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## Egyptian-African Relations “Past, Present and Future Horizons”

Assem Fath al-Rahman al-Haj  
Sudanese Researcher in African Affairs



**E**gypt and Africa are strongly correlated. Egypt’s location in the North East of Africa makes it Africa’s gate to Asia, Europe and North and South America. Since the dawn of history, the Pharaonic Egypt has always been trying to solve the riddle of the River Nile. It also sought to activate relations with other nearby African kingdoms.

During the Islamic era, the Egyptian African relations took a significant dimension as various Africans came to study in al-Azhar, including Ibn Khaldun from Tunisia, al-Gabarti from Ethiopia, al-Zela’i and al-Herari from Somalia, and al-Takrouri from West Africa, among others.

In this respect, the corridors of Al-Azhar carried the name of some of its sons; such as al-Takrouri corridor which represents West Africa and al-Maghareba Corridor which represents the Arab Maghreb, al-Borondia Corridor which represents Chad and its neighboring countries, al-Gabartia Corridor which represent Ethiopia and Eritrea, al-Ziale’a Corridor which represent Somalia, and al-Senaria Corridor which represents the Sudan.

During Mohamed Ali’s era, various Egyptian explorations and expeditions were carried to the Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, and North Uganda.

Upon the July 23, 1952 Revolution, President Gamal Abdel Nasser paid special attention to Africa. In his book, “the Philosophy of the Revolution” President Abdel Nasser regarded Africa as the third most important circle of Egypt’s foreign policy, following the Arab and Islamic ones. He also considered the liberation of African countries as a continuation to that of Egypt and that Africa represents a strategic depth for the Egyptian revolution.

In this vein, it is clear that from the Pharaonic to the Islamic eras, Egypt

established strong relations with the African kingdoms that had contributed to developing the commercial and political relations with its African depth. Furthermore, during the period 1952-77, Egypt performed a prominent role on the African arena; being the headquarters of the African rebels, where the African Association was established in Cairo, 1955, in order to provide military training and financial support to the African liberation movements.

Egypt had then played a regional role that sought to build an African unity. In this respect, Egypt had actively participated in the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), 1963, in applying the foundations of the Afro-Asian solidarity; represented in its active role in establishing the Bandung Bloc (Non-Aligned Countries) 1955 and in setting out the rules of the diplomacy of development through offering loans and financial assistance; according to its then available abilities, in addition to the technical support.

The Egyptian African relations reached its peak when most of the African countries severed their relations with Israel upon the 1967 aggression on Egypt. Furthermore, the African countries had strongly supported Egypt in the 1973 War

against Israel.

During the era of President Mubarak, Egypt contributed, through the Organization of African Unity (OAU), in the efforts exerted towards the independence of Namibia, 1990, in the release of the African leader Nelson Mandela in the same year, and in settling the conflict between Mauritius and Senegal in 1989 through the ratification of a peace agreement between both countries with an Egyptian mediation, 1992.

It is noticeable that, by following the political changes that took place upon the end of the bipolar era with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the United States' full domination of the international policy with the help of regional parties, the Arab-African region, including Egypt and the Sudan, are currently targeted within the framework of those new transformations in the international policy. In this respect, the new international system under the leadership of the United States, plan to reshape the region through introducing the concept of the New Middle East and the big African Horn in order to separate the Arab part "North Saharan Africa" from the African part "South Saharan Africa", thus giving an opportunity for foreign powers to control the economies and resources of the region.

Such facts are asserted through establishing the US command for Africa in 2008 which observe all African countries except Egypt that is currently lying under the area of responsibility of the US Central Command, thus asserting the intention of the new world system to exclude Egypt from its African strategic dimension. Thereupon, Egyptian foreign policy makers should work on facing such foreign agendas. In this vein, several indicators point to the fact that some regional and international powers tend to undermine Egypt's strategic privilege and to diminish its role in Africa, thus constituting a real challenge for the Egyptian foreign policy towards Africa.

African and Arab peoples possess various potentials and wealth that can contribute to pushing the wheel

of development in the near future forward. However, in order to realize such development, leaders of African and Arab countries have to create the appropriate atmosphere for their peoples to accept such concepts socially and politically. In this vein, the political leadership in Egypt should be capable of facing all the coming challenges within the framework of Egypt's African dimension through following the new outcomes on the African Arena, through playing - in coordination with the Sudan and all other Arab Countries via the League of Arab Nations - a vital and pivotal role in rebuilding the Arab-African relations in all political, economic and social walks of life, and through activating dialogue among the Arab countries in order to unify stances towards issues of mutual concern.