



THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO

School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

SEEING OURSELVES AS OTHERS SEE US

AUC - RICE CROSS-CULTURAL EXPLORATIONS

**Prince Alwaleed American Studies Center
Baker Institute of Rice University**

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Visiting Qaitbay Citadel in the Alexandria harbor.



Dina cools off in the Alexandria catacombs.

INTRODUCTION

A Rice representative visited AUC in October 2009 to examine collaborative possibilities between the two universities. One idea raised was a dialogue and exchange project between students of the Baker Institute at Rice and a counterpart organization at AUC. The Provost, now President Lisa Anderson, blessed the idea and Amb. Nabil Fahmy, the new Dean of the School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, gave it an institutional home.

Knowing that the American Studies Center works hard to improve understanding between Arabs and Americans, the Dean asked me to take over the project and I gladly agreed. It was a good fit because the center's approach focuses on binational conferences, field trips to America, Arab and American stereotypes, engaging the media, working through face-to-face relationships, and building working relations in Egypt and abroad.

The Rice and AUC teams spent the early months of 2010 finding common ground and a common approach by email. A joint plan for an active week in Cairo for ten AUC students and ten Rice students plus faculty advisers ensued.

The June 4-11 Cairo events centered on the Flamenco Hotel on Zamalek Island in the Nile where the Rice students and the AUC students roomed together. We had discussion sessions; dinners; appointments at AUC, the US Embassy, USAID; visits to the Egyptian Museum, the Pyramids, the old market (Khan al Khalili), Islamic Cairo, and Al Azhar Park; a felucca (sail boat) ride on the Nile; and a day trip to Alexandria. Altogether there were about 100 contact hours. The two sides were totally interactive.

The Rice team produced a thorough 53-page "Report from the Cairo Colloquium: Lessons Learned from a Student-Led Diplomacy Program and Recommendations for the Future." Our report here is a sequel to Rice's, but it covers both the June program and the return visit to Rice in Houston by the AUC team.

Already planning a trip to Washington, D.C. in January, the AUC group decided to add extra time at Rice in Houston. Between January 18-22, we held more student discussions, stayed in the dorms, attended classes, put on two Egyptian films, and had several dinners. We met the Amb. Edward Djerejian, Amb. Robert Blake, Dr. Michael Lindsay, the Houston World Affairs Council, and ExxonMobil. There were about 70 contact hours altogether, including much informal time for student interaction.

We want to thank Baker Institute Director Amb. Edward Djerejian who had the original idea for this initiative, which flows out of his diplomatic career and his publications. At AUC, Presidents David Arnold and Lisa Anderson as well as Dean Nabil Fahmy were vital in their support. Rice advisers Jay Vinekar and Maher Amer were crucial on their roles. Rice students raised funds to get themselves to Cairo and the Baker Institute covered the faculty advisers. AUC parents covered student travel costs and AUC covered the in-country US costs. We thank them all. Without them, none of this would have happened.

There is no doubt that the year's activities had real depth and impact. The whole year's activities are a major highlight of the university careers of the 20 students. Many more of these types of exchanges are needed across the cultural divisions in today's world.

Jerry W. Leach
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AUC Delegation

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AUC Graduate
M.A student at AUC in Political Science specialized in International Relations and her thesis is about "Human Security in Egypt and Saudi Arabia Expected to Graduate in June 2011
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Free-lance Translator, Writer, Speaker and Researcher
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Previously served as National President of the World Affairs Councils of America; Peace Corps Regional Director for Eastern Europe, the Soviet Republics, Middle East, Asia, and the Pacific; NSC Director of International Economic Affairs at the White House; Deputy Director, Office of Strategic Technology Affairs, State Department; Consular Officer, US Embassy, London; Assistant Lecturer at Cambridge University; Instructor at the University of Papua New Guinea; and Peace Corps Volunteer in Turkey. Ph.D. Cambridge University. Five other degrees and certificates from Emory, Berkeley, Cambridge, Harvard, and the Foreign Service Institute

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Robin Richards is a senior at Rice University studying history and religious studies with a focus on Islam and modern Middle Eastern history. Robin is a native of Houston, Texas. Robin is involved with the Rice Mock Trial team. She has spent the spring semester studying in Alexandria and traveling around Egypt.



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David Sorge is a senior at Rice University studying linguistics and Asian studies. David has extensive experience traveling and living abroad, and he has completed internships with the Sociology Department of Rice University and Ashoka: Innovators for the Public in Washington, D.C.

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Graham West is a junior at Rice University studying political science with an emphasis on international relations. He works as a tour guide for Rice University and is very involved at the Admissions Office, while also being active in student government. Graham is working on a research project with the political science faculty of Rice University, studying transitions in domestic leadership in individual countries, with a focus on the Middle East.



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Michael Feldman is a recent graduate of Rice University who majored in political science and Asian studies and studied both Spanish and Mandarin Chinese. Michael has extensive travel and internship experience. He has studied in Shanghai, China, at the East China Normal University as a Boren Scholar; visited both Malaysia and Israel; worked at an international law firm in Washington, D.C.; and completed an internship with the U.S. Consulate General in Sydney, Australia.

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Anastazija Ristovska is a sophomore at Rice University studying bioengineering and political science. These diverse fields relate to, respectively, Anastazija's interests in the bionanotechnology industry and U.S. foreign policy toward the Middle East



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Shamoor Anis is a recent graduate of Rice University who majored in policy studies with an interest in international relations and a particular focus on the Middle East. He has written 20-30 page papers on the "Co-Development of Sharia and the English Common Law," "American Aid and Its Impact on Egyptian-American Relations" and "The Influence of the Israeli Lobby on American Foreign Policy." He is also a former president of the Rice Muslim Student Association. He has traveled and lived abroad extensively.

