

Egypt in slow transition after Mubarak's ousting

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It's been two years since demonstrations marked the end of 30-year President Hosni Mubarak's rule and 59 years of military control, but in Egypt, popular unrest persists. Two Lafayette-based Egyptian natives agree the transition will take time, although they differ on whether or not the current government will best handle the changeover.

"I think the people should stop demonstrating, stop protesting and give the new government time to conduct its affairs," said Egyptian native Nasser Hamden, 50.

But 26-year-old UL Lafayette student Bassem Hassam said he disagrees with the current regime.

"I don't see that what (President Mohamed) Morsi is doing is right," said Hassam, a senior general studies major. "I think he is soon to be out, too."

Separate democratic elections saw Morsi sworn in as president last June and a new constitution signed into law in December. But opposing factions accuse Morsi — a leading member of the Muslim Brotherhood — of pushing through legislation that favors Islamists and ignores the rights of Christians, who make up about 10 percent of the population, as well as the rights of women and secular Muslims.

Demonstrations ensued. A court ruling this month that reaffirmed death sentences for 21 individuals

involved in a deadly soccer riot last year spurred further violence. And last Thursday, Egypt's police force went on strike after a leaked report commissioned by Morsi claimed more than 800 civilian deaths tallied during the country's 2011 uprising were at the hands of the police.

The volatility has taken its toll on Egypt's economy. The Egyptian pound has lost more than 8 percent of its value against the U.S. dollar since the end of December, and tourism, which makes up for 11 percent of its gross domestic product of \$537.8 billion, is plunging.

"The instability in the street scared away the investors who worry about the instability of the country," explained Hamden, a 1990 graduate of the University of Southwestern Louisiana, now UL. "Egypt needs investors, capital. The other thing is tourism. It's a major income for the country."

As reported by The New York Times this week, a report from the nonprofit World Economic Forum ranked Egypt the least secure of 140 tourist destinations that include Pakistan and Yemen.

Hassam, an Alexandria, Egypt, native who has lived in the U.S. for 21 years, said he felt safe in the streets of his home country when he visited last year, but said he was surprised at the obvious class disparities in the capital, Cairo.

"I've been to places in Cairo that when you see it, you're like, 'How are these people living this way?'"



he explained. "It's crazy. They have nothing. A lot of them don't even have sewage. But I've been to really rich places, too. Either you're here, or you're there."

Egypt's per capita GDP is \$6,600, or 138th in the world, according to the CIA World Factbook. The availability of city services lags in Cairo, where population has doubled since the 1960s. The capital city is home to more than 10 million of the country's 79.9 million people.

Egypt is one of the oldest civilizations on Earth — it dates back to 10,000 B.C. — but it's had a turbulent modern history. Historically governed by monarchs, it essentially became a British protectorate after Britain gained and maintained control of the Suez Canal from 1882 to 1956. The strategic importance of the canal made Egypt a battleground between

the British and Germans in World War II.

A group of leftist army officers led by Col. Gamal Abdel Nasser overthrew the monarchy in 1952. Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal in 1956, provoking an international crisis, and led Syria and Jordan into the disastrous Six-Day War with Israel in 1967, in which Egypt lost control of the Sinai Peninsula to Israel.

Nasser died in 1970 and was succeeded by Anwar El Sadat, who unsuccessfully attempted to regain the Sinai in the Yom Kippur War in 1973. Sadat then made history by visiting Israel as a bold peace initiative. He and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin negotiated the Camp David

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Play

Holiday.” “It looks at what the world would be like if there wasn’t a finale to it. All he does is have a job that he goes around and touches people and they die. That’s all he knows of life is that eventually you die, but he wants to know why they cry, why it’s sad.”

The premise sounds serious, but Roy assured it is a “ridiculously romantic,” but unusual, show with “serious overtones.” Espinosa said her character, Gratzie, finds it easy to fall in love with the prince because of her desire for something more than her vanilla fiancé.

“It’s a show about love being stronger than anything else,” she said.

The production chronicles Death’s new experiences, from pushing a baby on a swing to crying, as well as how the world feels in the absence of death.

“He (Death) is like a baby,” said Roy. “He knows nothing, so everything

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we see through his eyes in the show — his first smell of a flower, his first taste of food — is all experienced in the show.”

“He grows because he finally learns what human emotions are,” said Greene, who acknowledged how difficult it is to portray someone so naive. “He sees them so sad whenever he takes them, but he never understands why. That’s what he goes through: He understands why people cling to life so dearly. You take this figure that’s never known any emotion at all — never known regret, love, nothing.”

