



HOW DID THE EGYPTIAN LOBBY'S AGENDA DEVELOP IN WASHINGTON AFTER THE JANUARY 2011 REVOLUTION?

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Summary:

Egypt has always been important to the United States, and relations between the two countries have gone through significant turning points. Sometimes, there was great tension in ties, and at other historical moments, they were governed by common understandings and interests. However, Egypt's importance to the United States has never changed.

The January Revolution¹ marked a monumental shift in Egypti - U.S. relations, characterized by a long period of political stability during President Mubarak's era. Mubarak's fall profoundly impacted Egypt and its active parties, setting the stage for a protracted political struggle between the old regime and the revolutionary forces.

The issue of American aid, which has not stopped since 1979, after the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel, appeared on the agenda of the Military Council lobby in Washington. Which is estimated at 1.4 billion US dollars annually². Egypt ranks third in the Middle East and North Africa region, after Israel and Jordan, regarding 2024 aid funds.

Despite Egypt's political turmoil during the January Revolution and the turmoil in the American position towards the revolution in Egypt, the Military Council used all its tools and contracts with political pressure companies to reassure the American side about the democratic path in Egypt.

In subsequent periods, the Egyptian Lobby maintained strong relations with the Republican and Democratic sides in the White House, and its activities were influenced by the transition of power in the United States between Republicans and Democrats.

The priorities of the Egyptian lobby in Washington were similar at moments to those of the US State Department. Still, the constant obstacle was the problem of political freedoms and human rights. However, these differences did not affect the continuation of joint relations. According to the statements of many members of Congress, Egypt's political stability, its fight against terrorism in Sinai, and preserving Israel's security take precedence over everything.³

Keywords: FARA - Lobbying - Egypt - United States - interest groups - Israel - Military council.

INTRODUCTION:

After a period of solid activity, described as the first formation of an Egyptian lobby⁴ in Washington during President Mubarak's era in 2008, the January Revolution came, creating significant political tensions, both internally and externally. These tensions caused a lack of clarity in the American position and assessment of the revolution in Egypt. A new phase of contracts with political lobbying

¹ Data is according to analyze the files and contract on <https://efile.fara.gov/ords/fara/f?p=1235:10>.

² Egypt-U.S. Business Relations, American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt, <https://www.amcham.org.eg/information-resources/trade-resources/egypt-us-relations/us-foreign-assistance-to-egypt>

³ Press Release, State Department is Missing "Historic Opportunities" in Egypt, Kurdistan. <https://web.archive.org/web/20201105032258/https://steveking.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/king-state-department-is-missing-historic-opportunities-in-egypt>

⁴ Adding it up: The Top Players in Foreign Agent Lobbying, <https://www.propublica.org/article/adding-it-up-the-top-players-in-foreign-agent-lobbying-718>



companies in Washington began, but not through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or military council members that ruled Egypt in the post-revolution period.

Political lobbying activity developed after this stage, entering other stages and different challenges, especially after the military coup in June 2013 and, on the other hand, the transfer of power in the United States to the Republican Party with President Trump. Then it moved to the Democrats with President Biden. The shifts of the Egyptian lobby from the Democrats to the Republicans and the difference in its agenda make reading the scene clear about the priorities of the Egyptian Foreign Ministry.

Study Question:

Given the strong relationship between the United States and Egypt, which depends primarily on Egypt's geographic, demographic, and military importance, the January Revolution was a turning point that largely determined what came after it. The effects of this moment continue on the political scene today. From this standpoint, the study attempts to understand the agenda of the Egyptian lobby and how its agenda changed according to the different political regimes in Egypt and the United States.

Purpose of the study:

Studying the Egyptian lobby in Washington is vital, especially since studies about it are almost rare and are limited to activities and press reports. Studying the Egyptian lobby contributes significantly to knowing the developments in the Egyptian government's agenda and the extent to which it is affected by changing internal policies.

Study structure:

This study examines the Egyptian relationship with the United States from the perspective of political pressure groups after the January 2011 revolution. The first section reviews the historical development of Egypti - U.S. relations up to the January Revolution and until 2022.

The second section discusses the concept of political pressure, its history and origins, and how it is viewed in the Arab world. It also addresses attempts to form an Arab lobby and its most prominent challenges.

The third section analyzes the activities of the Egyptian lobby in Washington by reviewing the files of registration of foreign agents in the Ministry of Justice, short (FARA), and trying to understand how the Egyptian lobby's agenda differed according to the Egyptian political system after the January Revolution.

