” (H. Mubarak 1987).

⁴² Popular jokes at the time reveal the disdain some Egyptians had for their leader. One joke tells a story of how Mubarak demanded that his speech writers produce a simple and brief speech so people would not view him like Sadat, whose hours-long diatribes were widely ridiculed. But when he gave the speech it also lasted for hours. Furious, he went back to the speech writers to protest, only to be told that he had been given multiple copies and he had read all of them. Another joke tells a story of Mubarak flying with his wife and son over the Egyptian countryside when his son suggests that he drop a 100 Egyptian Pound note out the window to make someone happy. His wife exclaimed that he should throw ten notes out of the window and make ten people happy. Then, over the speaker the pilot says he should throw himself out the window and make millions of people happy.

Either he was extremely naïve, which is highly unlikely, or he was deliberately misrepresenting the true nature of the political system and his intentions for reform. Either way, it did little to alleviate misgivings about his ability and willingness to bring about real change (H. A. Hassan 2010). In 2003, he clarified his position in a speech to university students when he said: "We are democratising at our own pace and will continue to do so gradually to avoid causing turmoil...We are following the basic principles of democracy but not necessarily adhering to a specific model" (Khalil 2003, n.p.). This illusory refrain remained his main contribution to democracy right up until the end.

His speeches and declarations about education reform exhibited a similar rhetorical pattern. In a 1987 speech, Mubarak denounced the traditional system of education as 'a dumb way' and called for a system that aimed to cultivate creative, ethical students who could participate in debates objectively and solve problems in a resourceful and innovative manner (Lippman 1989, 80). While this sentiment might have given some the hope that Mubarak was going to turn around the education system and bring Egypt into the 20th century, "it has to be understood in context: Sadat was saying similar things as long ago as 1974" (Lippman 1989, 81). In fact, Egyptian leaders have been stating those same sentiments for nearly a century and the problems have persisted.

As with the subject of democracy, Mubarak's message did not change significantly while he was in power. The 1988 five-year plan had lofty goals for increasing access and quality of Egypt's overtaxed system. The 1990s were declared "the decade for educational reform" by Egypt's leaders. In 1991, Mubarak expressed concern that the system was "in crisis" (Zaalouk 2004, 32 & 34). When parliament opened that year he warned that the educational system was not preparing students for the "challenges of the new era" because of the government's "focus on

quantity at the expense of quality in an attempt to provide an education opportunity for all children” (Chiara 2010, 9). In 1992 Mubarak established the National Project for Education with the goal of increasing access to basic education as a means of maintaining social stability (World Bank 2002). The 1993 five-year plan called upon the state to make education its top priority and added that it should promote “educational democracy and equity” (Zaalouk 2004, 178). In 1996, Egyptians saw the inauguration of a long-term “Education Enhancement Program” that promised to improved equity, access, quality, relevance, efficiency, management and governance (World Bank 2002). This was followed in 1997 by a National Commission on Higher Education Reform, and in 1998 by the Secondary Education Reform Program.

The cycle seemed to start all over again in 2000. That year the National Commission on Higher Education Reform laid out another long term education plan. In 2003, the National Democratic Party, with Mubarak at its helm, once again announced that education was a top priority for the party’s reform efforts. But his 2003 speech to university students, Mubarak added something new – a nod towards civic education and stakeholder engagement in policy making. He stated that the youth should be encouraged “to participate in the decision-making process [regarding] the future of their nation.” For that, they needed to developed a “modern vision and developed intellect” that would facilitate democratic, tolerant participation in the public sphere (Khalil 2003, n.p.). Lest it seem that he was inviting the stakeholders to actually practice using these skills while on campus, he made clear that political discussions were not welcome on campus.⁴³ “To grant permission for political parties to operate freely on campus would divide the

⁴³ Despite Mubarak’s restrictions, or perhaps because of them, Egyptian universities became highly politicized in the last two decades. Security forces had a noticeable presence on campus and regularly interfered with the political and apolitical activities of students and professors on and off campus (Osman 2010, 193). Whenever there was even the *potential* of a demonstration security forces would cordon off areas around university campuses, sometimes even sending high-ranking officers to ensure that the situation remained under control.

student and even faculty body. ... This would create an internal struggle on campus and education would be neglected" (Khalil 2003, n.p.).

Despite the many declarations in support of democratic reform and progressive education reform, there was clearly little elite support for liberalization of either the political system or the education system. Thus, it should come as no surprise that in 2004 Egypt's educational system was still following the same "dumb way" it had been in the 1980s and that Mubarak was repeating essentially the same message that he had been for over two decades:

The future of our country and of the coming generations depends now, undeniably, on the extent of our ability to engage in the areas of science and knowledge that are now expanding in an unprecedented manner. This requires the re-structuring of the educational system, on all levels, on bases that secure the right of education to all, improve the quality of education and produce open minded mentalities that are capable of dealing with the spirit and challenges of the age; intellects that do not depend on traditional thinking but rather on creativity, innovation, research and criticism. (Arabic News 2004)

Notwithstanding stated intentions to use education reform to improve the social and political *status quo* in Egypt, reforms in education have largely failed to reverse the stagnation of social, economic and political development (Golia 2004). In fact, it could be argued that some of the reforms have contributed to this stagnation (Dore 1976). Part of the problem is that many, if not most, policy-makers come from a large, prominent group that fears the changes that would be brought about by pioneering movements in education. There are also many policy-makers who are not threatened by such changes, but these are generally non-politically relevant elite who tend to be viewed as Westernized and somewhat out-of-touch with the needs and values of

the masses. In order to make meaningful and significant reforms, the Egyptian government needs to increasingly involve all stakeholders in the reform process. In addition to parents and members of the business community, the government must turn to teachers and students to discover what the educational system has done right, as well as what has been done wrong, so that Egypt can build on its success and avoid perpetuating mistakes.

Conclusion

Mohammad Ali used education as a tool of nation building, but his successors did not successfully continue his efforts, eventually ceding control to the British. The British used education to fill low and mid-level posts within the colonial administration but also maintain stability, ensure a docile populace and prevent the development of any serious challenges to their authority. This strategy also failed to work, and Egyptians did eventually gain independence from their colonial masters. But once again, the new leaders relied on education to cement their hegemony and prevent the mobilization of the masses (Starrett 1998), and once again this strategy failed.

“After World War II, Arab nations joined other colonies in throwing off the yoke of European imperialism” (Spring 2006, 162). Rejecting the forces of imperialism was easier said than done. Because of the pervasiveness of the modernization paradigm, some assumed that to achieve the developed nations’ level of material success it was not only desirable, but necessary, to follow their exact path. Others believed that it was crucial to follow an indigenous path, and that Western style modernization was inappropriate for Egypt. Arab elite who had been educated abroad struggled to reconcile the European

teachings of personal liberty with the way the Europeans had behaved in the colonies. Newly independent Egyptians wanted to find a balance between assuming the modern habits and values of their former colonial masters and returning to a more traditional 'authentic' way of life.

The legacy of imperialism did include some positive elements such as improved infrastructure and mass education but Nasser and Sadat recognized that they needed to create, if not a new system, at least the illusion of a new system, in order to establish legitimacy. The educational systems reflected this struggle between authenticity and modernity. The expansion of education gave the elite a mechanism for indoctrinating the masses, but this necessitated adoption of traditional modes of education and incorporation of content that promoted loyalty and discouraged critical thinking. Expansion of higher education had two purposes: replacing foreign experts and making the country more self-sufficient as well as the creation of an elite that was loyal to the leadership of the country and would provide intellectual support for policy decisions. Education reform formed a cornerstone of Nasser's revolutionary agenda, and it was important that all educational institutions supported this cause. The parallel system of traditional religious education created a class of people not fully indoctrinated into the hegemonic ideals of Nasser's secular-socialist agenda. It was for this reason that Nasser took control of Al Azhar University and its related pre-university education system. By controlling this institution, he was attempting to strengthen the state and cut off a major source of competition from society.

Sadat essentially continued Nasser's education policies but his rhetoric stressed development and opening over unity and discipline, and emphasized Islamic heritage

over Arab nationalism. Sadat echoed many of Nasser's sentiments regarding the importance of education, but in reality education reform was not an area of emphasis in Sadat's reform agenda except as it supported his economic and political goals. The major policy changes did not match the rhetoric of his October Working Paper, but rather seemed to be part of his strategy of using Islamic rhetoric to shore up his legitimacy and gain support for his economic agenda. As part of his departure from Nasser's secular-socialist agenda, Sadat allowed Al Azhar and other religious institutions to have more autonomy. This move also took some pressure off the government, because Al Azhar primary schools were able to help respond to the rapidly growing demand for schools that the Ministry of Education could not manage.

