



University of Alexandria
Faculty of Engineering
Department of Architecture

VIEWS & VISIONS

**On Architecture, Urbanization and
Environmental Development**

Published and unpublished Articles by

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BIBLIOTHECA ALEXANDRINA

VIEWS & VISIONS

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Environmental Development**

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In The Name of **Allah,**

The Merciful, The Compassionate

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Introduction

Reflections and visions on the conditions of building , Urbanization , Environmental development and national and regional concerns , have been embodied in nearly one hundred articles and research papers published in various periodicals, conference proceedings and other publications in Egypt as well as abroad, during the last few decades.

These have been classified, edited, and included in topics ranging from Fukuyama's "*End of Civilizations*", to climate change, to challenges of environmental development, to sustainability to concerns over the future roadmap and paths to meet the difficult situations confronting Egypt now after the two Revolutions.

The difficulties, challenges and promises are focused upon and addressed objectively in order to help shape the unfolding future horizons of hope, stability, progress and prosperity.

I am humbly offering to share these thoughts and visions with my students, colleagues, professionals and the academic community at large, in Egypt, in the arab region and beyond, hoping that they could contribute , in a small measure, to spark needed reawakening, order , will, determination and in order to institute the needed uplifting of human condition, meaningful environmental development and progress of our renown civilization, sound civility, and true identity for Egypt and the arab region.

15/1/2015

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Chapter One: Architecture

- 1.1 The new Bibliotheca Alexandrina: The Human Dimensions; Flashes of Indelible Memories**
- 1.2 Marring Alexandrina**
- 1.3 Continuum of civilisations**
- 1.4 Summary report On the Preliminary Investigative Studies of Major Tourist Development Projects in Greater Alexandria**

1.1 The new Bibliotheca Alexandrina: The Human Dimensions; Flashes of Indelible Memories

Published in The Author's book

The new Bibliotheca Alexandrina : reflections on a journey of achievements / Mohsen Zahran. – Alexandria, Egypt : Bibliotheca Alexandrina, 2007.

People build civilizations, they can make prosper ascend or can mar it and go under. There are so many persons from Alexandria, Egypt, as well as from countries around the world, even from down under (Australia) who were energized by the idea of the revival of the ancient library of Alexandria, turned into true believers, supporters and torch carriers, leaving no stone unturned, no resource untapped and no time spared . Their collective will and resolve made the dream come true, promising capturing, breathtaking and fulfilling!

The Bibliotheca Alexandrina to them, and to me, was a religion, was a dream, was a hope. It was a holy goal that united them all together in an inspiring, exciting and captivating undertaking, withno parallel and, certainly, no equal, any where, any time! .

My early association with the idea of the need to have a university library built for the University of Alexandria began in 1968. The University was the true initiator of the legacy of the ancient library, since its inauguration in 1940, during World War II as King Farouk University. Dr. Taha Hussein ,the first president, had underscored the continuity and linkage between the famed lighthouse of knowledge, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and the new institution. I discussed the idea, as a young faculty member, with the head of the department of architecture, Dr. Fouad Helmi, and we were convinced of the need to build the university library, the true generator of research and scholarship at the vacant present site at Shatby, Selsela, and that he would discuss this necessity with the University presidents, dr Aly Shoeib, and later on,dr Hasan Baghdady and dr Lotfy Dowidar .

Meanwhile, I carried out a research study on campus planning, location of libraries in ancient and modern campuses in the U.S. and U.K., as well as their relationship with other campuses

facilities and components. There are, of course, similarities between city planning (my specialization) and campus planning. I had this study published in B.A.U. in 1972.

The idea was discussed at the university level, with a committee established, including Dr. Helmi in the 1970's, but no action was taken. My divert involvement was resumed officially, almost fifteen years later in 1985, when Dr. Fared Moustapha, the university President, appointed me as rapporteur of the preparatory committee of the Revival project. Since then, and for Sixteen years of utter devotion and commitment as the President's Consultant, the country representative, as the Executive Director of GOAL, and as Egypt/unesco implementation unit's project Manager, I spared no time, effort, expence and experience in order to turn the dream into reality, no apology no regret!

During these lonely, consuming years of rise and fall , laughter and tears, victories and setbacks, hard times and great moments, agonies and ecstasies, I was lucky to meet leaders and citizens, adults and children, men and women from all nations who have come to support and fight for Alexandrina. I have also met and seen people who were anti-success, achievements hackers, jealous, envious, pretenders, bloodsuckers, and grave diggers! I watched and marveled and learned enormously about human charity and human vanity, human devotion and human locomotion, fakers and claimers; about climbers, opportunity seekers, , apple polishers, takers but hardly givers, lime light seekers and plotters. Human frailities were abundant, though human goodness was boundless.

I have taken the liberty in these pages to highlight a few remarkable examples of human pronouncements, reflections and emotions that remain indelible in my memory throughout the fully absorbing sixteen years of direct responsibility for rebuilding Alexandrina representing Egypt as the Executive Director of GOAL (General Organization of the Alexandria Library, as my favorite coined name for it) and as representing the International community as project Manager of the Executive secretariat, the machinery

For easy reference and comprehension, I found it easier to select flashes of unforgettable reminiscences associated with people, places positions or institutions in order to powerpoint or focus light upon meaningful human dimensions, brilliances, emotions and reflections. There are rare words, moments or acts in historical essays or manuscripts that may grasp or tell; except for

those who were there to tell and foretell as well as to bid farewell! They are witnesses of history in the making., and careveal the real facts and the formidable truth! I was truly disheartened though to read in an interview with one of the godfathers of Alexandrina, and they are many now, since success has many fathers and failure is an orphan, that Mohsen Zahran was only responsible for the building and construction?! How could he blindfold history?! Though he knows too well that I was accountable and responsible for all aspects of the rebuilding process, container, content, finance, management, human resource development, book collection-building, public relations, fund-raising promotion, logistics, etc., etc.!

Was I not there to receive all the blame, and left with little to claim?! Alas, but this is the story of life experiences echoed anywhere! However, God knows these are quite a few indelible flashes of human dimensions to convey and reflect upon, and which I wish to share with you.

Archeological discoveries at the library site:

I was surprised that some of the present so-called godfathers, or key project personalities, were adamantly against it and sought to kill it. One such luminary personally insisted upon the Minister of Education to return back the conference center to the university and to burn the library! The other wrote to the French media accusing the project management of destroying antiquities at the site, though he knew too well that the Antiquities Dept was in charge of antiquities investigation work at the site. (It is the national authorities only entrusted to safeguard antiquities). A third, who was bitter about the project, used to attack it in front of the international press, and once filed a complaint at the police station of Bab Sharq to stop the antiquities work at the site! They sought to stop the library implementation. Even a few opponents have contacted UNESCO inciting them to disengage from the project which destroys Egyptian heritage! Although They knew too well that we were working with the contracted antiquities Dept. to locate archeological pieces in order to have them displayed at the planned archeological museum within the new library. The intention was that archeological finds will be a tangible display of true linkage with history, especially the site was part of the Royal quarter, where the ancient library was reputed to have been located! True enough, the beautiful mosaics from the helenistic period were uncovered, and are now in display in the library museum! Furthermore, a granite statue of Ptolemy I Soter who founded the library, which was salvaged

from the Eastern harbour, is now standing at the site plaza of civilizations after hectic contacts and appeals to the antiquities authorities to accept its display at the library. However, history will eventually reveal the facts!

1.2 Marring Alexandrina

The revival of the ancient Alexandria Library project was launched by Egypt and UNESCO more than two decades ago in Aswan, in cooperation with the international community, after the selection of the magnificent first prize design submitted by a Norwegian team in the international competition held under the auspices of UNESCO in 1989, which was unanimously chosen by the international jury, of which I was the chairman. The execution of the simple, imaginative and intricate building complex by international contractors, in joint venture with the Arab Contractors, has produced by the beginning of the third millennium the new Bibliotheca Alexandrina, an international beacon of knowledge—a pace setter in the architectural rotunda hall of fame. Its imaginative, creative concept is full of unique symbolism, intelligence, high-tech manifestations befitting this world beacon. It was selected by professional organizations and the media as one of the seven architectural wonders of the 21st century. Time magazine featured in 1999 an article entitled: “Recreating a Jewel.”

The civilized world witnessed with awe and acclaim the Bibliotheca Alexandrina’s inauguration on October 16, 2002 in the presence of President and Mrs. Mubarak, in the company of kings, queens, presidents and high dignitaries from the international community. The 5th anniversary was celebrated two years ago, proving to all the success of the Alexandrina in achieving its objectives as a center of excellence in knowledge and culture, a world-class forum for debate, peace, tolerance and dialogue among cultures, north and south, east and west, in continuum of the message, mission and example of the ancient Alexandria Library.

However, with the 8th anniversary slowly approaching on October 16th, and the convening the 12th annual meeting of the International Friends Associations in Alexandria, the Friends will be bewildered and dismayed at the sight on the plaza of a new 2-story food-court structure on the plaza of cultures – a strange arrival built recently, according to media reports. It is not only indifferent to the complex, but also incompatible architecturally, functionally, visually and spatially. The architectural schemata are peculiar and in discord, disharmony and disturbing, especially to the twelve olive trees in the adjacent, landscaped plaza of cultures, with their provocative, symbolic meanings.

The new Alexandrina was completed during the same last decade of the 20th century, when the new British library in London and the new French Library in Paris were inaugurated. However, it is inconceivable that these two international centers could tolerate the construction of food-courts on their plazas! Nor could Harvard, M.I.T., Oxford, La Sorbonne, or UNESCO, or the universities of Cairo or Alexandria, or the Opera House in Cairo allow such a transgression. How can such a distraction, diffusion and digression be allowed to stand on this sacred campus!

Even the claims that the food court and the bookshop would serve the needs of 1.2 million tourists visiting the Library annually, is inexcusable, especially since the Library complex itself incorporates several restaurants, cafeterias and bookshops. Who would go to the sacred Plaza of Culture, except for food for thought and soul, but never for entertainment activities and food for the body? Furthermore, this strange structure will block the future extension of the Library complex westward toward the archeological sites, which is tantamount to arresting the future Library development options. The Library consultants have submitted from the very beginning, an urban development plan for the entire vicinity, which would envision the future composition and prospects of the entire Selsela and Soter districts along the waterfronts facing the eastern harbor. Certainly, this new structure violates this future plan. Furthermore, one is afraid that other academic and cultural institutions in Egypt or elsewhere would follow suit, given the role model and the example of Alexandrina!

I am sure that the Egyptian authorities would look seriously into this matter in cooperation with UNESCO and the international community due to the special national, regional and international role and mission of the new Bibliotheca Alexandrina, which serves Egypt, the Mediterranean region, the Arab region and the world at large.

August 25, 2009

1.3 Continuum of civilisations

Not clash but cooperation: **Mohsen Zahran*** pleads for new horizons

Al-Ahram Weekly Online-14 - 20 February 2002-Issue No.573

Recently, the University of Chicago's sociology department has published an important report pointing out that religious fundamentalism, extremist movements and groups engaged in anti-social or anti-cultural violence became especially active during the latter years of the 20th century and at the beginning of the third millennium, in Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas. These radical religious movements are reported to be Jewish, Christian, Islamic, or other.

This study thus dismantles any allegation of the clash of Western and Islamic civilisation. The factors in favour of such a clash were based on confusion and illusion. They are baseless and incorrect.

On one hand, Islamic civilisation, which represents many countries with no relation to colour, boundaries, or languages, whether in Asia, Africa, or elsewhere across the globe, shows almost the same socio-economic problems. On the other, since the communist bloc was dissolved and the iron curtain demolished, the entire world has joined the one essential force of the domination of the developed countries, represented by America. The crimes committed, violence induced, terrorism inflicted, blazing upon the fabric of many countries, have recognised no borders of time, place or culture.

In contrast to this report, many articles have been published recently on the theme of Samuel Huntington's 1993 article on the clash of civilisations, published in *Foreign Affairs*. Huntington's and Francis Fukuyama's views, together with similar articles in the international media, are certainly baseless. Allegations of the clash of civilisation have become lame and impotent.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US became the sole world power influencing world affairs. Capitalising on the statements and actions of radical fundamentalist Islamic governments, especially in Iran and Afghanistan, as well as the killing of innocent victims by Islamic fundamentalist operations in various Middle Eastern, African and Asian countries, Western strategists invented a new enemy to fill the vacuum left by the disappearance of the Soviet adversary. At one point, even some Western circles referred to old scars, animosity and hatred forgotten since the Crusades. Islamic civilisation, culture and countries thus became the new enemy.

Forgetting the lessons of history, the true nature of Islam, Islamic culture, and Islamic values, which preach peace, love, mercy, tolerance, equality, charity, high morality, human rights and

justice, the advocates of the clash of civilisations forgot that Islam, like all other religions, emphasises individuality, personal accountability, social order and basic goodness. Thus, respect for other religions has been a basic teaching of Islam, which recognises variety and respect of differences and opposes subjection or imposed conversion. Freedom of individual choice, humanitarianism and accountability for one's deeds and actions: these are emphasised and manifested even in Islamic cities and architecture, the true mirror of Islamic culture. The built environments of Islamic civilisations differ distinctively in Andalusia, Spain and North Africa from those of Egypt, Syria, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Malaysia or Indonesia, thus expressing their local environments, heritage, resources, cultures, arts, and capabilities.

The influence of Islamic civilisation on Europe and the West, has been both varied and vast. The transfer of knowledge by the Arab scholars of Baghdad or Andalusia to Europe during the Middle Ages is well established. The Silk Road, which channelled East-West trade, was also an avenue of cultural exchange. The knowledge and contributions of scholars that radiated from the ancient library of Alexandria were transferred by Muslim scholars to the West, where it served as the basis of today's knowledge.

Consequently, there has never been a "clash" or conflict of civilisation, but rather interaction; a continuum of human civilisations throughout history. Each society, culture and civilisation has its own distinctive nature, impact, and contribution to human society, progress and the universal continuity of humanity. It must be clear to all that Islamic religion and culture have nothing to do with terrorism, violence, intolerance, poverty, underdevelopment, injustice or lack of democracy.

Even those who professed the need for new dialogues or debates among civilisations also forgot that debate has been taking place through many international and regional organisations, forums, institutions, in addition to the media. Recently, Pope John initiated a meeting of representatives of different religions to emphasise the need for greater understanding, tolerance, peace and collaboration among world faiths. Furthermore, George Cary, head of the Anglican Church, and Grand Sheikh Tantawi of Al-Azhar, signed a protocol for promoting greater dialogue between their religious institutions.

Thus, the issue here is not, as some claim, the lack of debate between cultures, since many government and non-governmental organisations and institutions concerned with this issue have been involved in creating and establishing such debates and maintaining open communication. The 6.5 billion people who make up the UN Charter countries represent many channels for intensifying cooperation and creating highways to bring all countries into the new globalisation.

The challenge is not to start debates or dialogues, but to make existing institutions more effective, more productive and engaging, by creating new avenues of cooperation and

communication. We do not need more debates; rather, we must promote the goals, substance and results in order to reduce grievances, alleviate suffering, eradicate injustice, salvage human diversity and eliminate despair.

Recent history contains many examples of partnership, regardless of the partners' diversity and differences. Of these, two major channels or avenues can be explored: the Intangible Avenue (essentially cultural, social, scientific and intellectual); and the Tangible Avenue, basically technical and operational.

The first aims at creating and reinforcing systems and frameworks for dialogue and partnership among civilisations that share cultural or environmental roots. An obvious example of a region of common heritage and potentials is the Mediterranean basin. By capitalising on the Barcelona Forum and the European Union experiment, many programmes aiming at new horizons of collaboration can be conceived. Similar examples abound in the African and Arab worlds. Frameworks and foundations capable of ensuring greater cooperation and partnership are necessary, as are attainable, pragmatic goals, to maximise complementarities and synchronised integration according to a short-, medium- and long-range plans of action.

The second avenue, concerned with institutional, material and implementation aspects, is directly dependent on the pursuit of the first. The new Alexandria Library will initiate, promote and support momentum along this avenue and the fulfilment of this goal. It will become a window onto the world for Egypt and onto Egypt for the world, thus linking North and South, West and East, as Mrs Suzanne Mubarak, chairperson of the Library's board of trustees, has emphasised. Here is a great potential and magnificent framework for the manifestation of the continuum of civilisation, as demonstrated in the ancient library.

Circles of cooperation can extend to link other neighbouring regions in the Middle East, the Arab world, Africa, and beyond. These regional alliances and partnerships can create a multi-polar galaxy, with prominent nodes of radiance and great influence, in the service of all toward a better future of mankind everywhere.

Nearly 50 per cent of world civilisations are made up of young people. We owe them the promise of a brighter future, given the great technological revolution, spreading globalisation, and breakthroughs in information and communication technology and outer space discoveries in the third millennium.

What is essential is greater understanding, conviction and a common will to act effectively and quickly, conquer backwardness, eliminate socio-economic injustices and promote avenues

of trust, and collaboration. Thus can we generate hope, and map out new frontiers for the realisation of the grand goal of the continuum of civilisation.

The challenges are surmountable, the difficulties are numerous but not insuperable, the resources are available, and the horizons of hope and progress are both vast and promising.

1.4 Summary report On the Preliminary Investigative Studies of Major Tourist Development Projects in Greater Alexandria

1.4.1 Introduction

Upon the request of the Chairman of the General Organization of Touristic Development on 11/12/2005, and after the approval of A.E the Minister of Tourism, to prepare preliminary investigative studies on major touristic development projects in greater Alexandria, in implementation of the Ministerial Committee on Tourism resolutions on 7/11/2005, I have undertaken to prepare the required studies on following the key touristic development projects in Alexandria:

1. The PALM project in Alexandria
2. Development of the Nozha Airport District
3. Development of the Alexandria / Dekheila district
4. Development of Abu-Kir Bay and Nelson Island
5. Development of Qait-Bey Fortress and Eastern Port area.

To carry out the studies, tasks, several site visits and data gathering trips were made, together with meticulous consultation of Alexandria 2005 / 2017 / 2050 Comprehensive Plans. Analytical investigation and critical evaluation of all the available information, data, maps and studies were carried out in view of its economic and touristic potentialities and liabilities. A preliminary estimate of the approximate investment cost needed for each project realization was suggested in final analysis.

