



Dialogue on
Globalization

BRIEFING PAPER
FES CAIRO

New Powers For Global Change?

Egypt's Foreign Policy in Global Change
The Egyptian Role in Regional
and International Politics

MOHAMED KADRY SAID

1 The Three Circles Vision

The existence of an independent government body that handles foreign affairs of Egypt in its modern history started in 1826 in the age of Mohamed Ali, known as the founder of the modern state of Egypt. This body was first named *Diwan of Foreign Trade and Affairs*, and in the age of Khedive Ismail, it was named the *Wizara (ministry) of Foreign Affairs* by the first cabinet in Egypt formed in 1878. The mission of this body until 1914, when Egypt was declared as British protectorate, was confined to dealing with all what was *foreign* including commercial interests and foreign treaties. With the signing of the 1936 treaty with Britain, Egypt started to exercise a relatively independent foreign policy devoted in its considerable part to fulfilment of complete national independence, settlement of national problems with the outside world as well as sharing in a number of issues related to the establishment of the new world order in the post-WWII era. In April 1945, Egypt participated effectively and had distinguished contributions in the San Francisco Conference which resulted in the founding of the United Nations (UN) and the establishment of the rules of modern international law. Without reservations, the Egyptian parliament approved the UN Charter on October 11, 1948 with a majority of 94 votes against 2. On regional level, Egypt with other six Arab countries founded on March 22, 1945 the League of Arab States to serve Arab countries' interests and to coordinate between them in political, social and cultural affairs.

The emergence of the contemporary foreign policy of Egypt started with the July 1952 revolution by *the Free Officers' Movement* under the leadership of Gamal Abdel-Nasser. Succeeded to overthrow the monarchy in Egypt, Nasser had laid out the parameters of new Egyptian foreign policy in his book, *The Philosophy of the Revolution*, based on the well-known *Three Circles Policy* for Egypt's outside action: the Arab circle, the African circle and the Islamic circle. To face challenges of the time especially from the West, it was essential for Nasser to use the three circles policy for the creation of a broader strategic depth for Egypt. On the first circle, the Arab circle, Nasser advanced his project for Arab nationalism and unity driven by a deep conviction of shared heritage and destiny. On the African circle, Egypt backed African countries to achieve their independence and contributed in the founding of the Organization for African Unity (OAU) in Addis Ababa on May 25, 1963. Egypt in addition prompted the Afro-Asian solidarity and enhanced its cultural relations with Islamic

countries. To avoid being involved in the East-West ideological confrontation of the Cold War, Nasser of Egypt, Tito of Yugoslavia, Nehru of India, Sukarno of Indonesia, and Nkrumah of Ghana declared in Bandung-Indonesia in 1955, the founding of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The main focus of the Egyptian foreign policy during the 1950s and 1960s was directed to ending of colonialism, help national liberation movements as well as working to initiate new regional and sub-regional institutions. At that period of time, the Egyptian national security has been traditionally defined in terms of the fear of western hegemony and domination expressed by different security schemes imposed on the Middle East like the Baghdad Pact and the Eisenhower Doctrine. More over, the creation of the state of Israel with the support of the West added an additional threat dimension. Another important security dimension for Egypt has been the River Nile and its waters. This has been always expressed in terms of a firm Egyptian stance not to allow hostile power to control the headwaters of the Nile or tamper with its flow into Egypt.

The numerous changes in foreign policy during Anwar Al-Sadat's era (1970-1981) go back mostly to the consequences of his visit to Israel and the Egyptian-Israeli peace process. Under Mubarak's rule, the Egyptian foreign policy in the 1990s had to handle the challenges and uncertainties of the new world order after the Cold War. This has been manifested since the Gulf War 1991 in the rise of *The Middle East* concept as a principle domain of interaction and cooperation. The importance of Egyptian-European relations and their evolution within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (the Barcelona Process) has been recognized; and the Egyptian-NATO relations as part of the NATO-Mediterranean Dialogue. This was mirrored in new organizational changes in the Egyptian foreign policy apparatus and different approaches towards issues such as environment, human rights, civil society, scientific research, technology and international cooperation. The same holds for the expansion of the Egyptian-Asian relations on economic and political level. Finally, the Egyptian foreign policy had to adapt once more to the post 9/11 world through enhancing cooperation in terrorism issues, dialogue of cultures and civilization.

