Introduction

In July 1980, a dozen F-4 fighter jets traveled from Moody Air Force Base, Georgia, to Cairo West, where they would fly in joint U.S.-Egyptian maneuvers. Operation Proud Phantom was the U.S. Air Force's first tactical deployment to Egypt, and it symbolized the two governments' nascent partnership. An aerial photo of Egyptian- and U.S.-piloted F-4s passing the pyramids conveyed, in the words of one National Security Council (NSC) staffer, "the sense of cooperation and benefits to regional states that we have emphasized throughout the security framework."[1]

The framework, designed to counter Soviet influence in the Persian Gulf and absorb the aftershocks of Iran's revolution, almost collapsed the following year during Egypt's "Autumn of Fury." Egyptians faulted President Anwar Sadat for mismanaging the economy, hoarding power, and accepting a bilateral treaty with Israel that enabled Israeli aggression instead of bringing regional peace. Rather than answering these objections, the embittered ruler jailed fifteen hundred of his critics. But a small band of militants struck back. During an October 6, 1981, ceremony – which commemorated Sadat's military success eight years prior – they shot and killed the president. The assassins took Sadat's life, but they did not upset Egypt's role in U.S. geostrategy. Vice President Hosni Mubarak succeeded to the presidency, and his counterpart in Washington, Ronald Reagan, fortified the U.S.-Egyptian alliance by increasing military aid.

Thirty years and $60 billion of U.S. aid later, President Mubarak
and his U.S. partners watched tens of thousands of Egyptians assemble
in a "Day of Rage." The January 25, 2011, protests began a national
uprising that eclipsed the Autumn of Fury in scope and impact. As
anti-Mubarak demonstrators occupied Cairo's central square for more
than two weeks, Egyptian and U.S. officials struggled to quell the
crisis. Realizing that the crowds, which eventually encompassed mil-
lions, would not disperse as long as Mubarak headed the regime,
they hoped to install ex-intelligence chief and newly appointed vice
president Omar Suleiman in power. A smooth transition to Suleiman
could placate Mubarak's critics without disrupting U.S.-Egyptian co-
operation.

But representatives of the uprising rejected any dialogue with the
regime and would not accept a government headed by Suleiman. The
opposition refused to leave the square, even as police and thugs killed
hundreds of demonstrators and injured thousands more. On February
8, 2011, tens of thousands went on strike or joined in protests to oust
Mubarak. The groundswell forced the Egyptian Supreme Council of
the Armed Forces (SCAF) and U.S. policymakers to rescind support
for Mubarak and Suleiman. On February 11, Suleiman announced
that Mubarak was stepping down, the SCAF took responsibility for
governing the country, and U.S. president Barack Obama praised the
outcome. This transition was more open than elites in either coun-
try had envisioned, exposing Egyptian domestic and foreign policy
to the will of the Egyptian public. Without firing a shot, the opposi-
tion had cracked the edifice of Egyptian autocracy, rattled the U.S.-
Egyptian alliance, and launched the Middle East's largest democratic
experiment.

Mubarak's overthrow is one of the most consequential develop-
ments of the early twenty-first century. Not since the Iranian shah fled
into exile in 1979 has a popular movement swept away a key U.S. client
in the Middle East so abruptly. Nevertheless, democracy in Egypt is
no more certain after Mubarak than it was after Sadat. When it inter-
vened, the SCAF circumscribed the uprising and safeguarded its ties to
Washington. Similarly, U.S. officials accepted a change in leadership
that would protect their interests. The bulwarks of authoritarianism
had not vanished. Egyptians debated constitutional reforms and new
election laws under the supervision of the military, which had been the

arbiter of Egyptian politics since 1952. Six months after Mubarak's resignation, the SCAF sought to reassure the public that it had no desire to rule after Egyptians had elected a new parliament and president, and ratified a new constitution. Observers doubted, however, that the military would submit to civilian control.