According to the investigative studies request, an outline of the aspects were looked into included the following:

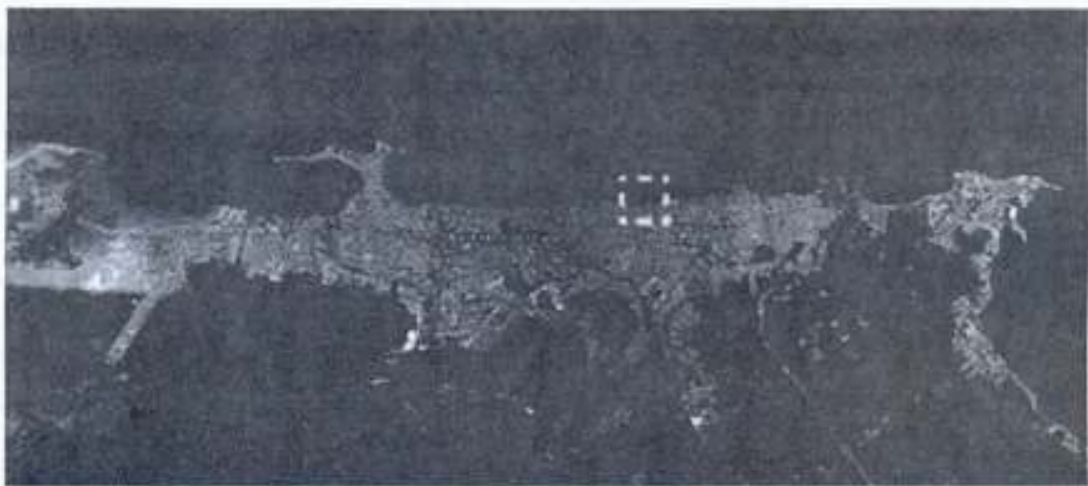
1. Brief description and identification
2. Study of studies undertaken on the project and the outlying areas within the planning framework, if available.
3. Extent of accessibility to the site and surrounding areas
4. Study of public and private land ownership and need for acquisition, together with public intervention, conflicts or obstacles.
5. availability of infra structure in the project site
6. Study of restrictions confronting site developments (military or archaeological).
7. Determination of the projects economic viability

8. A preliminary estimate of the investment cost

Finally, the investigative studies of the specified project shall be concluded with a comprehensive report on the results and recommendations in both Arabic and English.

1.4.2 Conclusion of the Investigation Studies of the Five Major Touristic Development Projects

1.4.2.1 THE PALM PROJECTS IN ALEXANDRIA



The study underlined the great promise and reality of the project, especially in due consideration of the success of similar projects in Dubai and elsewhere in the Gulf region. However it was amply emphasized the climatic, environmental, political and socio-economic differences which may curtail similar success or even achievement. The Mediterranean Sea is subject to strong rainy and windy storms in the winter, and the sea floor and continental shelf slopes sharply, thus necessitating great sea fill cost as well as break water defense walls. In addition strong westerly currents cause strong shore erosion as evidenced in nearby Rosetta.

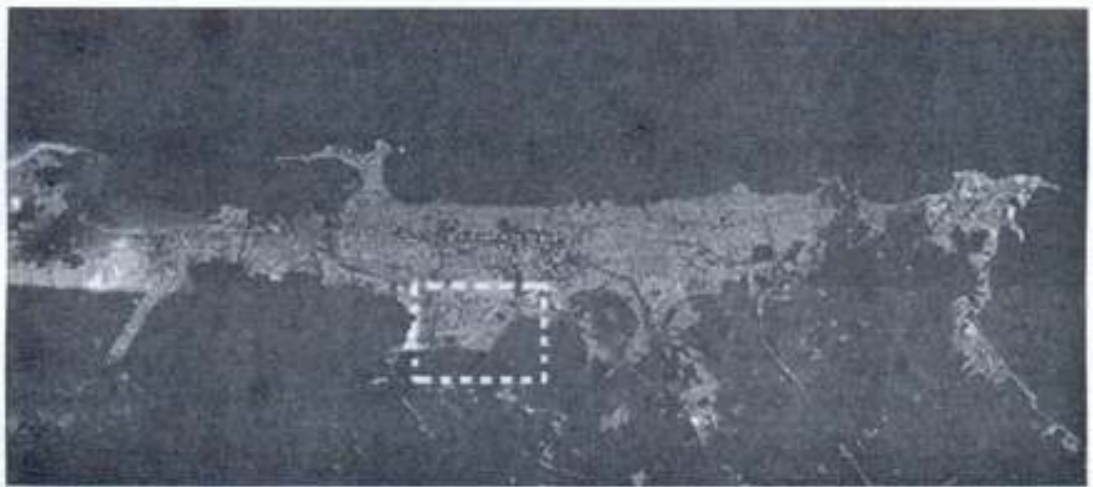
Nevertheless, and notwithstanding, the promise of realization, attraction and success is true convincing, viable and attainable, provided the appropriate sites are well investigated, surveyed and thoroughly studied, environmentally, engineering wise, physically, culturally and touristically. Possible PALM sites are:

1. Abu-Kir bay / Nelson island: Abu-Kir Palm
2. Montazah Palm, within the new breakwater built from Montazah toward Asafra.

3. San Stefano Palm, in complementary with the marketing and inertia of the new San Stefano complex.
4. Marakia, or Marabella Palm, echoing the success of the Marina experience and magnetic touristic pull.

These are examples that can begin with one or two simultaneously, until the movement gains momentum and success. The Palm development may cost three billion pounds; returns may double with proper standards, marketing and management.

1.4.2.2 NOZHA AIRPORT DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT



Investigative studies emphasized that the site is most attractive and suitable for such an imaginative and extensive touristic development around the marine airport area measuring nearly 400 acres. The development may include Marine land, Disney world, Golf course, Athletic and recreational facilities, Motel, Boatel, Marine airport, Hangers together with complementary facilities and services. Upgrading and renovation and proper renewal of the existing Nozha airport and terminal are also emphasized. The expected cost is approximately One Billion pounds.

1.4.2.3 DEVELOPMENT OF ALEXANDRIA AND DEKHEILA PORTS AND THE ADJOINING DISTRICT



It was pointed out the necessity to integrate the operations, management, functions and physical connections of both ports. In complementary and equal emphasis the total urban renewal and upgrading of the archaeological sites of the adjoining districts must go hand-in-hand. This massive development project involves urban archaeological, housing, conservation, touristic as well as naval transport projects which link the ports with the waterfront districts of Alexandria by sea shuttle daily services along the 80 Km ribbon stretch of the urban corridor.

The preliminary cost of the project was estimated as one billion pounds.

It is important to assert that the direct touristic developments are limited and the project is multi-faceted and far reaching in its impact on the city and national socio-economic development.

1.4.2.4 DEVELOPMENT OF ABU-KIR BAY AND NELSON ISLAND



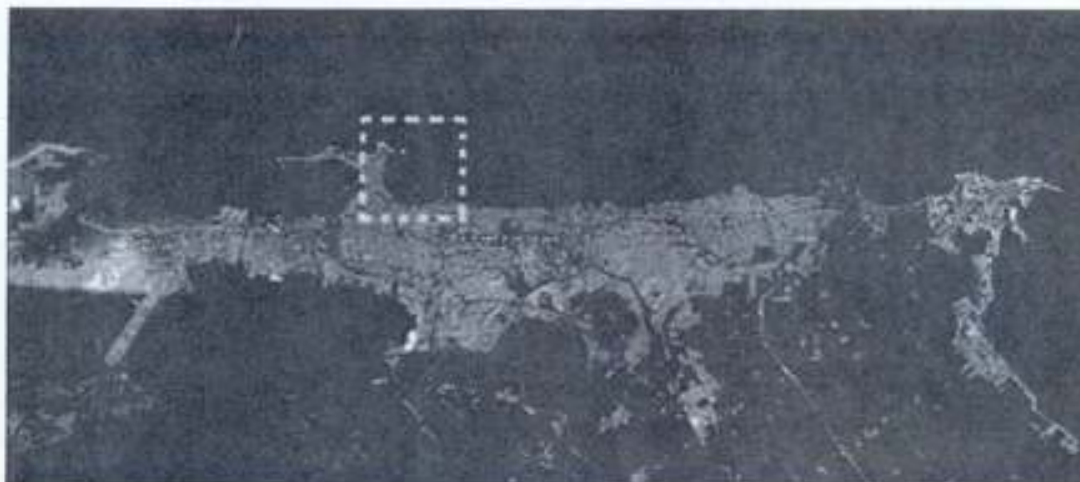
The magnetic impact of the history of Abu-kir and the recent archaeological discoveries has whetted the appetite and interest of the media and various circles, nationally, regionally and internationally. This interest needs proper capitalization upon to uplift the poor urban situation and condition of Abu-kir, especially that the comprehensive plan of Alexandria looks upon Abu-kir as the eastern pole of Alexandria. The investigative study underlined the impact and limitation of existing military camps and presence and that the navy has control over Abu-kir port.

Equally, decisive and affecting the daily life and activities of urban life and functions are the existing air defense college, the naval academy and maritime academy. The present condition of the infrastructure is also unsatisfactory and lacking.

However Nelson Island is almost virgin, neglected and ripe for development. It is important to engage the various players in Abu-kir, military, academic, and industrial as well as archaeological to partake in supporting and implementing comprehensive development. A Palm development around Nelson Island with marina as well as touristic development, visit the sunken monuments of the tow submerged cities as well as the sunken Napoleon Fleet are targets of great investment promise.

The tentative cost of such development is nearly 900 Million pounds.

1.4.2.5 TOURISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF QAIT-BEY FORTRESS AREA AND THE EASTERN HARBOR



The recent world attention focused on the discovery of sunken monuments in the Eastern Harbor by the French archaeologists and the sunken piers of the Hellenistic port and Cleopatra's palace must not wither away. In addition, the inauguration of the Alexandria Library overlooking the port further calls for the need to insist bravely in the proper development of this historic port that witnessed the birth of Alexandria in 332 B.C, the lorry of the famous ancient library, and the magnificence of the famous Pharos Lighthouse, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world that stood where the existing Fortress is now situated.

UNESCO and the European Union have supported studies and investigations on the Eastern Harbor and its historical and archaeological treasures. In addition Pierre Cardin, the renowned fashion designer, sponsored with EDF studies on building the glass faced obelisk of light at the harbor with exhibition and touristic facilities. Studies have also proposed having an urban walk around the inlets, almost a circular 5 Km path with suitable cafeterias, restaurants, shops, rest areas, fishing jetties placed strategically about. It was also proposed to have one retired passenger boat liner be paced permanently as QE2 in Long Beach, California, as a hotel with marina planned alongside. Ferry boats could also have regular daily transport services linking the port to Alexandria districts along the 80 Km waterfront.

The estimated cost of this great ambitious project will hover around one Billion pounds.

1.4.3 Additional Proposals

In addition to those projects one may also propose complementary additional key touristic development projects:

1.4.3.1 SIDI ABDEL RAHMAN PROJECT.

This project was the site already owned by a public sector holding company on a beautiful search 1500 acre that can accommodate 3000 rooms in 8 to 10 hotels, motels, in complementary with other recreational facilities like golf courses, restaurants, safaris, lakes, water sports, etc. several Palms may also be planned.. It is a huge project that may be mentioned internationally.

1.4.3.2 THE NEW MAMOURA DEVELOPMENT.

Mamoura waterfront could be redeveloped with plans proposed capitalizing on its reputation and special character.

1.4.3.3 THE MINE LAND

It is of 380,000 acres (nearly 1500 acres) at the old site of WWII famous battle could be auctioned for developers as a BOT project to remove the mines and build various touristic, agricultural and housing complexes. The time span could be 50 years and the benefits will be multiple in terms of jobs, facilities, housing, services, and above all ending the daily danger of mines that have killed thus far thousands during the last 60 years, in addition reaping benefits from death land.

1.4.3.4 DEVELOPMENT OF LAKE MARIUTIS

This project entails the salvation and conservation of the lake, controlling its present pollution and neglect. It involves developing of the waterfront totalling 50 Kms, building Palms, foresting around the waterfront as well as recreational activities about a truly urban lake.

1.4.4 Conclusion

I wish to express my appreciation to the public organization of touristic development for undertaking such grand projects which will propel the socio-economic and urban development of the Greater Alexandria region.

I wish to advise that priorities should be made and that a plan for action is effectuated in a momentum that will propel development in all fronts in comprehensive integration and complementarity.

The Nozha airport district project may be given priority together with the Eastern Harbor district fronting the Qait-Bey fortress, capitalizing on the international interest and involvement. The Plam project may come next or even pursued in parallel after identifying the appropriate site, location, content and intention to have the adequate physical and climatic parameters carefully surveyed and evaluated.

In conclusion, I wish that with your will dedication, resources and capabilities, these projects will soon become viable realities, of which we shall all be proud.

Thank you and God bless you all

.. / 12 / 2005

Chapter Two: Housing

2.1 RECOVERY FROM THE RUINS OF HOPE

2.2 GRAVEYARD HOMES

2.3 SQUATTING: AN ALARMING NATIONAL Phenomenon!

2.1 Recovery from The Ruins of Hope

An old folk song tantalizes emotions and invades patriotic hearts by recalling: "Where have all the young men gone? Gone to graveyards.... everyone, gone to flowers.... everyone, *When will they ever learn? When will they ever learn?*" is repeated rhythmically..... The catastrophe of the squatter settlement's ruins of Dowaiika, near the Mokattam plateau east of Cairo, echoes repeated tragedies that have shocked the nation and the world with hundreds dead and injured! The sequence of tragedies, from the Shura (Senate) Council grand fire and its embarrassing exposure of inept, inefficient, irresponsible authorities and their lack of preparedness to face tragedies; to the Red Sea sunken ferryboat with 1300 passengers drowned; to the train fire and crashes; to collapses of apartment buildings to others -- all point accusing fingers to authorities and local government. It has betrayed the flagrant lack of preparedness, shortage of emergency plans or programs, lack of resources, shortage of facilities, absence of expertise, inaction, as well as poor management! The death toll, especially from the poor needy and plagued classes has been staggering. The victims have been multitudinal, the losses astronomical and the dashed hopes are agonizing and telling! People are now painfully awaiting when, where and how Dowaiika-like tragedies the axe of fate will strike?! What is both distressing and ironic is that the reports of experts and many conference studies have forewarned about the exasperating and terrible situation of pending tragedies and forthcoming catastrophes (*The Weekly*, #861, dated 6/9/2007). Have not academics pointed out the dangers and predicament of several hundred squatter settlements and shanty-towns and informal housing developments, sheltering nearly one third of the Egyptian population, are infesting the urban and rural fabric everywhere? Have not international advisors pointed out that these illegal conglomerations are dangerous grey areas which are havens for poverty, outlaws, fanatics, crime, narcotics, speculation, usurpation, unemployment, economic deprivation, social ills, congestion, high density high dependency illiteracy, anti-social and anti-cultural conduct, epidemics. In addition, they are a total environmental hazard: physically unsafe, infested, unhealthy, an explosive liability, fire hazard, security threat and an alarming national insult. Alas, nothing seems to shake the conscience of authorities or the nation anymore! No sooner than a tragedy strikes, than it is quietly wrapped up into oblivion and forgotten, whether by the victims, the used, the abused or the accused! *When will they ever learn?*

The squatter crisis is over-whelming; the figures are staggering, testifying to the corruption, laxity, collusion, inefficiency and apathy in local government, which essentially shoulders the blame. Who allowed the illegal squatters to sprout every-where? Who sanctioned connection permits to utilities, thus giving residents *de facto* existence and *de jure* claims? Who condoned their registrations during election bonanzas to gain political favor or interests despite

their illegal, unsafe, unhealthy, insecure and inhuman existence? Who realizes that informal housing and squatters have siphoned many billions of Egyptian Pounds of private capital from the meager resources of the poor classes?

Elsewhere, one is alarmed and troubled to report that most apartment buildings in Cairo, Alexandria, and other cities are fire hazards for their lack of proper fire-escape stairways to be used during emergencies. Most residents, employees and users of public and private high-rise buildings have no knowledge of fire escapes or trained how to use a fire extinguisher at the breakout of fires. Governorates, organizations, institutions, and other establishments, public or private, should value human life, human safety and environmental security. They must mobilize resources and capabilities and begin immediately by adopting all plans, programs, policies, operations and maintenance, emergency procedures with sustained, periodic fire drills, fire inspection, follow-up, quality control and quality assurance in complementarity with governmental and public plans for action at all time and at all locations. Meanwhile squatter-like manifestations are plaguing the Egyptian built environment: in buildings, on roofs at streets in people's conduct, human relations and deeds, which require drastic intervention and needed change in both form and content!

The solution must begin with the reawakening of the national conscience and communal guilt for laxity, inefficiency, unpreparedness, irresponsibility, absent planning and inadequate human and national resources and facilities. Transparency, accountability, exposure, and due process must be in order at first. Continuous, solid commitment to face the awesome challenges ahead and to institute proactive reform is mandatory toward the road of recovery, which necessitates that comprehensive national urban redevelopment plans must be strategically adopted and implemented at all levels, sectors and regions, sparing no resource and avoiding any slogans or dogmas. These must be multi-layered and multi-targeted to deal with corruption, inefficiency, negligence, apathy and neglect. Demolition of unsafe, unhealthy and illegal squatters must not be delayed, coupled with the building of new nuclei of conglomerations in new developmental corridors away from the traditional axis of the Nile Valley for a balanced distribution of Egypt's population. Local government reform must begin immediately with proper leadership, training, enlightened management, expertise and ample human and material resources.

A national campaign is badly needed, urging all to wake up, shape-up and rise up to the call for salvation, reform, and long awaited change. Squatter settlements cannot continue any more to mushroom wildly and threaten the lives and livelihood of the nation. There is no choice! There is no alternative! We must act NOW. There are no higher stakes and there is no greater priority. There is no more honorable and humane national strategic goal for the future! Any continued *status quo* or further delays is intolerable and unacceptable. The time is running out!

22/09/2008

2.2 Graveyard homes

27 November - 3 December 2008 Issue No. 924 Opinion

The collapse of residential blocks in Alexandria sent shockwaves throughout the country. One can only guess what the tragedy meant to its survivors. How terrible it is to lose everything in a second, the loved ones and the material things people accumulate in a lifetime. And such tragedies are not only happening in Alexandria. With alarming frequency, we hear of similar incidents taking place in other parts of the country. The media reports them, experts discuss them on talk shows, and little else seems important for a while. Then the memory fades, and we find other things to worry about.

How many times have we discussed the problem of unplanned urban districts? How many conferences were held about unregulated housing? How many scientific papers have been written about the uncontrolled growth of our cities? And yet nearly one in four Egyptians still live in unplanned neighbourhoods, some without water, electricity or sewage.

The recent rock collapse in Moqattam offered a tragic illustration of how serious things can get. Despite all the conferences and experts, buildings are being built without licences, without regulations, without safety measures, without insurance against fire, without precautions against earthquakes. Agricultural land is lost every day to urban growth and nothing is being done about it.

We need to start protecting our agricultural land. We need to start caring about the safety and integrity of our cities. We know what's wrong with our building regulations. We know what parts of our towns need to be re-planned. All we need to do is act. We have the means to make our homes and cities safer and we have a duty to do so. We cannot allow more homes to turn into mass graves.