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Susan Wu is a recent graduate of Rice University who majored in economics and biology. She has combined these two disciplines to explore interests that include bioengineering, social entrepreneurship and health care throughout her undergraduate career. She has also participated in research characterizing biaxial diaphragm mechanics and examining the infectivity of *Cryptosporidium meleagridis*, a coccidian parasite found throughout the world.



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Marc Sabbagh is a sophomore at Rice University studying political science and history. He works as an intern at the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy. Marc has previously traveled to Lebanon, where his parents are originally from, and has also visited several countries in Europe.

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Sean Graham is a recent graduate of Rice University who majored in cognitive sciences and psychology.

Sean works in the Office of the President as part of the Presidential Internship Program at AUC

He has two years of experience as an intern at the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, during which he has studied the computational analysis of violent groups, managed server and wiki infrastructure for classes on the Rice campus, briefed government and private sector officials on research conducted while interning at the institute, and led the charge in creating this colloquium between Rice and the American University in Cairo.



JAY VINEKAR



Jay Vinekar was the assistant director for program development at the Rice University Office of International Programs in Houston, Texas. Having completed his B.B.A. in finance at The University of Oklahoma, Jay was a private business consultant before entering the field of international education. He is a graduate of the NAFSA Academy VI, an intense training program for international education professionals, and is a frequent presenter at NAFSA Texas State and Region III conferences, on topics such as "Campus Internationalization" and "Study Abroad."

MAHER AWAD
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Professor Maher Awad attended college in California after graduating high school in the Middle East. He majored in linguistics and English literature. Awad then moved to Colorado for postgraduate work in linguistics. Afterwards he taught at University of Pennsylvania and University of Virginia. He came to Rice in 2005. His areas of training and specialization are general and Arabic linguistics, language acquisition and pedagogy, and language proficiency assessment.



SCHEDULE FOR RICE VISIT TO AUC

June 4 – 11, 2010

ROOMMATES

Sean Graham and Ramadan Moussa
Sarah el Masry and Anastazija Ristovska
Dina Salah Eldin and Susan Wu
Dalia Abbas and Robin Richards

Tom Campbell and Ahmed Ezz
Graham West and Mohamed El Gindy
Marc Sabbagh and Michael Feldman
David Sorge and Shamoor Anis

FRIDAY, JUNE 4

3:30 LH582 landing at Terminal 3
4:15 AUC greeters: Mike McMullen, Ramadan, Dalia meet group
7:30 AUC-hosted Dinner in Florencia Restaurant of Flamenco Hotel

SATURDAY, JUNE 5

9:00 Giza Pyramids.
12:15 Lunch at Mina House Restaurant in Giza.
2:30 Tour of Coptic Cairo
5:30 World Environment Day Celebrations at Al Azhar Park
7:00 Rice-hosted Dinner at Al Azhar Park

SUNDAY, JUNE 6

9:00 Session 1 of Roundtable Discussions: Misconceptions and Stereotypes
11:30 Session 2 of Roundtable Discussions: Religion, Secularism, and Interfaith Dialogue
1:30 Buffet Lunch
3:00 Egyptian Museum

MONDAY, JUNE 7

9:00 Session 3 of Roundtable Discussions: Media in Egypt and America
11:30 Session 4 of Roundtable Discussions: Women, Family, and Education
1:30 Buffet Lunch
3:30 Meeting with Dean Nabil Fahmy
4:30 Meeting with AUC President David Arnold
5:15 Tour of New Campus
6:30 Dinner at Sarah el Masry's Apartment in el Rehab city

TUESDAY, JUNE 8

9:00 Session 5 of Roundtable Discussions: Egypt and America in 2050
11:30 Session 6 of Roundtable Discussions: Conclusions
1:30 Buffet Lunch
2:30 Tour of Islamic Cairo
4:30 Tour of Medieval Cairo Sites on el Moez Street
5:30 Shop in Khan al Khalili
7:00 Dinner at Naguib Mahfouz Restaurant in Khan al Khalili

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 9

Day Trip to Alexandria

THURSDAY, JUNE 10

10:00 Meeting at USAID
12:00 Sandwiches at Felfela
1:30 Meeting with US Military Attaché
5:30 Felucca Ride on the Nile
7:30 Rice-hosted Dinner on Riverboat Le Pacha

FRIDAY, JUNE 11

1:30 AUC bus departs for Cairo International Airport
4:30 Departure of Rice group

Misconceptions and Stereotypes

June 2010

Discussion Leaders: Ramadan Moussa and Tom Campbell

Rapporteur: Ihab el Sokary

Stereotypes are cross-cultural obstacles and stumbling blocks that are more likely to make us enemies than friends. All peoples hold them. Some people, by becoming aware of them, can lessen or even extinguish them in their own thinking.

We started our discussion with the trauma of 9/11. It fuelled a welling up misconceptions and a hardening of stereotypes, fostering greater hatred, hostility, and suspicion between Americans and Arabs.

Most of the misconceptions of Arabs saw them as too conservative; Americans, in turn, were too liberal. Arabs see Americans as unreligious, spreading evil in the world, creating an empire, being run by Jews, and blindly supporting Israel. An Egyptian student shared his school and mosque experiences after 9/11 which described the US as evil and being deservedly punished for its deeds.

However, Egyptians hold some positive views of America as well. They admire American democracy and wished to adopt it. Many dream of moving to North America and want the American dream for themselves. They don't know there are millions of American poor people and that many Americans are dissatisfied with their education, health services, and government. American misconceptions see many Muslims as terrorists, human rights abusers, oppressors of women, and haters of everything American.

We discussed whether these stereotypes were, to an extent, true or not. Is the US creating an empire and seeking to incorporate Arab countries in it? We agreed that the US is practicing new form of imperialism which works through media, economic, and political influence worldwide. The US in world affairs is following its own agenda that serves its own interests. This means supporting dictatorial regimes that abuse human rights as in Egypt in order to maintain regional stability. This type of America influence has some positive elements such as supporting economic reforms, giving development aid, and financing UN and World Bank programs.

