

Egypt Changing

Commentary for February 1, 2011 — Turmoil ... Blood in the Streets?

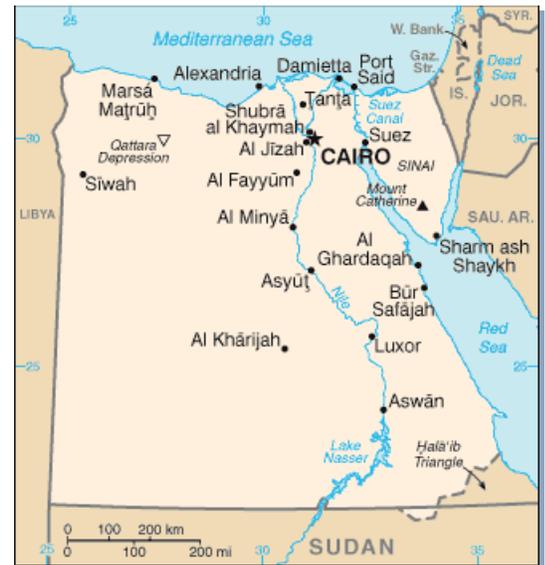
In the past two weeks the people of Egypt have risen in protest and demonstration. The result of this will likely be a change in leadership for the government of Egypt. As of this writing the outcome as to how things will turn out is unknown.

Will there be widespread violence? There has been surprising little up to now. Will President Hosni Mubarak leave his position after 30 years of rule? Will there be a complete change of government down to the lowest levels? Will Islamic radicals take over the government? Would a new Egyptian government reject its peace treaty with Israel?

These events in Egypt bring to reality the international aspects of this month's article "[Geography in Scripture.](#)" (Read first the "[February 2011 Newsletter.](#)") The world is receiving a geography lesson about this very important nation that is mentioned extensively in the Bible. Dr. Martin's analysis of geographical indicators contained within the Bible will help you to understand the prophetic biblical passages.¹

Egypt is the largest Arab country, with a population of 80 million people.² Most all of its population is in the northeast corner of the country. Estimates of the population of Egypt's capital, Cairo, range from 14 to 20 million people in the greater metropolitan area. Other Egyptian cities in the news during this crisis are:

- Alexandria on the Mediterranean coast has 3.5 to 5 million people.
- Suez at the south end of the Canal has almost ½ million people.
- Port Said on the north end, also has close to ½ million people.
- Approximately 90,000 American citizens live in or are visiting Egypt at any point in time. Many Americans are being evacuated.



¹ The thousands of geographic locations mentioned in the Bible (and most all are identifiable) could be used as proof that the Scriptures were true, written by participants of events (or from original documents) with precise geographic knowledge. Thousands of geographic references would be unlikely if the Bible was made up of fictional stories. If the Bible is true (and it is), the geographic indicators would be expected.

² Egypt is not the largest Islamic country. The largest Muslim populations are in Indonesia, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, in that order. None of these countries are of Arabic heritage. According to the article "[List of countries by Muslim population,](#)" 62% of all Muslims live in Asia.

Economic Considerations

Note the position of the Suez Canal (in blue print above the "R" in Cairo) between the Sinai Peninsula and the landmass of Egypt. Some 7.5% of world shipping trade passes through this waterway. Three percent of the world's oil flows through the Suez Canal carried by medium-sized tankers and by pipeline to the Mediterranean. (The biggest tankers are too large to go through the canal.) Egypt derives substantial income from the Canal. The Suez Canal is also a military passage route for warships, including the largest aircraft carriers of the United States fleet.

Egypt produces 680,000+ barrels per day of crude oil. It is a slight net exporter. Egypt produces twice as much natural gas as it uses and exports the remainder to nearby countries such as Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel. (Since 2008 Israel imports 35% of its natural gas from Egypt, transported by pipeline.) Egypt and Europe are cooperating to construct pipelines to transport natural gas to European countries. Egypt is a much preferred supplier over Russia. Egypt's oil and gas production continues to grow with active exploration, particularly in the western desert. Large natural gas finds have been discovered which should increase exports in the future.³

With regard to communications, 90% of adults have cell phone access, but only 25% have internet access.⁴ Egypt is a very young nation with a median age of its population being 24 years old, and they see and desire the good things of life.

So, Egypt is a potentially rich country, but like most all Arab countries Egypt has an autocratic ruling hierarchy that does not allow much freedom or economic opportunity or prosperity to reach the mass of the population. Egypt has a small middle class. Former Ambassador John Bolton considers the Egyptian regime under President Mubarak as autocratic, secularist, and socialistic.

