

# MEMMO

Feb. 10, 2011

## Post-Mubarak Egypt Must Maintain Peace Treaty with Israel, Cooperation with United States

**While the Egyptian people admirably demonstrate for democratic change and political freedom, the resulting turmoil raises many security concerns both in the United States and in Israel. The 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty has been the cornerstone of regional stability for more than three decades. As America works with the Egyptian people to bring about a democratic transition, Washington must urge the new government to maintain Egypt's commitments to peace and nonproliferation as well as its opposition to Islamic radicalism and Iran.**

The Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty is the lynchpin for stability in the Middle East.

- In 1979, Egypt became the first Arab country to sign a peace treaty with Israel.
- Although the peace has been cold, Cairo has adhered to its main treaty commitments: full diplomatic relations; keeping the Sinai as a demilitarized buffer zone; permitting the presence in the Sinai of the U.S.-led Multinational Force and Observers; and maintaining freedom of navigation through the Suez Canal even for Israeli warships.
- The Egyptian-Israeli border has remained quiet. With Egypt at peace with Israel, no Arab army has attacked Israel since 1979.
- Although Egypt's performance in preventing the smuggling of weapons to Hamas in Gaza has been uneven, Cairo has quietly cooperated with Israel in isolating and blockading Hamas.



**The United States should ensure that Egypt adheres to its 1979 peace treaty with Israel, which has served as the cornerstone of regional stability.**

Egypt has been America's foremost strategic Arab ally.

- Since the signing of the peace treaty with Israel, Egypt—the most populous and powerful Arab nation—has been the key U.S. strategic ally in the Arab world.
- Egypt has worked with the United States in opposing Islamic radicalism in its many forms (Hamas in Gaza, al-Qaeda in the entire region, Hizballah in Lebanon) and has been a strong opponent of Iran's nuclear program and efforts to attain regional hegemony.
- Egyptian troops also participated alongside U.S. forces in the liberation of Kuwait during the first Gulf War in 1991.

- In return, Egypt has benefited from massive annual U.S. military and economic assistance, currently standing at roughly \$1.3 billion in military aid and \$200 million in economic assistance.

The unpredictability of the current transition period in Egypt carries considerable risks.

- Everyone wishes for Egypt a peaceful transition to a full-fledged democracy that will continue Cairo's close relations with the United States and maintain its peace treaty with Israel. Yet no one can be certain of such an outcome.
- The Muslim Brotherhood, a radical Islamist movement, is by far the best-organized and most effective opposition group. The Brotherhood has consistently advocated the cancellation of the peace treaty with Israel, expressed hostility to the United States and promoted the establishment of an Islamic state in Egypt and beyond.
- Even if more secular groups win the next elections, Egypt's foreign policy could undergo fundamental changes. A future government might turn against Israel and the United States in an effort to gain and keep popular support.

While only the Egyptians can form their own government, the United States should insist on several goals for the next Egyptian government to meet.

- Egypt needs to maintain the peace treaty with Israel, including the demilitarization of the Sinai Peninsula and permission for the continued presence of the U.S.-led Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai.
- Egypt needs to adhere to other contractual obligations to Israel, particularly continuing the supply of natural gas.
- Egypt must maintain its policy of isolating Hamas in Gaza.
- Egypt needs to continue to oppose Iran's efforts to expand its regional influence—both directly and through Hizballah and Hamas.
- Egypt must continue to oppose the global jihad of al-Qaeda and its affiliates.
- Egypt must keep the Suez Canal open to all shipping, including the passage of Israeli civilian and military vessels.