At the same time, Sadat called for reincorporating religious education into the school curriculum but with a modern pedagogical approach that would increase tolerance and reduce hatred. This was not meant to increase Egyptians' openness to the rest of the world, but rather to ensure peace and tranquility. In other words, Sadat had concluded that the religious curriculum had to be changed in order to "meet the goals of social control" (Starrett 1998, 82). This implies that Sadat's underlying motive for education reform was not improving the educational system, but finding a new way to promote elite interests.

Like Sadat, Mubarak claimed to be searching for a way to modernize the educational system. But he never achieved this goal, nor did the political elite make any significant attempt to develop a system that would increase the capabilities of Egyptian citizens, despite numerous suggestions from the academic elite and foreign consultants, and generous support from donor countries and international organizations. It seems that

Mubarak's declarations in support of democracy and progressive education were nothing more than rhetoric used to bolster his image in front of skeptical foreign donors, cynical citizens and the non-politically relevant elite.⁴⁴

In fact, when analyzing the major reforms in education in Egypt under Mubarak, one cannot help but come to the conclusion that maintaining the political *status quo* seems to have been a major motivation behind the choices made by the political elite, while the non-politically relevant elite, who are not as threatened by political change (Abdelnasser 2004, 118), promoted a different reform agenda for the educational system. The growing influence of the small group of businessmen with close ties to Mubarak added a new, tempting dimension of personal profit to the underlying political reason behind reform choices supported by Mubarak and the political elite. At the same time, the masses grew increasingly skeptical and lost what little faith they had in the will and capability of the Egyptian leadership to effect change that would be in their best interests. Students, teachers and parents alike viewed many, if not most, new education reforms with doubt, suspicion and sometimes outright hostility.

The relationship between state and society in Egypt sheds light on why and how the elite were able to maintain a system that protected and promoted their interests while preventing the masses from having any influence in state policy formation. Niblock (1998) points to three factors that have allowed the state to maintain its hegemony: access to rentier income, the role of the military and the existence of a "sacred mission" against imperialism and Zionism. Because Egypt's leaders had access to significant amounts of income from oil exports, Suez Canal receipts, tourism earnings and remittances from expatriates, they have not generally needed to

⁴⁴ The non-politically relevant referred to here are generally Egyptian academics or bureaucrats who are responsible for crafting reports such as the Arab Human Development Report and World Bank Education Sector Reports. They often profess strong support for the ideals of progressive education and tend to be members of the more secularized class, often educated and/or employed at Western or international institutions.

rely heavily on taxes that would make them increasingly accountable to the masses (Waterbury 1985). But Mubarak's regime suffered from a "lack of deep public support and genuine political legitimacy" and thus relied greatly on the military and security forces for backing, although the ties were stronger to the military (H. A. Hassan 2010, 324).⁴⁵ Egypt's leaders since 1952 have all come from the military, and they all enjoyed the full support and backing of Egypt's powerful and omnipresent military and security establishment, at least until 2011, when unprecedented mass resistance and the regime's extreme response led the military to end its support for Mubarak's regime and force him to step down.⁴⁶ The growth of the military and security infrastructure, while at times resented by the masses, was tolerated and unchallenged by the vast majority, because the state was able to convince national and international audiences that it was best equipped to deal with exogenous and indigenous threats, in particular from militant Islam and Zionist enemies (Hicks 2006).

It is the presence of this coercive apparatus, and the state's control over it, that "extinguished the possibility of transition" to democracy (Bellin 2005, 26). The state's control over the coercive apparatus, which Skocpol (1979, 32) argued is the best predictor of its ability to prevent or survive an attempted revolution, is also a main factor in explaining the regime's resistance to liberalizing reforms. Egypt's military and security apparatus was "patrimonially driven" not "institutionalized", and it is this characteristic that made it resistant to any reforms

⁴⁵ In 1986 the security forces revolted and the army was called in to suppress this movement. The military was also been instrumental in supporting the regime's fight against Islamic extremist groups (H. A. Hassan 2010). However, a not-so subtle shift seems to have occurred in the last decade, with Mubarak growing increasingly reliant on the Interior Ministry's security forces, and the military growing increasingly estranged and frustrated with the regime's obvious corruption and favoritism towards the politically relevant economic elite.

⁴⁶ In the days leading up to the Mubarak's ouster, the military was called in to secure the city when the police force was pulled off the streets. At one point, shortly before Mubarak was forced out, multiple reports circulated that tank officers were being seen throwing down their headsets allegedly in protest of orders to shoot protesters. It has been suggested that this was the 'final straw' for Tantawi and other military leaders who had grown frustrated and embarrassed by Mubarak's inability (or reluctance) to curb the influence of his son Gamal and his clique of business-minded, non-military cronies who were widely viewed as plundering the country.

that would reduce its ability to “[demobilize] the opposition and [build] a loyal base through selective favoritism and discretionary patronage” (Bellin 2005, 28).⁴⁷ As long as the regime had the financial wherewithal to support a massive military and security apparatus and backing from international networks,⁴⁸ it was able to thwart popular mobilization and eschew potentially democratizing reforms in favor of those that advanced its legitimacy.

But it is not enough to simply understand why Egypt has failed to liberalize its political system, which is what most studies of democratization in the Middle East have done. “Shifting the focus of democratization studies of the Middle East towards a concern with *how* [emphasis in original] democratization might be initiated could prove productive” (Niblock 1998, 227). Ascertaining how to support a transition to democracy entails an analysis of how *and* why Mubarak’s regime failed to support a holistic, liberalistic view of development. This study attempts to contribute to this analysis; in particular by investigating the role of education reform in this failure. This is the topic for the next chapter, which ends with an examination of how and why Egypt’s future leaders can expand upon some existing education initiatives that promote social justice, economic equity and civic engagement.

⁴⁷ Also see Brownlee 2002 for a discussion of authoritarian resilience and for a discussion of patrimonialism.

⁴⁸ This backing included funding as well as compliance with governmental restrictions on the funding of advocacy groups or professional associations; groups that form the segment of civil society which has been more opposed to the state than groups which are primarily providers of social and economic services (Hicks 2006).

CHAPTER 5

Education Reform for Stability or Development?

“A number of vital issues being discussed today, such as the style and content of improvements to education ... not to mention democracy itself, are the same issues which occupied the Egyptian elite for almost 200 years. It is as if the whole of Arab thought was halted at a specific moment that cannot be transcended so that we can face the future” (Mustafa, Shukor and Rabi' 2005, 21).

Introduction

Of the five major problems noted by education officials in 1929 (Galt 1936, 49), two were tackled with commendable success during the Mubarak era (Dewidar 2009). Literacy rates grew dramatically, and the education gap between females and males shrank. However, the three problems related to quality of education still stand out as being unsolved decades later. The methods of education are still as formal, mechanical and dogmatic as they were in the 20th century. The curriculum still lacks a needed emphasis on critical thinking and reflection, and for the most part, lacks effective instruction in social and civic rights and duties. The state education system remains highly centralized, and schools everywhere must follow the state-mandated curriculum to the letter. These problems are intensified by problems that appeared in the 1960s and 1970s, including a shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate school facilities and the emergence of private tutoring and schools. In addition, vigorous debates over the optimal nature

of the educational system (i.e. vocational/university prep, secular/religious; public/private) were revived particularly in the 1990s and 2000s, the same period when the Egyptian public became increasingly resistant to the regime.

Decreased Illiteracy, Increased Enrollment and Shrinking Gender Gap

In 2002, Egypt was commended for being one of the developing nations which had shown the most commitment to improving education (World Bank 2002). The Egyptian Human Development Report for 2003 attributed Egypt's progress to the medium level of human development category to improvements in education. The basic and secondary enrollment ratio rose from 42% in 1960 to 86% in 2001. Adult literacy rose from 25.8% in 1960 to 69.4% in 2002. Of particular note is that there was a 50% increase from 1990 to 2002 (Handoussa 2004, 20). The achievements made in increasing female literacy and enrollment are nothing short of extraordinary, especially considering the patriarchal nature of Egyptian society. In 1927, only 5 percent of women could read or write, whereas in 2011 the youth literacy rate for women 15-27 years old was 82 percent, very close to the rate for males, which was 88 percent (UNICEF 2010). In 2005 the Education for All [EFA] report noted that universal primary enrollment [UPE] was a realistic expectation for the near future (UNESCO 2004).

However, in 2008, universal primary enrollment was no longer considered a probable achievement (UNDP Egypt 2008). In some urban governorates it was already met, but in more governorates it was considered unlikely. This is despite the fact that U.S.\$41.2 million of foreign aid (5.6%) went to programs that promote primary enrollment. There were a number of related problems as well. Class density averaged in the forties, and many classes had between 60 to 100 students. Part of this was because there were simply not enough classrooms or teachers, but this

was exacerbated by the fact that nearly a quarter of the school buildings were not safe for student use (Handoussa 2004). Drop-out rates were alarmingly high; census data from 2006 indicate that 14.7% of Egypt's youths had either never enrolled or had dropped out of school (Handoussa 2008, 15).