This book seeks to explain why Egyptians who joined the Day of Rage in winter 2011 managed a political triumph that had eluded them in the Autumn of Fury of 1981. It also seeks to show why protesters replaced a ruler but not a regime. Answering these questions depends on showing not only what changed but also what remained the same across these periods. Scholars have identified two major political components to the durability of authoritarianism: domestic coercion and international support.[2] One of the remarkable aspects of the January 25 Revolution is that both factors were at least as strong in 2011 as they had been in 1981. The pillars of Mubarak's rule had not crumbled before the initial Day of Rage. Yet, in the absence of pre-existing rifts within the Egyptian state and its international support network, protesters overcame security forces and prompted elites to recalibrate their support for Mubarak. Grassroots mobilizing, rather than intraregime cleavages, propelled the January 25 Revolution. While the result fell short of regime change, because the Egyptian army remained in control, the uprising showed how mass movements in Egypt contested the foundations of durable authoritarianism.[3]

Arguably the best guide to Egypt's dynamic and evolving present is a clear understanding of U.S. support, internal repression, and domestic opposition in Egypt's recent past. This book investigates the historical and contemporary obstacles to Egyptian democracy, analyzing the Egyptian security state that Sadat erected, Mubarak expanded, and the united States enhanced. It also chronicles the opposition's uphill battle for an accountable government. Official U.S.-Egyptian relations have been at odds with domestic public opinion in Egypt. Rather than fostering democracy in an incremental fashion, U.S. and Egyptian officials have promoted an autocratic security state that supports a U.S.-led regional order built around Israeli security and the projection of U.S. influence over the Persian Gulf.[4] By contrast, public opinion in Egypt favors a regional security order less dominated by the United States and Israel, and a government that respects political competition and civil liberties.

I consider authoritarianism an international phenomenon, and this book treats Egyptian authoritarianism as co-constituted by local and foreign actors.[5] Beginning with the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and extending past the January 25 Revolution, the United States has been a coalitional partner of Sadat, Mubarak, and the SCAF. This participation in Egyptian authoritarianism has not been all-determining or immutable. Rather, the United States has shaped the regime's longevity and posture in specific and contestable ways.[6] The United States has protected Egyptian rulers from foreign threats, heavily subsidized the Egyptian armed forces, and bolstered the Egyptian security services.[7] At the same time, the U.S. alliance with the Egyptian regime has been influenced by events inside Egypt. During the January 25 Revolution, Egyptian demonstrators induced the Obama administration to curb U.S. support for Mubarak. They showed that while "strategic interests" may be quite rigid, the calculus by which the United States pursues those interests can shift. By February 10, 2011, a transition without Mubarak or Suleiman had become the best bet for preserving the U.S.-Egyptian alliance.

Authoritarianism under Liberal Hegemony

Prolonged autocracy in one of the United States' closest allies challenges ideas about U.S. democracy promotion and the triumph of liberal values after the Cold War.[8] Scholars and practitioners have documented U.S. efforts to spread democracy.[9] Carter is credited with helping the opposition win an election in the Dominican Republic; Reagan purportedly pushed for democratic outcomes in El Salvador, the Philippines, South Korea, and Chile; and after George H. W. Bush overthrew Manuel Noriega in Panama, the country's multiparty democracy resumed.[10] Yet, Washington's support for autocratic regimes is also well known.[11] During the Cold War, the pattern was clear: When the incumbent was pro-United States, the United States was pro-incumbent. John F. Kennedy's administration would only experiment with democracy in the Dominican Republic, for example, when a communist takeover had been definitively precluded. "There are three possibilities in descending order of preference," Kennedy explained. "A decent democratic regime, a continuation of the [Rafael] Trujillo regime or a [Fidel] Castro regime. We ought to aim at the first, but we

really can't renounce the second until we are sure that we can avoid the third."[12] The implications for popular sovereignty in the Dominican Republic became clear when Kennedy's successor oversaw a military intervention in 1965 that enabled Joaquín Balaguer, a former aide to Trujillo, to claim the presidency over anti-Trujillista Juan Bosch. Balaguer ruled continually until 1978.[13] Reagan's ambassador to the United Nations, Jeane Kirkpatrick, defended the "double standards" by which U.S. leaders denounced human rights abuses committed by communist regimes and ignored them in its anticommunist allies.[14] Only when circumstances impelled the White House to accept the opposition – as in the Philippines – would the United States realign.

