

## **Modern Egypt from Britain domination to independence**

- The construction of the Suez Canal, ended in 1869, led to the interference of foreign powers in the country, specifically France and United Kingdom.
- After Egyptian revolt against Ottoman domination, the UK invaded Egypt in 1882, for protecting its interests in the region, marking the beginning of British influence on the country.
- In 1914, Egypt became a British Protectorate, forming a Sultanate governed by Hussein Kamel.
- Independentists, in revolt against Britain, obtained a declaration of independence in 1922, when Egypt became a kingdom headed by Fouad I, succeeded by Farouk.
- In 1936, Egypt and the UK signed an agreement that maintained the *status quo*, implying limitation of Egyptian sovereignty and the withdrawal of British troops from Egyptian territory except the Suez Canal.

## **The formation of the two powers: the Wafd Party and the Muslim Brothers**

- In the period preceding independence, two powers central to Egyptian history have developed: the Wafd Party and the Muslim Brotherhood.
- The Wafd Party, born in 1920s, comprised nationalists opposing British control over Egypt, and became the first political movement with a liberal vision backing constitutional monarchy. The party dissolved in 1952, when Nasser seized power.
- Western influence over Egyptian society, with Christian schools, health institutions, and new customs, was cause of popular discontent among nationalists and Islamists.
- The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1936 by Hassan al-Banna as a social, religious, pan-Islamic movement. The political goal of the Muslim Brothers is the creation of the Caliphate governed by *shari'a*, by liberating the Arab and Islamic world from Western influence, through social activities filling the vacuum left by the state in terms of education, health services and assistance of people in need.

## **The 1952 revolution and the rise of Nasser**

- In July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1952, the Movement of the Free Officials begins the revolution, first directed against King Farouk, but aiming to abolish monarchy and put an end to British influence.
- The revolution led Gamal Abd al-Nasser to power, first appointed vice-premier, who developed an anti-imperialist, nationalist, and socialist policy called "Nasserism."
- Under Nasser's regime, Egypt joined the movement of Non-Aligned States, supporting anti-Israeli and Palestinian propaganda.
- The Muslim Brotherhood was outlawed, together with other parties, causing violent protests.

## **The Suez Crisis and the Six Day War**

- Exploiting anti-imperialist and anti-Israeli propaganda, Nasser declared the nationalization of the Suez Canal in July 1956, causing the intervention of Israel, France, and United Kingdom, consequently blocked by the US and NATO.
- Nasserism spread in the entire Arab world, and pan-Arabism led to the creation of the United Arab Republic, uniting Syria and Egypt, dissolved shortly after.
- Nasser succeeded in heading Arab armies against Israel, creating a coalition among Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. In May 1967, Nasser moved troops to the border with Israel; subsequently, Nasser closed the Tiran Straits to Israeli naval traffic,

causing Israeli military reaction, which, in 6 days, starting in June 11<sup>th</sup>, defeated its enemies, capturing the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank from Jordan, Gaza and Sinai from Egypt.

### **Sadat and the new regime**

- Anwar Sadat succeeded Nasser, who participated to the 1952 revolution and opposed Nasserist heritage. Sadat opened up to Islamic movements, which he favored for their social values, and, simultaneously, to the West, for economic development of Egypt.
- For gaining popular support, Sadat attacked Israel in October 1973, during the Kippur (Atonement Day in Judaism). Israel repelled the Egyptian army, while a cease-fire was imposed at the end of October.
- Sadat opened up to the West, leading to the historical visit to Israel in 1977, to the Camp David Agreements in, followed by the Peace Treaty with Israel, providing withdrawal from Sinai, the recognition of Israel, and the free passage through the Suez Canal, the Tiran Straits, and the Gulf of Aqaba.
- After signing the Peace Treaty with Israel, Egypt was expelled from the Arab League, and Iran severed relations with Egypt.
- Popular discontent for openness toward the West and the mobilization of Islamist forces against Sadat's pro-Western and pro-Israeli policy led to his assassination in 1981.