Persistence of Rote Learning & Lack of Critical Thinking

The political elite repeatedly claimed to support the introduction of critical thinking to the curriculum. According to MP Hossam Badrawi, who helped design an innovative critical thinking program for Egyptian schools, the government was not sufficiently promoting the inclusion of critical thinking into the curriculum. The program he designed was only adopted in only 245 schools from its inception in 2001 until 2006. And most of this increase was recent; between 2001 and 2005, the program existed in only 30 schools. Dr. Badrawi says that to keep up with population growth, the program needs to be spread to another 10,000 schools (Gauch 2006). But this type of education does not suit a nondemocratic system, as it tends to produce a society of citizens who are more likely to question the *status quo*, so the lack of commitment to this type of educational reform is unsurprising (Galston 2001).⁴⁹

The top-heavy Ministry of Education does not give teachers any room within which to foster creativity or dialogue, and according to Negad Borai, director of the Group for Democratic Development, it “thinks it owns” teachers (Golia 2004). In fact, teachers were docked pay and transferred to less suitable assignments for having the audacity to attend critical thinking workshops. One Egyptian working in the field of education reform in Egypt explained that this

⁴⁹ Basic literacy is insufficient to support democracy. Citizens require a higher level of literacy to be able to follow the public debate (Galston 2001) and critical literacy to successfully participate in this debate (J. W. Fraser 1997, 53). Increased education does not necessarily affect attitudes towards civic responsibility unless it is the kind that promotes critical thinking (Lipset 1963; Cutright 1969; Kingston et al 2003).

may not have been due to a fundamental disagreement with the concept of critical thinking. Rather, it could have been due to the supervisor's lack of understanding of the methods, but is certainly due to the systemic emphasis on inspection and punishment over inquiry and support.

The systemic culture of conformity and control affects students as well as teachers and can be best described as "oppressive" (Zaalouk 2004, 180). A former Minister of Higher Education lamented that the antiquated system of rote learning was endangering the very fabric of Egyptian society (Weaver 1999). Students who express their opinions freely can fail exams and even be imprisoned, as one opinionated *Thanawiyya Amma* exam-taker learned after penning a virulent tirade against Egypt's alliance with the American government. Instead of feeling free to question their teachers, students learn to unquestioningly accept whatever they are told is "truth".

Egyptian education is still overwhelmingly focused on 'mass-producing' government employees, who make up nearly one-third of the labor market (Handoussa 2008, 5), or employees that meet specific market needs, and 'diploma disease' is still endemic (Hargreaves 1997). Students are not taught to look for common threads or patterns which could facilitate tolerance or innovation. Graduates of the public faculties of business often complete their degrees without ever using a computer, making them virtually unemployable unless they have connections to get a government job, or they ignore social pressure that makes it unacceptable for a university graduate to take a working-class job (Osman 2010, 199). Children are sold the idea that diplomas alone make one a superior person, and that the prestige of certain faculties is the key to success. This 'diploma disease' is perpetuating and exacerbating class divisions which have contributed to the success of the Islamist quest for social justice while also suppressing growth of the structures and values needed for democracy.

“For poor countries to produce the skills necessary to participate in the gains from globalization, their education policies will have to shift from a focus on school enrolment and attainment to a focus on learning outcomes” (Woessmann 2011, 309). Recommended actions include an overhaul of the examination system, increasing teacher capacity and introducing quality assurance measures. Student examinations should be more rigorous and comprehensive and student evaluations should be made on a continuous, cumulative basis, not just according to term-end examinations. The World Bank report argues that this reform is particularly important for primary level students, for whom year-end examinations should be completely abolished (World Bank 2002). Teacher capacity can be increased by implementing teacher training programs, particularly ones that enable teachers to implement student centered teaching methods and utilize modern technology. Teachers’ jobs will be made easier if the government expands early childhood education and parent-support programs, particularly in disadvantaged areas. Recommended quality assurance measures include direct monitoring by official bodies, but also by local community and staff involvement. This final recommendation is vital, since evidence shows that reforms are more successful when stakeholders are involved in the design, not just implementation of policy (Chapman, Mählek and Smulders 1997; Kemmerer and Windham 1997). In fact, not involving stakeholders can completely derail even the best planned policies; “ownership must be created before the local population will feel motivated to participate...” (Blaser, Besdzik and Byrne 2003, 47). One well-intentioned and much-needed program to institute standards-based assessment in Egyptian schools failed almost immediately due to a lack of stakeholder participation⁵⁰. Though the concept was constructive, the implementation plan

⁵⁰ The policy was crafted by a group of technocrats from within the MoE and academia. One committee member, speaking at a conference shortly after the policy was reversed by the MoE, seemed surprised that such a positive reform was not received well by the teachers and other MoE members. What she and other members of the committee failed to consider was the issue of incentives; in other words they failed to examine what incentives

was flawed. The amount of time the policy would have required teachers to invest was extremely high and the rewards were intangible and thus did not provide any incentive for the teachers to cooperate.

Indirectly, increased private sector competition at the tertiary level and decentralization of decision-making is expected to contribute to quality assurance. The Program for International Student Assessment [PISA] found that results were higher at privately managed schools, but in Egypt there is a great deal of anecdotal evidence that the private sector so far has done more to improve the investors' bank accounts and philanthropic reputations than improve students' opportunities for quality education. The 2007 – 2012 Five-Year Plan calls for “popular participation in building, administrating and financing institutions of higher education” (Ministry of Planning 2007, 156). By popular, the plan is referring to the elite-dominated private sector, not the grassroots organizations that make up civil society. And by participation the plan means giving the private sector a mandate to supplement governmental provision of public services, not filling an advocacy role. “Civil society is rarely, if ever, considered an equal partner in the initial planning, or drafting of plans, and participation is usually limited to consultation sessions” (Handoussa 2008, 9).

Since 1996, more than ten private universities have been established, at least one of which has ties to relatives of Mubarak. The increased privatization of higher education “creates opportunities for Egyptian philanthropists to invest in the business of education and come across as promoters of the “knowledge society” (Kohstall 2007, 4). Private-public cooperation is also taking place in the expansion of infrastructure. In 2005, 300 new public schools were scheduled to be built by the private sector and rented by the government in a ‘creative’ scheme to harness

would encourage the stakeholders to support the reform. The subject of incentives analysis is based on the idea that major policies should be based on consultation and consensus (Kemmerer and Windham 1997); a characteristic greatly absent from Egyptian policy making.

private sector capabilities for the public good. (Boutros-Ghali 2009). As of 2008, the project, which called for a total of 2,210 new schools, was still in the pipeline stage according to the Ministry of Finance PPP Central Unit (2008). Given Egypt's lack of transparency and a weak anti-corruption framework, the private sector projects for the public good may very well have had a benefit for certain private investors as well.

The masses' reaction to the growing presence of private schools has been mixed. Private American schools are widely perceived as being an easy, though expensive, way to get through the educational system.⁵¹ Many private schools are run as for profit enterprises by the investors, who demand that teachers overlook poor performance and excessive absence in order to provide their clients, wealthy Egyptian parents, with their desired product, a high school diploma for their children. Private universities have long been criticized for being nothing more than diploma mills for wealthy children who did not have scores high enough to get into the prestigious faculties (colleges) in public universities. This criticism was previously only directed at the American University in Cairo [AUC], but when the law allowed other private universities to open, some of the criticism was defused, and now AUC mostly faces criticism for being too "Western". One difference between AUC and the other universities that is rarely mentioned is that AUC is a non-profit institution, whereas the new private universities are generally business ventures for wealthy, well-connected Egyptians, often in cooperation with foreign schools looking for an opportunity to boost revenues. What is also lacking from this discourse is an appreciation for the benefits of the liberal education which is part of AUC's stated mission. The

⁵¹ The American system is seen as undemanding and insubstantial. But in the last few years, there has been a spate of other national systems introduced into the private school arena. Canadian, Australian and even Turkish schools have opened, many with business and pedagogical practices similar to the aforementioned American schools. Many Egyptian parents enroll their children in these schools, not for the benefit of a liberal education, but because they believe enrolling their children in these schools raises the social status of the family and offers the best route to a guaranteed high school diploma.

mission statement of the American University in Cairo also includes the goal of fostering civic engagement, despite operating “in an environment with limited ‘democratic space’” and under constant scrutiny by the state media which was always on the watch for any activities that might indicate that the faculty, staff and students are “instrument[s] of U.S. foreign policy (American University in Cairo 2011).