This has led to Egypt being a poor nation with an average \$2/day income. Unemployment is 9.7%, mostly among young adults. Rising food prices have caused a shortage of government subsidized bread. Buyers must wait in long lines to purchase the subsidized bread. This is due to a command economy with too much control by a government bureaucracy. While demonstrations so far have been peaceful, food riots could ensue as they did in 1977.

Security

Egypt has been ruled by its current President, Hosni Mubarak, and his administration for the past 30 years. He rose to power with the assassination of President Anwar Sadat in 1981. At that time he brought order and stability to Egypt, suppressing the radical Muslim Brotherhood (which was responsible for assassinating Sadat). The Egyptian military is the 10th largest in

³ "[Egypt](#)," in CIA World Factbook, accessed 1/31/11. Regarding natural gas, see the more extensive data from "[Egypt](#)" at the U.S. Energy Information Administration website, accessed 1/31/11.

⁴ "[Egypt](#)," in CIA World Factbook, accessed 1/31/11. Recently the Egyptian government shut off the entire cell phone system, which has angered most users. This was done to minimize organizing efforts by anti-government demonstrators.

the world, with 400,000+ members supplied and trained by the U.S. military. Every two years since 1981 the United States in cooperation with the Egyptian army conducts large-scale military exercises called Bright Star.⁵ The Egyptian army is well trained. Foreign and military aid from the United States amounts to over \$3 billion per year.⁶

One interesting fact to note is that 1.7 million people work for the Egyptian Interior Ministry providing security. This percentage of adult citizens who are part of this internal security, police, and intelligence apparatus is truly massive.⁷

God's Involvement with Egypt

As you read about the crisis and changes in Egypt that will occur in the coming years, keep in mind these passages which relate to all nations, even Egypt:

"And he [God] changes the times and the seasons: he removes kings, and sets up kings: he gives wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He reveals the deep and secret things: he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him."

• *Daniel 2:21–22*

"By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth."

• *Proverbs 8:15–16*

"I have made the earth, ... and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon ..."

• *Jeremiah 27:5–6*

"... that the living may know that the most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever he will, and sets up over it the basest of men.

... till you know that the most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever he will.

... until you [Nebuchadnezzar] know that the most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever he will."

• *Daniel 4:17, 25, 32*

God not only chooses rulers, but he also determines the boundaries of nations and peoples:

"[God] has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, ..."

• *Acts 17:26–27*

What is transpiring in Egypt at the moment is a transition of power from one person and group to another person and group. A "Greater Egypt" with power and influence in the region

⁵ These exercises involve tens of thousands of troops, often with other countries participating. There was an interruption in 2003 because of the invasion of Iraq. Egyptian troops participated with the United States in the liberation of Kuwait in February 1991.

⁶ "[Most US aid to Egypt goes to military](#)" from January 29, 2011 *Daily Telegraph*, accessed 1/31/11.

⁷ Source: Professor Fauod Ajami, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, television interview, 1/30/11.

and in the world will develop in the future. Eventually it will be recognized as the international power designated in the Bible as **“the King of the South.”** It will control an area much larger than Egypt of the present day.⁸

What is happening in Egypt is a God-managed step to future Egyptian greatness. Whether that will begin the rise to prosperity now or later, or whether there will be mass violence and death before the greatness and prosperity of Egypt begins, no one can tell. However, when that rise to greatness begins — at some time in the future — it will surprise the world.

At present Egypt is desperately poor with an increasing population and a burgeoning percentage of young people who are largely educated but unemployed, and hungry. That is a dangerous situation.⁹

In the complex situation of international politics, Egypt needs the United States, and the United States needs Egypt. It is now questionable if either needs Mubarak. On October 15, 2003 in a Commentary titled [“Changes of World Leaders”](#) I wrote:

“Egypt. President of Egypt Hosni Mubarak took power in 1981. He is in his middle to late 70s and has diminished energy, delegating more and more functions to his son. Egypt’s internal situation is politically volatile with a very young and poor population. The long relationship (and \$50 billion dollars in foreign aid given to Egypt since World War II) between Egypt and the United States may end if a more radical leadership takes over. Great unrest is possible.”

President Mubarak continued to hang on to his energy and his power up to 2011 when his son and family have reportedly left Egypt for Britain. The “great unrest” did not happen in 2003, but the tension continued below the surface. That unrest has arisen and it has resulted in the present series of leaderless nonviolent mass demonstrations. Although the demonstrations have not yet been very large, it is expected that they will increase in size if the economic systems (especially food distribution) breaks down.

The Political Geography of Egypt

The geographic position of Egypt tells us its relation to other nations. Egypt is located on the northeast corner of Africa, adjacent to the land bridge between Asia and Europe.

