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TELEVISION PROGRAM TO "CBS NEWS' FACE THE NATION."



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**GUESTS: SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN
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TRANSCRIPT

BOB SCHIEFFER: Today on FACE THE NATION, Egypt: The Road Ahead.

MAN: Bye-bye Mubarak.

(Crowd cheering)

BOB SCHIEFFER: We'll go to Cairo to look at events of these past nineteen days and hear from our correspondents there. We'll talk to one of the men who'll be negotiating reforms to the military, opposition leader Ahmed Zewail.

From Washington, we'll bring in Arizona Senator John McCain of the Armed Services Committee and Sameh Shoukry, Egypt's ambassador to the United States.

It's all ahead on FACE THE NATION.

ANNOUNCER: FACE THE NATION with CBS News chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer. And now from CBS News in Washington, Bob Schieffer.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And good morning again. Here is the latest now from Cairo. Egypt is getting somewhat back to normal this morning. People are going to work. Traffic is flowing through the downtown. The military which is in power now has suspended the constitution and dissolved parliament. And it has announced it will form a committee to draft the constitution. State television now says the military council will retain power until elections take place. For the situation in downtown Cairo, now we're going to go back again to our man on the scene Harry Smith.

Harry, it's a little different picture down there in the square this morning.

HARRY SMITH: Well, Bob. The celebrations basically ended late, late, late last night. The square was reopened to traffic and early this morning traffic was actually going through. The army came in, then later in the morning, and said we want the protestors who are left here to dismantle their tents and go home. Several of the tents were dismantled, but the protestors and the army, don't see eye to eye on all of the issues. The army has said we want a peaceful transition of power. And the protestors have said, but what we really want is not only a dissolution of parliament, which the army has agreed to, they want Mubarak's cabinet dissolved as well, which the army has not agreed to. So these two sides there's a bit of a tug of war going on. And a huge crowd has once again formed in Tahrir Square behind us. As for whether or not President Obama had any real effect on the protestors here or the overflow of the Egyptian government, last night we spoke with the Wael Ghonim, the Google engineer who had been arrested for twelve days and held in captivity by the Egyptian authorities, one of the engineers of this entire protest movement. And he said no way.

President Obama came out several times during the revolution and had things to say. Did it help? Did it hurt?

WAEEL GHONIM: You want the politically correct answer or the-- you know, it was good that he supports the revolution. That's-- that's a good stand. But we don't really need him. And I don't think that-- I-- I wrote a tweet. I wrote, dear Western governments, you have been-- you have

been-- what-- you know, you have been supporting the regime that was oppressing us for thirty years. Please don't get involved now. We don't need you.

HARRY SMITH: Bob, quite frankly. This is perhaps where the really hard part starts. Is how the army, how the protestors and demonstrators are-- are going to come to eye to eye? And how they're going to form a transitional government? And how this country takes the steps necessary to get to a real Democracy?

BOB SCHIEFFER: Harry Smith in Cairo as he has been for the last week. Ahmed Zewail is a Nobel laureate. He's been a leader of the opposition who has been negotiating with the military on reforms. I spoke to him just a while ago. And he said now that parliament has been dissolved, he believes its possible elections could be held even before September which had been the previous goal.

DR. AHMED ZEWAIL (Nobel Laureate): The fact of the matter is that the people here would like to have this done as soon as possible.

BOB SCHIEFFER: So you-- your hope is that you can have elections before August? Is that what I understand you're saying?

DR. AHMED ZEWAIL: That's-- that's-- that's-- that's what's my hope is. Is that we're going to have to wait that long. There will be a transit-- translation government-- a transition government. But also you-- now the fact to that the parliament has been let go, the key thing is now for the Egyptian people to get this referendum done. And then we go on with the election which I anticipate, it should be before or about the summer.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right. And let me ask you, sir there have been some reports that you might run for some office. Are you contemplating running for any leadership position?

DR. AHMED ZEWAIL: Well, as I said, Bob, to the whole menu of the people in the international media, my role right now is to make sure that Egypt will become a democratic state. That's really what I'm after. And then I think after that, it's truly up to the Egyptian people to decide on their leader. But what I'm here for is to see in my lifetime Egypt becoming a democracy.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Do you think that the government should find ways to freeze Mubarak's assets that he seems to have in-- in-- in other countries? What do you see coming of-- of those efforts?