### **Mubarak, the Arab Spring and the rise of the Muslim Brothers**

- Mubarak, who participated in the 1952 revolution, became president after Sadat's assassination. He continued the pro-Western policy with more moderation and joined back the Arab League.
- Mubarak invested US and International Monetary Fund support for modernizing the country, trying to gain popular support through anti-Western and anti-Israeli declarations, such as during the 2003 Iraq war and Israeli military operations in Gaza and Lebanon.
- Mubarak's regime fiercely opposed the Muslim Brothers and Salafists, who, over the years, had gained considerable popular support for their social work among the poorest.
- Ill and incapable of governing the increasing opposition, Mubarak resigned in February 2011, after a month of harsh protests in Tahrir Square by youth, women, and liberals. After a long process, Mubarak was sentenced to life imprisonment for not impeding violence by armed forces against protests.
- After a first phase of government by the Military Junta, the Muslim Brothers won the elections, while liberals and Christian Copts try to oppose Islamization.

## Interview with Smadar Perry, Middle East Senior Editor of Yediot Ahronot

**1) Let me start with the role of Egypt in the region after the Arab uprisings. Egypt is the main example of what the so-called Arab Spring has caused in terms of regime change in the region: the triumph of the Muslim Brotherhood, backed by Salafists. Islamist victory is confirmed by constitutional reforms, by the consolidation of power by Morsi performed with the adoption of decrees that even Mubarak never dared to sanction, the apparent alignment with Iran, as well as by the general anti-Israeli feelings. However, Egypt-Israel neighborly relations have always depended on Mubarak's regime, while the masses have increasingly advanced anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish hostility notwithstanding the formal peace signed with Israel. What has changed and what will change in terms of relations with Israel and with other regional powers?**

I think we have to distinguish between the aspirations of the revolution on the one hand, and the reality on the ground on the other. The last years of Mubarak were characterized by uncertainty due to his illness and his political weakness in the region. On the contrary, the new regime is trying to reestablish the former power and position of Egypt as leader in Arab world. However, the reality is that the region is unstable: Egypt and other Arab countries are not stable, including both those countries that have been affected by the Arab Spring and those that are waiting for reforms. In this respect, I do not see the possibility that Egypt will gain back the position it had as a leader of the Arab world. New actors are emerging as leaders in the region: the center of power now is Iran, the focus of events is on Syria, and Turkey is a new power. For the moment, Egypt has to deal with stability, economy, and regime change, which affect its capacity to act as a regional normative power.

As for the alignment with Iran, I do not see a convergence of interests. Iran is a headache for the Islamic regime in Egypt and, therefore, I do not consider they will join forces. Indeed, Egypt is concerned with Iran's involvement in instability inside Egypt, specifically backing Islamist rebels in Sinai. The historic visit by Morsi to Teheran in August 2012 made it clear that the two countries are not on friendly relations. First, Morsi refrained from meeting the Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and, secondly, his speech did not please the Iranians, by delivering a message against Bashar al-Assad, and by leaving the country immediately after. So I do not see a possibility of alignment in the near future, and let's not forget that Saudi Arabia remains vigilant with respect to Iran's influence in the region.

As for the relations with Israel, the situation is like this: there is a peace agreement, as with Jordan, but only Jordan has ambassador in Tel Aviv. Israel keeps an ambassador in Cairo, but with limited functioning and limited staff; the Israeli Embassy in Cairo is highly guarded, and diplomatic staff limits the meetings; it has become more or less a symbol of our presence, while Egypt has withdrawn its ambassador after the incursions in Gaza. Moreover, over the last two years, Israelis are not allowed in Egypt. I can say from my own personal experience: I cannot have an entry visa to Egypt.

I believe we should follow very carefully the current and future relations with Egypt. Egyptians have always refused to have any kind of normal cooperation with Israel, even before Morsi. They have always been against normalization with Israel, defined in Arabic as *tatbi'a*, and the anti-normalization discourse has always been very strong. However, relations have recently been severed: there are no (official) relations in the economic field, while Egypt, as other countries in the region, needs Israel because they could benefit from

economic relations in order to combat the economic crisis. There are secret relations, although it is not enough. I do not see any concrete change in near future for the positive. Egyptians have their own problems and the crucial one is the economy. After political turmoil and stabilization, which includes recovering from the demonstrations, electing a new parliament, and adopting the constitution, Egypt will have to face the disastrous economic situation, and this means that the streets won't be quiet for a long time, resounding to the frustrations of young people.