Given the historical pattern in U.S. foreign policy, U.S. support for autocracy in Egypt and other Middle Eastern allies becomes easier to understand. Many states in the Middle East have had greater geopolitical significance for the United States than the Dominican Republic or the Philippines. Further, the strategic significance of the Middle East predated and outlasted the period known as the "third wave of democratization," roughly 1974–1991.[15] On October 6, 1973, Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack against Israeli forces occupying the Sinai Peninsula and Golan Heights. The war (discussed more fully in Chapter 1) turned quickly in Israel's favor, thanks to a U.S. resupply effort and Sadat's limited strategic ambitions. When news leaked that the United States was airlifting military supplies to Israel, however, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia led Arab oil producers to gradually cut production and, later, to completely freeze Arab oil exports to the United States, the Netherlands, and a small number of other states. Active hostilities ceased later that month, and the Arab supply cuts ended the following spring. The crisis brought two U.S. strategic imperatives into focus: preventing another major Arab-Israeli war and maintaining reliable ties with Gulf oil exporters.[16] This vision of regional security belongs in any explanation of why democratic currents have barely touched the Middle East. Post-1973 U.S. foreign policy promoted the continuity of friendly Middle Eastern autocracies during the Cold War and afterward.

U.S. support for Middle Eastern regimes since 1989 represents an anomaly for the leading prognoses of post–Cold War world politics. Under the pressures of "liberal hegemony," autocrats were expected to democratize or be ostracized.[17] In some regions, such as Central

Europe, the U.S. government and U.S.-based nongovernmental orga-
nizations (NGOs) helped opposition movements bring down authori-
tarian regimes.[18] But international liberal norms lacked transformative
power in the Middle East. Updating Kennedy and Kirkpatrick's pref-
erences for a postcommunist world, U.S. politicians who celebrated
the defeat of tyranny in Eastern Europe or sub-Saharan Africa showed
little zeal for advancing democracy among the United States' Arab
partners.[19] Instead, they promoted current regional allies over their
domestic opponents. It was not that interests trumped norms. Rather,
U.S. policymakers normatively preferred the U.S. framework for
Middle East security over local democracy.[20]

America and the Egyptian Regime

Scholars have explained the persistence of autocracy in the Middle East
with a number of variables, including oil income and domestic political
institutions.[21] This book joins a growing body of work looking at the
contribution of the United States to robust authoritarianism.[22] Steven
Levitsky and Lucan Way have cited the "linkage" and "leverage"
between Western states and developing countries to explain variations
in authoritarianism and democratization after the Cold War.[23] In the
conventional sense of those terms, there has been no autocracy more
linked to and more leveraged by the United States than that of Egypt.[24]
Rather than siding with the opposition, however, America backed the
ruling coalition of an authoritarian regime.[25]

   The contemporary U.S.-Egyptian relationship began after the 1973
War. It was sealed after the Iranian Revolution. After Great Britain
withdrew from the Persian Gulf in 1971, Iran became the centerpiece of
U.S. strategy in the area.[26] U.S. president Richard Nixon and National
Security Advisor Henry Kissinger even discussed with the shah of Iran,
Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, "contingency plans" for an Iranian inter-
vention in Saudi Arabia should the kingdom fall.[27] Playing the role
of regional gendarme, the shah ordered $20 billion of U.S. materiel
from 1970 through 1978, a quarter of all U.S. foreign military sales
during that period.[28] A Senate report called the U.S.-Iranian military
sales program "the largest in the world in terms of dollar value and
the number of Americans involved in implementation."[29] Such lavish
expenditures were expected to secure the Persian Gulf while supporting

U.S. arms merchants. At the end of 1977, Carter toasted the shah as leading "an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world."[30] Yet, heavy equipment was no panacea for the shah's political woes. Advanced submarines could patrol the Indian Ocean but could not stop the protests against his profligate and brutal regime. One year after Carter had raised his glass, protests were sweeping the country.

