

Egypt After Mubarak: A Speculative Research Project

“Egypt is the next domino to fall and, as they say, so goes Egypt, so goes the Middle East.”

Robert Baer, former Middle East-based CIA operative

“When it happens, it will rock the world; octogenarian Mubarak will leave office, either by his own decision or that of Providence, probably within the next three years. So far, few in the West have paid much attention. But Egyptians certainly are getting ready, and we should do so as well.”

Michelle Dunne, Georgetown University specialist on Arab politics and fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

“Perhaps the most valuable contribution the United States can make to democratization [in Egypt] is to create a framework of incentives and disincentives to keep Egypt on its current path toward liberal reform. It can use this framework to strengthen the rule of law, broaden governmental accountability, increase private-sector autonomy, and improve protection of basic civil and political rights. The purpose of these efforts is to firmly support the emergence of a more constrained and law-abiding state with a higher degree of accountability and responsiveness to its citizens.”

Bruce K. Rutherford in *Egypt After Mubarak: Liberalism, Islam and Democracy in the Arab World*

“For Washington to abandon the Egyptian people by letting things fester, with all the risk that entails of bringing the Muslim Brotherhood to power, as though the Egyptian people deserve nothing better and want nothing more, as many Washington-based policy analysts seem increasingly to advocate, would be more than a betrayal of what has historically been the Arab world’s most vibrant and diverse culture: It would sound the death knell for democracy and pluralism throughout the region.”

John R. Bradley in *Inside Egypt: The Land of the Pharaohs on the Brink of Revolution*

Author: Cynthia McNulty

Description:

Grades: This research activity is designed to compliment an AP World History course for seniors. It can easily be used in Current Events courses or adapted for younger students.

Subject: History

Overview/Rationale: The project is designed to address a real life foreign policy dilemma looming in the Middle East: Egypt after Mubarak. This project will require students to work in teams to research focused topics addressing the range of issues which need to be considered in adjusting the US position on the impending changes in Egypt. The format of the policy scenario is designed to lend an authenticity to the assignment.

Objectives: Since this project is designed for an AP World History class, my objectives are determined by the **Themes and Habits of the Mind** drawn directly from the Advanced Placement World History program structure.

Themes are overarching subjects to be examined within each time period of study. The following are the themes which most directly relate to this project:

- “Changes in functions and structures of states and in attitudes toward states and political identities (political culture), including the emergence of the nation-state (types of political organization.” This theme addresses the way in which the tension between the secular and religious views of the role of government are playing out in Egypt. It is more specifically “political” than the following theme, although clearly, there is overlap.
- “Cultural and intellectual developments and interactions among and within societies.” This theme will be addressed when students examine the role of Islam and the secular opposition in the discourse about the future of Egypt. This theme would then also extend to the impact Egypt’s actions will have on the wider region.
- “Systems of social structure and gender structure (comparing major features within and among societies and assessing change)” This theme will be addressed when examining the growing economic gap in Egypt as well as the complex status of women both manifests and, in some cases contradicts, the shift to a more conservative culture.

Habits of the Mind are intellectual characteristics emphasized in each activity. The following Habits of the Mind will be employed:

- “Using documents and other primary data: developing skills necessary to analyze point of view, context, and bias, and to understand an interpret information”. This objective will be addressed when students analyze the material in their reading and interpret the meaning. The materials range from newspaper editorials to books by both scholars and reporters.

- “Enhancing the capacity to handle a diversity of interpretations through analysis of context, bias, and frame of reference”. The range of materials is designed to provide a variety of opinion which the students will need to contextualize and analyze for point of view.
- “Constructing and evaluating arguments: using evidence to make plausible arguments”. This objective will be met when the students engage in the role-play and write position papers.

Resources: The students must begin their research with a selection of “core texts”. These are books I have chosen after my own research into the topic. They are required to use at least four of the core texts and then they must supply four of their own. Texts may be additional books, articles, newscasts, etc. but they all need to be approved by me. This enables me to include an additional objective into my project: distinguishing credible sources from poor ones. At least one of their additional sources must be from an Egyptian author or publication.

The following are the core texts:

Allawi, Ali A. *The Crisis of Islamic Civilization*. Yale University Press: New Haven and New York. 2009.