The first section: Egypti - U.S. relations

Egypti - U.S. relations were marred by tensions and stages of rapprochement, caution, and estrangement from the monarchy until the republic at the hands of Gamal Abdel Nasser. In the mid-seventies and in the wake of the October War of 1973, Egypti - U.S. relations witnessed a comprehensive review and re-evaluation of their trends and regional and international connections, a radical shift from the state of tension and competition that characterized them in the era of the fifties and sixties, to a state of understanding and cooperation that reached the level of "partnership." "The full results of the Camp David Accords in 1979." (Shalabi, 2019)⁵

Hence, Egyptian relations with the United States began to be described as tripartite relations, including the relationship with Israel. President Anwar Sadat said during his meeting with US President Carter at the White House in April 1977: "I see the possibility that our relations in the economic and political fields ten years from now will be as strong as our relations between the two countries." The United States of America and Israel."⁶

⁵ Shalabi, Elsayed Amin, Egyptian-American relations 1950-2011, Awraq vol 15, 2019

⁶ Shalabi, 2019



Although Egyptian relations with the United States have undergone several real tests, the two countries have maintained strong ties. The general framework of American complaints towards Egypt is summed up in Egypt's hesitation in responding to American expectations regarding the fundamental issues of concern to the United States. Such as establishing close security cooperation between Egypt and the United States in the Middle East and Africa and obtaining facilities for military operations regularly and without restrictions that enable them to reach other regions. Opening passages for them in times of emergency. There were hopes for tripartite security cooperation in which Israel would participate.⁷

After the 2011 revolution, diplomatic relations and military aid between the United States and Egypt witnessed significant transformations. While the United States has sought to maintain its strategic partnership with Egypt under evolving political leadership, challenges have emerged as the Egyptian military retains power and suppresses protesters, drawing US NGOs into scrutiny. The United States navigated complex relationships with the military and the Muslim Brotherhood, balancing its strategic interests with democratic principles amid Egypt's changing political landscape (C. Ryan, 2015).⁸

Key areas of focus in the US-Egyptian relationship include: (Sharp J.M., 2011)⁹

1- Egypt's relations with Israel and peace in the Middle East: Central to American interests are Egypt's role in maintaining the peace treaty with Israel and its contributions to broader peace efforts in the Middle East.

2- Political dynamics after the January Revolution: The United States is closely monitoring the internal political transformations in Egypt, especially the transition of power after the January 2011 revolution. This includes assessing the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in the political framework, which reflects concerns about political Islam and governance.

3- Security concerns regarding Gaza: The United States is concerned about Egypt's management of its borders with Gaza, especially issues related to weapons smuggling to Hamas, which has broader implications for Israeli security and regional stability.

4—Human rights and religious freedoms: The United States prioritizes monitoring and promoting religious and human rights inside Egypt. This is consistent with American values and often affects foreign aid and diplomatic commitments.

5- The Sudan Agreement and Nile Basin issues: The geopolitical dynamics related to the Nile Basin, especially the management of water resources and the repercussions of the Sudan Agreement, are considered crucial to the strategic interests of the United States in the region.

The second section: political pressure groups and the Arab lobby

The lobby's idea dates back to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Still, it was regulated legally and constitutionally in the United States in 1938. It was known as the Foreign Agents Registration Act, or FARA, the most essential American law regulating Political pressure on behalf of foreign (non-American) parties.¹⁰

In the Arab world, discussing “lobbies” in Washington has always raised doubts and questions. Despite the many references to them, lobbies remained unknown and mysterious. No discussion of American policy in the Middle East is complete without mentioning the “Israeli lobby” and its influence, without talking about what pressure groups are, how they work, who they are, and who works in them.¹¹

⁷ Shalabi, 2019

⁸ C. Ryan, Oasis or Mirage? Jordan's Unlikely Stability in a Changing Middle East, <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/oasis-or-mirage-jordan-s-unlikely-stability-in-a-changing-middle-east/>

⁹ Sharp, Jeremy M. Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations, United States Congressional Research Service, 2011

¹⁰ <https://efile.fara.gov/ords/fara/f?p=1235:10>.