How do we clear away misconceptions where they exist? The media plays a key role in both creating stereotypes and in clearing them away. Currently it contributes to stereotype formation by telling people what they want to hear and not countering prejudicial thinking. We all saw education as the major way to clear misconceptions. Curriculums at all levels need to be changed. We need many more study abroad programs, students exchanges and conferences, online forums, and blogs to overcome the gaps. Both sides need to make huge efforts to improve the understanding between Arabs and the US and the West. Despite failures such as Al-Hurra TV so far, we should not give up. We should attack media bias on both sides.

Stereotypes are huge road blocks in developing better relationships between the sides. We agreed that it is the responsibility of governments, media organizations, educational institutions, and individuals to work hard to remove the bases of the misunderstandings between us. We need to identify common grounds and common challenges to work which will help diminish conflict and potential conflict between us.

Religion, Secularism, and Interfaith Dialogue

June 2010

Discussion Leaders: Dalia Abbas, David Sorge, Dina Salah el Din, and Robin Richards

Rapporteur: Salma Gaber

In our session, we focused on the four topics in the paragraphs below.

Religion in America. America is a secular state based on separation of religion and the state. Yet the US government supports religion in general but does not favor one faith over the other. All religions are tax-exempt. America is also considered more religious than other western countries. Some 80% of the people view religion as an important aspect in their lives. It is, however, not considered the only source of identity as national origin, occupation, and education count for a lot. Religious conversion is easy. People can freely choose their faith without government interference or controls from other people.

Religion in Egypt. Egypt is neither a purely secular country nor a purely religious one. Islam is the official religion and Shar'ia law governs personal status relations and is a major source of law. Secularism is viewed as a western concept. Non-secular governments have ruled Egypt for centuries. Islam has strongly influenced the country's political life. Though illegal, the Muslim Brothers won 88 seats in parliament in the 2005. Islam shapes social life where religiosity conveys prestige and morality. Religion is a major source of identity. Converting to another faith is difficult and dangerous.

Religious Misconceptions. Americans tend to think that *Jihad* in Islam, which translates to struggle, means holy war. This misconception is driven mainly from the 9/11 events. Egyptians assume that America is completely secular when religion has a large role in Americans' lives. Egyptians confuse secularism with atheism, believing that religion-state separation means having no faith at all.

Education and Interfaith Dialogue. Religious illiteracy is high in both countries. US students study religion in high school social studies classes where many religions are explained briefly. The Egyptian government requires that students to take a religious course on religion without a final grade, lowering interest. Christians and Muslims learn about religion in separate classes. It creates an us-and-them situation because as they learn concepts that support the superiority of their religion against the other. Interfaith dialogue in classes and through the media would help students learn about the similarities and differences of each religion. Religion classes should explain Judaism, Islam, Christianity and other religions and teach tolerance.

Media in Egypt and America

June, 2010

Discussion Leaders: Graham West, Michael Feldman, Mohamed E. el Gindy, and Yasminah el Sayed

Rapporteur: Yasminah el Sayed

We discussed censorship and the media freedom in Egypt and the United States as well as the impact of movies and the entertainment industry on stereotypes and misconceptions of each other.

Both sides agreed that the media in the United States was freer than Egyptian media. AUC students concurred that media was to a certain extent censored in Egypt but they had different views regarding the extent of censorship and whether media was becoming freer or not. Most Egyptian censorship has become self-censorship as the media has generally tried to avoid trouble with the government.

Rice students explained how American and Egyptian media taboos differ from each other. Religion is not criticized in the Egyptian media but is addressed like any other topic in American media. Rice students pointed out that, despite greater press freedom, the US now has the Patriot Act that threatens their freedom as citizens and operates similarly to the much-disliked Emergency Law in Egypt.

Both groups agreed that the entertainment industry, especially movies and music, are the most important factors shaping our perspectives of each other's cultures. AUC students stressed the fact that the image of Arabs in many Hollywood movies was false and negatively portrayed them as terrorists who live in tents and ride camels. Such portrayals have an impact on many of the less educated Americans who gradually start to believe that this is what Arabs are like as it is the only image that their media shows.

Rice students, on the other hand, saw anti-American media bias in the Arab world, especially with news channels like Al-Jazeera which only emphasizes the negative image of Americans and disregards the efforts that Americans make to help Arabs.

We discussed solutions regarding what could be done to correct the Arab and American stereotypes that are projected by the American and Arab media. One suggestion was to make a documentary that portrays real contemporary Arab life today and post it on the internet. The film would thus counter the stereotypes presented in American media and would be widely accessible to global audience.

Another suggestion was the creation of an online art gallery that would counter the media stereotypes by showing pictures of Egyptians as Arabs going through their daily lives and activities vis-à-vis pictures of Arabs as portrayed by the Western media. AUC students suggested that the USA should try to provide more incentives and scholarships that would encourage more Egyptians and Arabs to go study in the States and gain a better understanding of American people and culture.

Overall we put greater emphasis over how the Western media portrays the Arabs more than how the Arabic media portrays the West. The discussion of stereotypes and taboos was really intriguing and frankness, giving us greater understanding of the problems.

Women, Family, and Education

June 2010

Discussion Leaders: Anastazija Ristovska, Marc Sabbagh, Salma Gaber, and Sarah el Masry

Rapporteur: Dina Salah el Din

The session concentrated on the roles of women in both societies, the challenges women face in each society, the place of family life, and a comparative analysis between public and private education in Egypt as well as the US

Over the past decade, Egypt has made many positive changes on women's rights both politically as well as socially. There is now a quota for women elected in the parliament so as to guarantee them places. Many NGOs, some companies, and some ministries or divisions of ministries are now headed by women, including the *April 6th Youth Movement*.