DR. AHMED ZEWAIL: That corruption has become a way of life and a very small number of people in the country have made billions and billions of dollars in such a short time. And I think there will be justice here made for the Egyptian people to have their own wealth back. And I don't mean here to be personal on President Mubarak or his family. I think all those who have abused the system, there will be a time where justice will take place.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Let me also ask you about the emergency laws that Egypt is operating under now and has been for three decades. Is it time for those emergency laws to be lifted?

DR. AHMED ZEWAIL: In my opinion it should be yesterday. I think there's no reason whatsoever, Bob that Egypt lived for thirty years under martial law, but I would like to urge them to do it as soon as possible because psychologically, even to the Egyptian people this is very important to be done as soon as possible.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Doctor Zewail, thank you so much. We appreciate you being with us this morning.

DR. AHMED ZEWAİL: Well, thank you, Bob. Thank you.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Ahmed Zewail who is in Cairo. With us in the studio here in Washington, the Egyptian ambassador to the United States Sameh Shoukry. Mister Ambassador, thank you so much for joining us.

Well, you heard what Mister Zewail just said. The emergency law should have been lifted yesterday. He said that's what a lot of people think. Are they going to be lifted soon?

SAMEH SHOUKRY (Egyptian Ambassador to the United States): We are living under extraordinary times and the suspension of the constitution itself, I think. The amount of whether the-- the emergency law is in effect or not is-- is a legal matter to be debated, but the-- Supreme Council has indicated its commitment to lifting the emergency-- the state of emergency. And I believe they will do so as soon as the conditions are appropriate.

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): But you don't have the--

SAMEH SHOUKRY: This is the first day of normalcy back in Egypt.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Who is in charge now? We know the military council has taken command but who is running things right now?

SAMEH SHOUKRY: By-- by virtue of the Fifth Communique that was just issued a short while ago it's quite apparent that the chief of the military council, the supreme military council is now effectively undertaking the responsibilities as representing the state both internally and externally. So that's the minister of defense Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, you heard Harry Smith reporting from Cairo. He said some of the people out on the street, the demonstrators they want every-- that cabinet dissolved. They want all of those people out of there. Is that a realistic hope?

SAMEH SHOUKRY: At this time, it is also difficult. The government has been requested to stay in a caretaker capacity. There are enormous challenges facing Egypt currently, in terms of the security void that was created with the withdrawal of the police force in addition to the economic conditions which are very difficult by virtue of the impact of these demonstrations and the length of time they were under way and the overall global recession. So there are challenges to regain economic equilibrium and to deal with the challenges related to our unemployment.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Are you confident that the military will hand over power as they say they're going to do?

SAMEH SHOUKRY: Well, certainly and by the Fifth Communique also where they indicated a very specific timeframe of six months to undertake both parliamentary and the presidential elections that I think has-- has come as a surprise. Most analysts thought that it would take longer. So for them to specify, now that elections would be undertaken in six months, I think is an added guarantee that it is their intention--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): So--

SAMEH SHOUKRY: --to hand over.

BOB SCHIEFFER: So it's your understanding now from this communique because they were talking about August, September to hold elections. You think now it is possible and the intent now is to hold the elections before that?

SAMEH SHOUKRY: Well, the specification of-- of six-- a period of six months certainly is-- is very definite in-- in its meaning. And if elections were to be held before that, that was-- is what the communique indicated that it is possible to hold elections prior to the six-month period. And that would be an ex-- expedited timeframe.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And is your understanding that it is in the-- the intent of the military council and the government now to honor all of Egypt's treaties with other countries, including the Camp David Accords.

SAMEH SHOUKRY: Certainly that's been reiterated three times so far in the various communiqués. The-- Egypt is a state of institutions that honors its commitments and it enters commitments that are in its best interest. The peace treaty has been in the best interest of Egypt, has provided regional security and has provided for Egypt the opportunity to concentrate on its development.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right. Mister Ambassador, I want to thank you so much for joining us this morning. I know this hasn't been an easy time for you personally. Thank you so much.

SAMEH SHOUKRY: Thank you for having me.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And we turn to the other side of the table now where there sits the senior senator from Arizona, a member of the Armed Services Committee, senior Republican on the Armed Services Committee, John McCain. Senator McCain, should we have seen this coming?

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN (R-Arizona/Armed Services Committee, Ranking Republican): I think so. We should have seen this coming when the Egyptian government failed to move forward with a process of democratization. The last election was particularly flawed. By the way, Madeleine Albright, the head of NDI and I had (INDISTINCT) called for observers. Russ Feingold and I had a resolution in support of human rights in Egypt. So a lot of this should have been seen. This administration and the liberal left in America viewed Bush's democracy efforts as a way, excuse to go to war. And when President Obama refused to support the people in the streets of Tehran when a young woman bled to death named Neda before was seen by the world and this administration did nothing. That sent a very bad signal to all of these dictatorships. I'm not pretty much sure it's--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): Well, Wha-- wha-- what should we have done? But we should--

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: Oh, we should.