2 The Middle East

The Egyptian foreign policy has always been subject of strong conflicting trends. Those who advocate the primacy of an African or Euro-

Mediterranean orientation have continuously competed with proponents of the traditional Arab-Islamic orientation. Over the 1990s, a new Middle Eastern trend has received greater impetus based on regional security and cooperation framework consisting of the countries of the League of Arab States in addition to Israel, Turkey and Iran. The Egyptian experience has proved that giving priority to Africa and the Euro-Mediterranean options alone will not satisfy Egypt's desire for an effective external role.

Considering stability in the Middle East, Egypt worked to stabilize relations not only within Arab context but also within the framework of non-Arab neighboring countries. Egypt, for example, had a role in containing the Turkish-Syrian dispute in 1998 by making it subject of dialogue and negotiations. Over the 1990s, Egypt realized the importance of having stronger relations with regional non-Arab countries, such as Turkey and Iran with which Egypt has strong historic and cultural ties. As far as Israel is concerned, promoting normalization and reconciliation represented the focus of the Egyptian-Israeli relations. Unfortunately, there has been always a setback on this road as a result of Israeli policies against the Palestinians and the peace process. The assertion of Sadat that the October 1973 war is the last war, still serves as a framework for future relations between the two countries. The relations between Egypt and Israel have survived several crises and never escalated to the point of complete breakdown. Egypt maintains special relations with a number of key Arab states like Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria. The roles and visions of these states are essential for the peace process. Moreover, Egypt coordinates on periodic basis with Gulf countries, Yemen, Morocco, Algeria, Sudan and Libya.

A Middle East free from weapons of mass destruction has been always one of the important foreign policy initiatives of Egypt. This initiative gained success when adopted by the 35th session of the UN General Assembly with a consensus (1980). Meanwhile, President Mubarak presented in April 1990 his initiative aiming at clearing the Middle East from all weapons of mass destruction. Since the 52nd session of the General Assembly, Egypt proposed regularly a draft under the title "Transparency in Armament" aiming at extending the level of transparency to all weapons of mass destruction especially nuclear ones. Egypt also hosted in April 1996 the signing ceremonies of the treaty of clearing Africa from nuclear weapons asserting through the Cairo Declaration the principles of regional nu-

clear disarmament and calling the international community to draw up similar treaties for other continents. Egypt in addition participated in June 1998 with six other countries in issuing the ministerial declaration on forming a new plan for nuclear disarmament known as *the New Agenda Alliance*.

Some experts see that the war on Iraq in 2003 has caused a geopolitical revolution in the Middle East that is likely to be featured in three aspects: regional power structure, the future of regional institutions and nation-building projects by external powers. For the time being, the United States has become the strongest military power in the Middle East, not only over the horizon, but also on the ground. This will make traditional power calculations and military balances between regional actors in the Middle East largely less important than before. Political acts by regional powers and their capacity to launch initiatives will prove much more important than their command of certain weapons systems. The new geopolitical situation in the Middle East could also suggest the reorientation of existing regional and sub-regional organizations or to establish new ones defined by shared interests. This tendency may explain the fact that Iraq's *neighboring states plus Egypt* have been meeting regularly since the start of the Iraqi crisis.

Such a vision was practically materialized by Egypt's sponsoring of the *Iraq Conference* held in Egypt on the 25th of November 2004 with the participation of foreign ministers from Iraq, its neighbors, the Group of Eight Industrialized Nations (G8) and representatives from the League of Arab States and Organization of the Islamic Conference. In a similar fashion, President Hosni Mubarak attended in Tripoli in October 2004 the five-nation African Summit on means of resolving the crisis of Darfur alongside with the leaders of Libya, Sudan, Chad, and Nigeria. Egypt is also a member in *the Forum for the Future Initiative* that held two summits one in Morocco, December 2004; and the second in Bahrain in November 2005. The 36-nation Forum for the Future aims at promoting political, economic and social reforms in the Middle East region.

On regional level, Egypt also has a good record in disaster relief and humanitarian response missions. The Egyptian Armed Forces' medical and engineering teams stayed in Turkey several months after the Earthquake that struck Turkey in 1999. Egyptian Corps of Engineers contributed in demining operations in Kuwait after the Gulf War of 1991. A similar Egyptian effort has been provided to Lebanon after the war be-

tween Israel and Hezboallah in August 2006. Moreover, Peacekeeping operations are likely to be a major area for mutual cooperation and confidence building in the Middle East.