¹¹ Bard, Mitchell, The Arab Lobby: The Invisible Alliance That Undermines America's Interests in the Middle East, Harper Collins, 2010



The Arab lobby in Washington is often viewed as not being an actual lobby but rather as a reaction to the Zionist lobby, as the Arab presence for long periods in the arenas of political pressure was only for the cause of Palestine and the conflict with Israeli influence. in the United States of America.¹² Therefore, the general impression of the political pressure efforts exerted by Arab countries is that they are weak. Some believe that the Israelis created this concept just to show that they face opposition. Unlike Armenian, Israeli, or Greek lobbies, which have a strong grassroots base, Arab lobbies are viewed as weak. The strength of the Israeli lobby is due to the strength of the Jewish community within the United States. Arab lobbying efforts are scattered, disorganized, and lack a coherent strategy. Each country seeks supremacy in its relations with the United States rather than cooperating to achieve better collective bargaining power.

The third section: The Egyptian lobby

Although Egypt's registration files in the FARA database date back to 1955, a report by ProPublica says that in 2007-2008, Egypt ranked sixth in the list of meetings between lobbyists for foreign governments and members of Congress. The first truly organized Egyptian lobby was formed after the January Revolution.

Some files were the priority of the Egyptian lobby in Washington, which are:¹³

US aid file

The military junta pressed on this issue throughout the January Revolution and its aftermath, directly through meetings with congressional representatives, senators, and the White House. Several large lobbying companies contracted it.

Polishing Sisi's image

After a complete break from lobbying during the Muslim Brotherhood's rule, the Egyptian lobby returned after the military coup and the Rabaa massacre in just two months, as several companies were contracted for considerable sums to polish Sisi's image and emphasize the narrative of either Sisi or terrorism. The peaceful, democratic transition of the regime in Egypt after Sisi's victory in the presidential elections 2014.

What is interesting is that, for the first time, the foreign agent representing Egypt is Egyptian Intelligence, and the Egyptian Foreign Ministry is spared.

Civil rights and religious minorities

In light of complete disregard for the political crises and American pressure for political rights and the release of political detainees, the Egyptian lobby in Washington pressed to confirm the availability of a large area of civil rights and the file of religious minorities in Egypt. The era of President Sisi is the best era that guaranteed the rights of Christians, Jews, and Baha'is.

Renaissance Dam file

Despite the significant crisis that Egypt faces with Ethiopia and the Renaissance Dam¹⁴, which began before the January Revolution, the Egyptian lobby began to put pressure on this issue at the end of 2020, during which, and in the following two years, significant communication and meetings with representatives of the Egyptian lobby and American officials appeared.

CONCLUSION:

¹² Khatib, Dania Koleilat, Arab Gulf lobbying in the United States: what makes them win and what makes them lose and why, Contemporary Arab Affairs, 2016

¹³ According to FARA file analysis

¹⁴ Fahmy S. Abdelhaleem and Esam Y. Helal, Impacts of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on Different Water Usages in Upper Egypt, Faculty of Engineering, Menoufia University, 2015



The Egyptian lobby was very active and communicated with several parties after the January Revolution. The military council's primary goal was to preserve American military and economic aid and ensure the democratic path. It can be said that the first organized and clear Egyptian lobby arose after the January Revolution.

Despite the fear and apparent disappearance of any activities during the rule of President Mohamed Morsi, before the coup against him in 2013, activity returned with force to obtain American support for the military coup and maintain American aid.

However, it seems that all of the Egyptian lobby's subsequent activities were primarily aimed at polishing the Sisi regime and improving its image in the West by advancing the issues of religious minority rights in Egypt and promoting some international conferences and significant tourism events such as the mummies' parade in 2021.

For the first time in the history of the Egyptian lobby, Egyptian intelligence participates directly in representing Egypt as a foreign agent in official contracts instead of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by contracting with several companies for huge numbers exceeding \$13 million¹⁵ to polish Sisi's image in the corridors of American politics.

Despite the Renaissance Dam file's importance and impact on Egyptians' lives and future, it remained absent from the Egyptian lobby's agenda until 2021, when the second filling of the dam was completed.

In conclusion, despite the solid and transparent activity in the Egyptian lobby during the post-revolution period, the Egyptian lobby still suffers, like the Arab lobby, from a lack of clarity about the overall plan and moving according to a complete project and not pressure for specific issues. However, over the past years, the Egyptian lobby has built a broad base of solid relationships in Republican and Democratic circles. However, he leans more towards the American right and supporters of Israel.

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¹⁵ FARA files