Egyptian women now have the right to divorce their husbands, which was never the case before. Despite that, there are still some practical hindrances that prevent Egyptian women from receiving their full rights. AUC students explained how *Shari'a* law, which is a primary source of legislation according to the Egyptian constitution, affects women in terms of inheritance and travel. A woman inherits half of what a man does. There are several restrictions imposed on women when it comes to travelling abroad.

Another difficulty women in Egypt face is that of early marriage, which is widespread in rural areas. However, last year, the newly established Ministry of Family and Population implemented a new law making it illegal for girls to get married before the age of 18 and penalizing parents who allow this to happen.

Rice students made it clear that women in the US also face difficulties, albeit on a lesser scale. American women still face troubles when it comes to equal opportunities at work. Whereas most Egyptians believe that American women have too much freedom, it became evident during the discussion that women in both societies face many similar issues.

Many Egyptians are convinced that the concept of "family" is nonexistent or very weak in America. Three Rice students countered this with their personal life stories which showed a strong role of family in their lives, stressing that the nuclear family is as common in the US as it is in Egypt.

In discussing education, the Egyptians were surprised to learn that the US educational system is flawed and that there is a huge gap in education between the different classes and ethnic groups. American students were amazed in turn to hear how 28% of 14-year-old Egyptian public school students cannot read or write their own names.

We concluded that our two societies had more in common than any of us thought, including many of the same problems. It was very beneficial to hear students on both side relating experiences from their own schooling.

Egypt and America in 2050: where do we want to go and how do we get there together?

June 2010

Discussion Leaders: Ahmed Seddik, Ihab el Sokary, Shamoor Anis, and Susan Wu

Rapporteur: Ramadan Moussa

We opened with Egypt's current challenges and problems such as scarcity of resources, water problems, low rates of economic development, and illiteracy.

The two countries are allies and partners in peace. Egypt is the second biggest recipient of the US aid after Israel, but our relations are considered an "immature marriage". Many challenges cause problems in this relation such as the democracy issue in Egypt. Bush tried to promote democracy in Egypt which caused some instability and was abandoned after Hamas won the Palestinian elections. Egyptians question why US still supports Egypt even though the country is very undemocratic. We know that the US supports the Egyptian regime to keep stability in the region by bribing Egypt to keep its peace with Israel but we do not support that rationale.

We discussed who would come to power if democracy came to Egypt. The Egyptian students thought it would likely be the Muslim Brothers as they are strong in Egypt due to weakness of the government in terms of services for the poor. The Muslim Brothers provide many poor Egyptians with services like education and health services. Also the weak political parties in Egypt give the Muslim Brothers a golden chance to fill this vacuum. Some students said that democracy might not be good for Egypt.

We talked about the role of security services in Egypt. They make people fear the government. In more open and democratic countries, citizens send letters of criticism to the president and they can criticize him publicly. But it is not the case in Egypt. Professors cannot talk freely to their students about the mistakes of the regime. The solution is to eliminate or to narrow its role which will not be easy. Other countries, such as the former communist states, have tamed the security services and learned to live with and even like freedom of the press. This type of change will have to come from the bottom up, not top down, to be successful.

We tackled the issue: "Which comes first, democracy or economic growth?" However, we arrived at many different answers and no consensus of this issue.

We talked about the role of the Jewish lobbies in the US in creating the American support to Israel. We felt that Muslims should also have their own equally strong lobbies in the US which might some balance of the issue.

Finally, we asked if the US should ever intervene in Egypt's internal affairs. Some Egyptian students were totally against the American interference in Egypt as it is internal issue. Others saw that US interference should be limited to improving education and economic development only. The American students indicated that US intervention has not successful in most cases in the Middle East.

Concluding Session of the Roundtable Discussions

June 2010

Discussion Leaders: Ahmed Ezz, Sean Graham

Rapporteur: Dalia Abbas

We left our last session for topics that were not adequately covered earlier or that had spontaneously arisen at the table. Everyone was pleased with our discussions but emphasized that we all had to turn our discussions of cross-cultural issues and misconceptions into practical actions to help eradicate cross-cultural misunderstandings.

An AUC student posed the question of the value of the conference: did the Rice students who came all the way from Texas feel the week was worth it. The Rice students all agreed they felt more knowledgeable and confident about what they were studying after having this experience.

Another AUC student pointed out that one should not take the AUC delegation as a completely accurate representation of the Egyptian society as many Egyptians are not as privileged and not as well off as the AUC students at the table.

Several AUCians expressed their delight with the conference in that they were exposed to a group of Americans who held many diverse opinions and were honest about presenting them. The AUCians said that many of them had previously thought most Americans were more or less of one mind about US foreign policy.

We unanimously agreed that what made the debates during the week so effective was the agreement made at the inception of the program, that there would be no taboo topics.

Students all concluded that study abroad programs during one's university years were highly beneficial and should be strongly encouraged everywhere. Another solution to combating cultural misunderstanding involved starting a website combating stereotypes.

Other ideas included translating films and documentaries from English to Arabic and vice versa and then showing them to spread awareness to enhance awareness.

In closing we focused on education. Every student spoke about the obstacles and triumphs in their educational experiences. The many weaknesses in the Egyptian education system were emphasized. We closed by emphasizing how many of the world's problems, as well as those in our own family and social lives, can be best addressed only through education.

Meeting with the US Military Attaché

June 2010

Rapporteur: Ahmed Ezz El Din Mohamed

At the US embassy, we met the US general in charge of administering US military aid for Egypt and commanding the less than one hundred military personnel in the country. We focused on the military aid program

The general opened by saying the military aid program started as a part of Camp David peace agreement between Egypt and Israel. Its purpose is to give guaranteed support for the security of both countries. It started as \$800 million for economic aid and \$1.3 billion for military aid. The economic aid decreased gradually because the Egyptian economy progressed well with time and is today \$250 million. The military aid has not decreased however. Congress appropriates the aid amounts each year and the Egyptian Government provides a detailed report how the aid is spent.