Finally, Egypt is pioneering in thinking regional infrastructure necessary to connect countries of the Middle East. Building of roads and railways, energy and information networks on the regional level are vital for security and the promotion of a regional spirit. In this regard, Egypt works on networking electricity and natural gas with its neighbors. The Nile waters are now flowing through four tunnels under the Suez Canal and two new bridges were constructed over the Canal for Cars and railway transportation. The new railroad line represents the starting point for re-operating the famous *Orient Express* train from Cairo to Istanbul and from there to Europe and Asia. Orascom, an Egyptian giant telecom group, has built mobile phone networks in Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Iraq, and Pakistan as well as in other African countries.

3 Sending Troops outside Egypt

Egypt has sent troops abroad on different occasions where either vital Egyptian interests were at stake, or a window of opportunity for development and growth of these interests opened, or sometimes for both motives combined. However, the decision to send Egyptian troops outside the country has never been an easy one since such decisions were subject to public debate that always led to a mix of support and rejection. Although neither Yemen nor Kuwait have common borders with Egypt, Egyptian troops were sent to Yemen in 1962 and to Iraq during Desert Storm in 1991. The decision in both cases was based on the conclusion that the size of the threat posed to Egyptian national security and the opportunities available to be seized require such a decision and justify it. The Egyptian public in both cases of intervention was divided into two trends of thought: one supported sending of troops outside to protect Egyptian national security at the very end of the Red Sea and beyond in the Gulf; and the second viewed the intervention in Yemen as a harmful venture that stretched the Egyptian armed forces thin paving the road for the defeat of Egypt by Israel in 1967; and the Egyptian participation in the Desert Storm as submission to American hegemony igniting Arab-Arab conflicts from which only the United States and Israel benefited.

In the nineties, Egypt also sent troops to several hot spots around the world namely to Bosnia in Europe, and to Somalia in Africa. In such cases

however, decisions to sending troops abroad did not arouse much controversy inside Egypt due to their geographical remoteness as well as their low intensity level of conflict. Such Egyptian presence in these areas opened a window of opportunity for Egypt to make political, economic, and strategic gains. However the closest perspective to the Egyptian mindset is that Egypt should have a role however big or small in re-engineering its region and the world in times of transition.

It was during that period of the nineties characterized by active Egyptian presence outside its borders - jointly with the US and other western and Arab allies in the Gulf, with the NATO in Bosnia, and under the UN flag in Somalia- that many Egyptian figures reached very prominent posts as heads of international political and economic organizations; in addition to that, a large amount of Egypt's debts were cancelled and Egypt became a center of attention when it comes to international rewards, funding, and political support. It was also during this period that Egypt partnered with other global and regional powers in the founding of many important regional initiatives and multilateral agreements in the Mediterranean and in the Middle East. This period of the nineties also saw a qualitative shift in the Egyptian armed forces reaching advanced levels of command, control, and communication, in addition to establishing military institutions for training in the fields of peacekeeping, learning foreign languages, and information technology.

4 The African Circle

The African circle has been always of importance to Egyptian foreign policy despite its traditional inclination towards Europe and the Arab World. Since July 1952 revolution, Egypt supported African countries in their struggle to gain independence from foreign occupation. Egypt also had a prominent role in the efforts made to establish the Organization for African Unity (replaced by the African Union on July 9, 2002). This role was crowned by Egypt's hosting the first African Summit Conference in Cairo on July 17-21, 1964. As a result of an Egyptian proposal, the establishment of *the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution* was announced in the 29th African Summit held in Cairo in June 1993. The Cairo Center for Training on Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa was then established in 1995. The Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs jointly with the

Ministry of Defense prepares the training courses of the Cairo Center.

Egypt has conducted a large number of peace-keeping operations in Africa including in Congo (July 1960-1964); Somalia (April 1992-March 1995); Mozambique (December 1992 – December 1994); Rwanda (October 1993 – March 1996); Angola (February 1995 – 30 June 1997); Liberia (September 1993 – September 1997) and West Sahara (April 1991 to present). In Darfur, since August 2004 Egypt has sent 34 military observers, a humanitarian airlift, a military field hospital and a medical convoy that has extended medical assistance to more than 500 people per day. Egypt expressed its readiness to send a mechanical infantry division as part of the African Union forces in Darfur.