Meanwhile, Carter was working to translate the Camp David Accords into a permanent treaty. After thirteen days of grueling negotiations at Camp David in September 1978, he achieved a framework that would prevent another Egyptian-Israeli war. But this diplomatic feat coincided with political calamity. The shah fled in January 1979. His downfall upset U.S. strategy for the Persian Gulf. The next month Secretary of Defense Harold Brown toured the Middle East, in search of allies – and arms buyers for the wares previously destined for Tehran. Peace between Egypt and Israel served both aims. When the two countries signed a peace treaty in March, Washington offered unprecedented military assistance to help them acquire U.S. weapons and vehicles.

The aid symbolized how important Egyptian-Israeli peace and U.S.-Egyptian cooperation had become for the White House's interests in the Middle East. The NSC staffer commenting on the photo from Operation Proud Phantom noted the irony that "only a decade ago, Israeli F-4s were conducting deep-penetration raids in this same general area."[31] The peace treaty had virtually eliminated the threat of a major Arab-Israeli land war while freeing Egypt to assist U.S. operations from Afghanistan to the African Horn. In January 1980, Carter issued his self-titled doctrine, vowing the United States would forcibly defend the "free movement of Middle East oil." But U.S. intervention in the Persian Gulf depended on logistical cooperation with Egypt and speedy passage through the Suez Canal. Otherwise, the United States would have trouble projecting its power to what Secretary Brown called "areas far from but vital to us."[32] Carter left office ignominiously, but presidents from both parties would uphold his strategy and guard against revolution toppling another U.S. ally. The U.S. military, positioned discretely "over the horizon," would provide a check against hostile revolts while arming its clients to the hilt. Defending a controversial sale of high-tech radar to Saudi

Arabia, Reagan intoned, "We will not permit [Saudi Arabia] to be an Iran."[33]

As the United States ensured Israel's security and supported friendly Arab oil exporters, Egypt remained a key partner. With the exception of the Desert Shield and Desert Storm operations, Egyptian troops would not join U.S. forces in combat, but the Egyptian government shared intelligence and enabled the movement of U.S. forces from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. When the U.S. military was fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq in 2005, Egypt provided an average of twenty overflight permissions a day to U.S. aircraft crisscrossing its territory. Even at times of diplomatic strain, as in the mid-1980s and 2000s, bilateral tensions did not interfere with strategic cooperation. When democracy promotion became a prominent feature of U.S. foreign policy during the George W. Bush administration, for example, officials sought to safeguard security cooperation with Cairo. Similarly, when lawmakers attempted to condition military aid to Egypt in 2007, they sought to elicit greater Egyptian cooperation on Israeli security, not change the Egyptian regime's domestic behavior. Genuine leverage served U.S. interests (in that case, weakening Hamas) rather than democracy in Egypt.

Analytic Framework

Examining the United States' role in Egyptian authoritarianism is difficult, because Egypt is often understood as a case of failed or incomplete democracy promotion, rather than an exemplar of U.S. geostrategy. Those who have recently written on U.S.-Egyptian relations have generally provided two kinds of accounts. Public analysts, such as Michele Dunne and Steven Cook, have discussed the United States' vexed efforts to nurture democracy in Egypt through conditional aid and stern diplomacy.[34] Investigative journalists like Jane Mayer and Stephen Grey have highlighted the two governments' joint work fighting al-Qaeda.[35] These works illuminate different aspects of the relationship. While the democracy discourse has occupied the foreground, security cooperation has been the alliance's operational core. Officials may allude to the repressive side of the U.S.-Egyptian alliance, but they seldom acknowledge that antidemocratic norms pervade the relationship.[36]

The United States and Egypt's mutually advantageous relationship comprises massive economic support, joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, and high stakes diplomacy. Officials from the two countries form a network of common interests, values, and practices.[37] This network has served U.S. security interests in the Middle East and the interest of Egyptian incumbents in retaining power. While collaborating bilaterally, leaders have prevented the rise of a more representative Egyptian government and have reinforced Egypt's strategic alignment.