The structure of the military aid takes two main forms. The first is military equipment and weapons like tanks, trucks, boats, or aircraft. The second is providing Egyptian military training. Trainings are less expensive and more effective in the long run. The Egyptian military helps co-produce American defense items in Egypt giving it operational experience. The US has trained about 400 Egyptian military personnel on modern vehicles and fighter aircraft like the F16. It has also trained 50 members of the Egyptian military on military strategy and operations. Egypt and the US participate in common military exercises like Bright Star on a regular basis.

Countries do not provide aid except for things in their own interests. The US provides aid to Egypt for several reasons. First, Egypt is strategically important and has historic leadership role in the Middle East. Second, U.S. wants to maintain the peace between Egypt and Israel. Third, the aid helps Egypt in more effectively fighting terrorism. Fourth, Egypt's control of Suez Canal gives it strategic importance in world trade.

In the Q & A session, we asked why US aid to Israel is much greater than that to Egypt. The general replied that the dangers facing Israel are much greater than that of Egypt. Does the Egyptian Government use for the military aid to suppress democracy inside Egypt, for example in suppressing demonstrations. The general said the main US goal is to promote democracy so it sometimes uses the aid to Egypt as a political tool to achieve that goal. There is an agreement between the US and Egypt that the US military aid will not be used for policing purposes. The US will take a firm stand if this condition is violated.

The general emphasized that military aid will remain at the fixed amount. It is not likely to increase, but there might be come a time to reduce the aid in the future. The US is likely to focus on training the Egyptian military on civil operations such as bridge building.

The general pointed out that the Iranian nuclear program is a threat to peace in Middle East and it must be stopped. The US was the first country to call for limiting the use of nuclear weapons in 1948 and has since led the world on that issue. All options are available to Washington on Iran. Students asked if withdrawal from Iraq was realistic and might it not end as planned at the end of 2011. The general agreed that it is not an easy operation which might take more than expected.

How will the US react to the increasing Chinese activity in Egypt and the developing world? The general agreed that Chinese have strong economic role in developing countries in Africa and Asia now. He predicted major competition between China and US arising from major competing world economies.

Meeting at USAID

June 2010

Rapporteur: Ahmed Seddik

The USAID program started in 1975 to meet the pressing challenges of infrastructure, technical and scientific expertise, agricultural productivity, health care, and education.

Main Achievements in Early Stages. 1) Helping to restoring and reopening the Suez Canal, 2) helping to greatly Egypt's electric power capabilities, 3) building telecommunications infrastructure, 4) expanding port facilities, 5) enhancing grain storage capacity, 6) greatly expanding clean water distribution. The program has helped build strong institutional and professional ties between the two countries.

The 1980s. This period shifted the focus to support the goals of Egypt's social and economic development strategy; improving the quality of life for Egypt's people, in agriculture, health care and basic education. This furthered economic progress and a shift to a market economy. These programs supported the Egyptian Government's efforts for regulatory change and privatization. This facilitated market entry, promoting employment, and increasing access to credit for small businesses. Simultaneously, imports of American commodities, intermediate goods and capital equipment invigorated Egypt's industrial and commercial base and strengthened the private sector's role in the national economy.

The 1990s. This period focused on accelerating economic growth through privatizing state-owned enterprises, increasing exports, water use efficiency, enhancing the quality and availability of health care to women and children, expanding access across the country to the services of the growing infrastructural networks, reducing air pollution, protecting natural resources, improving the civil courts, and strengthening the ability of Egypt's NGOs to actively participate in the country's development. The US-Egyptian Partnership for Economic Growth and Development was established in 1994 by President Hosni Mubarak and Vice-President Al Gore. The partnership provides a framework for further development and closer cooperation between the two countries through economic policy dialogue engaging the public and private sectors.

2000 and Beyond: Aid to Trade. The focus of this period has been trade and investment. Egypt is becoming more closely integrated in the global economy. In 1999, the United States and Egypt agreed on a ten-year plan to reduce financial assistance in recognition of Egypt's progress in social and economic development. The two countries continue to build a self-sustaining market economy, promoting job creation, investing in people, and optimizing use of the natural resource base. Programs will focus on increasing mutual trade and attracting more investment to Egypt while creating a more productive and better-trained workforce, expanding and improving educational opportunities, enlarging the base of technical expertise, strengthening health and family planning services, protecting the environment, managing natural resources, and promoting citizen participation. In the past 25 years, Egypt has made considerable progress in increasing economic growth, achieving macroeconomic stability and implementing structural adjustment with the help of USAID programs. The US-Egypt aid relationship is evolving from a recipient of aid to a partner in trade and developments. Hence the US is reducing economic aid steadily.

SCHEDULE FOR TRIP TO RICE

January 18 – 22, 2011

Tuesday, January 18 –

4:45am	Students depart Cairo on LH581
8:10am	Arrive Frankfurt
10:15am	Depart Frankfurt on LH440 for Houston
11:00am	Leach arrives from Washington on UA981
2:10	Students arrive at Bush Airport in Houston on LH440
4:00	Greeting by Rice students
5:00	Meet student hosts and go to dorms
6:00	Rice-hosted opening dinner at Ninfa's Mexican Restaurant
8:00	Return to campus

Wednesday, Jan. 19 –

8:00	Breakfast in the campus cafeterias
9:00	Tour of campus led by Graham West
10:00	Classes with hosts in Arabic, History, Political Science, Policy Studies
12:00	Lunch at Tacos-a-Gogo
2:00	ExxonMobil briefing on Future of Energies
4:30	Discussion with Asst. Secretary of State Robert Blake
5:30	Free time
6:30	Dinner at Sid Richardson College Master's House Hosts Dale and Elise Sawyer
8:30	Free time