2.3 Squatting: An Alarming National Phenomenon!

Recently, I had to drive through the new city of "Borg El-Arab", an urban satellite, 50 Km west of Alexandria, in order to connect to the northern coastal Highway. It was my first exposure since 15 years ago to the urban condition in this new town. I was disappointedly shocked at the degree of urban dilapidation, deterioration and breakdown of urbanity. Squatting is now a common phenomenon in most Egyptian cities--a daily occurrence on sidewalks, in squares and in the streets right of way. Buildings are in disrepair, the urban fabric is deteriorating, engulfed in chaos which is infiltrating every quarter and every corner.

This virus of squatting, and the proliferation of squatting is a nationwide custom defying public order. It has been infesting Egyptian cities for decades, although it has spiraled and multiplied to unparalleled scale and complexity after January 25th, 2011 Revolution. The last three years have witnessed a multitude of crises and challenges: the increase of Egypt's population to nearly 90 million people (2.4 % annual growth rate), declining economy, rising unemployment (more than 15% nationally, also 50% in the youth group aged 15-45 years), deprivation, lawlessness, lack of security, loss of safety, mushrooming squatter development in most urban conglomerations, spread of informal housing, sprouting of thousands of illegal high-rise buildings everywhere (more than 50,000 violations nation-wide), the invasion of precious fertile agricultural land illegally by urban sprawl, and among others, disintegration of social conduct , challenge of public order and erosion of human behavior. This is a dangerous national malignancy of grave consequences.

The law-abiding citizen is now a rare commodity! Certainly he is long forgotten, constantly abused and taken advantage of, invariably ridiculed as a schemer, and often described as corruptible, cunning, devious, religious, devoid of conscientiousness, odd, gullible, naïve or passive! What a combination of national traits!

This alarming phenomenon reverberates everywhere in most localities and governorates. It threatens 7000 years of Egyptian history and tradition of civility, government, public order and discipline. Civility and urbanity are synonymous with respect of legality, order and rule of law, regardless. The primary definition of urbanity is its embodiment of order coupled with denial of chaos and disorder, is commitment to civic rules, a sense of belonging, commitment, loyalty, perpetual legibility and adherence to, and respect of, social and communal rights. These permanent values thrive consciously in the individual and communal human rights, as Serge Chermayef has long declared in his classic work, *Community and Privacy*. Earlier, Plato in *The Republic*, and Aristotle in his teachings, have reasserted profoundly these values and meanings, nearly 2500 years ago..

The multiple manifestations of squatting as a habitual national custom have been infecting and infiltrating Egyptian public life for decades. It began its proliferation after the defeat of the 1967 war, which was accompanied with the forced population evacuation and subsequent migration from the Canal Zone cities to inland major urban conglomerations. It has spiraled in tangible and intangible manifestations since then, with the inability of the central and local governments to provide adequate housing or services for the migrants' decent resettlement. Though illegal, squatting was allowed to spread with the benign neglect and detachment of most central and local governments, prioritizing spending to defense and liberation efforts in the Suez Canal zone. This era has also witnessed the spread of the casual mood, attitude and popular movement to challenge governmental authority by the youth revolution in France, together with the civil rights movement in the USA in the late sixties. Though casualness is now a global phenomenon reflected on peoples' clothes, conduct and performance, however, in Egypt it has commonly spread resulting in anti-government, anti-authority, defiance, apathy, detachment, resistance to order and chaotic behavior. It has thus become a national phenomenon involving the challenge and defiance of public establishments and institutions, coupled with the meanings they signify: disrespect of the rule of law (which could be unethical or immoral), disobedience of public rules, refusal of regulations and denial of traditions! The mood and adoption of The Casual are firmly adopted and embraced everywhere by all!

Since then, this phenomenon of challenge of government has spread globally to the developed and developing regions alike. The current wave of popular unrest and demonstrations are now fashionable threatening governments worldwide! Authorities that have long assumed the role of the father figure, the protector, the provider, the just and the model to follow, however in actual practice, proved to be unjust, biased, haughty, transcendent, corrupt and irresponsible. Casualness implied "Non-conformist" attitude and conduct, in dress, in word and in deed, it implied defiance of order, disrespect of law, neglect of regulations and avoidance of all rules, since the ruler does not properly rule, the government does not correctly govern, the provider does not give, and the public servant refuses to work or serve conscientiously and fairly all the people with honesty and transparency. The Chinese philosopher, Lao-tse, advised 2600 years ago: "Claim wealth and titles, and disasters will follow."

The customary infiltration of squatting has infested Egyptian public life and urban conglomerations, old and new in many fashions and forms or conduct. Manifestations are too many to recount; examples include:

1. Squatting communities represent a dangerous national challenge, they are mushrooming in urban and rural areas cancerously without control, defying law and order, undermining the basic meanings and essence of urbanity, civility and humanity! This alarming crisis is

explosive, for squatters have become a volatile, breeding environment of crime, violence, insecurity, drugs, disorder, illiteracy, immorality and disease. They are an affront to society, communality and urbanity, environmentally socially, physically, culturally and politically. They amount now to nearly 30% of major cities fabric, 20% of new towns coverage, and are sheltering a staggering 35% of the total population. These sprawling squatters, symptomatic of *urbanitis*, have invaded more than 50,000 acres of valuable, fertile agricultural land, which is hardly replaceable, in flagrant defiance of the law prohibiting and incriminating such common squatting practice!

2. The speedy construction of illegal 20-story high-rise (60 m.) apartment blocks in major cities after the 25th January, 2011 Revolution, is in public defiance and violation of building law, which sets the maximum height at 36 meters provided it is within 1.5 times the street width. This illegal construction of nearly 40,000 towers are malignant tumors of high population density which jam traffic flow, and burden services and utilities beyond their limited capacities. In addition they represent eyesores of visual and physical urban pollution, incongruent with urban form, character, imageability and harmony. This is a blatant form of urban vertical squatting compounded by sprawling horizontal squatters.
3. After the Revolution, the infectious infiltration of vendors squatting and invading sidewalks, squares, streets, public parks and public land has become a daily occurrence, forcing pedestrians to walk in the streets and to mingle chaotically with cars! Although these are public domains entrusted to local governments to upkeep and maintain, there is no sign of intervention or prevention. This vandalism has suspended public rights, has threatened public safety and is an alarming sight of urban deterioration and urban insult!
4. This *de facto* invasion of sidewalks has been also **customary** for years before the Revolution. The common use of sidewalks by shop owners, cafeterias, coffee shops, repair shops, garages has become a familiar scene, compounded by their habitual occupation by parked cars, by vendors and rural women selling their produce, or even reserved illegally by dwellers for their own private use. This congestion is multiplied by unruly car owners who park their cars illegally in two and three rows on street lanes, especially in city centers and near shopping malls, thus causing traffic snarls and strangling jams. Because of these squatting practices, Police officers stand hopeless and helpless, unable to enforce proper traffic management, or prevent violations.
5. Squatting also blossomed in the Tahrir Square since the January 25th, 2011 Revolution, with demonstrators occupying the square and other squares nationwide for long periods. This revolutionary custom has inspired other forms of protests by civil servants, industrial workers, labor unions, Syndicates, students, and others, or in Rabaa and Nahda Squares by the Moslem Brotherhood after the June 30th, 2013 Revolution. This form of

squatting has precipitated traffic detours, communal tensions, civic strife and abrasive conduct.

6. A common form of squatting is in using buildings' lightwells or under staircases as illegal factories, stores or shops; or in converting apartments into offices, private clinics, or other commercial and business activities, in defiance of planning, building and housing laws.
7. The building of illegal annexes to dwelling units in public housing projects, the enclosing of balconies, adding new floors or additions to old buildings regardless of style, form or visual vocabulary, are examples of virtual squatting illegally on existing buildings sites or public open spaces.
8. The building of shelters, cages or shacks on rooftops are considered eyesores, for they mar skylines, blight architectonic entities and defy building laws, amounting to intolerable visual pollution.
9. Hanging signs or billboards from building facades, and erecting advertising signs on rooftops, which ruin the visual character and architectural identity, are also a customary occurrence destroying the urban visual environment and polluting the urban image, which echoes the other deplorable forms of squatting!
10. The nearly 20 new towns planned and built in Egypt since the 1973 October War, which were expected to be the showcase of the new urban Egypt, are now infested by incredible squatting, deterioration, dilapidation and disorder. The new public parks, also observed in the new International Garden at the gateway of Alexandria, are examples of squatter-like commercial developments that have become eyesores marring the urban image.
11. Major streets, highways and expressways are littered with squatting vendors' stands and shacks obstructing and blighting the road shoulders, precipitating dangerous conditions, insulting practices and defiance of all planning and visual determinants.

It is evidently clear that squatting whether tangible, intangible or virtual in all its forms and practices as a habitual national customs, is truly deplorable and utterly condemnable. It has become alarmingly a national phenomenon; an epidemic threatening public order, legal framework and the national pride in its heritage of civility legality, governability and meanings of urbanity. The culprits are the lawbreakers, government ministries and municipalities who violate regulations and refuse to play their obligatory role models. Their public performance and practice testify to their abundant share of squatting practices and irresponsible conduct. They are the very ones who have disregarded what they preach. The age-old role of infantry tactics tells us that "a road block is worthless unless defended!"

Law enforcement is mandatory for all to observe and respect by the formal and informal sectors, by the public and private parties. There is no alternative, no exemption. The government

should provide housing for the needy at the rate of not less than 10 units /1000 population annually. Squatting developments must be arrested and phased out gradually in a phased, comprehensive national campaign. Cosmetic uplifting of squatters is useless. Brave and far-reaching development strategy, policies and projects must be implemented with no delay. Creative urban planning projects must be adopted and enforced, which are both comprehensive and inclusive, with participation and involvement of the private sector and the citizenry. There is no alternative to the strict implementation of planning, housing and building laws, with prohibitive penalties on violators, coupled with acquisition of illegally built new construction. Public education, schools, universities, the media and all information channels must be mobilized in order to achieve the goal of raising public awareness and commitment.

The road to recovery and revival is long, tiring but must be traveled sooner than later, before the crisis turns into catastrophe. The challenges are enormous but the benefits in confronting them and reshaping the future are indeed much greater and gratifying environmentally, socially, economically, culturally and political. There is no alternative to thrust forward toward more promising and rewarding horizons ahead.

24/1/2014

Published in Al Ahrām Weekly: Issue No.1184, 13 February, 2014

As: Egypt's coming urban catastrophe

Chapter Three: Urban planning

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3.1 A new shining capital

Issue No.1207, 24 July, 2014

To save Cairo, and spur the development of Egypt on the national scale, there is no reason to delay in making the appropriate plans and setting to work on building a new capital city, writes **Mohsen Zahran**

I have long held that securing a bright future for Egypt rests on a comprehensive integrated strategy for stimulating the wheels of growth and development. Such a strategy must engage a scientifically sound approach and an ambitious national plan for targeted human resource development that encompasses all political, urbanisation, social, economic, development and cultural realms. We are all morally bound to share in the bold and daring fight to overcome the gruelling difficulties and hardships that result from the forces of underdevelopment, the high population growth rates that compound general deterioration, sluggish economic and social development, high unemployment rates, spread of informal urban settlements, shortages in food and shelter, closed horizons and the dissipation of the hopes of younger generations.

One of the facts established by the numerous scientific conferences and workshops and intellectual meetings in which I have taken part is that we must redistribute our populace away from the traditional Nile Delta and Nile Valley axis, where 95 per cent of Egypt's 83 million people are densely concentrated, leaving 95 per cent of our country's approximately one million square kilometres uninhabited and a lure to others' greed. The demographic redistribution across all quarters of our territory to the south, north, east and west, in the framework of a national network of transportation grids, urbanisation and production, as laid out in a comprehensive national development plan, will accomplish national strategic goals in security, safety, sustainable development and growth in the unipolar world of this current era of globalisation.

One is dumbfounded by what we do to ourselves. Our duties to honesty and scientific objectivity compel us to acknowledge that the construction of 22 satellite cities around old cities, with plans for new ones down the line, is not the answer. Rather than alleviating our problem, these schemes will generate further deterioration and crises, spur greed and speculation, and exacerbate the problems of housing shortages, informal settlements and rising prices.

A bold national urban development project should require plans to create new corridors and nuclei that will attract development and, more crucially, that are dispersed across our national territory far away from the current octopus-like urban sprawls. We could begin with the 1,100 kilometre long urbanisation artery along the north coast and another 1,300 kilometre long artery

along the Red Sea mountains, and then gradually proceed to develop and integrate new arteries elsewhere across the country, taking advantage of local natural resources, environmental features and economic potentials, aiming to complete a grid covering our entire territory by 2050.

The first pioneering urban corridor in this region arose in tandem with the construction of the Suez Canal, which was opened in 1869. It led to the construction of the three Canal Zone cities, Port Said, Ismailia and Suez, linked together by an urban artery supported by a network of roads, railroads and communications facilities. That was a quintessential model of the linkage between an economic aim and an urban development aim. As attested by the documents of the Suez Canal Company that would later be nationalised, the project accomplished numerous local, national and international goals, while drawing the urban development movement eastward away from the Nile Valley and Delta and giving birth to a dynamic artery for habitation, commerce and transportation. It was an unprecedented feat that overturned the history of Egypt, the region and the world.

It seems as though one must forever despair at the opportunities lost. After the October 1973 war, a new dawn broke with golden rays promising rapid growth and development, engaging billions of dollars in the development of new infrastructure and the construction of dozens of new cities, especially around the capital. Unfortunately, those investments and works at the time were not directed to the realisation of a brave and ambitious urban development strategy aiming to create new urban and industrial corridors away from the overcrowded Nile Valley so as to open new horizons for a poor developing people whose hopes and dreams had been deferred for the sake of helping others and were now dissipated again due to the lack of vision, much talk and little action.

Reality does not lie. In spite of huge outlays and expenditures following the adoption of the "Open Door Policy", we have yet to develop a bold, unconventional comprehensive urban development vision. Instead of planning for new and promising urban corridors and pioneering development nuclei we have repeated the same mistakes and consequent ills of the satellite cities in other countries. Is it possible that, as of yet, there is no comprehensive plan for Greater Cairo, binding on all, in spite of the numerous plans that have been drawn up but were never authorised and implemented? Does it make sense to construct rings of new cities, all connected to the mother city with umbilical cords and perpetually feeding on it, aggravating the conditions of a capital that is already strained and reeling under enormous pressures? Some have even volunteered the idea of linking the new cities to the metro and bus lines, a suggestion that promises to only make matters far worse. The government spends billions on constructing overpasses and tunnels for cars and metros in the hope of alleviating the urban ailments that we, ourselves, have created and that have given rise to the spreading tentacles of informal

settlements, suffocating urban congestion and a permanent haze of pollution. Is there some unwritten rule stating that we should permit construction around ring roads as soon as they are completed, only to begin construction of other ring roads further out in endless waves of expansion, in spite of the fact that we know that we should prohibit construction near the ring roads so as to develop the green belt that we have been talking about since the 1980s? It is as though we are set upon forever battling with accumulating symptoms, narrowly escaping disaster and muttering supplications.

Greater Cairo is being strangled by one ring after another, each bringing new woes. We will continue to suffer from these until eventually we wake up and opt for the rational, scientific approach and proper strategic planning. The experiences of other countries, both developed and developing, have proven that new cities should be built well away from parent cities so that they can mature healthily and become independent and self-sufficient. These experiences also show that when new cities are built close to parent cities they turn into commuter towns or bedroom communities that empty out during the day. Even if factories and commercial centres are built to create jobs, these new cities cannot compete with the pull of the larger parent cities. The thousands of empty housing units that inhabit our new cities testify to this. Perhaps, at least, it would have made sense to link employment in new jobs in the factories of the new cities to a commitment on the part of the employee to live there so as not to defeat the purpose of their construction.

Some countries have followed an approach that has proved successful: creating new capitals and administrative centres far away from the old capital. A prime example is Brasilia, the planning and construction of which began in the 1950s in a vast unpopulated area well out of reach from the urban pull of San Paolo and Rio de Janeiro. The construction of Washington as a capital city in the US certainly did not halt expansion and the rise of major cities such as New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago or San Francisco, each of which is thriving, unique in character, and capable of sustaining their pioneering civilisational contributions. The same applies to Ottawa in Canada, Melbourne in Australia, Ankara and Turkey and Bonn in former West Germany. In like manner, building a new capital for Egypt will not diminish the brilliance of Cairo and its pioneering civilisational role.

The time has come to put an end to the cancerous urban growth of Greater Cairo that now houses 20 per cent of Egypt's population. This mega polis monopolises the lion's share of national investment per capita, yet it continues to buckle under the weight of sprawling slums, congested roads, and deteriorating services and infrastructure while it gobbles up the agricultural land around it. Why do we blindly and blithely keep inflicting this harm on ourselves? How can we allow ourselves to persist in this waste of labour and money?

The idea of building a new capital for Egypt has been discussed since the 1950s. At one point, the government made an attempt to create an alternative administrative capital in Sadat City. The idea was soon abandoned and the empty ministry buildings were turned to educational purposes.

Now, the idea should no longer be put off or ignored. The current policy of the government emphasises change, reform, decentralisation and eliminating red tape. Serious and encouraging steps have been taken in this direction. Provincial governors have been delegated a number of ministerial powers enabling them to set into motion the constructions of new urban and development corridors and nuclei. But radical change is needed in development planning, policies, programmes and projects at all levels and in all fields.

The location of a new capital city must be carefully chosen. Above all, it must be situated at a sufficient distance from Greater Cairo to prevent the rise of more bedroom communities that feed off the mother city, and to ensure the practical realisation of the goal of decentralisation. The construction of Heliopolis over a hundred years ago was, for its time, a pioneering venture in urban development that was carried out with little cost to the state. The same applied to Maadi and Moqattam. The crucial point is to identify the aim, the feeling and the specifications of the new capital, and to choose a location that offers the best possible potential for communications, energy, transportation networks, buildings, businesses and all the other ingredients for a healthy vibrant life. Also to ensure the independence of the city and its ability to thrive, it will be important to ascertain that the land in the surrounding desert areas can be reclaimed and put under cultivation so as to provide the city's inhabitants with food and clean air.

Cairo will have nothing to fear. Its eternal light will not dim. In fact, it will have a chance to shine brighter once we alleviate it of its chronic ailments and burdens. Meanwhile, the new city will perform its intended role and functions, becoming a true seat of government complete with the institutions, agencies and support services fit for a capital of Egypt of the future. Naturally, the project can be carried out in phases over time and space. For example, we can begin with the government agencies that do not interact with the public on a daily basis, such as the presidency, some government administrations, embassies, research centres, private universities and high tech industries. In our computerised age of internet communications, there is no longer any need for government agencies and institutions to be clumped together. Global transnational companies manage their daily activities from continents away. The same applies to the world's major newspapers that are printed and distributed in various spots on the globe at the same time. Our technocratic era has erased the borders of time and place in the global village of today.

Reflecting this spirit, Egypt's new capital must be more than just an administrative centre. It should incorporate science parks, industrial parks, business and management parks, entertainment and recreation parks and other diverse and modern features that give it the unique and attractive character that we would like to see in our capital of the future. It is important to ensure that its activities are diverse, organised into diverse hubs, like pearls woven together by a solid, efficient and elegant fabric of state-of-the-art transportation and communications networks, services and utilities, and other such features that will give life to our dreams for a new, prosperous and trailblazing Egypt.