In the 1990s public debate over Egypt’s identity began to grow more intense. “Within these debates there was often an underlying skepticism towards currents perceived as carriers of Western ideology” (Hamzawy 2006, 51). The debate was generally framed in terms of an oversimplified dialectic between Egypt and the West; with the West existing as a dangerous force against which Egyptian society must protect itself. Any policy or organization that is perceived to be associated with Western consultants or donors will nearly always be viewed with suspicion (Pratt 2006). When the MoE introduced a new course entitled “Ethics” into the curriculum, it was portrayed in the media as a capitulation to U.S. interests and a first step towards eliminating religious education in the public school system (H. Mostafa 2003). Supporters of the course vehemently denied U.S. involvement and emphasized that they wanted to build tolerance and unity within the society. Regardless of their reasoning, they were seen as co-conspirators and the course became one more piece of evidence in the masses’ argument that the ruling elite was part of a conspiracy to rid Egypt of its Islamic identity and open it to re-colonization by neo-imperialistic forces (Sayed 2010).

A similar controversy was ignited when former Minister of Education Dr. Bahaa El Din issued a ban on the *niqab* (face veil) on university campuses citing security concerns (Weaver 1999). And when this ban was renewed by his successor to increase safety in student dormitories and prevent cheating on exams, the media decried the government’s interference with freedom of

religion and lack of respect for Islamic law. In a manner typical of the highly-centralized ministry, it seems no one thought of asking students for ways to increase security or prevent cheating (although students interviewed by the media suggested having female security guards and proctors) before officials unilaterally determined that a ban was the best tactic. They soon found themselves embroiled in numerous court cases for violating students' rights and subject to accusations of conspiracies and collaboration with 'enemies of Islam'.

Mubarak inherited a system with too much emphasis on higher education and not enough focus on providing students with the critical and practical skills needed to compete in a global economy. Because entrance to faculties (colleges) related to science and technology is highly coveted, but also highly limited, the vast majority of students enter faculties related to social science and humanities. "This pattern of enrollment is historically consistent with a policy of absorbing most university graduates into civil service jobs, but is ill-suited to a development strategy that draws on private initiatives and dynamic manufacturing and service sectors" (World Bank 2008, 20). At the same time, specialized vocational education has not kept pace with the rapidly changing technology and does not prepare "adaptable" students who have "the ability of lifelong learning which allows people to develop job-specific skills, to keep their skills up to date, and to retool their skills when career changes are require" (Woessmann 2011, 311). The modern economy demands students with mobility and transferable skills (Gellner 1983), but Egyptian schools are turning out students who lack this skill set.

This is not to say that the government has not invested in improving the quality of vocational and technical education. Egyptian goods and services are facing increased competition from regional and international competitors, and linking education to the labor market is the key to gaining a competitive edge (National Democratic Party Policies Secretariat

2003). To increase public-private cooperation in educational planning, a number of projects were initiated. A project called the “Mubarak – Kohl Initiative” partnered the business sector with schools in 16 governorates (*Mubarak and Education* 1992; Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit 2011). The outcome was a system called “doubled education” which is a form of experiential education, and provides students with training in academics and production. According to the Ministry of Planning, a major achievement in the field of improving quality of education was realized with the installation of science labs and media rooms equipped to receive educational television channels in 78.5% of schools (Ministry of Planning 2002, 28). This “project approach” or “isolated pilot approach”, according to Chief of Education at UNICEF Cairo, Malak Zaalouk, has improved material conditions in some schools. Unfortunately these improvements are often short-term or superficial and have done little to change the educational system and the prevailing skeptical attitude towards reform (Zaalouk 2004).

The ability to compete regionally and internationally is clearly the top priority for the NDP. As a signatory of free trade agreements like GATT, Egypt is being increasingly drawn into global markets. This has increased the need in Egypt for graduates who have the skills and knowledge necessary to compete in the international labor market. Therefore, the NDP recommended that curricula and institutions of higher education be modified to better provide for the needs of international industrial and services markets, to overcome cultural values that discourage free enterprise (in favor of “prestigious” careers) and increase graduates’ practical experience (i.e. through internships or apprenticeships). A project entitled the “Alexandria Experience” involved the local community in increasing opportunities for vocational education.

Another public-private partnership project is to build fifty “technical education” schools similar to those in the Mubarak – Kohl project.⁵²

Egypt’s educational system led to a mismatch between labor demand and supply (A. Galal 2002), and Mubarak’s early reform efforts did little to remedy this situation. The Education Plan for 1988-1992 was unrealistic and biased towards higher education, and such formal, diploma-driven education reflected an inappropriate model and questionable goals (Murray 1992). The noticeable result of this mismatch between market demand and the labor supply was chronic unemployment and underemployment, (A. Galal 2002) especially among secondary school graduates.

Table 5.1 Unemployment Rate by Educational Level

	2001	2002	2004	2006
Below Primary	1.5	1.0	0.9	2.3
Secondary	22.4	20.4	19.8	61.8
Tertiary	8.9	14.4	14.0	26.8

Source: Handoussa 2008, p.26.

Exacerbating this problem was the government’s drive towards economic liberalization without a plan to foster equitable and inclusive growth. The underlying result has been increased instability, evidenced by rising crime rates (UNODC 2009; UN 2010; UNODC 2011) and decreasing levels of satisfaction with the direction of the country (Pew Research Center 2011). Yet despite obvious deficiencies in the system, the government remained uncommitted towards making much needed reform in higher education (U.S. Embassy Cairo 2009).

⁵²See the book *Mubarak and Education: A Look to the Future* (1992) chapter 5 for more details on the Mubarak-Kohl project.

Mubarak's ability to deal with the crisis in the educational system was impaired by the economic realities that made teaching in Egypt an unpopular career choice for well-educated Egyptians. In Egypt, teachers are not a high priority and "either become powerless state employees or profiteers who are making money through illegal channels and thus deeply hurting the status and profession of teaching" (Zaalouk 2004, 180). In the late 1970s, many Egyptian educators left Egypt for the Arabian Gulf countries where their qualifications commanded salaries many times higher than they would have earned in Egypt. Instead of earning a paltry \$600 to \$700 yearly, teachers could earn \$12,000 or more in one year in Saudi Arabia (McDermott 1988, 137). University professors could command salaries five times as high. Other teachers chose to leave the profession and take menial jobs in the service sector that paid more than the government paid its teachers. Remittances from foreign workers and the growth of the service sector were a boon to the economy, and to a limited extent, reduced the demands upon the government. But this phenomenon also vastly thinned the pool of qualified teachers and exacerbated the already serious problems with the educational system. It also undermined the state's rhetoric regarding the importance of education and education reform. States routinely profess commitment to education improvement, but the reality of that commitment is called into question when factors such as teachers' pay and the status of the profession are considered (OECD 2010).

Highly-Centralized System

Under Mubarak, the government's official position was that education reform was not exclusively the prerogative of the president but that the entire nation should be involved in the process (*Mubarak and Education* 1992). In 2002, the World Bank sponsored a Higher Education

Enhancement Program which was intended to promote decentralization and stakeholder engagement (Kohstall 2007). Such efforts received great rhetorical support from Egypt's political elite. In 2003, when he was still NDP Policy Secretariat Chair, Gamal Mubarak argued that modernizing the education system required privatization and decentralization of the education system. These sentiments were echoed by his father in a speech at a conference on education reform the following year ("Mubarak Vows" 2004). And in April 2007, the government announced a five-year National Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Education that emphasized decentralized school-based reform and management (Education Goes Local 2007). Still, no meaningful devolution of power has occurred.

Decentralization of education promotes democratization by creating openings for civil society and opposition groups to be involved in shaping the national curriculum (McGinn and Welsh 1999; Hannum and Buchmann 2003; Handoussa 2008). But decentralization is criticized by some for its inability to safeguard equal access to quality education in countries with large economic divisions. It is also criticized for being an inefficient, top-heavy, ineffective system that is resistant to change. "In an extreme reaction to 'over-centralization' ... some educators have argued that all change must begin from the bottom and that the central ministry can really do very little to influence what happens in schools" (Chapman, Mählck and Smulders 1997, 3).

Egypt's MoE, like most highly-centralized institutions of educational oversight and planning, faces implementation problems often associated with over-centralization, as well as "reform fatigue" among its own policy-makers (Zaalouk 2004, 175). As can be seen in Table 5.2 below, a lack of communication between policy-makers and stakeholders is one of the major problems preventing the effective implementation of reforms. This is certainly the case in Egypt where participation is essentially "ceremonial" and limited to attendance at conferences,

workshops and project launches (Sayed 2006). When stakeholders do not have a voice in policy choices, they will have little incentive to cooperate, especially when they do not understand the purpose of the reforms or how to implement those reforms (Kemmerer and Windham 1997).