Thursday, Jan. 20 –

8:00	Breakfast
9:00	Meet with Amb. Edward Djerejian at Baker Institute
10:30	Meet with Dr. Michael Lindsay of the Leadership Program
12:00	Lunch with Muslim Students Association and Environmental Club leaders in Duncan and McMurtry Private Dining Rooms
1:30	Free time on campus
5:00	Dinner with Dr. Mahmoud el Gamal of Rice Economics
7:00	Egyptian Film Festival: "The Days of Sadat" Middle Eastern catering courtesy of AUC
9:50	Q&A on film

Friday, Jan. 21 –

9:00	Free time
7:00	Egyptian Film Festival "Garbage Dreams" about Cairo trash collectors. Middle Eastern catering courtesy of AUC
8:45	Q&A on film
9:30	Campus parties

Saturday, Jan. 22 –

9:00am	Shuttle bus for Bush Airport
11:40am	Depart for Washington on UA982
3:51pm	Arrival at Dulles Airport west of Washington
4:00	Van to Dr. Leach's House in Reston in northern Virginia
7:00	Dinner in Haymarket with Leach extended family

Meeting at ExxonMobil Houston Headquarters

January 2011

Discussion Leaders: Jerry W. Leach

Rapporteur: Ihab el Sokary

We met with Wilson W. "Dub" Crook, Manager of Global Gas Regulatory & Legislative Systems, at the Houston office. He has for the company for 34 year and travelled for 58 countries around the world. He is a mineralogist by training. As he has been to Egypt many times, he wore a tie with symbols of ancient Egypt.

ExxonMobil is the world's largest private oil and gas company and one of the biggest companies in the world. We had asked to be briefed on how the company viewed the future of oil and gas and what it is currently doing in alternative energy sources.

Mr. Wilson's PowerPoint briefing was entitled "Outlook for Energy: A view to 2030." He started by explaining how the company divides "upstream" drilling, pumping, moving, and refining activities from "downstream" activities such as supplying customers. He outlined the huge current demand for energy and the large expected future increases in the demand for these fuels all around the world and especially in Asia.

He listed the challenges that the company faces as securing supplies, maintain energy standards, supporting economic growth, and reducing poverty. To meet the challenges, the company has to consider three key things: price stability, secure supplies, and reductions in environmental damage.

There have been breakthroughs in natural gas supplies in "unconventional supplies." Such supplies are more available but harder to produce. Such sources are divided into: deep natural gas, tight natural gas, shale gas, coalbed methane, geopressurized zone gases, methane hydrates ([www.naturalgas.org/overview/unconvent ng resource.asp](http://www.naturalgas.org/overview/unconvent_ng_resource.asp)). Unconventional natural gas is a future option and that needs further investment to make it a viable, inexpensive solution for the future.

In the Q & A session, Mr. Crook said that the company has gone out of the business of solar and wind energy as they are outside its expertise. It has decided to focus on unconventional sources of natural gas and oil for the company's foreseeable future. However, the company is venturing into algae fuel production. It is also partnering with Stanford University on efficiency improvement research.

We discussed the company's position on the theory of peak oil. The reply was confusing as he switched the discussion into peak hydrocarbons, not just oil. His answer showed that the company that once denied peak oil are in beginning to accept it, even though it uses an unusual definition. ExxonMobil believes that the world has to date produced only about 25% of the world's hydrocarbons (oil, gas, coal).

Mr. Crook shared some interesting experiences he has had doing international business, which means for him learning different languages and cultures so as to present business opportunities cross-culturally. We had the enlightening experience of hearing how ExxonMobil views the future of energy, especially that of unconventional natural gas.

Discussion with Ambassador Robert O. Blake

January 2011

Rapporteur: Aida Mohammed Yehia

We attended a session on "The Obama Administration's Priorities in South and Central Asia" given by Amb. Robert Blake, the Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs. In his career, he has served in US embassies in Tunisia, Algeria, Sri Lanka-Maldives, and Egypt. He explained his responsibilities as implementing US in South and Central Asia as well as advising Secretary Clinton on the region. He articulated the USA's role in the region, its partnerships and priorities there.

He described the India-Pakistan dispute as "critical" and that the crisis is seen as of "priority" to the US. He said the US main priority currently is to persuade the Pakistani Government to move its military from its borders with India, primarily to focus on instability in other parts of Pakistan itself, especially the Afghan border and the tribal areas next to Afghanistan.

He added that India is seen by the US as a major success story as it has a rapidly growing economy and real working democratic government. India, unlike China, really wants to work more closely with the US. Proof that this feeling is mutual was that President Obama's visit to India was an unusually long one. India strongly desires to develop strategic partnership with the US.

One of the most difficult conflicts US has to deal with is the dispute over Kashmir. The US can be a mediator only when both disputing parties want it to mediate. This is not happening at this point as India is resisting US involvement in the issue. Amb. Blake described the bombings in Mumbai (Bombay) on Nov. 26 as similar to 9/11 terrorist acts on the US. India's main concern now is to have the group responsible for these attacks put to trial; however Pakistan is refusing to help in bringing that about.

Turning to issue of Afghanistan, the Central Asian states have facilitated the US role in Afghanistan by allowing troops and supplies to go through their territories to Afghanistan.

He explained that the US sees Uzbekistan is one of the most repressive governments in the world so there are a lot of restrictions on support from that country. Despite this, he saw relations with Uzbekistan and neighboring countries as a good example of how diplomacy can influence a country's human rights and democracy records. He added that Kyrgyzstan is now organizing the first open and free elections in the region, which is a very challenging thing to do in the country's present situation.

The Q and A session covered many issues related to Russia, Tunisia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and India. On the Tunisian situation, he said, "Ben Ali, former president of Tunisia, lost the military's support which led him to flee the country. These events in Tunisia will act as a wake-up alarm in the region and stimulate activists outside of Tunisia." He would not be drawn into what he thought would happen in other countries such as Egypt.