As a temporary step, we might consider turning one of our promising existing cities, such as Alexandria, Sharm El-Sheikh or Luxor into an interim capital until the new capital of our dreams is sufficiently prepared to take off. The crucial point is that the idea of creating a new capital for our country is consistent with the nature of the challenges and promises of the 21st century. We can no longer afford to procrastinate. We need to forge ahead with the type of great dreams and innovative projects that help guard the safety, security and stability of nations and fulfil the hopes and aspirations that are shared by people everywhere.

If we agree to summon our resolve, we must renew the covenant with a state that protects without intimidating, invests but does not squander, disseminates peace and works make people's hopes and dreams come true. Accordingly, this requires introducing and implementing the necessary changes in all the political, legislative and regulatory frameworks governing development, the economy, culture, the environment, society and other crucial aspects of life without delay.

3.2 Egypt's coming urban catastrophe

Egypt's urban fabric is deteriorating at an alarming rate, a process that must be arrested before the country lies in ruins, writes **Mohsen Zahran**

Recently, I had to drive through the new city of Borg Al-Arab, an urban satellite 50 kilometres west of Alexandria, in order to connect to the northern coastal highway. It was my first exposure since 15 years to the urban condition in this new town. I was disappointedly shocked at the degree of urban dilapidation. Squatting is now a common phenomenon in most Egyptian cities — a daily occurrence on sidewalks, in squares and in streets. Buildings are in disrepair, the urban fabric is deteriorating, engulfed in chaos that is infiltrating every quarter and every corner.

This virus of squatting, and the proliferation of squatting, is a nationwide phenomenon defying public order. It has been infesting Egyptian cities for decades, although it has spiralled and multiplied to unparalleled scale and complexity after the 25 January Revolution. The last three years have witnessed a multitude of crises and challenges: the increase of Egypt's population to nearly 90 million people (2.4 per cent annual growth rate), declining economy, rising unemployment (more than 15 per cent nationally; also 50 per cent in the youth group aged 15-45 years), deprivation, lawlessness, lack of security, loss of safety, mushrooming squatter development in most urban conglomerations, spread of informal housing, sprouting of thousands of illegal high-rise buildings (more than 50,000 violations nationwide), the invasion of precious fertile agricultural land illegally by urban sprawl, disintegration of social conduct, challenges to public order and the erosion of human behaviour. This is a dangerous national malignancy of grave consequences.

The law-abiding citizen is now a rare commodity. Constantly abused and taken advantage of, this figure is invariably ridiculed as gullible, naïve or passive, while the schemer, the corruptible, the cunning and the devious becomes a new national norm. What a combination of national traits.

This alarming phenomenon reverberates everywhere — in most localities and governorates. It threatens 7000 years of Egyptian history and traditions of civility, government, public order and discipline. Civility and urbanity are synonymous with respect for legality, order and rule of law, regardless. The primary definition of urbanity is its embodiment of order coupled with denial of chaos and disorder, a commitment to civic rules, a sense of belonging, loyalty, and adherence to, and respect of, social and communal rights. These permanent values thrive consciously in the individual and communal human rights, as Serge Chermayef has long declared in his classic

work, Community and Privacy. Earlier, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) in his *Muqaddimah*, Plato in *The Republic*, and Aristotle in his teachings nearly 2500 years ago, reasserted profoundly these values and meanings.

The multiple manifestations of squatting as a habitual national custom have infected and infiltrated Egyptian public life for decades. It began its proliferation after the defeat of the 1967 war, which was accompanied with the forced population evacuation and subsequent migration from the Suez Canal Zone cities to inland major urban conglomerations. It has spiralled in tangible and intangible manifestations since then, with the inability of the central and local governments to provide adequate housing or services for the migrants' resettlement. Though illegal, squatting was allowed to spread with the benign neglect and detachment of most central and local governments, prioritising spending on defensive and liberation efforts in the Suez Canal Zone. This era also witnessed the spread of the casual mood and attitude, and popular movement to challenge governmental authority by the youth revolution in France, together with the civil rights movement in the US in the late 1960s. Though casualness is now a global phenomenon reflected in peoples' clothes, conduct and performance, in Egypt it has resulted in anti-government, anti-authority defiance, apathy, detachment, resistance to order and chaotic behaviour. It has thus become a national phenomenon involving the challenge to and defiance of public establishments and institutions, coupled with the meanings they signify: a disrespect of the rule of law (which could be unethical or immoral), disobedience in face of public rules, refusal of regulations and denial of traditions.

Since then, this phenomenon of challenging government has spread globally to developed and developing regions alike. The current wave of popular unrest and demonstrations is now fashionable, threatening governments worldwide! Authorities that have long assumed the role of the father figure, the protector, the provider, the just and the model to follow; however, in actual practice, proved to be unjust, biased, haughty, transcendent, corrupt and irresponsible. Casualness implied "non-conformist" in attitude and conduct, in dress, in word and in deed, and implied defiance of order, disrespect of law, neglect of regulations and avoidance of all rules, since the ruler does not properly rule, the government does not correctly govern, the provider does not give, and the public servant refuses to work or serve conscientiously and fairly all the people with honesty and transparency. The Chinese philosopher Lao-tse advised 2600 years ago: "Claim wealth and titles, and disasters will follow."

The customary infiltration of squatting has infested Egyptian public life and urban conglomerations, old and new, in many fashions and forms or conduct. Manifestations are too many to recount, but examples include:

— Squatters' communities represent dangerous national challenges; they are mushrooming in urban and rural areas cancerously without control, defying law and order, undermining the basic meanings and essence of urbanity, civility and humanity (nearly 1330 such communities nationwide). This alarming crisis is explosive, for squatters' settlements have become a volatile, breeding environments for crime, violence, insecurity, drugs, disorder, illiteracy, immorality and disease. They are an affront to society, communality and urbanity, environmentally, socially, physically, culturally and politically. They amount now to nearly 30 per cent of the fabric of major cities, 20 per cent of new towns, and are sheltering a staggering 35 per cent of the total population. These sprawling squatter communities have invaded more than 50,000 acres of valuable, fertile agricultural land, which is hardly replaceable, in flagrant defiance of the law prohibiting and incriminating such squatting practices.

— The speedy construction of illegal 20-story high rise (60 metre plus) apartment blocks in major cities after the 25 January Revolution is in public defiance and violation of building laws, which set the maximum height at 36 metres, provided it is within 1.5 times the street width. This illegal construction of nearly 50,000 towers is tantamount to malignant tumours of high population density, which jam traffic flows and burden services and utilities beyond their limited capacities. In addition, they represent eyesores of visual and physical urban pollution, incongruent with urban form, character and harmony. This is a blatant form of urban vertical squatting compounded by sprawling horizontal squats.

— After the revolution, the infectious infiltration of vendors squatting and invading sidewalks, squares, streets, public parks and public land have become a daily occurrence, forcing pedestrians to walk in the streets and to mingle chaotically with cars.

— This de facto invasion of sidewalks has been also customary for years before the revolution. The common use of sidewalks by shop owners, cafeterias, coffee shops, repair shops, and garages has become a familiar scene, compounded by their habitual occupation by parked cars, by vendors and rural women selling their produce, or even reserved illegally by dwellers for their own private use. This congestion is multiplied by unruly car owners who park their cars illegally in two and three rows on street lanes, especially in city centres and near shopping malls, thus causing traffic snarls and strangling jams.

— Squatting also blossomed in Tahrir Square since the 25 January Revolution, with demonstrators occupying the square and other squares nationwide for long periods. This revolutionary custom inspired other forms of protest by civil servants, industrial workers, labour unions and syndicates, students, and others, including sit-ins in front of Rabaa Al-Adaweya mosque and Al-Nahda Square by the Muslim Brotherhood after the 30 June Revolution.

— A common form of squatting is in using buildings' stairwells as illegal factories, stores or shops; or in converting apartments into offices, private clinics, or other commercial and business activities, in defiance of planning, building and housing laws.

— The building of illegal annexes to dwelling units in public housing projects, the enclosing of balconies, adding new floors or additions to old buildings regardless of style, form or visual vocabulary, are examples of squatting illegally in existing buildings, sites or public spaces.

— The building of shelters or shacks on rooftops is equivalent to toleration of eyesores, for they mar skylines, blight architectural entities and defy building laws, amounting to intolerable visual pollution.

It is evidently clear that squatting, whether tangible, intangible or virtual in all its forms and practices, as a habitual national custom, is truly deplorable and utterly condemnable. It has become alarmingly a national phenomenon; an epidemic threatening public order, legal frameworks and national pride in the heritage of civility legality, governability and meanings of urbanity. The culprits are lawbreakers, government ministries and municipalities who violate regulations or refuse to play their obligatory roles.

Law enforcement is mandatory for all, to be observed and respected by the formal and informal sectors, by public and private parties. There is no alternative, no exemption. The government should provide housing for the needy at the rate of not less than 10 units/1000 population annually. Squatting developments must be arrested and phased out gradually in a comprehensive national campaign. Cosmetic uplifting of squats is useless. Brave and far-reaching development strategies, policies and projects must be implemented without delay. Creative urban and environmental planning projects must be adopted and enforced that are comprehensive, multifaceted and inclusive, with participation and involvement of the private sector and the citizenry. There is no alternative to the strict implementation of planning, housing and building

laws, with prohibitive penalties on all violators, regardless, coupled with public acquisition of illegally built new constructions. Public education, schools, universities, civic societies, the media and all information channels must be mobilised in order to achieve the goal of raising public awareness and commitment.

The road to recovery and revival is long, trying and costly, but must be travelled sooner rather than later, before the crisis turns into catastrophe. The challenges are enormous but the benefits in confronting them and reshaping the future are indeed much greater and gratifying environmentally, socially, economically, culturally and politically. There is no option except to thrust forward towards more promising and rewarding horizons waiting ahead.

12-02-2014

3.3 Lessons from Sandy

Preparedness in the face of new horizons is an obligation governments must bear all the more as global warming intensifies their impact, writes **Mohsen Zahran**

06-11-2012-Monday, November 12, 2012- Issue Number: 1121

Along with the rest of the world, we followed the news of Hurricane Sandy as it swept up the eastern seaboard of the US, threatening the lives and property of people in eight states, especially in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York. Local and federal authorities had to caution some 40 million people against the dangers of this unprecedentedly huge and vicious storm. But thanks to advanced satellite and meteorological technology, it was possible to monitor Sandy's progress, to predict when it would head north from the Caribbean, and to identify the major centres it would strike, thereby enabling the implementation of precautionary measures to minimise human and economic loss.

The damage that Sandy wrought as it tore through the Caribbean made it clear just how destructive this hurricane was. Having claimed hundreds of casualties and decimated residential communities and tourist and recreational sites there, Sandy notified American cities to the north of exactly what it had in store for them. To prepare for this, President Barack Obama declared states of emergency for several states, rendering them eligible for federal financial aid and relief services, while several state governments acted similarly for cities and towns that would fall in Sandy's trajectory. In addition, two days before the hurricane would hit land at Atlantic City, New Jersey, numerous precautionary measures were implemented, notably:

- Schools, government offices and the New York Stock Exchange were closed.
- The operations of underground and surface transportation networks were suspended.
- Some 350,000 people were evacuated from coastal areas that would be affected by the storm.
- Commercial and US naval vessels docked in the area's ports were moved out to sea.
- Hospitals, the Red Cross and civil defence units were put on alert.
- The National Guard was brought in to assist employees in local utility and public service administrations and to guard evacuated areas.
- Private vehicles were banned from using public thoroughfares except in cases of emergency.
- Media outlets were instructed to publicise up-to-the-minute reports on developments related to the storm.

On Tuesday night, 30 October 2012, the mammoth hurricane struck the states of New Jersey and New York, and particularly the coastal New York City, the world's capital of trade and finance, destroying docks and yachts, seaside resorts and coastal residential areas. Torrential rain and high-tide seas flooded streets under several feet of water which, in New York City, poured into the subways and flooded the tunnels connecting Manhattan with other parts of the city and New Jersey. The rushing floods swept through the streets and into houses throughout the 12 long hours of this unprecedentedly huge hurricane whose flood-related damage was exacerbated by the fact that it coincided with a high tide.

But emergency and relief teams speedily moved to the rescue of the stranded and to put out fires that broke out in some 100 houses. Meanwhile, utility repair teams set to work to restore electricity to 10 million people, to get transportation services in operation again, to remove fallen trees and debris, and to pump out water from flooded homes and buildings. Initially, government authorities estimated that Sandy had caused \$15 billion worth of damage. They subsequently raised the figure to \$50 billion.

- In spite of the early warning, precautions, repeated alerts, and material and human resources support at all levels, there were certain other measures that US local and federal authorities could have taken. Had they done so, they would have averted considerable material and human loss, and the breakdown of utility networks and businesses for several days. Whether contingency planners were unaware of the necessity, or simply forgot, they should have:

- Cut off electricity and gas for the 12-hour period of the storm. Naturally, they would have given sufficient advanced notification to people beforehand. Implementing this measure would have saved hundreds of houses from fire caused by falling electricity poles. The current could then have been turned back on as soon as the storm passed and the electricity grid was tested for safety.

- Constructed steel gates to seal off the entrances to the Metro and installed large underground drainage tanks that would have collected flood waters and could then have been emptied out as soon as the storm had passed. These precautions would have prevented heavy damage to the subway grid and subway cars, and enabled the resumption of operations soon after the storm passed. Unfortunately, since such measures were not taken, the subway system is still out of order and repair work is expected to continue for several more days.

- Study maritime currents and construct barriers and levees in coastal areas. Certainly, such precautions would have protected seaside facilities from flooding caused by the onslaught of high waves and spared the economy billions of dollars worth of damage.

- Warned private yacht and boat owners to bring their vessels to shore and house them temporarily until the storm passed.

- Sheathed and anchored large trees located next to major roads or houses, thereby preventing them from falling and killing people, destroying property or damaging electricity lines. Many of the casualties from the storm were the result of trees falling on their cars or homes.

- Create special storm drainage networks separate from the normal drainage networks in coastal areas.

- Redesign coastal urban strips to better equip them against natural disasters.
- Create citizen defence teams equipped with the necessary training to assist government authorities in times of natural disasters and similar emergencies.
- Establish specialised natural disaster and emergency administrations endowed with the necessary material, technical and human resources. These administrations would be required to hold periodic drills throughout the year and to remain constantly prepared to contend with any emergency situation.

- Enact laws and regulations to ensure that all public institutions, especially schools, hospitals and government administrations, as well as commercial and industrial establishments, conduct regular drills and training courses for their staff on the emergency procedures to be followed in the event of earthquakes, fires, hurricanes and other such crises, as is already the case in airplanes and ocean liners. Sufficient funding should be made available for this purpose. The foregoing analysis underscores how necessary it is for relevant authorities to be equipped with the necessary resources and potential to prepare for and contend with the challenges posed by natural disasters. Certainly, if government authorities follow guidelines such as those described above, they would avoid unnecessary risks and pitfalls and spare the state and society considerable human and material loss.

I can only pray that God spares Egypt from such cruel natural disasters. In addition to our 2,500 kilometre long coastline, our country is located along a major fault line and has experienced a number of earthquakes in recent years. It is only logical that we should heed the lessons that

Sandy and earlier disasters, such as the catastrophic Tsunami in Japan a year ago, have taught us. Perhaps the foremost among these lessons is that global warming has heightened the likelihood of natural disasters and increased their magnitude. Surely this is all the more reason why we should take all appropriate measures and precautions to avert as much of the destruction they can cause as possible, rather than ~~repenting~~ for having left these matters until it was too late.

3.4 The Continuum of Urban Erosion and Decay

Urbanity is essentially based on order, discipline and a labyrinth of integrated systems and networks of infra- and super-structures. It is also necessarily dependent upon the culture and solid commitment to, and respect of, citizens to law, order and civic loyalty—regardless of the status, position, wealth, creed, color, gender or origin, no matter what. This is the well-established rule and character of urbanity and civility in the civilized world, as evidenced and recognized by all major cities and urban conglomerations in the developed world, eastward or westward, as well as in the newly aspiring developing world in the Gulf, Asia, Africa or Latin America.

Ironically, these basic rules and convictions are wantonly neglected, or even flagrantly violated, in developing and under-developed countries, despite their claim to the contrary and their persistent pride in their unique historical heritage, religious beliefs and moral values. Egyptian urban centers, especially in the great metropolises of Cairo and Alexandria, are cases in point. The continuing challenge to urban order and discipline, coupled with the absence and/or disregard of the comprehensive long- medium and short-term urban planning rules, objectives and directives have precipitated the current urbanitis and the continuing urban erosion and exasperating urban decay. It is mushrooming and spreading its deteriorating urban ailments everywhere, whether in the old cities depressingly congested historical cores or along the arteries and/or around the peripheries. These festering conditions and the proliferation of urban epidemics are tantamount to an alarming urban disintegration and approaching apocalypse. The symptoms anywhere and everywhere are distressingly recognized with evident acceptance and tacit submission by all, whether urban residents or visitors:

1. At the macro level, the continuing invasion of valuable and irreplaceable agricultural land by mushrooming shantytowns and squatter developments is spreading without control, arrest, or containment, which house from 25 – 35% of the urban population. These have become largely nodes of crime, disorder, disease, illiteracy, disloyalty, illegality, immorality, inhumanity, and insecurity, in addition to being unsafe and environmental hazard—an insult to human values and dignity!

2. At the micro level, the defiance of building laws through the construction of high- rise towers on narrow streets is omnipresent everywhere, thus violating height, density and setbacks restrictions, as prescribed by the law, without proper parking, necessary green areas, fire-escapes and essential utilities and appropriate services.

3. The chaotic use of colors, materials, styles, forms, shapes, textures, defies the basic esthetic, architectonic, and artistic values, while insulting urban order, denying visual character, and eroding the allegiance to civility and cultural identity.

4. Under the umbrella of encouragement of investments, everybody, investors, landlords or tenants, are tacitly allowed to do their own things, without restrictions or hindrance. Hotels, hospitals, schools, malls, restaurants, food chains, banks, businesses, coffee shops are all awarded building and occupancy permits, despite zoning and land use theories and regulations. They are built and operated without providing the necessary parking for their occupants, employees, users, clients, and visitors. The result is traffic jams, congestion, and overcrowding with double and triple parking, thus stifling the streets traffic flow. Sidewalks and open spaces are reserved for private use by adjoining shops, thus forcing pedestrians to walk on the streets and to endanger their lives, while the public domain right-of-way is claimed by merchants or public authorities. There is a disturbing relaxation in the enforcement of laws as well as the respect of due process and prompt implementation of law court rulings against violators, no matter who, whether public or private sectors!