**2) I mentioned before the Peace Treaty with Israel, which includes economic and energy cooperation. What is the status of Israel-Egypt cooperation, given that the pipeline through Sinai was attacked for purpose of sabotage? Does the newly discovered gas deposit offshore from Israel offer any solution in terms of energy and economic independence from Arab States?**

There have been 14 attacks on the pipeline, which affected the stream of oil to Israel and even to Jordan. It is clear that Israel has to find other sources of energy. In this respect, the gas deposit recently discovered off-shore of Israel could be an advantage, but I see no success in the near future for lack of resources.

In March 2012, an Egyptian delegation visited Israel in the effort to revive the economic and energy agreement, which is beneficial for all sides. It involves industrial cooperation, specifically with reference to the ten Qualifying Industrial Zones, dating back to 1996 and the result of Israeli-Jordanian-Egyptian joint economic cooperation supported by the USA, which guarantee tax-free export of products to America. This is the main field of secret or low profile economic cooperation, limited to the industrial elite. The potential is still high, if you consider economic growth since the 2000's. However, all parties in the region are concerned with internal problems: Israel is waiting for elections, Egypt has to deal with power struggles among secularists, Islamists, and the extremists. We do not know what the shape of the country will be. Copts are leaving the country, and this is not a good sign.

**3) Regarding to Egypt's minorities, secularists, Christians, and women oppose the Constitution and withdrew from the Constitutional Assembly, while anti-woman and anti-Christian violence increases as NGOs including Amnesty International have denounced. What is the role of the new Copt Bishop? Are secularists organizing into parallel political action?**

Copts are between 8 to 10 millions of the population, although no official census displays the actual number. The Coptic pope, even though he is elected by the community, behaves no more than as a government officer, so he has not an actual role in political affairs. The fact that Copts are consistently fleeing indicates high distress.

With respect to women in current Egypt, they have been the real fighters of the revolution: committed, active and involved during the 18 days of demonstrations that ended up with Mubarak being swept from power. And now they are the losers of the revolution. The new constitution is vague regarding their role in daily life, while the general public prefers keeping them home and veiled. Those women who dare venturing in the streets are consistently victims of harassments and attacks. Even foreign women are targeted: it started with Sara Logan of the BBC, sexually assaulted in a mob attack in February 2011. Women are deeply frustrated and angry, while human rights organizations have been silenced and are not allowed to work any more. Women in the streets run risks even if they are appropriately dressed according to the Islamic code: the veil does not protect

them any more. It is a kind of punishment by extremist Muslims against women, and this attitude also reflects their new aspirations out of the revolution.

The behavior of the American establishment is puzzling. The Americans were behind the scenes supporting Mubarak's removal under the slogan of democracy and human rights. Now Morsi is supposed to visit Washington, and America is supposed to supply money, weapons, and planes as part of military cooperation. Indeed, it is disconcerting: Americans have experts, analysts, they have interests in the region, and all of this notwithstanding, we ended up with the Muslim Brotherhood. In my opinion, the Americans do not understand the mentality of Middle Eastern peoples; they do not read the Middle East as Middle-Eastern people read themselves. But with this, I do not mean that they apply Cold War patterns to the region, as some authors suggest: they just want to get through with Bashar al-Assad and finish up the Syrian affair by avoiding a massacre, but they cannot intervene militarily, because this would mean causing a war, and Syria would turn into a battlefield between America and Iran.

**4) The triumphant figure of the regime change is Morsi, Egypt's current president, who is leading the country toward Islamization. Are there patterns of political strategy and language that also characterized the Khomeinist revolution, such as political disguise, rhetorical dissimulation, and temporary adaptability to Western expectations?**

I think that the ongoing struggle may result in a regime headed by two kinds of religious leaders as in Iran. Nevertheless, Egypt has a bigger chance to become a member of the democratic community, because it is still in the middle of revolution.

## **Interview with Zvi Mazel, former Israeli Ambassador to Egypt**

### **Egypt has always been the leader of the Arab world and the best ally of the United States and of the West. What has changed after the revolution and the rise to power of the Muslim Brothers?**

Under Mubarak's regime, Egypt was a strategic ally of the United States and was fundamental to the balance of power in the region. The peace with Israel and the policy toward Iran of pragmatic Arab states, like Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, were the two principles of the alliance between Egypt and the US. Egypt could count on military and economic support, including 1.5 billion dollars a year, weapons and military technology supply, including Abrams tank, training of army officials in the US and so on. Military cooperation also included joint exercises called "Bright Star," which occurred every two years and lately also included the Gulf States. Egypt guaranteed free and secure passage through the Suez Canal, crucial for American presence and policy in the Gulf, including free passage through the Hormuz Straits, defense of Saudi Arabia and Gulf Emirates, and the pressure over Iran exercised by the American Navy patrolling the Gulf's waters.

