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## **U.S. Must Rethink Egyptian Foreign Aid Strategy** **By Lawrence J. Haas**

As the world evolves, presenting new challenges to U.S. national security, the patterns of U.S. foreign aid should evolve with it.

Nowhere is this truer than in Egypt, the Arab world's most populous and historically most influential state, which is gradually transforming itself from a Western-leaning secular autocracy into an increasingly Islamic state that's run by the anti-Western (specifically, anti-American) Muslim Brotherhood.

Though long-time Egyptian strongman Hosni Mubarak was no paragon of freedom, no promoter of democratic norms, Washington showered more than \$1 billion of aid a year on Cairo because Mubarak upheld the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty and served as a bulwark of U.S.-backed regional stability.

But Mohammed Morsi, Egypt's new Muslim Brotherhood-rooted president, is rethinking U.S.-backed policies across the region while, at home, threatening to replace Mubarak's dictatorial rule with an Islamic authoritarianism that leaves Egyptians with no greater say in the political process. Rather than accept this harsh new reality, Washington should use the leverage that its foreign aid provides to press for a more U.S.-friendly approach from Cairo, both in its regional relations and its behavior at home. That, at the moment, Cairo desperately needs America's cash and its global financial leadership to avoid an economic meltdown gives Washington even more leverage than it would normally have.

The United States has allocated economic, military, and political aid across the world in a formal foreign aid program since the early 1950s in order to promote U.S. interests. Those interests include such short-term U.S. goals as regional stability and access to natural resources, and its long-term goal of advancing freedom and democracy abroad in order to make the world more peaceful and prosperous.

With Cairo facing a crisis of dwindling cash reserves—for instance, it owes an estimated \$6 billion to \$7 billion in overdue payments to foreign oil and gas companies—Washington has sought to rush supplemental economic assistance to Egypt in the form of dollars and debt forgiveness, supported a pending \$4.8 billion loan to Egypt from the International Monetary Fund, and encouraged U.S. businesses to invest there.

But if the Obama administration was hoping to curry favor with Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood-dominated government, Cairo is sending increasingly troubling signals to Washington in return. For starters, Morsi has raised doubts about whether Cairo will uphold the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. He previously called for scrapping the treaty, and his foreign minister recently suggested that Israel was violating it.

A long-time 9/11 "truther," Morsi was slow to condemn the violent attacks on America's embassy in Cairo, and he has called on Washington to release the "Blind Sheikh," Omar Abdel Rahman, who masterminded the 1993 bombing of New York's World Trade Center that left six dead and more than 1,000 injured.

At home, Morsi echoes the Muslim Brotherhood's stance that strict Islamic law ("shariah") should govern Egypt's society and undergird its laws. Liberals and moderates who seek a more pluralistic society are threatening to resign from the assembly that's drafting the country's new constitution because, they say, it's dominated by Islamists who seek a shariah-based outcome.

Meanwhile, Morsi and his government have replaced the editors of dozens of state-run newspapers, attacked independent papers for "fueling sedition" or "harming the president through phrases and wording," and ignored (if not encouraged) continuing attacks on Egypt's Coptic minority.

All told, that leaves the United States with neither an ally that backs its interests nor a country that shares its values. With Egypt, Washington should stop putting the cart of foreign aid before the horse of self-interest. Instead, it should make clear that our aid is not free, that it comes with important strings attached. Washington should make clear to Cairo that we seek a partner to help us build a more secure region, one in which Iran abandons its nuclear pursuit, nations no longer sponsor terrorism, and Muslims and Jews live in peace.

Washington also should make clear that we seek a government that will promote the promise of Tahrir Square, one that allows for a strong civil society, opposition parties, independent media, and free elections that let Muslim Brotherhood-dominated parties compete for power—but does not guarantee their victory.

U.S. foreign aid is an important tool for promoting U.S. interests abroad. We should never forget to use it that way.

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