5. There is an apparent animosity toward, and hatred of, trees and green areas, despite local government's claim of increased areas of public parks. The actual *de facto* practice testifies to the contrary. Cutting of trees is easily practiced, while the neglect of green areas and the use of public parks by either public authorities or investors' businesses is easily sanctioned by local authorities. Almost 30% of the Alexandria International Garden is currently leased commercially to various investors. The parallel strip to the west of the major access thoroughfare was allocated in the Master Plan of Alexandria to complement the International Garden to the east as sport and club facilities, in order to act as a green gateway to the city. This strip (250 acres) is now used as commercial malls, exclusive housing compounds, hospital, or other public facilities. This disregard of planning objectives and directions is commonplace. It has become the rule rather than exception!

6. The circulation network, the public transport systems, and the major utilities cannot cope with the rising urban population explosion, over-crowding, rising needs and escalating demands. Millions of cars are now congesting the main traffic arteries and the street networks, hence resulting in traffic snarls 24/7, especially in business centers. The traffic law was recently amended with harsher penalties; however, it is still flagrantly violated and ignored by all vehicles, public or private, with no solution in sight, leading to a silent resolve by all to tolerate the painful status quo!

7. The rampant attitude of '*laissez-faire*' is allowing all to do, say or act in whatever way or means to get their personal selfish goals achieved, or their greedy ambitious projects realized. This attitude and practice have accelerated and intensified urban erosion, corruption, degeneration, congestion, individualism, usurpation, bribery and speculation.

8. While people are bemoaning environmental pollution of air (dust and smoke clouds) and land (garbage piles), polluted rivers and lakes, they are equally alarmed by the rampant visual, cultural and moral pollution. Most building facades are marred by conflicting signs, colors and shapes, the urban skyline is threatened by building height violations, roof tops are littered by garbage dumps or forests of antennas, mechanical equipment, electronic signs and billboards. Noise pollution from car horns, public transport vehicles, motorcycles, and loudspeakers is contributing to health and psychological and environmental hazards.

9. The situation and condition of public utilities also reflects urban decay with frequent breakdowns of the old water mains, the blockage of sewers, and periodic flooding of old streets and districts. The continuing issuance of building permits for the construction of high rise towers on narrow streets with old infrastructure further worsens the situation of water pressure or the bursting of old sewers. Likewise the narrow streets cannot, and will not, accept increased traffic generated by the new high-rise buildings.

10. The systematic violations and invasion of the river banks by clubs or public organizations, which denies the public the free accessibility to landscaped waterfronts. This has led to infilling of waterways and the sprouting of diverse activities and developments along the banks, instead of developing the water edge as a green magnet for pedestrian amenities. The same type of invasion is taking place on Alexandria's coastline, which has been partly allocated by the local government for the exclusive use as private beaches for various syndicates and organizations. Meanwhile, Lake Maryout continues to shrink by systematic infilling for use by public and private developers, coupled with the dangerous levels of water pollution by sewage drainage laden with cadmium, lead, mercury and other heavy metals, which is a serious environmental and health hazard which could cause definite fatalities, despite the calls for due respect for the environment and the necessity of adherence to planning objectives and directives.

11. The conduct and practice of urban dwellers has become unruly and aggressive defying any and all rules and norms of loyalty, ethics, civility or accountability. The daily individual's behavior is largely characterized only by self-interest, deceit, profitability, apathy, dishonesty, and cultural immaturity. The continuing neglect of ethical values and denial of moral parameters have energized and idolized the sole purpose of maximizing of personal profits and material gains at the expense of public order, urbanity, intangible values and moral thresholds. This

virus is further infecting and infesting urban fabric, pattern, character and discipline, and is largely at the root of and is responsible for the current urban erosion and decay.

Conclusion:

These symptoms of urban erosion and decay have been caused by and accompanied with, rising inflation, relaxation of rules and standards, lack of controls and absence of a sane, objective and efficient urban management. This has been coupled with local government corruption, disorder, disloyalty, lack of attachment, lack of belonging, lack of identity and, finally, the lack of commitment, not only to urbanity and civility, but also, most alarmingly, the persistent neglect of local and national values, goals, and objectives. The problem is not the enactment of urban regulations, standards or urban laws, which are abundant and well known, but rather lies primarily in their denial and negligence by the formal and informal sectors, as well as the various groups and individuals. Education, the national media and information networks have certainly failed to instill urban values and underline the dangers of their violation. The problem lies as well in the lack of enforcement and reluctance to implement the objectives and directives of urban order. The guardians of public trust and gatekeepers of public domains are dangerously threatened, and slowly disappearing!

Obviously, the current policy and practice of building new towns around the capital and nearby existing cities is certainly short sighted and self-destructive, especially in causing exasperating and alarming urban deterioration crises. It is high time to adopt a strategic, forward looking and ambitious, national urban development plan with major urban nuclei, corridors and conglomerations, away from traditional cities and urban arteries aiming at an integrated and comprehensive balanced population distribution of almost 100 million citizens by the year 2020. The strategic plans must be a daring, unorthodox and unpretentious with sound environmental sustainability.

The will to change and institute the respect of, and adherence to, public law and order must be reinforced with firm resolve, for the time is running out, and the urban apocalypse is looming at the horizon. It is threatening the very existence of our cherished urban centers, the seats of our civilization. There is no alternative to acting now and here, with full commitment and determination, and without any hesitation.

April 15, 2009

3.5 Tragedies Revisited

Nearly one year has passed since I wrote in the *'Weekly'* a brief article entitled, "**Tragedy in Minneapolis,**" following the catastrophic collapse of the Minneapolis Bridge. I reflected on the situation and conditions in Egypt of bridges, public buildings, utilities, roads, etc., especially after the sinking in the Red Sea of the ferry boat with the loss of 1300 people, the train accident in Kalyoub, the collapse of the Laurant building in Alexandria and the sinking of various Nile ferry boats in Upper Egypt, and other fatal accidents with scores dead. I reminded myself that the earthquake of 16/10/1992 was a jolting warning for us all that Egypt lies in the 3rd zone of earthquakes, and that we are surrounded by earthquake belts in Asia, southern Europe and north Africa. Consequently, should be thoroughly prepared at all times to face emergencies and the shocking calamities of nature.

The Shura (Senate) Council fire that broke out on 19/08/2008 and destroyed one of the key historical monuments of Modern Egypt since its inauguration in 1866, shocked everyone again, as if no lesson was learned from past mistakes, short-comings, neglect and tragedies, like the burning of the historic Cairo Opera House. Officials were quick to blame the fire causes--and not themselves of course-- on electric sparks, strong winds (in mid August! ?), and on the wooden roof. Most palaces and monuments in Egypt, and abroad, were built, of course, hundreds of years ago, and have wooden roofs and floors but now are fitted with proper firefighting, systems, equipment, procedures and expertise to ensure their proper protection and preservation. We must remind ourselves that fire-fighting starts before fires begin! Established rules, regulations, procedures, systems, maintenance operations, equipment and trained personnel, fire drills, fire hydrants, must be implemented. This will ensure full preparedness to face emergency situations at all locations, including fire hydrants, fire alarm systems, fire detectors, fire retardant materials, automatically operational fire sprinklers networks, well equipped fire trucks, rescue mattresses, fire escapes, etc., not to mention, recruitment of well trained civil defense and fire fighters and the appropriations of the necessary material, human and financial resources.

One is alarmed and troubled to report that most apartment buildings in Cairo, Alexandria and other cities are fire hazards for they lack proper stairways and fire escapes to be used during emergencies. Most residents and occupants, employees and users of public and private high-rise buildings have no knowledge of fire escapes or trained how to use fire extinguishers at the breakout of fires! We should learn from airlines that crews must instruct passengers on emergency procedures before take-off on every flight. All Public and private buildings should be dealt with similarly. Governorates, organizations, institutions, and other establishments, public or private, should value human life, human safety, and environmental security. They must mobilize resources and capabilities and begin immediately by adopting all plans, programs, policies,

operations and maintenance, emergency and fire fighting procedures with sustained, periodic fire drills, fire inspection, follow-up, quality control and quality assurance in complementarity with governmental and public plans for action at all times and at all locations.

It is too tragic and costly, both tangibly and intangibly, that we have not learned from our past tragedies, mistakes, negligence and apathy in order to avoid the loss of human beings, our valuable heritage, and material resources. However, it is never too late, to start at once a national drive and commitment to eradicate our ill-preparedness and launch a national renaissance to wake up, shape up and rise up to face the awesome challenges ahead, and focus on needed change and urgent reform to insure a better, safer and secure future for Egypt.

August 22, 2008

3.6 Urban Chaos and Citizen Arrest

It has been long established that urbanity and civility are synonymous with order, commitment, loyalty, and responsible behavior toward, people, urban organization, operations, performance, and the livelihood of both the individual and society.

One is bewildered and shocked at the continuing erosion and decline of these vital relationships. This has resulted in the current deterioration and 'urbanitis' plaguing the urban scene, both tangibly and intangibly. The tangible aspects are seen in the chaotic building activities, squatter settlements (30% of Cairo), shantytowns, kaleidoscopic character, flagrant conflicts, audacious violations, covered with a grey blanket of dust and smoke, and impregnated with insulting symptoms of disorder and disregard for law and order. Meanwhile, intangible symptoms are recognized daily in the total apathy, disloyalty, detachment, usurpation of individual and public rights, fallacies, fabrications, corruption, and unruly conduct, as well as environmental, visual cultural and ethical pollution. Equally alarming are the disheartening lack of respect of others, especially women and the elderly, disregard of human rights, foul language coupled with offensive, immoral and unethical conduct. This "black plague" has infested the urban fabric, patterns, forms, spaces, heights, styles, color, activities, physical and psychological relationships and civic character, thus shaking, hacking, and insulting the unique valuable heritage of the succeeding civilizations of Egypt. Furthermore, the spreading epidemic of chaos, violations and conflicts of movement on public streets have endangered tragically the lives of pedestrians and motorists alike, resulting in nearly 100,000 casualties annually. The hemorrhage is steadily rising! Citizens have become so callous about the law that they pride themselves in glaringly violating it, regardless of the penalties or fines, as has been witnessed recently! The "law abiding urban citizen" is past history, as evidenced in the massive daily traffic mess, and building violations in every street and district. Plainly, everyone is doing (or saying) his or her own thing, no matter what or who, so long as he, or she, gets away with it?! This clearly undermines, perhaps destroys, the very basic foundations of urbanity, civility, and social order, and threatens all reform efforts!

The age-old infantry tactic tells us that a roadblock is worthless unless defended; any gate is useless without being faithfully guarded! There is no use enacting new laws, maximizing penalties or adopting tougher measures, as in the new traffic law, so long as it is not strictly safeguarded and faithfully *de facto* enforced, for there are always ways and means to get around it, owing to corruption, nepotism, dishonesty, collusion, favoritism, poverty, and exceptions for certain institutions, groups or individuals. The gatekeepers are often the violators, collaborators, or bribery seekers! Meanwhile governance and governments cannot allow, or even afford, having

a policeman on every street and every corner, and even then, strict enforcement can never be secured or assured.

The solution is multifaceted and multilayered. Law enforcement officers in every ministry and governorate must believe, trust, and uphold public laws and order. For application and enforcement of the laws and regulations must be strict on all groups and individuals and arenas – no matter who, what, or where. This requires public information drives and media campaigns everywhere, as well as changes in curricula and programs, in both the formal and informal education and information sectors. Governmental and public organizations should start immediately a commitment to respect public laws and regulations by becoming models for other to follow, with no exception and no exemption. On the other hand, it is worthwhile adopting the North American law of "citizen arrest" whereby a citizen may report traffic and building violations, illegal conduct, or aggressive acts directly to authorities, with proper measures, checks and guarantees. Meanwhile, plain-clothes law enforcement officers should be recruited and densely dispersed to report violations and institute allegiance and respect to public law and order. Speedy application of justice, and proper implementation of public order, at all levels, sectors and locations, can ensure the deterrence of violators, equality, transparency, and commitment to urban order, national values, and civility. These are prerequisites for building a promising future for the aspiring multitudes of Egypt's 80 million people.

Published as: Urban chaos, In: Al-Ahram Weekly 21 - 27 August 2008 Issue No. 911
Opinion

3.7 Tragedy in Minneapolis

Al-Ahram Weekly 6 - 12 September 2007 Issue No. 861-Opinion

The recent collapse of a bridge in Minneapolis was a tragedy by all accounts. Dozens died when cars fell in the Mississippi River and were carried away by the current. This was the second incident of this kind in a year and may not be the last. The worst part is that this disaster could have been avoided. According to US federal agencies, up to 150,000 bridges, or 25 per cent of the nation's total, are unsafe for passage. This is odd coming from a country with a national income of \$13 trillion, equaling the entire national income of all EU countries. It is odd coming from a country that spends \$12 billion a month on its war in Iraq. But that's not our problem. Ours is worse.

Many of our bridges are older than the one that collapsed in Minneapolis. Many are over a century old, and you can say the same about our railroads, our ferries, etc. Decades have gone by without serious maintenance and now many of our amenities are unsafe. Remember the train accident in Qalyub a year ago? After the accident, officials admitted that the railway network needed LE10 billion to be fixed. They could have been talking about our network of bridges. They could have been talking about our public transport fleets. We should learn from the past. And we should learn from Minneapolis. Right now we keep spending money on new bridges, tunnels and roads for Greater Cairo. But is this what we should be doing? Wouldn't it be cheaper and better to build a new capital from scratch? Let's consider our options. And let's try and do something before things get worse.

3.8 Urban soul

Al-Ahram Weekly 15 - 21 March 2007- Issue No. 836- Opinion

The great Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen once said, "Show me your city, and I will tell you what the true cultural aims of its population are." He could teach us a thing or two. A few months ago Egypt's Higher Constitutional Court revoked a former decision that banned the demolition of historic buildings. As a result, owners began knocking down old buildings so as to sell the empty plots to the highest bidder. Suddenly alerted to the consequences, the government attempted to call a halt to the destruction by hastily inserting preservation clauses into the unified building law. The Cairo governor also set up committees to list buildings of cultural and artistic value. Perhaps other governors can do the same before it is too late.

Alexandria has already lost dozens of its historic buildings. How sad this is, for this is a city that deserves to be an open museum in itself, a city recognised for its past role as a beacon of civilisation. A few years ago, Alexandria recreated the legendary Bibliotheca Alexandrina in an attempt to reclaim its past. It did so with the help of friends and nations around the world who wanted to help rebuild its extraordinary heritage. Yet while we build with one hand, we demolish with the other. Can't we do something about the buildings that speak not only for our history, but for the history of the entire region? We should protect our historic heritage, and we should do so even at the expense of material gains for the owners. If need be, let us compensate them. We have the money to do so. We could earmark part of the oil or Suez Canal revenues and use them to buy or rent historic buildings. We must not let our history turn to rubble in front of our eyes.

3.9 Give us a new capital!

Al-ahram Weekly 23 - 29 November 2006- Issue No. 821-Opinion

Egypt's population needs to move away from its conventional concentration areas around the Nile Valley. About 95 per cent of Egyptians live on merely five per cent of the country's area. Take for example Greater Cairo, a city that remains a thorn in the side of planners. None of Cairo's urban planning schemes has been appropriately implemented. All we did was link the capital with several satellite cities that still depend on the centre for survival. Now I hear people suggesting palliative measures, such as linking the new cities to central Cairo with metro lines and other forms of public transportation. Frankly, this is not the solution.

We're already spending millions on flyovers and tunnels. And yet our traffic is still as congested as ever and pollution is killing us. Why we haven't built a green belt around the city, instead of letting the outskirts turn into a jungle of cement, is beyond me. Satellite cities are not the solution. Even though many of them have factories and job opportunities, they remain dormitories, places from which people commute to the centre everyday.

The only solution is for a new capital to be created. We need to put an end to the cancerous growth of Cairo, a mega-city in which 20 per cent of the nation live. Let's make a new capital, complete with science and business parks, rich in entertainment and culture and strong in its appeal and economy. Let's have a new capital with sophisticated communication, proper transportation systems, and reliable amenities. Leave Cairo alone and it will become a better place. Cairo's only hope is to be replaced as the nation's capital.

3.10 Regional planning in the war on Hunger



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*Over the next 30 years the goal is to
increase grain production by 200%.
Now is the time to transform words and ideas
into cultivated fields and ripening seed.*

Regional Planning in the War on Hunger

MOISEN M. ZAHRAN

IN MANY UNDERDEVELOPED and newly independent nations, tremendous pressures for the maximum spread of new opportunity have had to be dispensed. The glorious dreams that political independence would bring about instant progress and prosperity have faded away. Many resources, including hard-won freedoms, have been sacrificed to the brief pleasures of nationalism. Slowly it is being realized that independence demands more sacrifice.

The hopes and expectations of the developing nations place greater importance on the hunt for methods which will yield results greater than any known in the past. While in many cases the people's despair can not, and will not, wait for perfectionist progress, it is also true that any attempt to accelerate the pace of rural development, the heart of the economy of an

many countries, may disappoint, frustrate and even defeat the goals so ardently sought.

Agriculture is the basic occupation of about 65% of the world's population. In varying degrees most of the population in the advanced countries have, since the turn of the century, moved from the farm to other jobs in industry or the services. Today about 5% of the population in the United States work on farms. While the percentage of rural occupations has declined since the introduction of mechanized agricultural methods, this decline has resulted in an actual increase in output.

Such is not the case in other parts of the world. Two decades ago Egypt and India were exporters of wheat but must now import. The 1966 report of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization

(F.A.O.) points up the desperate need to spur food production in the developing nations. In these areas, food production per capita is estimated at 4% less in 1960 than in the peak year of 1964 and lower than in any year since 1957. The present annual grain production of about 500 million tons must be increased by at least 80% in the next fifteen years in order to feed the projected increase of one billion in population and by 2007 to feed a world population of six billion in the year 2000.

Agricultural development necessarily depends on water, land, materials, equipment, capital and people. Effective planning must keep these resources in accurate balance, in complete orchestration, in order to manage a steady economic growth. It is best accomplished on a regional basis and under the guidance of a regional planning office.

The work of the office begins with an inventory of resources and a study of methods and techniques which may be adapted to the local circumstances. It envisages a total reconstruction program with gradual replacement of deteriorating villages and remodeling those to be saved. This can be done only after a comprehensive and detailed survey of all rural settlements is carried out. There can be no true development of rural areas without concrete and simultaneous transformation of the physical environment.

A phased method of physical regional planning should be developed in line with other planning goals, and it should be adjusted to environmental conditions. Space economy is essential for the environment since agricultural land is precious. Sprawling settlements waste otherwise productive land in addition to creating incoherence and fragmentation of the community.

Adequate potable water supply and sewage drainage should be available. Planning must also deal with the problems of animal shelter and their hazards to the hygiene of the house and the village. Many social, religious, and psychological factors are involved: the

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sacred cow in India causes many problems for planners and reformers even in the heart of Bombay itself. The insistence of some Egyptian farmers on keeping animals in their homes results in unhealthy houses and dirty streets.