Table 5.2 Impediments to Ministry Influence on School and Classroom Practice

Problem	Likely Cause
Policy changes are not conveyed to the local level	Unclear delegation, ambiguity or redundancy in the organization chart, conflicts or absence of communication.
Policy is communicated vaguely	Policy lacks concrete and specific guidelines due to lack of agreement or lack of commitment among policy-makers.
Policy is viewed as unrealistic or inappropriate	Teachers or administrators may feel that the policy will undermine their authority or ability to perform.
Policies is viewed as unnecessary, overly complex or impossible	The resources necessary for implementation may not be available or are inadequate, or there are no incentives for educators to make the extra effort involved in implementing this new policy.
Policy interacts negatively with other policies	Policy makers fail to anticipate potential problems or choose to ignore those problems during the planning stage.

Source: Chapman, Mählck and Smulders 1997, pp. 4-7.

A major part of political socialization and empowerment is involvement in decisions about policies that affect one's life, and involving stakeholders can increase civic competence. To be fair, the state has encouraged participation from Ministry of Education officials, members from the Teacher's Syndicate, parents, public figures and relevant experts (Zaalouk 2004). But this was "a form of 'confined participation' that invites stakeholders to confer over the issues without granting them an effective voice, and solicits the social and material participation and contribution, provided their contribution supports the *status quo*" (Sayed 2006, 150). In other

words, it was highly-centralized participation (Ginsburg, Megahed, et al. 2010, 12) that offered little likelihood of motivating stakeholders or promoting civic competence.

Former Minister of Higher Education, Dr. Kamal Bahaa el Din, provided two illuminating explanations for the lack of decentralization. In an interview granted after his term as minister, he explained that decentralization is problematic because citizens and local officials lack the competence to be involved in the decisions that affect their own lives. He argued that decentralization is easier said than done and “if you are delegating power to an inefficient partner, the quality will go down” (Ginsburg, Megahed, et al. 2010, 13). This logic clashes with the ideal of progressive education that emphasizes the crucial role of experience and engagement in learning and increased civic competence (Dewey 1916). It also undermines the potential for human capability development, since empowerment involves giving people a voice in the decisions that affect their future (Sen 2005).

A few years before this, Dr. Bahaa el Din provided a different reason why further decentralization of the education system was not in Egypt’s best interests. He argued that the Egyptian educational system already makes “a very convenient route” for Islamists to seize power, and that further decentralizing the system would pose a risk to stability. He asserted that the problem was overwhelming, that its leaders are well-educated and the Egyptian educational system provided them with an environment to create the conditions necessary for them to seize power. For this reason, he contended, the education system could not be safely decentralized (Weaver 1999). These assertions that decentralization was not possible directly conflicted with the stated goals of the regime; namely to decentralize and liberalize the educational system. They also reflected a general lack of commitment towards democratization among Egypt’s elite.

Another reason why a centralized education system was seen as better for Egypt was that it was believed to promote equality of access and quality. However, Egypt's highly centralized system has failed to bring about this equality. Although all Egyptian youths have the right to basic education, not all students were able to take advantage of the education, largely because of the high costs associated with formal education. The costs include opportunity costs as well as the monetary cost of private lessons that supplement the usually insufficient classroom instruction. More than half of Egyptian parents acknowledge paying for these lessons, even though they are illegal, and even though it is estimated that over half of private education spending is devoted to these lessons. There is also a "thriving clandestine trade in class notes and examination essays" to help student pass their exams (Osman 2010, 206), even if they are unable or unwilling to attend classes. Even if a child does not really need outside tutoring, teachers will often communicate to the parents that the child will fail if he/she does not get outside tutoring. These same teachers then make themselves "available" at high fees to help the "failing" student. It is not uncommon for a once "failing" student to become a star pupil within one or two private lessons with the classroom teacher.

This problem is more common in poor areas, and it is particularly apparent in rural poor areas. Rural areas typically have a fewer facilities and teachers, and also receive a lower level of funding than urban areas (Handoussa 2008). In the early 2000s, class density was higher in rural areas (50s) than in urban areas (20s) and reached as high as 62 in one rural area (Allam 2003). Because of the clear inequality of access to quality education, the World Bank (2002) recommended that the government of Egypt focus more on funding rural and poor urban areas. It also suggested providing subsidies and advice to parents who are unable or unwilling to send their children to school due to these costs. Unfortunately, five years later this imbalance

remained unchanged. Greater funds were still being spent in urban areas than in rural areas (World Bank 2007). As expected with such a persistent imbalance in spending, the average of literacy rates in urban areas was still 17% higher than in rural areas six years later (Handoussa 2008, 301).

If Egypt's leaders were primarily concerned with reducing poverty, as they often claimed to be, rural-urban ratios of investment should have *at least* been equal (Handoussa 2008). Given the higher level of poverty in rural areas, it seems that the ratio should even have been shifted in favor of rural areas. Pro-poor growth requires opportunities for the poor to participate growth via increased access to land, labor and capital markets, but it also requires involving the poor in the reform process (Handoussa 2008, 17). But the government stood to gain more immediate political capital from urban social development projects, because they are more noticeable and are able to reach a larger number of people. There is strong evidence that investment in rural areas often yields greater returns in the long term (Khan 2001), and that a pro-poor approach has longer-lasting sustainable results (Handoussa 2008). But this evidence has not been enough to overcome the urban-bias and service-provision mindset in government funding. This seems to support idea that short term political gain is behind the budgetary decisions made by Egypt's leaders.

One way to meet the educational needs of rural areas has been through the One-Room Schools movement. This movement is similar to the Community School movement, as it increases access to education for rural children and requires very little investment. Both were funded by foreign donors; American companies Apache and Springboard collaborated with the local Sawiris Foundation and the semi-official National Council on Childhood and Motherhood to support the One Room Schools initiative, and the Ministry of Education and

UNICEF underwrote the Community School project. Both received accolades for their ability to meet the needs of the most underserved areas of the countryside. But Community Schools are based on pedagogy of empowerment and have been shown to do more to produce students with skills equivalent to or better than traditional public schools.

There are major differences between the traditional approach to education and the community school approach. In the traditional approach to education, learning results from teaching, which means listening to the teacher and sometimes reading books. The Community School approach contends that learners have diverse learning styles and should have a voice in determining what goes on in the classroom and that learning does not always require a teacher or happen in school. Self-learning leads to life-long learning. Whereas learning in the traditional approach is restricted to content and is measurable in tests, the community school approach recognizes that learning includes not only content but skills, values and processes like critical thinking, creativity and problem solving, and cannot be reliably measured with tests. The traditional approach emphasizes the adult over child model; teachers must be adults, learners are children. The community school approach has a more holistic view and believes that the entire school is a community of learners and teachers. Adults can learn from children, not only vice versa, and children can learn from each other. Learning is life-long; children learn a great deal before they enter school and will to continue to learn a great deal after they finish.

Community schools have transformed the students from passive members of their society into engaged citizens with knowledge of their civic rights and duties. Children have developed a sense of self and other where there was none or virtually none. This has created self-confident leaders along with increased religious tolerance, support for gender equality and respect for elders. Another quality that has developed is trust. Community relationships became stronger and

more positive. The joint MoE/UNICEF team that evaluated community schools in 2001 were struck by the emotional impact of the movement; interviewees repeatedly referred to feelings of “warmth, love, passion, compassion, tenderness and gentleness,” when describing how they felt about the school and its impact upon them (Zaalouk 2004, 122).

On the other hand, One-Room Schools apply a traditional methodology and offer the public school curriculum as well as literacy classes for local adults. While they certainly have had a role in reducing illiteracy, they do not offer the sort of transformative, empowering education that is stressed in Community Schools. Community Schools were partially funded by the MoE and widely supported by mid-ranking employees of the MoE, but these are members of the non-politically relevant elite who tend support more transformative education reform.⁵³ Both types of schools require a similar investment from the government and tend to be cheaper than traditional public schools, but Community Schools rely slightly more on independent funding and yet they have a much greater return in terms of their transformative power and potential for development of human capabilities (DeStefano 2006) as well as the potential for developing civic competence (Zaalouk 2004). But One-Room Schools received more attention from the highest level of Egypt’s elite, including Egypt’s former first lady and the former Minister of Finance Youssef Boutros-Ghali. The only realistic explanation that this researcher can find for this incongruity is that One-Room Schools fit the elite agenda of providing services to improve the living situation of the Egyptian people, without actually empowering them.