Stability of Sudan, Ethiopia, and other upriver countries are central to Egyptian security policy. In 1998, Egypt played an active role in getting the ministers of water resources in the Nile Basin Countries to approve a new initiative for cooperation among riparian states. As far as Egyptian-Sudanese relations are concerned, the two countries have formed the Higher Egyptian-Sudanese Joint Committee which approves plans of action for cooperation and integration between the two countries. Egypt believes that the post peace era in Sudan will be crucial in determining its future. The Egyptian authorities have prepared studies on development projects to be implemented in the South during the transitional period in different sectors such as: electricity grids, agriculture, health, irrigation and education. Egypt has already decided to open a branch of the Alexandria University in Juba. Addressing the last Sudan Donors Conference in Oslo, Egypt pledged \$10 million as a grant for Sudan reconstruction.

In the economic sphere, Egypt has a leading role in African developmental and economic integration. In 1998, Egypt joined the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and in 2001 it joined the Sahel and Sahara Union. Egypt has a crucial role in demanding a fair approach to African debts through numerous proposals forwarded in African conferences and in different world organizations. In April 2000, Egypt hosted the first African-European Summit where the African debts to European countries came on top of the conference agenda. The German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder announced the cancellation of all German commercial debts, while the French President Chirac declared a 90 per cent cancellation.

In 1992, Egypt joined the African Economic Group and was chosen in May 1993 for a permanent seat in the African Import/Export Bank. Egypt has contributed to most of the African initiatives for development, notably NEPAD. As a co-founder of NEPAD, Egypt assumes the responsibility for the agricultural file where Egypt exerts intensive efforts to provide the African products access to the global markets. During the Algerian summit meeting of NEPAD, held in November 2004, Egypt pledged \$1 million, as a contribution to NEPAD. In addition to those efforts, Egypt is doing its best to activate its trade with African countries through 39 bilateral agreements and also through regional African gatherings in which Egypt participates, such as the Indigo gathering of the Nile Basin countries; the institution of TecnoNile concerned with joint cooperation between Nile countries for the best investment of the river's water.

In 1981, Egypt established the Egyptian Fund for Technical Cooperation with Africa. This fund offers experts and consultants of different specializations to the African countries, contributes in the rehabilitation and training of cadres working in development issues particularly in sectors of special importance, such as agriculture, mining, health, medicine, education, infrastructure etc. Moreover, in the last two decades Egypt has offered support to African countries in the economic, social, legal and administrative fields related to the process of economic reform and conversion to free market economy.

In the field of culture, President Mubarak opened in 1990 the Senghor University in Alexandria to serve all the peoples of Africa. Further, it was decided that the Nelson Mandela African University was to be established in Ismailia including 34 colleges and institutes. Every year the Egyptian universities as well as Al-Azhar offer scholarships and grants to hundreds of African students and researchers. Egypt also offered expertise to African countries in the area of Radio and Television and journalism through training sponsored by the Egyptian Ministry of Information. An estimated 30,000 to 40,000 African students are in Egypt on scholarships in different fields of knowledge.

Indeed, Egypt has been keen recently to refute accusations that it has lost its influence in Africa and that it perceives Africa as a fourth priority after the Middle East, the United States, and Europe. Cementing ties with Africa on all fronts has been an Egyptian foreign policy priority in the last couples of years. Egypt is working on developing economic and technical ties with Af-

rica and recently hosted a number of seminars on trade to encourage Egyptian private sector to invest in Africa. On the political level, Egypt has actively participated in dealing with the Darfur crisis and in ending the Great Lakes conflicts. Although there are other countries like South Africa and Nigeria that are competing with Egypt to gain an influential role in Africa, Egypt seems determined to strongly come back to the African scene through cultivating strong ties with its countries in areas of civil society, education, media, industry and culture.