Just as officials within each government have their differences, participants in the U.S.-Egyptian network periodically disagree. More importantly, however, they share certain assumptions, taken-for-granted ideas that establish the conceptual frameworks within which they identify and solve problems. For example, the primary functions of post-1973 U.S.-Egyptian relations – Israeli security and U.S. force projection to the Gulf – are not on the table for discussion; they are the frame of reference for everyone at the table. Two other core assumptions undergird the bilateral alliance: distrust of popular sovereignty and an acceptance of U.S. primacy.

Although some U.S. officials advocate liberalizing reforms in Egypt, they accept that a sudden opening of public participation could bring unknown figures to power and jeopardize strategic cooperation. No U.S. president, much less his Egyptian interlocutors, wants Egypt to follow the way of Iran, whether through elections or revolution. Indeed, even a subtler mix of populism and nationalism could jeopardize Egyptian support for U.S. strategy. It follows that elections and political reform are welcome only insofar as they impede extremists and enhance stability.

The second area of consensus is a binational hierarchy. Despite the two countries' codependency, Egypt has been a vital subordinate in U.S. foreign policy, not an equal partner. This arrangement stems from political and economic asymmetries that thirty years of linkage have not ameliorated.

U.S. antagonism toward overt Islamist movements shows the power of the unspoken assumptions of the U.S.-Egyptian alliance.[38] After the USSR collapsed, U.S. policymakers began regarding religious conservatism in the Muslim World as a strategic challenge to U.S. power. Washington opposed any traditional Islamic group taking power, even

through elections, at the expense of a pro-U.S. government. Assistant
Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs Edward
Djerejian vowed the United States would not accept "one man, one
vote, one time."[39] He implied that Islamist movements would use
democracy to take power then shut it down after they had won elec-
tions. Given U.S. reticence about democracy, however, his stance had
more to do with preventing assertive nationalism than preempting
authoritarianism. When Djerejian spoke, the only serious electoral
challenge to Mubarak's National Democratic Party (NDP) in Egypt
was the Muslim Brotherhood, a leading critic of U.S. and Israeli poli-
cies. The problem for Washington was not that pro-U.S. authoritarian-
ism would be followed by more authoritarianism, but that the succes-
sor government, democratic or not, could turn Egyptian policies away
from U.S. preferences. Hence, U.S. officials worked to check Islamic
political activity, either by cultivating a liberal option between the
NDP and the Muslim Brotherhood or by squarely backing Mubarak.

Foreign Aid and Regime Survival

Political scientists have already theorized that U.S. aid, especially mili-
tary aid, can make authoritarianism more robust. Beyond observing a
general aggregate relationship, however, they seldom specify the causal
role of aid in regime survival.[40] Thus, it is worth asking: Through what
mechanisms does Washington's support sustain nondemocratic rule in
Cairo? To answer this question we must situate the material aspect
of aid in the political relationship between the U.S. government and
Egyptian regime.

The United States' influence on Egyptian decision makers extends
beyond a normal bilateral relationship. Given the stakes for both sides,
the United States is less like an external force and more like a local
participant in the ruling coalition.[41] The U.S. government plays a role
analogous to those of domestic coalition members (the director of intel-
ligence, the minister of the interior, the minister of defense), shaping
the calculations, priorities, and resources of the regime. Continued U.S.
support for the authoritarian apparatus impedes the opposition. Con-
versely, a U.S. defection from the ruling coalition would increase the
likelihood of regime change and the development of democracy.[42] At
the time of this writing, such realignment has not occurred. Although