Village sites must be well-drained and should have such pedestrian, road, rail, and other means of circulation as is compatible with the size of the settlement.

Self-help projects must be emphasized, especially in reconstruction programs. According to United Nations' experiments in Latin America and Asia, farmers take pride in manual self-help projects. They feel a true sense of accomplishment, which encourages them to keep new projects in good order and condition.

#### **Types of Settlements**

As there is a hierarchy of sizes of settlements Class I, II, III, IV, etc., according to their population, services, location, etc., there are parallel classes of roads, I, II, III, according to the type, frequency of use, and importance in the total regional network.

Rural settlements are the basic and primary generator of regional life. A hierarchy of subcenters, subregional centers, and major centers is developed along with a hierarchy of services and institutions in the same order that Doxiadis proposes—Class I, the pilot towns or rural settlements with elementary schools; Class II, subcenters serving a cluster of pilot towns with grammar schools, trade and vocational centers, etc. The pilot town or rural settlement therefore becomes the heart of regional physical planning. Formal composition of the rural settlement comprises two basic components: the core which is essentially the hub of all rural public activities and facilities such as shops, stores, cultural, religious, and civic centers, schools; and the outflanking neighborhoods which are the residential quarters of the settlement. These components are organized in different ways depending essentially on local environmental forces and conditions:

1. The round compact settlements where the basic

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layout of the town is fine; the pattern is dense, urbane in character and coherent in form, space, and structure. Such a type is usual where there is expensive and limited agricultural land. The built up area is kept to a minimum with a high population density and small land holdings. This type is found in river valleys, oases or wherever natural forces are dominant.

2. The sheet settlement is found where farmsteads are spread over a large agricultural development. Small isolated farms are widely separated; travel to schools and other facilities is a major problem. The cost of institutions and services per capita is obviously much higher than in compact settlements. This type of development is found in regions of large farm holdings with low population density, as in the midwestern parts of the United States.

3. The line or linear settlements are usually found on canals, roads, and the like, and are organized like a string of pearls. The road becomes an originator, coordinator, and linker of all activities in the linear compact center.

4. The nucleated grid iron settlements occur where natural order is absent, or not visibly distinct. It is found in flat regions such as plateaus or *saharas*. A grid pattern of circulation system is most logical, and the nuclei of settlements are hooked at major intersections of the grid.

Above all, in all settlements, rural and urban, a strong visual order has to be established in order that the individual may identify with his community. The process of identification must be evident and revealing for a legible and recognizable physical environment. A structure of a town or a region that fails to establish a dialogue of visual language with the individual inherently lacks all values of individual recognitions, feelings of belonging, and means of identification.

Regional planning regulates the life and future of an entire region. Without accurate information, objective and correct statistics, comprehensive and precise surveys and maps, the whole goal of regional planning is undermined and threatened. Reliable data and techniques for gathering the right information are usually lacking or insufficient in many emerging

regions. The first step for accurate regional planning is the government's initiation of a comprehensive and objective census and survey. If regional agricultural development is to grow rapidly and efficiently, massive government programs and institutions, together with imaginative and energetic private initiatives, are important to generate and help finance all facets of research and experiments in land development. Indeed, an extensive network of circulation systems of varying classes has to be constructed as the first step in a regional planning implementation program. It is important that local governments establish institutions and training centers to develop competent managerial and technical personnel who can efficiently implement regional planning programs. Unfortunately, it is this deficiency in managerial and technical resources and personnel which has crippled many of the emerging nations' development plans. Equally essential to the implementation process is the creation of national, regional, sub-regional and local planning centers that can effectively carry out implementation programs.

#### Financing

Government financing of regional planning is not as difficult and forbidding as allocating funds for its realization. The latter requires a massive mobilization of resources and investments which no government alone can afford. Private and foreign investments, aid and credits are always required. To encourage this important and necessary financing, radical economic and fiscal policies have to be adopted. A number of developing nations, whose political independence was won after years of struggle and in which nationalism is presently a dominant emotion, are suspicious of foreign investments, fearful of attached strings. International organization under the United Nations' auspices are thus required to help finance development programs in developing regions. On the other hand, emerging nations should also begin to make certain adjustments in their financial and economic policies in order to encourage outside help without being unduly afraid of interference in their affairs.

The danger of world hunger is so imminent and overwhelming that an understanding of these aspects of the problem is urgent. Governments have to encourage farmers to increase their agricultural production by enacting new land policies and enlightened price control guidelines. In addition, a progressive and revolutionary farm input program has to be launched. Farm input whether material (fertilizers, chemicals, improved seeds, equipment, insecticides, etc.) or intangible help (technical information and credits) is the only answer for farmers in developing regions if increased farm productivity in quantity and quality is to be achieved.

#### **The Need for Research**

Research and techniques of the calibre applied in industry need to be mobilized for agricultural and rural development. They must include developmental research and experimentation on the use of mass production methods and techniques in agriculture. Already "softcase" farming has been in effect in the United States for more than a decade. In its report entitled "Agriculture 2000," Ford Motor Company's Tractor Division predicts that some farm machinery will be run without operators by 1980. They announce that already there is a machine that travels along vegetable rows picking produce by radio impulse. Such equipment can be run by buried wires or by following a pattern stored on computer memory tapes. Although this equipment will be readily helpful in highly industrialized societies, it will in fact help reduce rising farm costs and perhaps prices.

Research will also have to be carried out not only on agricultural techniques but also on crops and means of increasing food production. This will include research on protecting plants and genetic research on increasing yields. Many developing nations have made outstanding research on protecting crops but have scored no substantial success in introducing new seeds that give better yields. The Ford report predicts that corn production will one day be five hundred bushels an acre against today's average yield of less than eighty bushels, and wheat produc-

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tion of three hundred bushels against the present twenty-seven bushels per acre. To combat food shortages, Ford proposes that new systems of farming be adopted by less fortunate countries and backstopped by other astonishing production ideas, including farming of the seas with hybrid trout ranches, "feeding of human beings on algae, and the building of vast microbe refineries to raise rich protein from oils . . ."

It is time for many countries to understand that the development of a region should not be limited to formal boundaries. Total welfare and maximum utilization of natural resources should recognize no frontier demarcation but rather extend to all countries that share in these resources. Maximum benefit will come from comprehensive regional planning for all cooperating countries. The agricultural benefits of the Common Market are evident to all members of the European community. The definition of region will eventually be subcontinental or continental in nature.

Regional agricultural development in developing nations requires above all rural reform laws which not only free land tenants from unjust conditions but also promote better cooperation both between landlords and farmers, and between farmers and government agencies. Establishment of cooperative societies to help farmers with both farm inputs distribution and marketing is found to be substantially helpful. Such societies at the local level have to have trained managerial and technical personnel if they are to operate effectively. Recently, the Tennessee Valley Authority reported a rise in productivity per acre by consolidating small farms into large ones, which are more economical to operate. Larger financial allocation should help develop agricultural industries for better use of manpower and productivity. Such enterprises can flourish in rural areas with adequate and efficient government support. Similar attention is also needed for the establishment of health, cultural and social services to help the eradication of disease, combat illiteracy, and launch orientation programs.

The main question which should be posed, and responsibly answered, is whether agriculture will be able to support growing world populations and meet both food and protein shortages. There is enough evidence to believe that it can.

### 3.11 Growth of urban settlements

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR DEVELOPMENT TECHNOLOGY, VOL. 1, 265-278 (1983)

## GROWTH OF URBAN SETTLEMENTS AND THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARAB REGION

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#### SUMMARY

In this paper attention is focused on to the multifaceted problems of Arab urban environment, highlighting the challenges which face its future development. The health, beauty and identity of Arab cities are directly dependent upon the uplifting of the human condition, as well as on the development of socio-economic and physical resources, possibilities and potentials. Various ways and means for improving the situation in Arab cities are presented, and comprehensive measures and programmes outlined to reform and upgrade the quality, content and framework of the total urban physical environment. All efforts to develop this physical and economic environment become impotent and inconsequential if no equal and parallel development efforts are devoted to social, cultural and human considerations. By investigating the symptoms and roots of the present exasperating conditions in the Arab cities and by pointing out possible approaches to a comprehensive solution of the total urban situation, rather than the current piece-meal short-term remedies, it is hoped that a meaningful improvement of human settlements (urban, rural or transitional) may then proceed on a sound footing. In evaluating the future prospects of Arab cities, it is maintained that urban development must essentially germinate from the permanent values and heritage of Arab culture, and that comprehensive goals and complementary plans at all levels of environmental planning are the basic cornerstones for the promising future of Arab cities.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the October War (1973) the Arab World has had more strategic potential, and has been more the centre of world attention than at any other time. Overnight, Arab countries suddenly realized that they *could* control their destiny, and by their own choice shape their future development. This striking emergence of Arab renaissance and determination is almost unprecedented and it must be given every chance of fulfilment. The horizons of future Arab wealth and potential have finally unfolded, the only limitations being localized reluctance, benign neglect, indecision and lack of determination to initiate a valid order of priorities.

Arab cities, the reservoir of Arab talents, the seat of Arab decision-making systems, and the primary frontiers of development and growth, must now face the challenges and capitalize upon the unparalleled possibilities triggered by the recent events. They should unhesitatingly muster their human and

material resources to embark upon ambitious urban environmental plans which correspond to their local heritage and potential, and reflect the various natural, material and human influences of this region.<sup>1</sup>

The present urban condition in most Arab cities is unsatisfactory to say the least, and despite the oil wealth it is becoming even more so. The reasons for this are various, including neglect at both national and local levels, misguided priorities, and a somewhat schizophrenic view of the future juxtaposed between traditional and imported (Western) values and modes. The purpose of this paper is to focus attention on to the current urban situation in the Arab cities, their root causes, and ways in which decline and deterioration can be arrested. A comprehensive set of recommendations is also made to this end.

## 2. THE PRESENT CONDITION OF ARAB CITIES

Studies of the Middle East reveal that population there is either concentrated in the major cities, or scattered in an overwhelming number of very small settlements, with a surprising scarcity of medium-sized settlements.<sup>2</sup> The current level of urbanization, which normally denotes an intermediate stage of development, does not reflect the actual state of affairs.<sup>3</sup> It is actually the result of special local conditions and does not represent real development, due to one or more of the following factors: a small population base, dominance of agricultural land, prominence of urban centres as important magnets attracting industry and central governments, and the concentration of oil-related activities.

A careful study of the Arab world's geographical pattern shows a great concentration of population in the towns and cities along four distinct and rapidly urbanising corridors.<sup>4</sup> The first corridor is in northern Africa, parallel to the Mediterranean coast; the second is thrusting along the Nile from the south to the north; the third to the north-west parallels of the Mediterranean seashores, and the fourth to the north-east along the valley of the *Tigris* and the *Euphrates* rivers, including the oil-producing corridor. An emerging nodal urbanization cluster is also recognized at the south-western tip of the Arabian peninsula. Although these corridors comprise the bulk of Arab cities, with a population of over fifty million inhabitants, they are neither inter-related nor well co-ordinated socially, economically, culturally or physically. In terms of geography and population distribution the Arab countries, with 150 million people spread over 12 million km<sup>2</sup>, claim the low population density of only twelve persons per square kilometre, despite an average annual population growth of 2.8 percent which is high compared with the world average of 1.7 percent. The region's population distribution is also very uneven: the population density in Egypt is 45 persons/km<sup>2</sup>, 257 in the Lebanon, 2.5 in Saudi Arabia and only 1.2 in Libya. Due to the prominent role of central governments, capital cities usually attract the greatest population concentration compared with the other cities. Baghdad, for instance, has 8 percent of Iraq's population, Riyadh 10 percent of Saudi Arabia's, Khartoum 11 percent of the Sudan, and so on.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, it is expected that the present Arab urban population of 44 percent (Japan 65 percent, U.S.A. 70 percent, Sweden 73 percent, England 80 percent) will rapidly increase to 60-70 percent by 1990. With this projection and considering the high birth-rate in the Arab countries, it is likely that the population of the Arab cities in 1990 will be equal to the total population of the Arab countries in 1970! If this trend continues then it is expected that by the year 2000 the population in the Arab urban centres will have increased by 300 percent, compared with 66 percent in the industrialized countries. Of course, this rapid surge of urbanization is not due to socio-economic or cultural development; instead it is attributable to the special local conditions of the region's migrational patterns.

International urbanization studies reveal a clear relationship between economic and social development on one hand, and the level of urbanization on the other regardless of the lack of uniformity in the pace of change of these components. It is alarming to note, however, that in Arab countries, as in similar developing areas, urbanization is proceeding almost without control, in fact more rapidly than the corresponding improvements in social and economic conditions. Meanwhile, it is observed that the economic growth rate of a country, particularly those in the industrialized world, shows a high degree of correlation with the level of urbanization of that country. In addition, health and educational

programmes in these countries have uniformly kept pace with, or superseded industrialization as a result of massive investment, progress and a comprehensive planning approach to these sectors.

Development planning is at a very early stage in the Arab countries, and is primarily concerned with progress in specific sectors rather than with the planning of the total physical environment.<sup>6</sup> In many Arab countries undue emphasis has been given to industrialization at the expense of the development of other sectors, thus in many instances misguiding the overall direction of development in the context of social conditions and possibilities. This is partly due to the inadequate understanding or recognition of the principle that, valid development requires the enhancement of material potentials, as well as the satisfaction of the needs and aspirations of the population.

Both people and place, both man and land, are the ingredients and the intangible generators of healthy survival and steady growth. Unfortunately, development plans of most Arab cities have not taken fully into consideration the nature and magnitude of the population explosion due to various political, administrative and economic reasons, or owing to the lack of expertise and adequate information.<sup>7</sup> Nomadic people, for instance, who make up a considerable proportion of the Arab population, are generally not accounted for in social and economic statistics, which are, by and large incomplete and unreliable anyway. In addition, the age-structure of the urban population in Arab cities shows that children constitute 47 percent of the population, which is high compared with 28 percent in the developed countries. Clearly, this must be considered in future development plans in view of the fact that at present labour force in the Arab countries is, on average, 25 percent of the population—one of the lowest in the world (e.g., Germany's labour force is 48 percent of its population). The relatively small labour force implies a correspondingly higher number of dependents per worker, and reflects also the deep influence of traditional and social factors in the region; the latter is on the decline, however, as a result of education, progress and socio-economic challenges.<sup>8</sup> In any case, efforts to relate population trends, industrial location and geographical distribution to development objectives have been until now too simplistic, perhaps unrealistically so, and also distorted or crude. The unusual circumstances of unrest, pressure and uncertainty, which this region and its cities have experienced during the last three decades, have also contributed to the deterioration and imbalance in the urban communities—not to mention reversals, disorientation and confusion with the order of priorities.

Internal migration has been a major source of sprawl, conflict, over-crowding and stagnation in the urban environment. The 'pull' factors of urban life such as industrialization, employment, better living conditions, social status, and medical, educational and social facilities, together with the 'push' factors of rural life such as lack of opportunity, crowded settlements, inefficiency, low productivity, low-income, dreariness, lack of challenge, inferior living conditions and facilities, scarcity of arable land and neglect by government, have jointly led to successive waves of internal rural-urban migration mostly to the capital and the metropolitan areas, and also from town to city. Rural-urban migration has seriously and adversely affected the cities. For example, in-migration accounts for 20 percent of the urban growth of *Damascus* and *Aleppo*, and this compares with 33 percent for Cairo and 50 percent for Jordan's urban areas. Furthermore, metropolization and the dominance of large urban centres drain material and human resources from the network of orbiting settlements and villages.<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting in this context that 25 percent of Iraq's population live in *Baghdad*, 40 percent of Lebanon's in *Beirut*, 18 percent of Egypt's in *Cairo*, 16 percent of Tunisia's in *Tunis* and 16 percent of Jordan's in *Amman*. This, again, testifies to the greater problem of uneven population distribution and the imbalance in development plans which are primarily focused upon the improvement of the major urban centres, thus neglecting small-size and intermediate towns. Consequently, the current situation is characterized by further in-migration pressures on capital cities, and by greater deterioration and devitalization of small towns and villages which make up the bulk of the Arab settlements.

Continuing migration has given rise, of course, to shanty towns, *sarais* and squatter settlements, within or on the periphery of the cities. From the sociological point of view, Arab cities attract young male migrants who are better educated, able and active economically; they leave behind their villages that are inferior, devitalized and stagnant, and become even more so with increasing migration. The new migrants tend to gravitate towards existing groups with whom they can identify in terms of origin.

income and inclination, until they settle permanently and are eventually engulfed by the anonymity of urban life. They usually share facilities and housing with relatives and friends, thus causing rapid deterioration and delapidation of their environment.<sup>5</sup> Consequent congestion, insanitary housing and problems of urban adaptation then consign migrant urbanites generally to share the common indignities of neglect, destitution, malnutrition, poor health, discrimination and exploitation like others who came before them. Yet, despite increasing legal measures, social security and welfare programmes designed to remedy such inadequacies, migrants still tend to live in slightly better conditions than city slum-dwellers who are especially deprived of clean air, open space and communal facilities. Such slums exist largely in the centre of old, over-crowded and unhealthy urban centres, usually suffocated by traffic and degraded by delapidation and neglect. These slums thus generate agitation, chaos, disorder and immorality. In retrospect, although migrants have been blamed for social malaise, it has been proved recently that they do not in fact cause urban criminality, but could contribute to increased birth-rate and to the rise of juvenile delinquency.<sup>7</sup> This is due to the fact that mobile (migrant) populations display greater purposefulness, responsibility and capacity for solving their problems than do those from the slums.

### 3. PHYSICAL AND VISUAL VALUES OF ARAB CITIES

Arab cities are rich in their cultural, religious and imaginative architectural heritage, reflected in their unique physical patterns and visual characteristics.<sup>10</sup> The physical and spatial features of the Arab city are the result of the continual interaction of climatic, social, cultural and human values, translated into architectural forms using local materials, elaborate skills and conforming to local aesthetics (Figure 1). These forms are readily identified in the old streets, market places, squares, mosques and social institutions; they are depicted in compact fabric and fine grain (Figure 2), and are recognized by the outstanding qualities of Arab architectural vocabulary and expression.<sup>11</sup>

Most of the quarters which contain this valuable heritage, varying as it does from one city to another only in environmental and vernacular distinctions, are now deteriorating and suffering from congestion, conflict and neglect. They cannot accommodate the pressures of the Technological Age, soaring traffic volumes and the increasing complexities of communal needs. Their format is simply incapable of meeting the contradictory demands of today's urban movement and functions (Figure 3). It is, indeed, unfortunate that such reservoirs of Arab culture and heritage are left to decay while, in the rush for modernization, Arab cities have adopted imported clichés, foreign methods and irresponsible building codes.<sup>12</sup> The blind trust in foreign know-how and consultants has corrupted local values and replaced them with symbolic expressways, skyscrapers and kaleidoscopic panoramas of conflicting images, colours and patterns of fallacious forms that are divorced from the environmental dictates. The new (imported) architectural forms (Plate 1) lack a sense of belonging and identification; they tend to supersede and offend, rather than to complement and harmonize the essential characteristics of the Arab urban environment.