5 Relations with the US

Egypt was described during the Clinton Administration as "the most prominent player in the Arab world and a key US ally in the Middle East". Egypt and the US have a convergence of interests in many areas such as maintaining regional stability, stemming radicalization and terrorism, and furthering the peace process in the Middle East. US military assistance to Egypt is considered part of the administration's strategy of maintaining continued availability of Persian Gulf energy resources and providing security to the Suez Canal which serves both as an important international oil route and as critical route for US warships transiting to the Gulf and Asia. Military cooperation, commercial and trade ties, and close diplomatic coordination on regional issues, remained cornerstones of the bilateral relations between the US and Egypt. The United States and Egypt conducted the first "Bright Star" joint military exercise in August 1983 and continued ever since to hold it periodically for infantry, airborne troops, artillery, and armored forces. The Bright Star includes beside Egypt and US military contingents from Jordan, the Gulf countries and Europe.

More than \$50 billion in US aid has flown into Egypt since 1978, contributing to a thorough modernization of the Egyptian armed forces, as well as supporting a vast array of programs ranging from agricultural improvements to industrialization and infrastructure construction. In return, the US armed forces depend on Egypt for access to the Middle East and wide-range support in projecting American power into the region and beyond in Africa and Asia. During the Gulf war 1991, Egypt was the second largest military contingent to the defense of the Gulf countries (30,000 troops). Despite the formal opposition of Egypt to the US-led military intervention of March 2003 in Iraq, Egypt offered important logistical assistance to the Americans navy most importantly the short notice transit in

the Suez Canal before and during the war with all associated security and logistical arrangements.

The US-Egyptian military and political cooperation is facing a vision and credibility gap and much of mixing and confusion of concepts. Despite the mutual dependence inherent in the US-Egyptian relationship, the relation is not without friction and strains caused by the growing differences between Washington and Cairo on a range of regional and international foreign policy issues like those related to the peace process, Iraq, Sudan, WMD and ballistic missiles proliferation as well as the American political and military support to Israel. The Egyptian style in charting for itself a somewhat more independent line was described by some American analysts as *Cairo's Gaulist foreign policy* analogous to Paris line in pursuing a foreign policy independent of the US. It was clear in the last strategic dialogue held in Washington between the two countries on August 2006, that political reform in Egypt was the most sensitive issue on the dialogue agenda. There is a feeling in Washington that Egypt is not moving fast enough towards democratization and this creates a bad image for Egypt in Washington and the West.

6 The Euro-Mediterranean Dimension

Egypt as a founding member of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) since 1995 is a major beneficiary of the EU financial and technical cooperation. The portfolio of the on-going projects covers a wide range of sectors, including private sector, social and economic development, environment, agriculture and local development. The main priorities of EU cooperation with Egypt, as set out in the Country Strategy Paper 2002-2006 adopted by the Commission in December 2001, include the implementation of the EU-Egypt Association Agreement signed in 2001 to support the process of economic transition, assist regional stability and sustain socio-economic development. In January 1st 2004, the Association Agreement between the European Union and Egypt entered into force. The Agreement foresees possible joint action in nearly every field of political and economic life which is of interest to both sides such as: peace and human rights, energy and transport, migration and social matters, investment and research, education and environment.

The 10th anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Summit held in Barcelona on 27-28 November 2005 reflected major disagreements between Arab countries and their European

partners on the definition of terrorism and the persistence Arab demands for acknowledging the Palestinians legitimate right to resist Israeli occupation. Except for Palestine and Turkey, none of the southern partners sent heads of states to the summit. The speech delivered on behalf of President Hosni Mubarak by the Egyptian Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif emphasized the importance of intensifying the Euro-Mediterranean partnership based on co-ownership, mutual interests, and respect for each partner's differences. Throughout the meeting, Europe appeared to be seeking to make aid to its partners conditional on domestic reform, a position that angered many Arab countries.

Following the summit, Ambassador Gamal Bayoumi, one of the architects of the Egyptian role in the Barcelona process, summarized the Egyptian assessment of the Euro-Mediterranean process 10 years after its inception by arguing that the partnership has made progress towards many of its original goals, particularly those included in the financial and economic chapter. It has provided economic support to Egypt across a wide range of areas including education, health and water sanitation. Bayoumi added that the goal of establishing a Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area (EUFTA) by 2010 will benefit both partners. He also stressed on the importance of the provisions included in the cultural and social chapter of the process.