BOB SCHIEFFER: You're not saying we should have gone to war.

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: No, but we should have spoken up for them just as Ronald Reagan spoke up for the people behind the Iron Curtain, just as throughout our history we have had a fundamental belief and commitment that all of us are endowed with certain inalienable rights. And by the way, these winds of change that are blowing, I think that I would be a little less cocky in the Kremlin with my KGB cronies today, if I were Vladimir Putin. I would be a little less secure in a seaside resort that President Hu and a few men who govern and decide the fate of 1.3 billion people. I don't think this-- this is confined to the Middle East just as we believe that human rights are universal. I think the President has handled this situation well. I think that we need to get a-- a-- a transition that really understands that elections are not the answer. We've had election after election in places that have been meaningless. It is the apparatus. It is the-- the modalities. It is the-- it is the education of voters. It's all of the things that go to a free and fair election. And, I think that IRI, NDI, National Endowment for Democracy, who helped the countries behind the Iron Curtain after it-- it fell to-- to move forward with a free and fair election. We don't want this revolution hijacked by an extremist organization. And we've seen examples of both over the last twenty years.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, I want to ask you about--

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: Yeah.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --that because I want to ask you about the Muslim Brotherhood. But first, I mean do you think this was an intelligence failure on the part of the United States or was it just a misunderstanding by our--

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: It's--

BOB SCHIEFFER: --our diplomatic--

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: A lot of it is understandable. Bob, the-- the Egyptians helped us in the fight against al Qaeda. And by the way, this revolution is a direct repudiation of al Qaeda, who believed that the only way you bring about change is through violence. They were incredibly important in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. They provided us with a great deal of intelligence and help. So I can understand that side of the equation but there was a failure to realize that a sophisticated, educated freedom-yearning people sooner or later were going to demand their rights.

BOB SCHIEFFER: What about this--

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: And, by the way, my hindsight is 20/20.

BOB SCHIEFFER: This whole question of the Muslim Brotherhood.

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: Yeah.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Do you think the Muslim Brotherhood should be a part of the negotiations leading toward these reforms? Should they be a part of the new government?

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: I think that's up to the Egyptian people and government. I'm very concerned about a lot of the behavior of the Muslim Brotherhood. And a lot of the positions they have taken incu-- including their failure to recognize Israel's right to exist. And so, I'm very worried about it. The best way to ensure that no extremist element hijacks this election is to

have a free and fair election that is truly transparent, that brings in all the democratic forces and factors in the-- in Egypt into this process. And voter education has a lot to do with it.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, what-- how do you view the Muslim Brotherhood? I mean, you know, I think the hit of national intelligence, General Clapper--

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: Yeah.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --kind of caught Washington's attention when he said on Capitol Hill he thought they were a secular organization.

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: He later-- he later-- his spokesperson later took back that statement. I believe--

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, that's the only joke what the captain meant to say.

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: That's right. I-- I am concerned about it. We have reasons to be concerned about the Muslim Brotherhood. But at the same time for us to dictate what the role they should play in a way may be harmful to us because as you just heard that young man say, this revolution is theirs. And they want us to assist. They don't want us to dictate.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Why don't we take a break and we'll come back and talk about some more of this in a minute-- in a minute.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: Back again with Senator McCain. Senator, let's talk about this just across the region. Do you-- what do you see the impact of this?

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: I see it very unclear and unpredictable in many respects except that I believe that the Egyptian people are educated, they're sophisticated. They are not a country in-- in all due respect one like Yemen, where there are stark contradictions exist within that country so.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And there were some demonstrations there today by the way.

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: Yes indeed. And it-- again, it's not only spreading throughout the region but it's going to spread throughout the world in-- in my view again. So I-- I think the Israelis have reasons for concern. If you have a government-- whatever government is going to come into power is not going to have a close relationship that they with Mu-- Mubarak. Let's just make that assumption. Then the question is, what will be the nature of that relationship and will there be places like Gaza that are flash points anyway that will cause the likelihood or possibility of conflict? I'm very worried about Lebanon, Hezbollah taking over there. Lebanon has always been kind of the miner's canary of the Middle East. And the Syrians obviously and the Iranians will be much more harsh if demonstrations take place in their country. And the message to the Iranians is let your people have peaceful demonstrations and let's have democracy in Iran, Syria and other countries which are-- are not only are not our friends but are-- are in many ways our enemies.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, they're calling-- some of the protestors are calling for demonstrations in Iran Monday, tomorrow.