This complex scenario does not exist any more, although ever since Mubarak's fall, the two parties have refrained from coping with the new situation. The Muslim Brothers have not yet defined their foreign policy and have not yet consolidated their power. The US does not want to sever relations with Egypt and therefore try to dialog with the Muslim Brothers in the attempt to understand their intentions. Joint military exercises have been suspended, but military supports continues, although several Congress members proposed to condition military aid to the respect of democratic principles. Even Obama, interviewed on the American TV, announced that Egypt is not an ally any more, but not even an enemy.

### **What has changed in the position of Egypt toward other Arab and Muslim states? Does the alignment with Iran indicate a turn in the foreign policy of the new Egyptian regime?**

The alliance between Egypt and the United States has undergone a radical and dangerous change, for two reasons: 1) the relations between Egypt and Israel have severed without precedents, and the peace between the two countries is now uncertain; 2) relations between Egypt and Iran are not hostile any more. Cairo announced that it has no more enemies and intends to open a dialogue with Iran as well as to develop industrial and economic cooperation. Egypt is no more the leader of the Arab world in terms of pragmatic policy toward Iran: this role is now played by Saudi Arabia.

In the near future, Egypt is expected to intensify cooperation with other Arab and Muslim states, in order to spread the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the region, aiming to establish the Caliphate, according to the vision of its founder Hassan al-Banna. However, the disastrous economic situation compels Morsi to adopt a pragmatic policy, for obtaining economic and financial support from the West. Moreover, the instability of the region does not favor the development of alliances with Arab states. Egypt has lost its influence over the region, except for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in which Egypt is involved for its own security interests. The open question for the future is: who will prevail? Pragmatic policy or the radical ideology of the Muslim Brothers?

**Since the beginning of the revolution, relations between Egypt and Israel have severed: what is the future of the Peace Treaty and cooperation between the two countries? Is it a real change or does it only reflect the sentiment of the Egyptian people, which Mubarak tried to oppose?**

The Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel has substantially contributed to the stability of the region and to the improvement of relations with the US. However, Mubarak did not build upon the peace for creating a bridge between Egypt and the Arab world. Mubarak was the mediator between Israel and the Palestinians, but maintained a status of “cold peace,” which impeded a real development of relations between the two countries. Israel has repeatedly tried to improve relations with Egypt in all fields—what in Egypt is called “normalization”—in order to demonstrate its will to maintain peace and that peace can benefit all Arab peoples. This disposal, however, clashed with Egyptian indifference and lack of comprehension.

Mubarak committed to the dialog between the two countries, for guaranteeing the stability of the peace treaty. Israeli premiers and ministries, Foreign and Security Ministries specifically, used to meet Mubarak and their counterparts in Cairo, but institutional relationships have never extended to relationships between the two peoples. Professional associations of Egyptian elites, including engineers, physicians, pharmacists, artists, journalists, writers etc. have launched a boycott against Israel back in 1981, banning their members from travelling to Israel or establishing relations with the Israeli Embassy in Cairo. This has impeded cultural, scientific, or sport cooperation between Israelis and Egyptians. There have been, however, strategic commercial agreements, but peace has remained nothing more than an inter-governmental affair and a businessmen affair.

**What are, or were, the main fields of cooperation between Egypt and Israel? How has cooperation changed in the last few years?**

It is worth recalling some agreements between Israel and Egypt: the agreement on oil supply to Israel, part of the Peace Treaty; the cooperation agreement for the creation of a petrochemical pole in Alexandria; and the agreement on gas supply. There is also another important agreement on Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZ), on the basis of which Egypt can export textile products to the United States benefitting of the tax-free agreement between the US and Israel. Because of this agreement Egypt’s textile export has increased from 200 million dollars in 2005 to 1,3 billion dollars in 2011.