Baker, Raymond William. *Islam Without Fear: Egypt and the New Islamists*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England. 2003.

Benn, Aluf. “Can Egypt-Israel peace survive after Mubarak leaves office?”. Haaretz.com. March 27, 2009.

Bradley, John R. *Inside Egypt: The Land of the Pharaohs on the Brink of a Revolution*. Palgrave Macmillan: NY. 2008 -2009.

Cook, Steven A. “Adrift on the Nile”. *Foreign Affairs*. March/April 2009.

Elaasar, Aladdin. *The Last Pharaoh: Mubarek and the Uncertain Future of Egypt in the Volatile Middle East*. Beacon Press: Missoula, Montana. 2009.

Esposito, John L. and Dalia Mogahed. *Who Speaks for Islam?: What a Billion Muslims Really Think*. Galup Press: New York. 2007.

Glain, Stephen. “Egypt After Mubarak”. *The Nation*. April 27, 2009.

Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives. Ed. John Donohue and John Esposito. Oxford University Press. New York. 2007.

Rutherford, Bruce K. *Egypt After Mubarak: Liberalism, Islam, and Democracy in the Arab World*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ. 2008

Smith, Lee. "Egypt After Mubarak". Slate. July 9, 2004.

Activities / Procedures

This activity is designed to be implemented over a period of three weeks: two weeks of research, assembling materials, and writing position papers and three class days – two for presentations and one for debriefing and summary.

The activity is a policy scenario. The students are to imagine that President Husni Mubarak has died with no democratically elected successor. Students will play the roles of policy analysts with the Department of Defense and they are to prepare a briefing for President Obama. The student teams will be assigned areas of specialization:

- Islamic groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood and the "New Islamists"
- Economic pressures, especially unemployed youth and university graduates
- Egyptian relations with the US, especially military aid
- Egyptian relations with Israel (this is where the Camp David Accords will play a role)
- Secular opposition within Egypt.

Teams of two or three student will be assigned to each area of specialization. Their task is to begin their research with the core texts which I will provide and then to branch out into their own research. Each team will create both a role and a "policy paper" advising Obama about the foreign policy issues and recommending responses.

Some of the essential questions the students will need to address include: (I really need to put more time into this list – I intend to both extend the list and polish the wording of the questions. What I need to consider is what the students will already know by that time, given what we have covered in class. I don't have that part sorted out yet.)

- What will be the role of the Egyptian military?
- What will be the role of Gamel and Alaa Mubarak?
- Specifically how is the economic picture in Egypt affecting the political scene?
- What statements has the Muslim Brotherhood issued at this moment?
- How organized is the secular opposition?

Two weeks later: The students are given two days of class time to “brief” the president. Each team will select a spokesperson to role play a DOD specialist. Each team must provide the other students with a written policy brief so that they can prepare to follow the discussion. After each area specialist speaks she will entertain questions from the president and other members of the DOD. The last day will be used for debriefing and summary.

Evaluation: The project evaluation will have two parts. First, each team will be evaluated on the quality of their research, the understanding of the material as demonstrated in the briefing and the ability to answer questions President Obama (or other specialists) may ask. Each individual student will also be evaluated in the form of a short paper (2-3 pages) in which, after hearing and discussing all of the options, they take a position on what they think is the most likely scenario following Mubarak’s departure and the way in which they think the US should respond.

Extension Activity: Students write a short paper comparing the situation in Egypt to the Iranian Revolution. This would be good practice for the “Compare and Contrast” Free Response question on the AP test.

Academic Content Standards: Historical Analysis and Skill Development

- 8.1.12. C Evaluative historical interpretations of events
- Impact of opinions on the perception of events
 - Issues and problems in the past
 - Multiple points of view
 - Connections between causes and results
 - Author or source of historical narratives’ points of view

Academic Content Standards: World History

- 8.4.12. D Evaluate how conflict and cooperation among social groups and organizations
- Americas, Asia and
- impacted world history from 1450 to present in Africa, Europe
- Domestic Instability
 - Ethnic and Racial Relations

- Labor Relations
- Immigration and Migration
- Military Conflicts

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