

The Future of Egypt: A Conference

Sat, May 15, 2010

**Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall,
The Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY)
365 Fifth Avenue @ 34th Street,
New York City**

Co-sponsored with Alwan for the Arts and the Alliance of Egyptian Americans (AEA)

Free and Open to the Public

This conference on the future of Egypt features some of the most prominent intellectuals and academicians from Egypt and the United States. The conference examines the historical configuration of Egypt, its particular nexus of social-cultural, political and economic structures, and will endeavor to imagine possibilities for its future.

While being fully aware that retrospection and predictions are fraught with prejudices, nonetheless the act of public engagement and the urgent need to participate in a time when there is a crisis of legitimacy compels us to take our chances.

Egypt and the entire Arab World have experienced massive change over the last several decades: from modernization, de-colonization, nationalism, Islamism, neo-liberalism, and neo-imperialism to a current state of stasis and atrophy, stagnation and de-legitimization.

Egypt, a country of more than 80 million people, led by the octogenarian Hosni Mubarak, whose regime is removed from the quotidian struggles and concerns of its citizens, is an emblematic case for imaging alternative narratives.

This gathering provides a rich opportunity to inaugurate new thinking around unexplored beginnings and trajectories that are conscious of history and take into account local attitudes and sentiments that are in constant

interplay with the outside world. The conference is at once modest and blunt. Modest in so far as it a priori acknowledges the non-linearity of the alternatives and arduous roads ahead; and blunt in so far as it asserts that things as they are simply cannot be and change is inevitable.

9:00 – 9:30 am: Registration

9:30 – 9:45: Introductory Remarks

Mehdi Bozorgmehr, Co-Director, MEMEAC, City

Mahmoud El-Shazly, President, Alliance of Egyptian Americans (AEA)

9:45 – 11:15 am: Session 1: The Legal Foundations of Modern Egypt and the Current Constitutional Crisis

Panelists:

Yehia El Gamal, Professor of Law, Cairo University, “The Political Manipulation of the Egyptian Constitutional”

Osama Al-Ghazali Harb, Professor Emeritus of Political Science, Suez Canal University and Editor of the International Political Review, Al-Ahram, “The End of Authoritarian Rule in Egypt?”

Moderator:

Eva Bellin, Associate Professor of Political Science, Hunter/GC, CUNY

11: 15 – 12:30 pm: Session 2: The Political Economy of Structural Adjustment and The Egyptian Body Politic

Panelists:

Samer Shehata, Assistant Professor of Arab Politics, Georgetown University, “Egypt’s Uncertain Transition”

Gouda Abdel Khalek, Professor of Economics, Cairo University, “A Stalled Democracy: Economy-Polity Interaction in Egypt”

12:30 – 1:30: Lunch Break

1:30 – 3:00 pm: Session 3: Egypt’s Crisis of Legitimacy, and Possibilities of Democratic Rule

Panelist:

Hassan Nafaa, Professor of Political Science, Cairo University, “The Horizon of Democratization in the Current Political Environment in Egypt”

Discussant:

Joseph Masaad, Associate Professor of Modern Arab Politics & Intellectual History, Columbia University

3:00 – 4:30 pm: Session 4: Aesthetics, Culture, and Modernization

Panelists:

Samia Mehrez, Professor of Modern Arabic Literature, American University in Cairo, “Egyptian Cultural Players: Is There a New Game in Town?”

Sabry Hafez, Professor of Comparative Literature, Qatar University, “The Crisis of Culture in Egypt and the Aesthetics of Closed Horizons”

Mona Anis, Editor-in-Chief, Al-Ahram Weekly, “The Egyptian Media Apparatus: A Site for Cultural Hegemony”

Moderator:

Samah Selim, Assistant Professor of Arabic Literature, Rutgers University