Moreover, Israel has substantially contributed to Egypt’s agricultural development, which was among the world’s most underdeveloped. During the 1980s and 1990s, Israeli experts were sent by the government for working in Egypt, specifically in fruits and vegetables. They brought irrigation technology in desert zones, developed species apt to climate and soil, transforming Egyptian agricultural from subsistence farming to export farming even to the European market. Thousands of Egyptian youth were trained in Israeli kibbutzim, where they learnt farming techniques.

Unfortunately, no cooperation has developed. Of all these agreements, only QIZ are still in force. The Military Junta quashed the gas supply agreement after the attacks on the Sinai pipeline, acting clearly on the anti-Israeli resentment of Tahrir protests. And the government, accused by the opposition of letting Israelis poisoning Egyptian soil, quashed the agreement on agricultural cooperation!

The only field of dialogue between the two countries still working is anti-terrorism. Military units and security services still cooperate, by exchanging information on anti-terrorist activities against groups active in Gaza and in Sinai, which represents a common interest.

The rise to power of the Muslim Brothers has no doubt severed relations. Inter-institutional dialogue has stopped, and incitement to hatred against Jews and Israelis in mosques has increased. Dialogue in the field of security remains the main common interest, but, still, it is unclear how military cooperation can develop when there is no political dialogue.

### **Where is the Muslim Brotherhood leading to? And what is the position of the liberals and the Christian Copts regarding the Islamization of the country?**

After the referendum approving the constitution, the Muslim Brotherhood has seized all key institutions, ensuring itself full powers: majority in both Chambers of the Parliament, the presidency, the government, the army, and the constitution, redacted by an assembly dominated by Islamists and abandoned by liberals and by Copts. The constitution allows the application of *shari'a*, the limitation of fundamental rights, and the control over the judiciary. The lower chamber of the Parliament was resolved a few months ago, and elections will follow the adoption of the constitution: the Muslim Brothers will find the way to win the elections, because they represent a social, religious, and political power; they are well organized and can count on institutional and social support.

The rise to power by the Muslim Brothers does not imply the end of the constitutional, political, and economic crisis in Egypt. On the contrary, it has exacerbated the conflict with the opposition. The constitution was approved with 64% of votes in favor, and 37% of votes against, after a harsh political conflict between the Muslim Brothers and the opposition, which caused protests with 7 dead people and 700 wounded. This constitution is the product of the Islamic minority, which represents only the 20% of voters, (almost 10,3 millions out of 51,9). The opposition announced it does not accept the constitution. Mohammed El-Baradei, the leader of the opposition forces united under the "National Salvation Front," said that the adoption of the constitution is a "sad day for Egypt, since it marks the instability of the country." The "6 April" movement, which represents youth starting the protests against Mubarak in January 2011, is organizing a big protest against the constitution for coming January 25th, two years after the beginning of the revolution. Amro Mussa, among the leaders of the opposition, said an emergency government has to be appointed, which shall include all political forces, as well as a commission of legal experts tasked with changing the most controversial parts of the constitution.

Morsi will not accept these proposals, and the Muslim Brothers will do all they can to consolidate power, even resorting to force, which will lead to the deterioration of the crisis and of the economic situation in specific. Strikes have affected production and export, tourism in particular has been tremendously affected, and foreign investments have stopped. The International Monetary Fund allocated 4,8 billion dollars for Egypt, on the condition that it carries out radical reforms, including the cancellation of subsidies and the privatization of public sector. Morsi is facing masses in revolt against the Muslim Brotherhood in Tahrir Square, and it will be more difficult to set in motion these reforms, which will affect the poorest communities—that is to say the 50% of the population. Morsi is in a *cul-de-sac*: refraining from carrying out the reforms would mean running out of money, with a consequent deterioration of the economic situation, but carrying out the



reforms would lead to exacerbating the opposition and to further protests in the streets, as has already happened in the past.

The Muslim Brotherhood succeeded in seizing power in Egypt, causing more discontent than consensus, through lies and violations of democratic principles. Surely, this is not the best way to gain support from the Egyptian people, which expected its country to be democratic and prosperous. Egyptian citizens fear for their freedom: the Copt minority, which represents the 10% of the population, almost 8-10 million people, fears even more for its rights, and for this reason almost 150,000 Copts have fled the country over the last months.

If Morsi wants to continue on the path of Iran, governed by *shari'a*, he will have to shed a lot of blood, but this is a price he is not ready to pay.