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: Yes.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And already the government has told them no.

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: And already I'm glad to see that our Vice President Biden has called for these demonstrations to be allowed. I know that the President will too in direct contradiction of two years ago. I'm happy to say. And look, this-- this-- this is spreading and it's great news. And it is fraught with uncertainty. But some of these things were bound to happen, number one and number two is it's good for everything we believe in. You've got to believe in the long run that countries that have free and open societies are going to be natural allies of ours over time.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Let's talk a little bit about what's going on in Washington.

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: Okay.

BOB SCHIEFFER: We've got a whole new Congress here. And it certainly is going to be a different kind of Congress. Do you think there is the chance that this Congress can get anything done? I mean everybody is talking about spending cuts. The President's out today--

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: Mm-Hm.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --saying he's going to be for some deep cuts, not nearly as much as the Republicans want. Where does all this come down?

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: Well, I think it's going to be a confrontation. I hope it's one that can be worked out between the President and-- and Congress. And obviously the quote, "continuing resolution" will be the first area of confrontation. There is a different environment here though. It's not nearly what it was before the election. That gives me guarded-- room for guarded optimism. And sometime soon, some of us are going to come forward and say, look, we not only have to cut all of this spending which is twelve or fifteen percent of our spending but we're going to have to reform Social Security and Medicare and we're going to have to take it on and we're going to have to rely on the American-- good sense of the American people to realize the same thing. No longer can it be the third rail of American politics.

BOB SCHIEFFER: There's also--

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN (overlapping): A strong letter to follow.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --Pentagon's spending. Yeah, a strong-- strong letter to--

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN (overlapping): Yeah.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --follow. There's also a Pentagon spending. Isn't the Pentagon going to have to make some very deep cuts here?

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: The Pentagon-- and I would think it's, you know, it shows what a great Secretary of Defense we have. He's gotten out ahead of this as you know with some significant cost savings that he's already proposed. And we're going to have to make a lot of reforms in the way we procure weapons and a lot of things like that but at the same time we are

in two wars. We-- our biggest costs are personnel costs, because we're an all volunteer force. So let's recognize some of the realities of thus-- the-- our national security needs and I hope that some of my new colleagues on the other side of the Capitol understand that we've got to be very careful with cuts in defense spending.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, some of your colleagues on the other side of the Capitol are talking about a hundred billion dollars cut out of this year's budget. Now you've been a maverick--

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: Mm-Hm.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --a lot of your career. Do you really think that's realistic?

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: I think a lot of it is realistic. I think a lot of fundamental changes also can be made. And look, they are complying with the wishes of the people that elected them and that's what they have-- they to keep coming back to and may be they can go back and educate the viewers that all this-- voters that this may not be totally necessary. But right now that's what they were told their message was when they were elected. And I-- I-- I applaud their courage.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right.

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: We'll see what happens.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Thank you for being with us--

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: Thanks.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --this morning, Senator. I'll be back with some final thoughts in just a minute.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: Finally today, what happened in Egypt was a long time coming and who among us was not moved by the unbridled joy? The crowd's heartwarming response to our own Harry Smith said it all.

MAN: Thank you, everybody in the world. Thank you.

BOB SCHIEFFER: This was not just a great day but a wonderful moment in history. Yet, for all the joy, we are now in uncharted territory. Nothing underlines that so much as how U.S. policymakers were blindsided on all of this. We never saw it coming nor as it progressed could we do much about it.

In one side of my mind's eye I kept seeing our intelligence agents monitoring it with the latest tools of modern spy craft, but behind the curtain, just a bunch of people watching events unfold on TV like the rest of us. In the end, U.S. policy came out about right. May be because by then there was not much we could do about it. We sided with those who wanted freedom but were not seen as either publicly driving Mubarak from power or, worse, trying to prop him up that is not all bad. Mubarak's crimes can never be justified. But for thirty years, he brought a certain stability to a dangerous part of the world and was a reliable ally in maintaining Israel's security in fighting terrorism. If the past days have taught us anything, it is that no one can really say right now what the impact of his leaving will be. The President rightly said this is the beginning not the end of this story. And he could have added, and this is after all the Middle East.

Back in a minute.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: And that's it for this week. We'll be back here next week same place, same time. See you then.

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