Meeting with Ambassador Edward P. Djerejian

January 2011

Rapporteur: Sean Graham

Amb. Djerejian is the founding director of the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice. His vast experience in Middle Eastern diplomacy included being Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Ambassador to Syria, Ambassador to Israel, and holding posts in Lebanon, Jordan, and Morocco. He was heavily involved in the Arab-Israeli peace process.

Amb. Djerejian opened by explaining his view of comparative advantage and how, by using it, the Baker Institute has come to emphasize student exchanges. He outlined the value of building institutions by leveraging the environment and resources already in place. That is what we had just done in taking the Baker Institute's Public Diplomacy and Global Policymaking in the 21st Century program and turning it into the student-led Rice-AUC program that brought the two groups together for an in-depth experiences.

Many of our reflections on the June 2010 Cairo meetings showed that we had indeed leveraged our comparative advantages. The two universities had the programs and resources that allowed for in-depth policy and cross-cultural dialogue. We saw a part of the world we would normally only be able to read about. By living, eating, and spending the entire time together last June and now we breaking down some of our misconceptions and finding commonalities. One Rice student claimed that having the AUC and Rice groups design the agenda and the activities together, it was a "game changer. Jointness was key to our success." Amb. Djerejian said that there are "very few things that are more important" than what we were experiencing.

We discussed the Tunisian Revolution and whether a "domino effect" could spread to Egypt or other countries in the region. The ambassador highlighted the fact that the Arab world had recently begun to experience accelerating evolutionary changes. The region earlier blamed its problems on foreign interference arising from colonial rule. However, Arabs have begun to identify their problems as poverty, poor education, and joblessness as coming from unresponsive and corrupt regimes in their own countries. Youth are the largest section of Arab populations now. Mixing that with increased access to information technologies, Arab societies have begun to demand more freedoms. Any type of lasting positive change has to come from within, from the people themselves. Iraq is a perfect example of why externally imposed change does not work.

The Tunisian example could act as a catalyst, each Arab country must take account its own particular situation. Tunisia has sent a clear message that people deserve both justice and stability, not just stability alone. The ambassador closed by saying "Arab regimes need to be sensitive to the needs of the street. The more corrupt the regime gets, the less power the leader has to change it. Every Arab regime is now susceptible to a rise of the masses. While the Egyptian Government is stronger than Tunisian government, it needs to make immediate changes to avoid a revolt."

Meeting with Dr. Michael Lindsay

January 2011

Rapporteur: Yasminah el Sayed

Dr. D. Michael Lindsay is a sociology professor at Rice who specializes in leadership studies. He interviews with different prominent American CEOs and public figures and then tries to assess the key factors that helped them reach the leadership positions they have obtained.

He has done 360 face interviews such leaders and is currently expanding his interview pool by 200. He is trying to find the elements in these people's upbringing and motivation. He started by giving us the most important four common elements that he found in the career trajectories of the figures he has interviewed.

The first was that if you ever get a chance to work with a big organization then you should definitely seize it because scale matters. The talk revolved around how because we live in a very complex world dominated by big organizations then our first step to success should start by being a part of these organizations. One example was that if someone gets accepted into Harvard and gets a job offer at the same time, he or she should go to Harvard because of the relationships that will come out of it.

The second was that it is important to cultivate close relationships with people who can make a difference. Dr. Lindsay mentioned that no one wants to become just a cog in the wheel. We should actively cultivate relationships with our mentors, especially if they are in big organizations. By doing that, we will make our mentors understand that we care and we pay attention. Small little things make a lot of differences. A quite remarkable example is how writing handwritten notes instead of emails in this fast-paced world would actually get people's attention.

The third was that we should apply and look for as many opportunities as we can because we learn more about ourselves as we do this. The chances are we are not only capable but ambitious as well, and life rarely goes as we expect, especially for people who engage in the process of leadership. Dr. Lindsay pointed out that disappointment is part of the process so we must accept it and not be set back by it. Someone who applies for 36 grants might not get all 36 but at least he would manage to get three which show that accomplishment accompanies applying widely and frequently.

The fourth was that relationships are always more important than tasks. He explained that there is nothing that could not be done by someone else. For instance, if you quit your job, your company can hire someone else to do your work but what you get after you quit is the people and the relationships between you and your previous coworkers and colleagues whom you might ask for help later on. So it is not a matter of what you know: instead it is who you know - and that is why relationships are very important to cultivate.

We all enjoyed this session and we learned how we could make our choices and decisions better. We also learned more about the importance of networking.

Meeting the Rice Muslim Students Association

January 2011

Rapporteur: Dalia Abbas

Meeting with the Muslim Students Association (MSA) was both fun and enlightening. The MSA president and four MSA members joined two members of the AUC group and several members of the Rice delegation for lunch at the student cafeteria. The Rice Egyptian Student Association also joined in.

The MSA president described the MSA as an active club on campus that puts on several large and small academic and social events per year, hosts a Friday prayer every week, and sponsors Muslim Awareness Week.

Of the several events that the MSA puts on, one of prime interest is the *iftar* dinners held at the end of daily fasting during the month of Ramadan. The Muslim students fast from dawn to sunset but, by the time students break their daily fast, most of the student cafeterias are closed so the MSA ends up hosting *iftars* several times a week.

The AUC group asked if internal diversity in the club was an issue. The president said that anyone is allowed to join the MSA, and as a result, the club has students of different religions and ethnicities, although the majority is Muslim.

A couple of years ago, the club was dominated by South Asians, but now it was split in terms of gender and ethnicity, having 50% males 50% females as well as 50% South Asians and 50% Arabs. An AUC student asked if there were any sectarian issues within the club, such as problems between Sunnis and Shiites. The MSA members explained that almost nobody knows what sect of Islam any member belongs to and that sectarian conflict is not an issue.