The Egypt Human Development Report of 2003 stated “The government is, and should be, the major provider of educational services,” but added “Al Azhar and private sector

⁵³ The Minister of Education is a high-ranking official who generally carries little political clout and whose efforts are often stymied by the political elite. One well-connected foreign academic who knew the former Minister of Education personally remarked that the minister complained that Suzanne Mubarak was a major roadblock in many of the reforms that he had wanted to implement. See Abdelnasser 2004 for a discussion of politically-relevant elite in Egypt.

educational services are useful, complementary providers of educational services” (Allam 2003, 11) The government has established a department within the Ministry of Education to oversee the private sector educational institutions and facilitate private sector participation. However, it seems just this department is serving more to obscure vast deficiencies in private education and the apparent profit-seeking nature of many of Egypt’s newer private schools. There certainly is abundant evidence that it is not holding private schools to quality standards.

The main criticism that the Egyptian Human Development Report had for the education sector was that it does nothing to encourage citizen participation in the society (Allam 2003). This is not entirely fair; in 2002 the Minister of Education met with opposition politicians from the Tagammu’ party. They shared in an extended debate that ended with the group affirming its support for the MoE education platform that incorporated the following principles: “social justice, participation, democracy active learning, authentic assessment, teacher education, and relevant curriculum” (Zaalouk 2004, 181). Unfortunately, they were all ‘preaching to the choir’ and little came of this effort besides an attractive NDP policy paper that was drawn up in consultation with “many [high-ranking] stakeholders” and party members and *then* presented to the rest of the party members for voting and promotion. Despite the supposed existence of parent-teacher associations in all schools, there is not an effective dialogue between parents and school authorities, and the curriculum does not encourage civic values, tolerance and respect for diversity or other democratic values. The recently introduced course in Ethics aims to promote tolerance, and might be seen as a step in the right direction, but it remains to be seen if the textbooks will do more than create one more set of “facts” to memorize (H. Mostafa 2003).

Corporal punishment is still widely used in Egyptian schools, and though many parents will no longer tolerate it, there is little they can do to challenge the culture since the school

system does not view parents as partners. Even if parents visit the school to complain about disciplinary measures used against their children, teachers often feel no compunction to stop this behavior. A tragic case in 2008 speaks volumes of the environment of Egyptian public schools, where poorly trained, often young and inexperienced teachers are expected to control a class packed with 60 to 100 students. A 23-year-old teacher beat a child so severely that the child died. The nation was outraged and demanded legal action against the teacher. The teacher responded to charges by claiming that he was only attempting to discipline the child for not completing his homework; as if it would have been acceptable to beat the boy with a ruler and then take him outside and punch him in the stomach if only the boy hadn't suffered heart failure. (BBC News 2008). The government responded by arresting the teacher, announcing teacher testing reforms and disseminating reminders that corporal punishment is against the law.

After this heartbreaking case, some thought people's attitudes towards corporal punishment in the school would change; at the very least it was expected that teachers would be circumspect in their disciplinary measures. However, during the height of the protests that forced Mubarak out of power, a teacher was filmed having children no older than 5 line up at his desk, where he would ask each one for his or her homework. Then, he would beat each one on the hands, seemingly regardless of the answer given. What makes this even more shocking is that the film was taken by an assistant or another teacher who was laughing as the children timidly lined up, howled in pain and shuffled back to their desks (Ahram Online 2011). Of course, it is not unsurprising that some teachers had not changed their attitudes; they were simply mimicking the behavior of others in positions of power. Nevertheless, that these teachers believed that this behavior was not only acceptable, but even amusing, indicates the existence of a serious problem in the culture of the teachers' cadre.

Conclusion

A possible solution to many of the problems discussed in this chapter would be adopting the pedagogical philosophy espoused by the community school project described in this chapter. The community schools project, undertaken by UNICEF with the backing of the MoE, began as a way to meet the constitutional requirement for providing basic education for all Egyptians as part of the government's emphasis on expanding primary education. But it has morphed into a social movement with great potential for creating the conditions necessary for democracy to grow (Sayed 2006, 76). Students in community schools learn about their rights and actively defend them within the community through a rights-monitoring committee and acts of civil disobedience. One community school alumna was beaten by her teacher at a public secondary school and her friends enacted a campaign of passive resistance against the offending teacher until the alumna received an official apology (Zaalouk 2004).

Community schools have the potential of transforming social and political structures if the government adopts the model developed by UNESCO and seeks to engage all stakeholders from the very first stages of planning. Robust buy-in from the local community is necessary to prevent any faction from taking over the school and manipulating it to promote an agenda that might deviate from the progressive philosophy of the community school pedagogy. It is also important that members of the responsible government bodies view the community as equals and full partners so that a sense of ownership can develop among the community.

In July 2010, an employee of a non-governmental organization involved in education reform in Egypt told this researcher that the most serious impediment to educational reform is that the system does not allow for local stakeholders to play a role, and that it is too centralized

and draconian. That same month, a member of the NDP education policy committee contended that there are sufficient opportunities for teachers, students and parents to provide feedback, and that mass resistance to education reform was due to a lack of trust and a cultural mindset that was hostile to many proposed or implemented reforms. While there is ample evidence of the lack of trust and hostility towards the regime, much of this is due to a sense of disenfranchisement and alienation. It is exacerbated by a sense that the government and bureaucracy lack a unified or long term vision.

Egypt's new government will have a number of significant challenges to address, from writing a new constitution to rebuilding Egypt's battered economy. It is imperative that education reform be among the top priorities, since education plays a vital role establishing a tolerant, stable and successful society. Education reform can transform the political and social reality, or it can simply reinforce and give legitimacy to existing structures. For education to be transformative, it must promote civic responsibility and civic engagement. Positive change can occur in Egypt if the new leaders take the unprecedented step of actively engaging all stakeholders, and increasing the quality of education not simply the quantity.

CHAPTER 6

Egypt after Mubarak

“In the darkness and tranquility of the night, I allow myself the indulgence of a beautiful dream. I see an Egypt which has done all I have ever asked, now devoting its wholehearted care and attention to education. I see an Egypt which has achieved all I have ever promised. I see an Egypt from which the mists of ignorance have been lifted, now bathed in the light of knowledge and learning. I see an Egypt in which education embraces all the people, rich and poor, strong and weak, bright and dull, young and old. I see an Egypt steeped in the sweetness of education, an Egypt in which the light of education brightens hovel and palace alike.” Taha Hussein (The Future of Culture in Egypt 1938, 395-396).

Towards a Brighter Future for Egypt’s Educational System

Taha Hussein promoted the ideals of progressive education and believed that education had a vital role in building a resilient, independent and free society. He believed that Egypt’s future lay in recognizing the diverse wealth of its past, including its close ties to Western civilization, and rejected nationalistic divisions in so much as they were holding back the country. He also rejected classism and called for free public education at all levels in order to ensure that all Egyptians would be fully prepared to take part in a democratic future. ‘He affirmed that any democracy that went hand-in-hand with ignorance could be no more than

pretense and delusion. ... Real freedom arose when education imbued the individual with a public spirit..." (A. F. Galal 1993, 6). Taha Hussein would be deeply saddened by the state of Egypt's educational system today, but perhaps he would see a glimmer of hope after the events of 2011.

Egypt is experiencing an unprecedented level of citizen debate and activism as it prepares for and conducts parliamentary elections beginning in November 2011, the drafting of a new constitution within the first six months after the parliament convenes in March or April of 2012, and presidential elections two months after the constitution is ratified. The proposed timetable has led to serious doubts about the sincerity of the military's intention to return to the barracks as soon as possible (El-Hennawy 2011; El-Tablawy 2011). But in this new political atmosphere, these concerns are voiced openly and with the expectation that the military rulers will respond. Initial fears that Islamists would win an overwhelming number of seats in the new parliament have not disappeared, but they have been somewhat alleviated by the development of a dynamic dialogue among Islamists that shows that the movement is neither monolithic nor primarily fundamentalist. In fact, a number of prominent members of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood have come out in support of a secular political system similar to that found in Turkey (Shadid and Kirkpatrick 2011). Despite the many unknowns, many analysts agree that this is Egypt's first real opportunity to establish democratic governance. As one scholar put it, "It is a turning point" (Shadid and Kirkpatrick 2011).

One of the underlying reasons for skepticism is a lingering lack of civic competence in many Egyptians. This is not a criticism of the culture or an assessment of the capacity of Egyptians to function in a democratic society. Rather, it is denunciation of the educational system that has failed to capitalize on the human potential of the Arab world's largest and

arguably most powerful state. It is a denunciation of a political system which repeatedly said its citizens were not prepared for democracy, and yet repeatedly failed to make this preparation a priority.⁵⁴ The survival of democracy is not only dependent on institutional changes and economic growth, though those factors are important (Lipset 1963). “Its survival depends also on the values and beliefs of ordinary citizens” (Inglehart, *Culture and Democracy* 2000, 96) and “a certain level of political competence on the part of its citizens” (Dahl 1992, 45).