The current crisis began when a man in Tunisia lost his livelihood due to government oppression by low level bureaucrats and set himself on fire in desperation and protest. Demonstrations began in Tunisia and resulted quickly in a relatively peaceful overthrow of the rulers there. Soon after this occurred, people in Egypt, who were suffering from food shortages of bread and other staples, saw that example of change through action. Egyptians began to demonstrate against the government, which brings us to the current situation.

⁸ See Dr. Ernest Martin’s article [“The Coming Splendor of Egypt,”](#) originally published in 1981.

⁹ I highly recommend you sign up for free [Stratfor.com](#) notifications. When you need background information about a particular country, access the [“CIA World Factbook”](#) database which contains current basic facts about every nation in the world. Also consider looking at the [Al Jazeera - English](#) website which has been very evenhanded in their reporting of this current Egyptian situation.

These demonstrations in Egypt have stimulated protests in other Arabic countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Algeria, Yemen, and even Morocco. People suddenly feel there is a means of changing their autocratic government for a more responsive (if not a democratic) government. This has given many people great hope across Arab lands to change their governments and their own futures.



Prophecies in the Bible talk about great power and wealth in Egypt before Christ's return, with Egypt leading a kingdom, a coalition, or an empire led by a King of the South, that will be wealthy and have great power. We need to understand how that greatness, wealth, and power can come about for Egypt.

How the Future Will Happen

I wrote an Addendum to Dr. Martin's article "[The Coming Splendor of Egypt](#)," where I cite a 2004 article by financial publisher Steve Forbes about the seeming economic miracle occurring in Egypt at that time. It seemed then that:

"Egypt will be initiating reforms that should dramatically transform its economy into a wealth-creating, wealth-distributing dynamo that will lead millions of Egyptians into a vibrant, increasingly democratic middle class. The country is set to become an economic miracle rivaling Ireland or Hong Kong."

• Steve Forbes, "Mideast Miracle"

Apparently Egypt began those reforms, but stopped them in 2007 or 2008 after just a few years, suppressing a huge underground economy. Today in February 2011 Egypt is one of the poorest "large population" nations in the world.

In today's world of instant communication, rising expectations and desires, it is becoming more and more obvious that there cannot be prosperity for any nation unless economic opportunity is achievable for its populace. In general, depending on the culture, democracy arises from economic opportunity and a rising middle class.

People will work hard if they feel threatened such as in times of war. But people will work even harder if they feel that their lives and the lives of their family can be improved. The government under Mubarak has tight control over much of the society and economy. The government's excuse is that such tight control is necessary to suppress home-grown radical Islamic elements within Egypt, particularly an organization called the Muslim Brotherhood.

While this threat is a reality, a way must be found for the Egyptian people to be free so they can pursue opportunities, while the government continues to provide the necessary security.

A large middle class is necessary for prosperity, for democracy, and for positive change from repressive religious concepts such as radical Islam. Something will change in the future that shall cause a rise of a vibrant and energetic middle class in Egypt. This country will explode with innovation and genius peculiar to the Egyptian soul. Egypt will have its own form of democracy — eventually.¹⁰

This must occur in a manner that is unique to the Arab and Egyptian culture, and it will work to bring dynamism and prosperity to Egypt and her neighbors to the south and to the west across the Sahara desert area. This will comprise the Kingdom of the South spoken of by Daniel. It will reach such a situation of prosperity that the King of the North will desire to seize the “treasures” of Egypt:

“But he [the King of the North] shall have power over the treasures of [1] gold and of [2] silver, and over all [3] the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps.”

• **Daniel 11:43**

At present there is almost nothing worth having in Egypt today, or in Libya, and almost nothing of value in Ethiopia. The riches of Egypt and Libya are still in the future, in the ground, or in the minds of the people and cannot yet be seized. Yet Daniel 11:43 specifically says the King of the North **“shall have power over”** those treasures. It will not be oil from Libya or natural gas from Egypt or dust and dirt from Ethiopia. There will be gold in Ethiopia; it will be wealthy!

In the future there will be “treasures” in those lands that will be desired and seized at some unknown time in the future. Such a situation necessitates a prosperity that will surprise us. That prosperity will allow the people to buy and store gold, silver, and precious things.

Note that before Daniel 11:43 occurs, the King of the South has great power and his forces fight against the King of the North and even defeat him (Daniel 11:7–8, 11). Study the geography of Scripture. It is important even today. In the future God will allow us to clearly understand identifiable prophetic events so we can note how they are fulfilled. From the Bible we will be able to read about future events and observe their fulfillment.

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¹⁰ See my 2005 Commentary [“Freedom as God’s Gift”](#) and Dr. Martin’s article [“The Importance of Egyptian History”](#) which was originally published in 1981.