The MSA sponsors an annual event to discuss the issue of Palestine which is usually well attended. It also puts on a 'showdown' in which club members present skits, poems, songs, and other performance s in a competitive-style show. The AUC group asked "rapping" about Islam at the shows. An MSA member then gave both delegations a sample of her rapping skills, performing for them in style called 'the head wrap rap'.

The MSA group indicated essentially no prejudice or discrimination against Muslims on campus but said that unfortunate things like name-calling did sometimes occur in Houston itself.

We had a great time at the lunch, which ended in exchanging contact information and taking a group photo.

Meeting with Rice Environmental Clubs

January 2011

Rapporteur: Mohamed E. el Gindy

We exchanged ideas and experiences about the environmental programs and awareness at the two universities. The Rice group was very proud of Rice's environmental programs. They said the environmental clubs are some of the largest in terms of student numbers. They organize their activities into four main sets of objectives: 1) reduce, reuse, and recycle, 2) energy efficiency, 3) pollution prevention and education, and 4) eco-friendly transportation.

Recycling refers to paper, glass, aluminum, and cardboard. The university recycles 27% of its total waste, a good figure compared to other universities. Rice students replace "standing lights" with compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) and halogen bulbs for energy efficiency and greater safety.

In hot weather, Rice students lower energy consumption by reducing the chilling capacity in air conditioning in their rooms and dorms. This is coupled with getting the custodial staff and students to turn off lights and report thermal leaks in the university.

The Rice students participate in campus and public community awareness and educational programs. They use the Houston Earth Day celebration to inform the students and the public about what they are doing and to expand participation. Rice University funds some student environmental activities while other funds come from NGOs and personal donations.

Rice students give the university an A on its green investment priorities. The university got another A in green building practices as all new construction is designed with environmentally friendly features. The students have set the goal of recycling 75% of waste materials in campus construction projects.

Rice students have started a "yellow bikes program" bicycles are made available for the students use to reduce the use of cars and to get additional chances to exercise. The university makes establishing student associations very easy with minimal bureaucratic complexity. AUC needs to work on this problem by decreasing the bureaucratic steps needed to organize clubs on the campus.

Rice University is highly developed and very progressive in environmental awareness and sustainability programs. It has a strong commitment to the environment. There are 15 student organizations altogether. They are active in highly targeted environmental programs on campus. Some 75% of all students are environmentally aware and ready to participate, a much higher percentage than at AUC.

AUC is far more behind what Rice achieved in the environmental affairs. AUC has to greatly expand its efforts. Students need to get the university to move forward on renewable energies such as solar or wind energy.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Dalia Abbas

There was so much that it is difficult to summarize. This is my attempt to draw out the most important lessons.

GENERAL

- This type of initiative is so valuable that it should be a part of everybody's education.
- The kind of experience gives participants a broader worldview and promotes tolerance.
- Such experiences get you beyond the emphasis on cross-cultural differences and lead you to find and emphasize commonalities between peoples.
- The informal time the delegations spent together turned out to be much more important, instructive, and valuable than the formal planned events.
- These types of exchanges work best if everyone agrees at the outset that there are no taboos, i.e. nothing that can't be discussed.
- Such concrete experiences build life-long interests and make far stronger impacts than things one learns through words and abstractions.
- Such life experiences move one beyond what you learn from the media about another people and build skepticism about knowledge coming from the media.
- These types of experiences make it clear that all the people of a country do not all think alike.
- Such in-depth relationships are likely to last a long time, maybe even a lifetime.
- Such experiences help to get people beyond cultural stereotypes, giving one a way of testing and verifying whether stereotypes are true or not.
- Some individuals in these exchanges will take important steps forward in self discovery.
- When you see and interact with people practicing a different faith and at the same time you see those people as normal like yourself, it helps to humanize the other religion.

SPECIFIC POINTS ON EGYPT AND AMERICA

- The Americans learned that arranged marriages can and do work in Egypt, that they are not entirely compulsory, and that the bride and groom have a choice in the matter.
- The Egyptians came to understand that their idealized picture of American society, especially American education, did not include the many things that are wrong with the society and its educational system.
- The Egyptians achieved a new view of the independence of American students, of how strongly those students are motivated, how hard they work at school, and how well they balance their studying and their social life.
- The Americans were surprised to learn about the advancements of women's rights and the role of women in society including the ease.
- The Egyptians learned that Americans have strong nuclear families but not strong extended kinship network.
- Americans learned that Egyptian society has strong nuclear and extended family ties.
- The Americans emailed back in the two months after our January meeting saying how much better they understood the Egyptian Revolution after talking with the Egyptians.
- The Americans learned that most of the camels in Egypt are there for tourists to ride. They also learned the Egyptians resent it when their current way of life is depicted with camels.
- The Egyptians were surprised at how strongly the Americans spoke on the importance of their families to them.
- The Egyptians were again surprised that the more liberal gender relations amongst American students did not mean they were sexually involved.
- The Egyptians discovered that there are actually conservative American students.
- The Egyptians learned that American students are much freer from parental pressure, largely because they are not living with their parents, and as a result make more independent decisions in everyday life..

Everybody on both delegations expects some of these new relationships to last for many years. We hope that all AUC and all Rice students, as well as all students everywhere, have the chance to have this kind of enriching experience. It is an excellent complement to classroom learning.



Munching roasted corn (dora) on the corniche.



Nile felucca ride on the last evening in Cairo.



Seddik gets excited with lots of girls around.



Visiting ExxonMobil in Houston.



Will they take down Mubarak's photo at Rice?



Discussions with Amb. Djerejian of the Baker Institute.



Enjoying the company of Dr. Michael Lindsay.



Discussions with Assistant Secretary of State Robert Blake.



Chowing down at Houston's Rainforest Café.



Tom and Ihab introduce *Garbage Dreams*.



Freezing while saying our goodbyes.



We all did a little light shopping.

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IT WAS A



MIND-BLOWING EXPERIENCE!