Education can help develop the values, beliefs and skills citizens need to contend with changes brought on by globalization and democratization (Kingston, et al. 2003). But for this to happen, increased access to education must be tied in with a specific focus on citizen empowerment and the development of human capabilities, which entails more than higher literacy rates or increased net enrollment. The capability approach has attempted to “redirect development theory [and practice] away from a reductive focus on a minimally decent life towards a more holistic account of human well being for all people” (Alkire and Black 1997).

Policy makers need to look beyond the traditional concept of development because it does not give enough attention to the issues of agency and freedom (Nussbaum 2003). Development of human capabilities requires the development of a public sphere⁵⁵ that encourages stakeholders to have a voice in determining the relative value and need of policy choices rather than “burying the evaluative exercise in some mechanical — and valuationally opaque — convention” (Sen 2005, 157). The 2011 revolution showed that Egyptians want to

⁵⁴ The statement made by Osama el Baz, one of Mubarak’s closest advisors is indicative of the general attitude of the political elite: “If we introduce lots of changes in a short period of time, the people cannot digest it... Suppose that somebody has a fever, and he has to take some antibiotics. He is told to take it every six or eight hours. Should he take 48 tablets at once to feel better?” (Rawls 2004, n.p.). Perhaps a better question to ask would have been what will happen if you never give the “patient” the “medicine” he needs? The revolution of 2011 provided a very unambiguous answer to that question.

⁵⁵ The concept of public sphere referred to in this study is based on Habermas’s definition and refers to “a space of institutions and practices between the private interests of everyday life in civil society and the realm of the state” with the purpose of “overcoming private interests and opinions to discover common interests and reach societal consensus” (Kellner 2000, 263).

have a stronger voice in the decisions that determine their future, and the educational system needs to better prepare them for engagement in the public sphere.

Keys for the Future: Improving Quality & Involving Stakeholders

According to a U.S. Department of State cable written in 2009, there had been “unprecedented efforts” in education reform made by the Government of Egypt [GoE] in the previous three years (Lipset 1959). The cable went on to praise the Egyptian government for its exceptional efforts. In terms of increased enrollment, particularly increased enrollment of girls, the improvements made are quite remarkable. There had been significant improvement in women’s access to education, which is one factor considered when measuring the quality of an educational system. But critical theorists who emphasize equality as being an important factor in improved quality, stress that education should stimulate social change by encouraging critical analysis of power relations and allowing students freedom to actively participate in the design of their own learning experiences (UNESCO 2004). Egypt’s governmental objectives focused on increasing enrollment and improving job prospects, not on stimulating social change and freedom, leading this analyst to question whether the quality has been significantly improved by equalizing access to education.

In its statement outlining their mission for education, UNICEF repeatedly highlights the need for access to *quality* education, not simply increased access (UNICEF 2010). The Dakar Framework for Action outlined the factors that determine quality as including: learners who are healthy and motivated, teachers that have been trained to use active pedagogies, a curriculum that includes interesting, relevant content and a system that ensure equitable resource allocation

(UNESCO 2004). In fact, the quality of education is so fundamental that another UNICEF statement contends that “Indeed, access to education of poor quality is tantamount to no education at all,” (UNICEF 2010). Increasing enrollment in poorly equipped schools with inadequately trained and overworked teachers is virtually pointless because many students will still fail to learn the skills they need to succeed in life.

The 2005 EFA report published by UNESCO noted that “the quantity of children who participate is by definition a secondary consideration: merely filling spaces called ‘schools’ with children would not address even quantitative objectives if no real education occurred” (UNESCO 2004, 28). The authors of the report lamented that fact that quantity had overshadowed quality in many education policy initiatives and analyses. This makes it particularly ironic that the same report also includes the following passage:

Egypt is remarkable for the business-style approach to quality assurance that it has chosen. ... With its businesslike approach, Egypt seems to have a strong vision of educational development. This vision may stabilize education policy over the longer term, (UNESCO 2004, 54)

There are two problems with this analysis. First of all, the business-style approach being applauded was merely business as usual. The elite ‘experts’ set targets and made policy decisions with little, if any, input from civil society and non-elite stakeholders. The second thing is that there was little progress towards improving quality mentioned in this report aside from the setting of targets and no real indication that the ‘strong vision’ was anything but a mirage.

On the other hand, the aforementioned U.S. diplomatic cable does acknowledge that Egypt needs a more modern educational system and that a problem with quality persists, even as it praises the government for its progress. Significantly, the cable goes on to explain the source

of this persistent problem. The author of the cable noted an “inherent resistance to change” due to the centralized and authoritarian nature of the system and “fragile political legitimacy”, making it difficult for the regime to “[deviate] from its implicit social contract with the Egyptian public”. In other words, despite having made remarkable progress on the surface, the U.S. government recognized that meaningful progress was being resisted for political reasons (Wikileaks 2011).

In a cable preparing Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for a 2009 meeting with her Egyptian counterpart, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Ambassador Scobey noted that the Government of Egypt resented that U.S. assistance in the areas of health, education and poverty eradication had been used to promote democracy (Scobey 2009). In 2010, Mubarak was due to visit the United States for the first time after many years of eschewing his previous annual trips. In preparation for this trip, American Ambassador Scobey wrote that the conversation with Mubarak should focus on education. Scobey’s suggestion was based on an assessment of Egypt’s needs and an analysis of public opinion. It was believed that Egyptians would “welcome a new presidential level initiative in this area”, and that it would not create the kind of opposition that faced other forms of assistance, particularly in the areas of democracy promotion and economic assistance (Scobey 2009).

However, the reality was that while foreign donors urged Egypt to adopt a broad range of meaningful reforms, “Egypt [was] adopting selective approaches that add[ed] new layers to the educational system rather than overhauling it” (Kohstall 2007, 4). A later cable from the U.S. Embassy seems to reflect an awareness of this approach. This cable explicitly mentions Suzanne Mubarak as being one of the factors limiting Minister of Education Youssry El Gammal’s ability to push forward meaningful reforms. Not only did Mrs. Mubarak resist certain reforms, she was

also a source of resistance among certain segments of Egyptian society. After her husband was forced out of power, a movement began to reverse a number of women's status laws commonly referred to as the Suzanne Mubarak Laws. Mrs. Mubarak was vital to the passing of these laws and promoting women's rights in general, so much so that the media rarely mentioned women's rights without also mentioning her. But the laws were enacted in the top-down, personalized manner that characterizes the approach to policy making under Mubarak, and left the masses feeling alienated and dissatisfied (Dawood 2011). Mrs. Mubarak exhibited this same attitude in regards education reform. She was described in the aforementioned cable as having a "patronizing and controlling" approach to education reform, rather than a "consultative and participative" approach towards policy-making and that she was "unlikely to foster needed reforms" (Wikileaks 2011). In other words, her approach was 'business as usual'.

As events after the 2011 revolution have shown, business as usual for the Mubaraks was not necessarily in the interests of the general public. A stark example of this is the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. According to another leaked U.S. diplomatic cable, the library's director, Ismail Serageldin, was aiming for the library to become a "clearing house of progressive ideas" but that funding was insufficient (Cairo 2011). In fact, the library shelves, designed to hold 8 million books, had only 350,000 books three years after it was opened. Visitors to the library were impressed by the stunning location and architecture, but astonished by the bare shelves and the strict rules forbidding children from entering the library. Suzanne Mubarak, who was quoted as saying that the library "seeks nothing less than to recapture the spirit of the ancient library of Alexandria, center of knowledge and of ecumenism of the ancient world" was widely feted as one of the library's biggest champions. But her intentions were questioned in 2011, when a secret account holding nearly \$145 million of donations for the library was discovered in a Cairo

bank (Walt 2011, Shenon 2011). According to numerous reports, none of the library's other trustees or administrators knew about this account, and the account had been opened using Hosni Mubarak's signature (Shenon 2011). In March of 2011, the library noted an illegal transfer of funds from the account and lodged a complaint that resulted in an official order that the Mubaraks be banned from accessing the account (Ahram Online 2011).

For decades, a stereotype has dominated the popular understanding of Egyptians' attitudes towards democratization. Many non-Egyptians believed that Egyptians were as resistant to the idea of democracy as they were resistant to and disgusted by U.S. interference in regional affairs. "For some, democracy is but another code word for the 'American way of life' and especially for corporate capitalism which is now being exported ..." (J. W. Fraser 1997, 57). This belief was advanced by Mubarak, who always claimed that he believed in democracy but that Egyptians were not ready for democracy, and warned that the result of hastily imposed democracy would be another Iran. But Egyptians have shown the world that they are not only open to the idea of democracy, but that the vast majority believe it is the best system of government (Pew Research Center 2011), and many say they are "ready to die for it" (Lindsey 2011, n.p.). The essence of democracy is the belief that all citizens should have a voice in finding solutions to the nations' intractable problems, and education must empower them for this important role in society.