There was no wide public debate in Egypt about the European defense policy, yet the subject has been raised in some workshops and seminars among other occasions. The issue of credibility of the European defense policy is questionable particularly in the Egyptian military circles and academics. On the public level, those who are traditionally anti-American welcome these developments and put hopes that it will be soon credible to counter the American unilateralism in international affairs, and those who are "anti-west" see these developments as threat to Arabs and Moslems. In general terms, it is believed in Egypt that the European Defense Policy will give the EU a more effective international role.

7 Relations with NATO

At Brussels Summit in January 1994, the NATO Heads of State and Government called for considering measures to promote dialogue, understanding, and confidence-building between the Alliance and the countries of southern and eastern Mediterranean. As a result, on 8 February 1995, the North Atlantic Council invited Egypt,

Israel, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia to participate in the initial round of the NATO-Mediterranean Dialogue. In November 1995, Jordan was invited to join the Dialogue, and on 8 March 2000 Algeria accepted the Council's invitation to become the 7th Dialogue country. Compared to other security cooperation initiatives with the US and some European countries, Egypt kept its participation in the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue at low profile.

Early perceptions in Egypt regarding relations with NATO implied a mix of criticism and acceptance since content and final goals of this initiative were unclear for most observers. There were also some early reactions by a conservative group of analysts that see NATO as a tool for potential western intervention. Others criticized the initiative for the lack of a clear concept for Mediterranean security; for being selective by including only "pro-West" countries and ignoring others, and for its focus on soft security issues that are viewed by some as instruments for intelligence operations to monitor the capabilities of the southern countries. Most of these perceptions were shaped by events related to the Middle East peace process and flourish in time of crisis with Israel. The concepts of dialogue and confidence building are seen by those conservative groups as very idealistic, soft and illusive and lead to no where.

Relations between NATO and Egypt have shown a great deal of progress over the year 2005. In October 2005, Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul-Gheit met in Cairo with NATO deputy secretary-general Ambassador Alessandro Minuto Rizzo. According to Abul Gheit, any progress in Egypt's relationship with NATO is conditional on the positive impact such progress might have on issues vital to the Arab world, especially the Arab-Israeli conflict, the efforts exerted to establish an independent Palestine State, and Egypt's keenness to have the Middle East a nuclear free zone. During his first visit to Egypt, October 2005, the NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said that NATO can cooperate with Egypt in areas of fighting terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The NATO Cooperation Initiative with the Gulf countries has been perceived in some circles in Egypt as NATO tending to divide the Arab world into Arab Gulf countries and Mediterranean Arab states. Compared to some other Dialogue countries such as Israel, Morocco, and Algeria that participated recently with NATO in joint training, Egypt is still cautious and hesitant in enhancing its relations with NATO.

8 East of the Arab world

Only late in the 1980's, the Asian continent started to gain prominence in Egyptian foreign policy. Before that, Asia as a continent was not central to the 1952 regime, although Egypt had strong relations with individual nations, such as Nehru's India or Sukarno's Indonesia within the framework of the Non-Aligned Movement. Over the past 15 years, a growing interest in Egyptian-Asian relations became apparent. Political motives for this interest have varied, but economic considerations have remained a constant factor. Reasons of Egypt's recent interest in Asia are: the possibility of emulating the Asian economic tigers experience including successes and setbacks; the presence of an economic superpower like Japan in the region; enhancing trade and investment ties with new partners; and finally to adapt to changes on international arena in order to balance politically Egypt's relations with the United States and Europe.

There are many indications that several major Asian powers like China, Japan and India will soon occupy a pivotal place in world economy and politics, a reality currently in the making that will develop during the 21st century. This factor prompted many political analysts to describe the 21st century as the Asian or Pacific century. Naturally, Egypt must take such important changes into account in formulating its future strategy for growth and peace. India and China will become increasingly important sources for international tourism in the next 20 years. It is estimated that by 2020, 150 million Chinese tourists will travel overseas annually, while India will be sending 100 million travelers. Egypt is thinking how to attract a good sum of this amount of tourists given the fact that Egypt has excellent relations with the two countries.