The 'modern' mania for restless and exhibitionist developments (Plate 1), portraying material wealth and/or power and lacking in refined cultural taste, values and heritage, only pay lip-service to Arab urban development; indeed, they rob Arab cities of their special identity and their unique dimension of history.<sup>13</sup> This is not a romantic plea for the preservation of certain physical details or the recreation of historical clichés; it is in fact a demand for the conservation and revitalization of Arab cities' living heritage and the embodiment of their permanent values in form, pattern and expression which mirror *with validity* the contemporary resources and potential. Lewis Mumford's declaration<sup>14</sup> is only too relevant in this context: "The final test of an economic system is not the tons of iron, the tanks of oil, or the miles of textiles it produces; the final test lies in its ultimate products—the sort of men and women it nurtures and the order, beauty and sanity of their communities."

### 4. PROSPECTS FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT

While most Arab countries have adopted a centralized planning approach to their physical, social and economic problems in practice, if not in principle, it is vital to complement this with a parallel emphasis



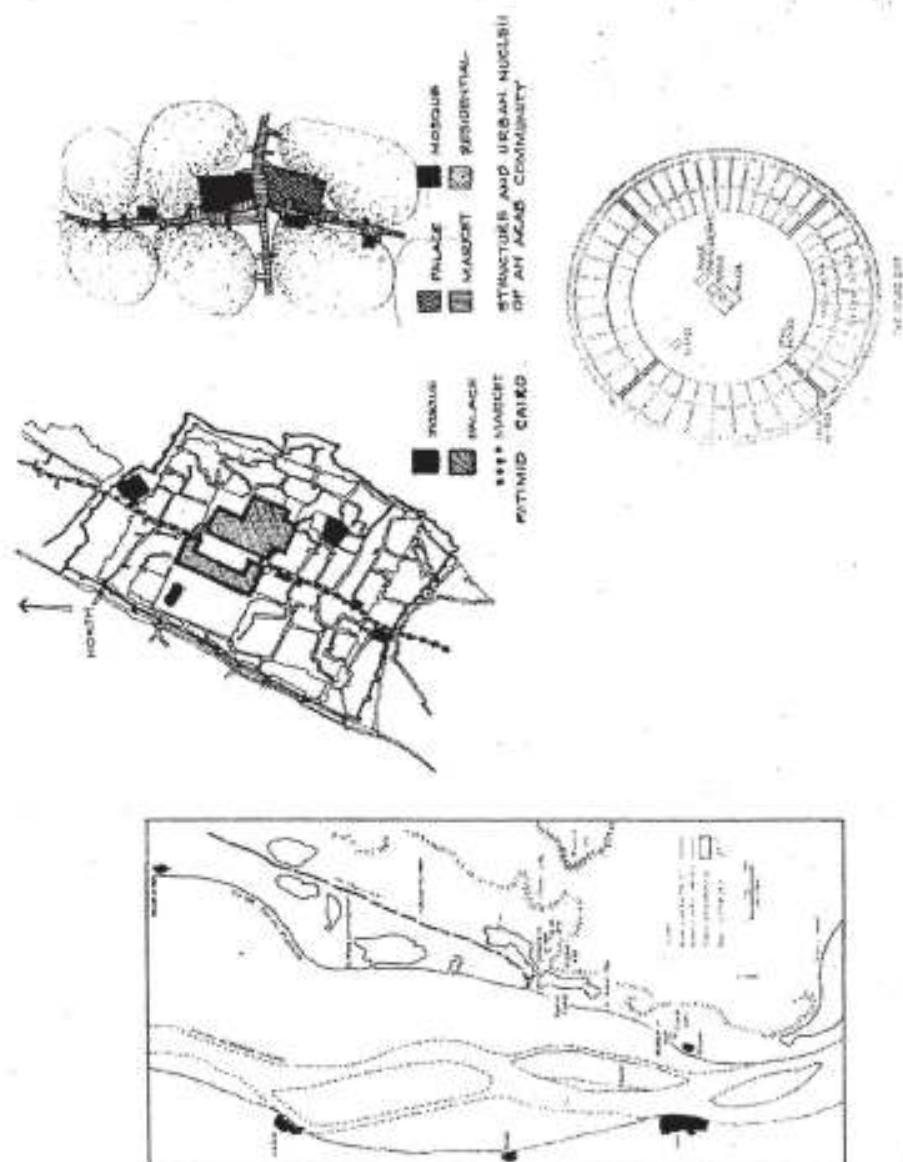


Figure 1. Plans of old Cairo, the physical structure of an Arab community, the Round City of Al-Mansour, Baghdad.



Figure 2. Plans and typical compact fabric of old urban patterns in the Middle East.

on geographic and regional planning. The regional approach to solving urban problems is mandatory. The term 'region' in this context means a metropolis or an urban zone encompassing all urban areas affected by a unified economic base (regardless of administrative boundaries), a conglomeration of small towns or villages with common interests and denominators, or a geographic district of outstanding or major natural resources.

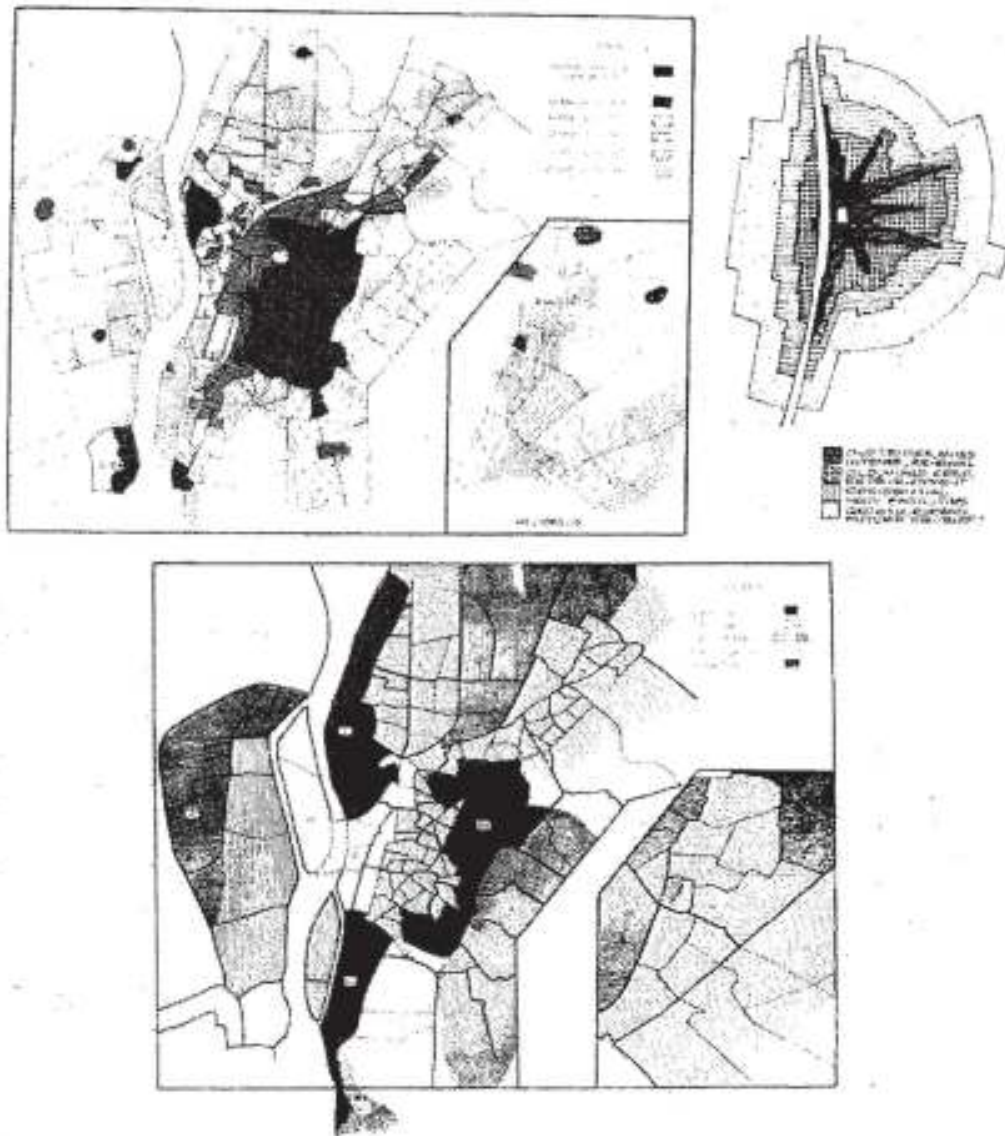


Figure 3. Structure and growth of the Carra Metropolis. Diagrammatic plans and section showing zones of urban structure in old cities.



Plate 1. Abu Dhabi City Centre, U.A.E.

Regional planning, as distinct from the planning of regions as miniatures of the national plan for a specific area for the geographic distribution of economic and human resources, is indispensable. For it synchronizes and capitalizes upon the geographic, economic and social forces of each region independently, within the dictates of the overall national targets. Relying on a cyclical input-output information flow, the hierarchical levels of planning are entrusted with their resources, duties and responsibilities which are organically inter-related and complementary.<sup>13</sup> As has been lately realized in major Arab cities, the urban situation can be dealt with more effectively and efficiently at the local rather than at the national level. The order of priorities and phases of development should therefore be established according to available material and human resources, possibilities and potentials, maximum effectiveness of implementation, comprehensiveness of operation and complementarity of phases and levels. The regional concept in the context of the Arab world implies a coordinated system of human settlements, from the smallest village as a unit of production to the intermediate communities and regional centres as units of service and distribution of goods; and to the large city as the hub of the national economy and the decision-making system.<sup>2</sup>

It is heartening to note that several national governments have accepted with resolve to undertake major responsibility for promoting socio-economic and physical development, although without appropriate and sufficient attention to human considerations. The majority of Arab governments have initiated central planning machinery for comprehensive environmental planning at the metropolitan and regional levels as an integral part of their national plan, and have prepared short, medium and long-term development plans related to geographical development projects in areas of concern. This has necessitated the establishment of hierarchical planning bodies at the local, city and metropolitan levels with sufficient legal powers and technical facilities to: (i) achieve a better understanding of the aspirations of the population and its cultural and social characteristics, and (ii) undertake effective adaptation of high-level planning objectives in order to meet local demands and conditions.

The emphasis on a regional approach should make it possible to interconnect and coordinate development plans and activities in the four urban corridors (Section 2) of Arab cities. A comprehensive urbanization framework, bolstered by a viable communication network linking these corridors, is a strategic umbilical cord which will lead to a common Arab density and enhance socio-economic and

cultural integration. The idea, the resources and the means for this are available; all that is required now is concerted effort, together with commitment to the idea.

In view of the commonly accepted definition of urbanization as the process whereby people come to live in urban areas, it is clear that the development plans for the over-crowded metropolitan areas and cities must include their surrounding areas also; because, it is through the development of the surrounding areas that sprawl can be arrested, rural-urban migration reduced, growth of slums controlled, and interference by conflicting uses curbed.<sup>14</sup>

Although glorified planning proposals and master plans for many Arab cities have been formulated, most municipalities lack necessary technical and managerial skills, and suffer from inadequate infrastructure, poor financial resources, shortage of updated maps, absence of reliable surveys and dependable statistics, and lack of credible feedback and follow-up systems.<sup>15</sup> The lack of materials and technical resources renders some proposals utterly far-fetched and inconsequential. Progress has, nevertheless, been made to extend primary education and social and health care centres to most districts in a hierarchical framework, as an explicit objective of community development programmes. There is, on the other hand, a persistent need to direct development programmes towards the countryside to help stabilize suburban and rural areas culturally, socially and economically in order to divert the tide of rural-urban migration. Revitalization of rural conglomerations, which constitute the majority of small settlements, is dependent on the establishment of a viable economic base, the building of a comprehensive transportation network linking provincial and local centres,<sup>16</sup> as well as the establishment of markets, development of skills, know-how and human attitudes. Planning efforts must be directed to organize, bolster, control and enhance the activities and the physical framework of villages, small towns and intermediate cities to create various degrees of 'pull', and thus bring about an effective hierarchical chain of development.<sup>17</sup>

Location of industry and other major magnets of economic development ('pull' factors) is the most important planning instrument available to national governments. Until now, however, it has been used ineffectively in Arab urban planning, sometimes with gross negligence, for reasons other than valid planning; this had led to greater congestion, centralization, imbalance in population distribution and slow economic development.

Development programmes should be directed towards decentralization and the achievement of a more even population distribution, by utilizing the key factor of industrial location. This would diminish the 'pull' factors of urban centres, thereby activating new nodes of viable economic bases in the surrounding rural areas, and in the forgotten zones of national concern.<sup>18</sup>

Evaluation of the impact of social, economic and cultural transformation (including the system of government) on population behaviour and attitudes is vital to development programmes, and to the fulfilment of comprehensive physical planning objectives. The social and psychological vacuum created by migration, dislocation, technological progress, value scales, lack of cultural development, illiteracy and foreign influences require serious assessment and attention.<sup>19</sup> If the physical structure of Arab cities does not incorporate Arab social content and cultural characteristics, then it is bound to disorient and misguide the total purpose of urban and national development. A crucial challenge to planning Arab cities lies in the embodiment of their strong traditional values, well-knit social cohesion and the deeply-rooted spiritual heritage; these characteristics, which dominate and indeed penetrate the everyday lives of the Arab people, are now being constantly shaken by the temptation of technological progress, and by imported modes and values.<sup>20</sup>

##### 5. THE HOUSING SITUATION

It is well known that most Arab cities suffer from chronic 'urbanitis'. The reasons behind this are diverse: overcrowded facilities, sprawl, congestion, deterioration, lack of open spaces and recreational facilities, serious housing shortages, rent escalation, inefficient transportation, chronic traffic congestion, spiralling land prices, speculation, limitation of available urban land (or public-owned zones for planned growth), high construction costs, lack of financial and credit resources, shortage of building

materials and skilled labour.<sup>11</sup> These are in fact the causes of the continuing deterioration of the urban condition, the worsening housing situation and, ultimately, the impairment of environmental health. In addition, urban housing programmes are beset with administrative, financial, technical, human and architectural design problems: they are largely unimaginative and sterile 'quarantines' for economically 'handicapped' groups that usually transform housing developments into slums soon after occupation. Meanwhile, the rate of urban growth is so high that governments cannot cope with the serious lag in meeting housing needs by replacing and redeveloping dilapidated zones, by remodelling existing ones, or by providing new areas to meet increasing demand.

Urban housing programmes have been predominantly circumstantial and short-term: they have lacked comprehensiveness, purpose and complementary facilities, and have thus become largely ineffective. Most municipalities in the Middle East have scarcely exceeded the construction of two dwelling units per thousand of population annually, whereas the present rate of urban population growth, together with existing shortages, requires the annual construction of ten dwelling units for every thousand.<sup>12</sup> Despite the enormity of urban housing requirements, most governments of the region still spend only 2-3 percent of their GNP on housing, compared with 7 percent spent in the developed countries.<sup>13</sup> This potentially dangerous inaction underlines the gravity of the urban problem and the escalating crisis of the housing situation in the Arab cities.

The housing sector of Arab cities can be taken as a true mirror of the state of their urban development, since housing makes up the bulk of the urban fabric and contains the very essence of urban living. Unfortunately, this sector, the very source of the kaleidoscopic and conflicting manifestations inspired by legal and professional inadequacies, includes awesome problems and poses serious challenges. In addition to the well-known problems of finance, rampant inflation, lack of materials and technical capabilities, poor safety, circulation and accessibility—factors which contribute to the deepening housing crisis, there is also the exaggerated emphasis of national planning guidelines on production rather than on physical development. There are, however, a few exceptions: in Iraq, for example, a national housing and community facilities programme was adopted within the framework of national development. Also, in certain cities helpful measures have been taken, such as the enactment of effective zoning and building laws, the establishment of housing finance agencies, the allocation of subsidies and incentives for the housing sector, and the direct construction of low-income housing projects; these measures have significantly eased the situation. The thriving role of the housing industry as a source of economic activity, and the private sector's involvement in housing construction, have also helped to ease the crisis temporarily, although the housing target set by the United Nations was not even 30 percent fulfilled by 1972. Meanwhile, public housing, which essentially lacks necessary communal facilities and amenities, has been unaccommodating, sterile and hardly related to, or integrated with other parts of the urban social and physical fabric, mobility and activities.<sup>14</sup>

Crucial measures for housing reform should include preferential interest rates on mortgages, technical assistance, and tax rebates and incentives for developers to encourage their participation in low-income housing ventures—perhaps in partnership with the public sector. In addition, the legal framework should restrict speculation and regulate growth, define population densities and uses, encourage co-operative housing movements and the development of local materials and techniques, and provide for the adequate production and prefabrication of various building supplies. These measures would also increase employment potential of the construction industry, which at present accounts for 30-40 percent of total industrial employment.

To achieve this, Arab governments should be required to match the 6-7 percent of the GNP which the developed countries now allocate to their housing. Furthermore, they must not regard housing as a mere provision of economical dwelling units for the low-income groups, but rather as the fulfilment of all residential and living needs of all citizens of all groups, regardless of income, sex, age, colour, creed or origin. Middle-income housing, housing for the aged and the deprived, and housing for the transient population (students included) should be provided according to need and resources, and must be integrated with other urban functions and activities.<sup>15</sup>

Comprehensive housing programmes, which must include all communal facilities, should be consi-

dered as the major determinant of the quality of urban life. A healthy survival of Arab cities demands and requires both a multinational and a regional reconstruction campaign to eradicate slum areas, to control unplanned growth and uses, to transplant dynamic components for urban revitalization, and to plan a healthy expansion for urban areas in a viable and adaptable environmental framework.

## 6. A SUMMARY OF THE CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM AND PROPOSALS FOR ITS SOLUTION

### 6.1 *Causes of the problem*

It is clear from the foregoing that the current urban crisis affecting most Arab cities is symptomatic of their gross under-development and misdirected priorities. Before any proposal can be made to remedy the situation, it would obviously be useful to summarize the root causes which have historically contributed to the crisis, and still continue to do so. The major causes are these:

- (a) The inability of the existing administrative and control machinery to cope with the complex issues of urbanization—a fact evidenced by the present ineffective legal framework, policies, organization, processes and methodology.
- (b) The lack of experience and examples to assist in dealing with local urban problems, as well as the general absence of communication among Arab cities in exchanging information, sharing know-how, and in comparing experiences.
- (c) The increasing rural-urban migration, proliferation of slums, the enormous lag in housing and public services, and the shortage of employment opportunities. These are not helped by inaction, lack of commitment, inadequate planning and development of resources, or by the absence of citizen-participation.
- (d) The alarming cultural disorientation, social disorganization, class conflict, corrupt bureaucracy and individual apathy, as well as insufficient concern for implementing basic environmental health measures, and
- (e) the high cost of urban planning which cannot be met by the insufficient financial resources and capabilities available to most Arab cities at present.