Performances of “Death Takes a Holiday” are March 21-23 at 7:30 p.m. and March 24 at 3 p.m. in the Burke-Hawthorne Theatre. UL students and employees get in free with a UL ID, and tickets are \$15 for members of the public of \$5 for those under 18. Tickets are available at the door or in

Festival

around the world through storytelling, games, music, art, workshops, hands-on programs and active participation.”

The sales of Festival pins at PinPal kiosks help keep Festival free, and collecting them is popular among festival goers.

“Volunteering is easy and fun,” Arcuri declared. “It just takes a couple of minutes to sign up, and the shifts are anywhere from an hour to three hours long. It is a great way to get involved with Festival and the T-shirt is awesome!”

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If interested in volunteering, signing up can be done at the Festival website. Once the account is created, all available scheduled positions and shifts can be viewed online. Those unsure about volunteering for Festival are encouraged to attend FIL’s volunteer recruitment event on March 26 at 102 Center St. from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Attendance is open to the public, and it provides an opportunity to see what volunteering would entail if on the fence.

Venezuela

Though economic conditions have improved since, it is now the second-most corrupt nation in Latin America, according to Transparency International, and has the third highest murder rate in the world. Venezuela is about the size of Texas and Idaho combined, with an estimated per capita GDP of \$12,568 in 2011.

Buckman predicted Maduro will

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be unable to “maintain a hold over Venezuelans,” and Lentz agreed.

“But if the *chavistas* lose the coming election, will they relinquish power without a fight?” asked Buckman. “What will the armed forces do? A civil war is not a far-fetched possibility.”

Lentz’s prediction does not involve civil war, but party splintering,

he said, is a definite possibility within five years. He said *chavismo* under Chávez’s monolithic socialist party will split as Maduro loses popularity, with former Chávez military allies forming a separate party, ending Maduro’s reign after no more than

Egypt

Accords in 1978, by which Egypt recognized Israel’s right to exist and established diplomatic relations, and Israel returned control of the Sinai to Egypt. Sadat and Begin received the Nobel Peace Prize.

But three years later, in 1981, Sadat was assassinated by hardline army elements who opposed any concessions to Israel. He was succeeded by Col. Mubarak, who ruled for 30 years before the popular uprising toppled his regime.

Assistant political science professor Elizabeth Nyman, Ph.D. said she understands the frustrations on both sides of the debate, but agrees that after decades of military and dictatorial rule, Egypt’s transition into a democracy will be a timely affair.

“With all new people in charge,” said Nyman, “it’s going to be a very slow process.”

She also said foreign aid to the country will be reliant upon the new regime’s adherence to the Camp David Accords.

Golf

be incredibly active, indeed.

Verrougstraete is from Reunion Island, but he attended high school in France where he played for the French Junior Team. Upon leaving France, he was the No. 42 ranked amateur in the country. He said his decision to come to the U.S. for college was driven by various aspects.

“I really like the weather in Louisiana,” explained Verrougstraete. “It is nice to be able to play all year long, and I think that will help me improve my golf game a lot, which was one of my goals in college. Coach

one term. In the short run, he said, the country will regain stability as long as oil prices remain high, but the short run will be “messy.”

“The one and only thing that I see in the future of my beloved country,” agreed Olivares, “is uncertainty.”

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This month, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry visited Egypt — a country slightly more than three times the size of New Mexico, at 387,048 square miles — and announced \$250 million in aid to the country, which Hassam said he hopes to see invested in the people.

“The Egyptian culture is very strong,” he said. “They are very kind. They help each other. But they don’t have the chance. I think that’s a big part of that culture, is that somebody needs to give them the chance to succeed. Put more into the people, and they’ll make it happen.”

But for that to happen, Hamden said he believes patience is key.

“I think there’s no easy solution, because if Morsi uses a tough hand, people will accuse him of being a dictator, and if he lets things go, people will also accuse him of doing nothing,” he opined. “I think if the government is given a chance, they might do better.”

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Sliman was also a big part of my decision. I saw how much he helped other players improve, and that made me want to play for him.”

If his excitement at the extended playing time translates to his work ethic, expect Verrougstraete to be an absolutely essential part of the team come next fall.

If Sliman picks up any junior college recruits in the offseason, next year’s team will have only two seniors, and it will be up to these now-freshmen to shoulder more responsibility and step up their play.