9 Egypt and the United Nations

When the United Nations was established in 1945, only four independent African countries were among the founding members during the San Francisco conference: Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia and South Africa. However, the winds of change blew across the continent and the colonial powers had not been able to continue forever dominating other nations, especially after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations in 1948. The Egyptian political legacy with the UN after the 23rd of July 1952 revolution started with the first UN peacekeeping operation, namely the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) created in Palestine in May 1948 to su-

pervise the truce ordered by the Security Council at the end of the first Arab-Israeli war in which Egypt had participated. The term *Peacekeeping* did not enter popular use until 1956 when the Suez Crisis erupted between Egypt on one side and Israel, France and Great Britain on the other side. The crisis prompted Lester B. Pearson, then Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs and later Prime Minister of Canada, to propose the deployment of an international peace force under the UN flag (the first United Nations Emergency Force – UNEF 1, 1956). Since that time the UN peacekeeping operations have evolved worldwide, where Egypt participated in a number of UN contingences in different places of Africa and outside.

Egypt, like most developing countries, is a believer in the UN and its important role in promoting justice, security and development in the world. Egypt signed the statute of International Court of Justice on the 18th of July 1957, the International Agreement for Eliminating all Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1967, and endorsed the agreement of Eliminating all Forms of Discrimination against Women in September 1981. Egypt hosted the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in September 1994 and the International Conference on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders (ICPCTO) in May 1995. A constructive role had been played by Egypt in drawing up the legal system of the international maritime law which defines the authorities of coastal countries in relation to nearby sea areas, and also took part in the proceedings of the Committee of the Peaceful Exploitation of the Sea-bed. This long list of achievements will not be complete without mentioning Mr. Botrous Botrous- Ghali, the former UN Secretary General and former Egyptian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, and his leadership of the UN organization from 1992-1996; and the awarding of the IAEA and Dr. Mohamed El-Baradei – a former Egyptian diplomat- the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005.

People tend to speak more about UN peace work than about its development work. This imbalance does not do justice to the many UN agencies that spend significant sums of money, time and energy each year in pursuit of countries' progress. Concern for this was a major impetus for the UN reform process initiated in the 1990s. A central tool of that reform has been the creation of the common country UN plan, known as *the United Nations Development Assistance Framework or UNDAF*, whose basic premise is to combine strengths of UN agencies

in serving its projects in a specific country. On 28 March 2006, the second UNDAF in Egypt was signed marking the beginning of a new period of collaboration between the UN and Egypt that will begin in January 2007 and extend to 2011. The plan identifies the country's main development challenges and sets time-bound goals to address them. The UNDAF's main role is to help Egyptians improve their lives in line with their own self-identified needs and goals. Broadly speaking, it is based on the principles laid out in the United Nations Charter and subsequent internationally recognized development targets, such as the Millennium Development Goals, to which Egypt is a signatory. The UNDAF is distinct in that it is home grown. It reflects the national priorities of the country and is developed in close consultation with a wide range of Egyptian partners in government, civil society, business, academia and the media.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) that the UN has undertaken since the early 1990s comes on the top of the list of UN contributions to assist development in Egypt. The central instrument in this endeavor was the series of *human development reports (HDR)*, which were first published in 1994 nationally and in 2003 at the sub-national level. The main goal of these reports was putting people back at the centre of the development process; and creating an environment to enlarge people's choices. Fundamental to enlarging these choices is building human capabilities. This was strong reason for the UNDP Egypt to form a think tank group to examine ways to conceptualize a people-centered approach to development that should be environmentally, socially and financially sustainable. Formed in 1991, the think tank brought together an eminent group of Egyptian intellectuals of diverse ideological and spiritual backgrounds. The group concluded that conditions in Egypt provided enough reason to justify a new paradigm: *the human development approach*. Since the first report in 1994, eight other National HDRs have been published, bringing different development topics in Egypt to the forefront of policy debates.

Following the events of September 11th and the subsequent linking of the terrorist attack with Arabs and Moslems, many demands came up calling for reforming the Arab and Islamic worlds. A joint report of the United Nations and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development on *Arab Human Development* first appeared in 2002 clearly highlighting this link and created the opportunity for the United States and the

western countries to use the report as a basis for demanding Arab countries to start reforming their political and economic systems. The report generated a wide debate in the Arab world by its supporters and its opponents. The supporters thought that the report explicitly expresses the reality of the Arab world and the need for reform, while the opponents perceived the report as pretext for justifying intervention in the Arab affairs. The first Arab Human Development Report concentrated on three crucial areas that would need to be reformed if the Arab countries really care about progress. These areas are political freedom, the educational system, and the status of women. The third UN Arab Human Development Report was released in April 2005 under the title: *The Time has Come: A Call for Freedom and Good Governance in the Arab World*. The report's assessment of freedom and governance in Arab societies practically mirrors some of the discussions and debates currently taking place in the region. The report also argues that despite claims of promoting democracy in the region, the US has also hampered democratic progress via its bias towards Israel, its war on Iraq, and a long array of security measures that primarily affect Arabs.