Conclusion

If democracy is to work, it would seem to require a certain level of political competence on the part of its citizens. In newly democratic or democratizing countries, where peoples are just beginning to learn the act of self-government, the question of citizen competence possesses an obvious urgency (Dahl 1992, 45).

Target for the Future: Fostering Civic Competence

Job creation and economic growth are still seen as primary challenges for the leaders in this new era of Egyptian politics, but there is growing recognition of the need to foster development of a viable civil society and promote social justice (Page 2011). Research shows that reforming education to better prepare citizens for global markets is a necessary goal, but if Egypt is serious about establishing a democratic society, a focus on education for meeting market needs is insufficient. Many Egyptian educational professionals and parents alike still suffer from the modern ailment that Dore described as Diploma Disease (1976). The desire for a diploma is not, in itself, a negative motivator. However, a diploma is not adequate preparation for the needs of the Egyptian market nor is it enough to prepare citizens for their civic duties. But liberal education may continue to be resisted unless political reform brings genuine freedom and enfranchisement. “Until we view schooling ... as an essential element in the preparation of the next generation of active and engaged participants in the common life of the nation, all debates about schooling will be trivialized and ultimately will miss the point (J. W. Fraser 1997, xi).”

Fraser (1997) recommends three questions for evaluating the success of an educational system in preparing students for their role as citizens in a democracy: Does it produce students

with high levels of critical literacy? Does it produce students with a good understanding of the economy and the skills necessary for satisfying and gainful employment? And does it produce students with an internalized appreciation for the values and habits of a democratic society? Thus far, Egypt has done well in achieving the first criterion but it has failed miserably with the second two criteria.

Creating an educational system that prepares students for their civic duties in a democracy is going to take patience and candor, because it involves altering the mindsets of the privileged as well as the disadvantaged (J. W. Fraser 1997, 43). However, a need for patience should not be translated into a license for continued stagnation. “In a world where what matters is not only what a country does, but also what its competitors do, a more rapid pace of reform is a must” (World Bank 2008, 298). Improving civic competence is also more challenging today than it was in Dewey’s day because political problems are often more complex and larger in scale, and information is overwhelming (Dahl 1992). In order for policy changes to occur, policy elites will still need to be convinced as will mid-level bureaucrats and administrators. But for policy changes to be transformative, stakeholders from the masses will need to be engaged (Chapman, Mählek and Smulders 1997).

NGOs and other local organizations, such as student unions and parent-teacher organizations, should be empowered to participate fully in future education policy decisions. Egyptians’ access to information has increased exponentially over the last decade, particularly due to explosive growth in access to the internet and satellite channels. The way information is shared among levels needs to be restructured to ensure that decision-makers at the center are not overwhelmed with too much information as they seek to increase the input from local

stakeholders, but also to ensure that local stakeholders' voices are really heard (Chapman, Mählick and Smulders 1997).

What is needed is a "movement approach" which attacks the root of the problem. The results take longer to materialize, but in the long-term such an approach is expected to create systemic changes that a short-term "project approach" cannot achieve (Zaalouk 2004). Community schools are an example of a movement approach. The key feature of a community school is community participation. Community participation can range from cash-dependent contributions like providing land for school buildings, to skill-dependent contributions like engaging in school construction and even socially-dependent contributions such as word of mouth publicity by encouraging parents to send their children to the schools. When these contributions are sustained, a community school becomes a social movement with the potential to generate both individual and systemic changes. Unlike formal mass education which has traditionally focused on producing "model citizens" in order to maintain stability, community schools are based on participation and empowerment, which produces citizens who have greater control over their lives. In this way, community schools can be considered "liberatory" in the words of Paulo Freire (Shor and Freire 1987, 36). More importantly, education becomes an experience in democracy not just a tool for promoting democratization (Freire 2006). Mere expansion of the education system is insufficient (Hannum and Buchmann 2003); true change will only occur if there is a major paradigm shift in how teaching and learning is understood in Egypt.

Between 1995 and 2001 the number of community schools in Egypt nearly doubled and it was expected to grow, though there is no readily available evidence to verify if this has occurred. What *is* known is that community schools have done a better job at traditional education than

traditional schools have. Community school students have gotten consistently higher scores on Egyptian governmental standardized tests than their traditional school counterparts, and what is even more amazing is that analysis show that they cost less per student (DeStafano 2006). Community schools have also had a number of other more transformative effects on the communities in which they exist. What is particularly significant is that the qualities that have developed are all qualities that are said to be hallmarks of a democratic culture.

One quality that has developed is civility. Children have developed a sense of self and other where there was none or virtually none. This has created self-confident leaders along with increased religious tolerance, support for gender equality and respect for elders. Another quality that has developed is trust. Community relationships became stronger and more positive. The joint MoE/UNICEF team that evaluated community schools in 2001 were struck by the emotional impact of the movement; interviewees repeatedly referred to feelings of “warmth, love, passion, compassion, tenderness and gentleness,” when describing how they felt about the school and its impact upon them (Zaalouk 2004, 122). These attitudes are hallmarks of a civic society (Inglehart and Welzel 2009).

Children also became aware of their civic duty and participated in projects like cleaning their classrooms on a daily basis, another novel idea in Egypt where cleanliness is often overlooked or left up to underpaid cleaners. Likewise, adults have followed the children’s positive role and have become advocates for positive change in their communities, supporting women’s rights and the importance of life-long learning. In fact, the education committees of some hamlets have become defacto ruling bodies because of a lack of other forms of formal governance. Moreover, they have become looked upon as spokespeople for the community at the local government level, which is where the roots of democracy lie.

“Although the outlook is never hopeless, democracy is likely to emerge and survive only when certain social and cultural conditions are in place” (Inglehart and Welzel 2009, 34). Nasser attempted to fight inequality in Egyptian society in a top-down manner that was as much about creating a loyal elite as it was about engaging the masses. He expanded free education through the university level but closed the door to innovation, critical thinking and cooperation with the West. Instead of reducing classism in Egyptian society; Nasser created dysfunctional institutions and new elites whose loyalty was to the regime. Sadat and Mubarak moved towards rapprochement with the West and followed an open, increasing liberal economic policy, but they never opened the door to the type of political or social liberalization that would have encouraged the kind of innovation and critical thinking that are crucial for successful integration into the global economy and society.

Future Directions for Research

The study analyzed the role of education reform in the Egyptian state from Muhammad Ali until Mubarak, within the context of a state-society framework. The central argument was that elite and mass resistance to education reform was due principally to a desire to maintain the *status quo*. The ruling elite wanted to maintain economic and political privileges and prevent the masses from exercising self-determination, whereas the masses were suspicious of changes that might increase state power and make greater demands upon their limited resources. Many were also suspicious of changes that would “contaminate” their culture with “Western” values that had historically been promoted by the elite that they considered out of touch with their reality.

The original purpose of the study was to show how education reform has prevented liberalization of the political system. Despite nearly a century of criticism for its system being

overly centralized and its curriculum being insufficiently critical, Egypt's leaders have not made any significant progress towards alleviating these problems. Reforms supported by the elite reinforced their authority and were largely remedial in nature, focusing on narrowing a gap that grew larger with decades of ineffective education policy.

One area which this study did not address extensively was the public debate regarding education reform, particularly the debate related to the entrance of foreign educational institutions and foreign funded education reform projects. Though this debate began in the mid-19th century with the expansion of missionary schools, it surged after 1952 when Egyptians began to develop a stronger sense of national pride and resentment towards foreign influence, which translated into strong criticism of Egyptian liberals who espoused ideas that were viewed as part of a cultural invasion (Heggy 2003). The debate changed its tone in the 1970s as Egypt's economy opened to the outside world and peace with Israel brought closer ties with foreign powers, especially the United States. Egyptians still largely resented and rejected ideas that they viewed as foreign and imposed, but in this debate the government was viewed as being complicit in the cultural invasion.

A more thorough analysis of the public debate will add a great deal of valuable insight into our understanding of how and why Egyptian leaders failed to liberalize the education system. There have been excellent studies that trace and analyze the debate over foreign influence in Egypt's education reform, for example the study done by Sayed (2006). But a methodical content analysis of the debate needs to be done in order to strengthen the body of knowledge in this vital area. It is this researcher's intention to carry out such a study, backed by a number of cases, to expand on this study and work towards a clearer understanding of the rhetoric and reality of education reform in Egypt.

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