Egypt follows closely the current debate at the United Nations over enlarging the Security Council. Egypt's stand in this respect is governed by the Declaration by the African Summit in Harari 1997, requesting two permanent seats and five non-permanent seats for Africa. In this respect, at the 2000 and 2004 inaugural sessions of the United Nations General Assembly, Egypt declared herself qualified to shoulder the responsibility of her permanent membership in the Council. The Egyptian move draws on Egypt's regional role, her contribution to the United Nations' budget and the peace-keeping operations of the organization as well as her role in the African, Arab and Islamic frameworks. This renders Egypt's accession to the permanent membership of the Council a guarantee of the representation of all these cultures and civilizations in the enlarged council.

10 Is Egypt still a Leading Regional Power?

In an interview with Amr Moussa in October 1998, then Egypt's Minister of Foreign Affairs, he was asked whether Egypt is capable of regaining the position it held in the 1960s as the uncontested leading regional power. His answer was that Egypt's regional role in the 1990s can not be assessed by the criteria of the 1960s,

since the facts and the challenges are different. He then stressed that Egypt's regional role should drive from interaction, partnership and the establishment of common interests with other countries not by the imposition of will. This new criteria for judging the success or failure of the Egyptian foreign policy during the 1990s and beyond has been founded on its realistic vision for the region and the world at large and its ability to seize opportunities and address challenges. Some analysts believe that radicalism which characterized Egypt's foreign policy in the fifties and sixties was a product of ideologies that possessed a distorted vision of the world and influenced by both an ultra-nationalist trend and an authoritarian leadership seeking to wield power domestically and on the Arab world.

Over the last decade, Egypt has succeeded in formulating a foreign policy attuned to its perception of reality on the grounds that its national interests are best served by integration into the world order, rather than by isolation or the pursuit of conflict. Egypt is one of only a few African countries to have representation in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and hence negotiating ability to stand against protectionist policies. It is with this conviction that Egypt is steering its foreign policy in order to play a positive role on the regional and global level.

Economically, Egypt is striving to raise its competitiveness. The Egyptian Competitiveness Report (ECR) published recently by the Egyptian National Competitiveness Council in 2006 shows notable improvements in Egypt's competitiveness rankings reflecting the impact of significant economic reforms taking place in Egypt. It jumped from 81st to 50th place in the Global Competitiveness Index. Indeed, a new environment has been created to encourage domestic and foreign investment based on reforms made through reducing inflation, freeing the exchange rate, lowering taxations and tariffs, simplifying business start-up procedures and registering property, financial access, developing the stock market and reducing the paperwork related to export and imports.

Globally, Egypt, with its geographic location in the center of the Arab and Islamic world, its heritage in founding the international system, its size of population, and its peaceful international relations based on mutual respect between countries and cultures, is destined to play a central role between the Islamic world and the West in order to diffuse the current polarization and misperception shaping the global scene.

About the author:

*Maj. Gen. (ret.) Dr. Mohamed Kadry Said, Military Advisor, Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Cairo, Egypt.
mkadry@ahram.org.eg |
www.ahram.org.eg/acpss*

The FES holds a series of regional dialogues devoted to the new foreign policy role played by a number of key countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa ("New Powers For Global Change?"), their strategies for the regional and global order and perceptions of geopolitical change in these countries, in Germany and the European Union.

This paper is the second in a series of Briefing Papers, contributing insights from each of the "New Powers".

More information is available on
www.fes.de/globalization

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the ones of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung or of the organization for which the author works.

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
Hiroshimastrasse 17
10785 Berlin
Germany
Tel.: ++49-30-26-935-914
Fax: ++49-30-26-935-959
Roswitha.Kiewitt@fes.de
www.fes.de/globalization