### 6.2 *Proposed measures for the reform of urban settlements*

To remedy the situation and to establish a continuing process for urban reform and regeneration, alleviation of the present inadequacies and shortages is essential, including the adoption of the following measures:

- (a) Stemming of migratory tides and their containment according to a comprehensive socio-economic and physical plan, ranging from national to local levels.
- (b) Creation of alternative growth poles, coupled with comprehensive national development objectives. This will require research to determine the impact of dynamic relationships between urbanization and industrial development. Indeed, industrialization may not be the only route to the future development of all Arab cities or nations.
- (c) Realistic and effective implementation of social, economic, physical and cultural objectives in existing cities according to phased plans of action.
- (d) Allocation of adequate financial resources for urban redevelopment. A minimum percentage of the national income (GNP) should be budgeted for urban redevelopment. Also, the establishment of a bank for urban development to which governments should contribute a minimum percentage of their national income from oil revenues; this would assist in extending low-interest loans for Arab urban development.
- (e) Establishment of an Urban Research Centre to assist and advise in the planning of Arab cities, and to act as an information-bank for the dissemination of knowledge, exchange of ideas and experience, and for the development of infra-structure.

(f) Preservation of local heritage, communal identity and environmental values, as well as the development of the Arab individual and Arab culture, and complete reappraisal of the existing legal framework, zoning and building laws; these are now inadequate and rarely reflect Arab environmental conditions. It is ironic that in Arab cities open spaces, parks, ventilation, light, amenity, social contact, local aesthetics and the individual's privacy are now being sacrificed because of inappropriate building codes which, in any case, contradict the basic needs and standards of environmental health.

### 6.3 Recommendations for a comprehensive environmental planning approach

There is no doubt that the comprehensive development of Arab cities is dependent upon the elimination of their deterioration, inadequacies and shortages; and clearly, such developments would automatically improve environmental health standards. The following specific measures are recommended for improving environmental health:

(a) Comprehensive planning of urban complementary constituent factors, with in-built growth facilities in conjunction with a knowledge of localised human resources and materials.

(b) Development of necessary social, cultural, recreational, educational, health, religious and commercial facilities that are integral with the various classes and categories of urban residential components. The psychological and emotional accommodation of individual needs are complementary to the upgrading of environmental health.

(c) Construction of efficient and safe means to service urban areas with all utilities, including water, sewerage and industrial water treatment plants, refuse collection and treatment, slaughter houses, public baths and rest rooms, sanitary market places, etc. are key functions of municipalities; these must be carefully implemented for maintaining public health. The following recommendations should also be observed when applicable:

(i) Cities located away from river basins should be provided with alternative sources of water, from underground or from desalination plants.

(ii) Cities located on rivers or seashores must take steps to ensure the adequate treatment of their sewage and industrial wastes in order to prevent possible water pollution and contamination of beaches, and

(iii) when public water supply and sewerage are not available, it is of great importance to observe strict enforcement of municipal rules regarding the design and location of cesspools, so that they do not pollute water wells.

(d) Parks, play areas and recreational facilities for various age groups should be integrated with residential areas, their sizes and locations being keyed to the hierarchy of urban organization.

(e) The appropriate orientation of urban areas and residential districts so that they receive adequate sunlight, ventilation, view and amenities, and also protection from sand-storms and other natural hazards.

(f) Necessary activities and installations that produce smoke, noise, odour, vibration, explosion and radiation, should be isolated from the residential districts.

(g) Elimination of traffic conflicts and dangers for securing safe means of pedestrian movement.

(h) Prevention of the causes of environmental pollution of land, water and air. Industrial nations have already taken measures prohibiting the use of diesel fuels, and requiring automobiles to install anti-pollution devices. Steps must also be taken against irresponsible dumping of hydro-carbons, industrial wastes, organic and solid rejects, and thermal and radioactive pollutants. These increasing sources of pollution are likely to endanger health, damage marine ecology, and spoil waterfronts and natural amenities.

(i) Moral and ethical hazards (bars, night clubs, etc.) should be specifically prohibited from residential areas to safeguard local values, privacy and social stability. Preservation of natural and historical sites is also important for elevating both morale and cultural standards.



- (j) Landscaping, beautification and the enhancement of urban corridors, squares and parks, as well as the uplifting of aesthetic taste by encouraging, through incentives, a high degree of architectural excellence, are vital means for maintaining involvement, identity and environmental sanity.
- (k) Elimination of unnecessary tensions caused by traffic congestion in crowded areas. Clearly, such tensions would diminish with the easing of the urban housing crisis together with the provision of an efficient public transport system.
- (l) Establishment of cultural institutions (theatres, performing arts centres, concert halls, etc.), museums and libraries is necessary for the psychological well-being of both the individual and the urban population as a whole.
- (m) Provision of a healthy environment which is coherent and imaginative, and the distinct but compatible components of which are readily identifiable by all individuals, is an important criterion for communal involvement and a sense of belonging.
- (n) Accommodation of individual and communal aspirations, vernacular values, historical heritage and commitment to environmental forces are essential ingredients of sane and healthy urban planning.
- (o) A gradual and phased change of pace in urban development is essential to the evolutionary process of progress. If the rate of urban development and physical reconstruction in the Arab cities is too abrupt, then the usually slow process of social, cultural and psychological transformation may be replaced by corruption, disorientation and immorality—the ultimate set-back for material progress and civilization.
- (p) Since no environmental reform programme, however ambitious, is meaningful without the understanding and commitment of the citizenry, municipalities and central governments must implement careful and effective campaigns for information dissemination. These should be calculated to stimulate the individual's awareness, and to arouse his/her civic responsibility *vis-à-vis* the efforts of environmental health agencies; and also to motivate citizen participation and enhance consciousness, to help uplift the human condition, to mobilize communal action for conserving local values, and to synchronize efforts for maintaining a healthy human environment.

#### 7. CONCLUSIONS

The desperate and deteriorating urban condition in most Arab cities at the present time is a result of benign neglect, lack of purpose and objectivity, and misguided priorities. In view of the increasing seriousness of the situation, urgent steps must be taken *now* to arrest this worsening situation and if possible, reverse it. In this paper a comprehensive survey of the present situation has been presented, its root causes analysed, and recommendations proposed for its remedy. An overview of the situation suggests that resources are now available for implementing a suitable remedy; what is lacking however would appear to be concerted effort together with an appropriate set of priorities. It is hoped that suitable steps will be taken in the near future so that the Arab urban situation does not finally and irretrievably degenerate beyond redemption.

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## **Chapter Four: Development**

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#### 4.1 The National Development and the Nile Water in Crisis

One is bewildered and concerned by the stagnant negotiations among the eight countries sharing the Nile basin, which have been lame and impotent since 2001, unable to reach a common agreement on the Nile Basin Initiative. The NBI should aim at the equitable distribution and management of the Nile water among the participants without jeopardizing, as we assert, the historical shares of Egypt and the Sudan. These have been recognized as 55.5 billion  $m^3$  and 18.5 billion  $m^3$  respectively from the total annual Nile water revenue of 84 billion  $m^3$ . However, there is an essential difference in the position of the four southern countries, which challenges the 50-year-old agreement, and demands a greater share! This could be detrimental to Egyptian national interests and security. The Nile water has become a hydro-political challenge to Egyptian future development, stability and its survival.

The current Egyptian share of 55.5 billion  $m^3$  will not suffice to meet the essential national hydraulic needs in the coming decades, given the current consumption needs, lifestyles, urbanization, and socio-economic development goals. By the year 2020, the expected population explosion will reach 100 million people, which will require, at the average human consumption of 400 liters/capita/day, in addition to the agricultural and industrial requirements, nearly 60 billion  $m^3$ . One would hope that the Egyptian position in the forthcoming meeting of the NBI Water Ministers this summer in Alexandria is firm enough to insist on Egypt's absolutely needed historical share of the annual Nile water revenue, and that this share is fundamental for Egypt's strategic development, prosperity and security.

On the other hand, one is equally disturbed and alarmed by the recently published study by the National Organization for Remote Sensing, which revealed that recent remote sensing maps, taken by satellites, are indicating the sharp decrease of Egyptian agricultural land, due to the uncontrolled growth of urban and rural settlements at an alarming rate. As an example, during the last two decades the east delta region has lost 30% of its green land. Accordingly, the study warns of the pending, utter eradication of agricultural land in sixty years. At this galloping rate of consumption of both agricultural land and potable water how can Egypt meet the essential needs of its 150 million people by 2050!? Indeed, these are looming national crises that demand drastic commitment, mobilization, and action. The vital water issue alone could trigger serious conflicts and confrontation!

Meanwhile, given those facts, one wonders at the national media recent reports that the Ministry of Agriculture has decided to allow an increase of built-up area of land bordering the Cairo-Alexandria expressway to 7% instead of the current 2%, and to 15% in certain areas, hoping to reap LE 100,000 per acre. As a result of this increase, the ministry hopes to harvest a

total of LE 20 billion in this transaction! Are the motives purely monetary, despite the national development strategic objectives?

Ironically, it is clear by now that no one heeds any proper concern to those studies, projections, or plans. Very few decision makers bother to think of the national strategy, security objectives, or developmental goals, for, alas, there is no due consideration, necessary coordination or comprehensive strategic planning that places national interests and future prosperity as a top priority. It is high time did we think of alternative water and agricultural resources in order to achieve sufficiency! Desalinization plants on the Mediterranean and Red Seas to produce needed potable water for the multiplying millions, and for agrarian reclamation projects, are of an absolute necessity. In addition, intensive research on genetically modified grain strains that can grow on seawater and produce needed crops suitable for human consumption must be mobilized immediately. This can be augmented with the proper cultivation of sea floors on the 12-mile continental shelves, which would boost the production of the needed food sources, as has been proven in the pioneering research and experiments during the last fifty years in the United States and Japan.

The stakes are high, for the national development goals must be fundamentally the cornerstones of any treaty, agreements, policies, programs or plans at all levels, at all sectors and at all regions, all the time. Great challenges demand an awesome resolve and require an absolute commitment!

June, 2009

## 4.2 Millennium apathy

Al-Ahram Weekly 7 - 13 October 2010- Issue No. 1018- Opinion

The UN Millennium Development Goals Summit was a tired and disappointing affair, says **Mohsen Zahran\***

Attended by nearly 140 presidents, kings and cabinet ministers, the summit was convened on 20-22 September 2010 in order to review the global situation and achievements in fulfilling the MDGs during the last 10 years, and five years before the target date in 2015.

During the summit in 1990 in Rio de Janeiro, it was agreed that the world summit would meet in New York City at the UN headquarters prior to the 65th annual Meeting of the General Assembly 10 years hence, in order to review the progress achieved by the UN member states in the implementation of those goals.

These goals are spearheaded by cutting extreme poverty by half, especially for the more than one billion people living on less than \$1.25 per day, as declared by Ban Ki-Moon, UN secretary general in his address. In addition, other primary goals include ensuring universal primary education, eradicating illiteracy, halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, reducing maternal mortality at birth by 75 per cent and child mortality before age five by 65 per cent. The eight MDG targets also include empowerment of women, and environmental sustainability.

World Bank President Robert Zoellick, heads of states and NGOs expressed their disappointment at the minimal accomplishments. As indicated in the country reports, the limited achievements realised thus far are limited to 30 nations, with scarce external funding. Some leaders blamed the global economic slowdown. Others voiced their concern at the alarming deterioration of conditions in certain regions around the world, especially the horrible genocide acts and terrible massacres in the Congo, Burundi, Uganda, South Africa and Somalia, in addition to dislocation and migration due to natural causes as in Pakistan and Nigeria, or due to national strife, violence and wars.

International experts as well as concerned officials and humanitarians have stressed the urgent need to confront the causes of those sufferings, deprivation and misery in concert with MDGs.

Although a glimmer of hope was announced at the progress achieved in the goal to half extreme poverty by 2015, as well as in the health sector, especially in fighting HIV/AIDS and malaria, coupled with combating illiteracy and improvement of primary schools in the education

sector, it was stressed by UN officials that further progress requires \$42 billion annually in order to achieve those goals during the next five years.

Despite declarations of a few leaders of the developed world to raise the funds needed, especially for the countries in the developing world suffering from extreme poverty and underdevelopment, many concurred that the slow pace of implementation and intolerable stagnation during the last 10 years gives little hope that the Millennium Goals can barely be achieved by 2015.

Judging from previous world summits, especially the Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen last December, it seems that such summits have little use, and are often arenas for political manoeuvres, unfulfilled pledges and empty slogans. They only reaffirmed the despair, hopelessness and helplessness of the world community in confronting global problems, global threats and global crises. Unfortunately, except for strategic resolutions favouring Western interests, world forums and UN resolutions have been, by and large, fruitless, empty, fragile, lame and impotent.

Any achievement of such cardinal goals as combating poverty must start with the national will and a solid commitment to achieve those goals. International subsidies or support can only help, provided nations have development plans and budgets prudently adopted in phases at all levels, regions localities and sectors.

### 4.3 The Moslem World in Dilemma?

**Published as: Vast potential,**

In: Al-Ahram Weekly 12 - 18 November 2009, Issue No.972

In this holy season, when nearly four million Moslems (0.3% of the total) from all nations travel to Mecca in order to perform their holy pilgrimage, obediently submit and pray to God Almighty, they are in fact a living testimony to their spiritual union, submission, devotion and equality before God, regardless of color, creed, origin, gender, culture, wealth or status. However, it is ironic that while everyone is watching this remarkable annual assembly of Moslems with awe, amazement and acclaim, a recent report by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, was especially telling and revealing, regarding the disturbing conditions and situation of the Moslem world. The current global Moslem population stands in the Report at 1.57 billion people in 232 countries and territories, -- nearly 25% of the world population. Thus, Islam is the second largest religion after Christianity (2 billion adherents). Sixty percent of those Moslems live in Asia, 20% in the Middle East and North African countries and 15% in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Report exposes to the world, especially the west, that not all Moslems are Arabs, and not all Arabs are Moslems. It further underscores the breakdown of the Moslem Sunni – Shiite population, revealing that Shiites make up 10 -13% of the total, 80% of whom live in four countries, namely: Iran, Iraq, India, and Pakistan. However, Middle Eastern countries remain the religious spiritual beacons of the Islamic world with the holiest sites in Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia; and Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, Palestine; and the Al-Azhar Mosque and University in Cairo, Egypt. Al-Azhar, of course, is the prominent religious heart of moderate Islamic scholarship, and the oldest center of Islamic theological teachings since 969 A.D.

Given these significant demographic facts, one would wonder in bewilderment and confusion at the depressing situation and declining conditions of Moslems around the globe, despite the establishment of the inter-regional Islamic Conference nearly three decades ago, as a regional forum, aiming at translating this two-week annual spiritual assembly in the pilgrimage season in Mecca into a year-round union of cause, action and deed. Its objectives are intended to address and confront the challenges of peace, security, stability and development as well as to promote the uplifting of the deteriorating human conditions of the great majority of the Moslem population everywhere. However, this organization has too little to show, beside verbal resolutions and ceremonial declarations of intent without any substantial content or truly



concrete achievements! One would again observe and bemoan in dismay and discontent that the majority of the Moslem communities are plagued with the misfortunes of poverty, illness, illiteracy, under-development, violence, instability, and insecurity. Why is it that Islamic Middle Eastern countries, that pride themselves of being custodians of holy sites and religious scholarship, have not spearheaded the drives to implement badly needed socio-economic, political and cultural development in the Moslem world, as they have partly achieved in religious affairs? Furthermore, why is it that certain Middle Eastern countries with their 15% of the Moslem population, have brought upon the Islamic world universal accusations and blame, with their growing fanaticism, radicalism, violence and terrorism, and even exported these to Asian Moslem countries like tolerant, moderate Indonesia in which reside 203 million Moslems (13% of all Moslems)? While some Asian countries, like Indonesia and Malaysia, have catapulted themselves during the last three decades to new heights of development in order to achieve progress and prosperity, as economic tigers, however, the majority of Middle Eastern countries, alas, have remained almost at a standstill, or even slipped backwards, during the elapsed 100 years after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. In fact, their geo-political mosaics and socio-economic road maps have remained in limbo throughout the last century, trapped in a state of *de facto* or virtual colonization, and entrenched in wars, fighting, instability, bloodshed, under-development, and backwardness. Ironically, their abundant national and human resources and the common denominators of objectives, religion, culture and language, should have enabled and propelled them into new frontiers and great achievements in all fronts.

Yet the seeds of animosity, infighting, rivalry and hatred continue to infect many areas and infest relationships, thus threatening the very existence and future of the Moslem populations in the region. Tragically enough, the Moslem populations continue, in the meantime, to endure intolerable deprivations, persistent suffering, and curtailment of human rights and denial of freedom. These practices violate and affront the basic Islamic teachings. Although these divisive seeds were planted fourteen centuries ago, nevertheless, external powers and interests are rudely exploiting Middle East resources and conditions by capitalizing on the potentially divisive issues in order to further inflame and exasperate the volatile conflicting issues of religion, color, origin, resources, and borders. The ultimate aim is focused on splitting national and regional entities and causes at the seams, thus triggering wars, bloodshed, terrorism, violence, and tension. Alas, the Moslem nations' wealth is drained in exhausting conflicts, expensive armaments, futile fighting, desperate illusions, and aggressive intentions. Meanwhile, the latest Chinese Report entitled "Academic Ranking of World Universities - 2009" on the Top 500 Universities world-wide, has embarrassingly indicated that only three countries in the Islamic world are listed to have one university each that has fulfilled the ranking criteria, namely: Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran. This plainly underscores the fact that the education system in the Islamic and Arab worlds is in need of drastic reform.

The awesome spiritual and human resources of the Moslem world, coupled with their blessings of vast human and natural resources, especially in oil and gas, could motivate and propel national strategic plans for unprecedented socio-economic development and prosperity, in coordinated fronts, levels and sectors, provided that destructive forces of tension, interventions, and divisions are contained and eliminated. The Islamic Conference and the Arab League are only formal regional frameworks for the political expression of union but have unfortunately achieved too little to account for. They reflect the current state of affairs and relationships of member states with all their problems and conflicts. These regional organizations need to be restructured and get inspired by the model accomplishments and successful experiments of the European Union, and have suitable strategic plans adopted to reform and uplift Moslem conditions. Moslem nations must abandon wars, conflicts, and tensions in order to achieve greater objectives and meaningful developmental achievements for all the people in all the communities of the Moslem world.

The horizons are vast and promising; the resources are abundant and awaiting; the spiritual framework is inspiring and urging; but the will must be formidable and propelling.

#### **4.4 Fifty Years of European Union: Any Hope for An Arab Union?!**

Fifty years have passed on 25-03-2007 when six European Nations signed the Treaty of Rome launching a miraculous achievement among nations which had emerged, battered from the horrors, death, destruction, divisionism and animosities during World War II. The common will, determination and commitment of the founding countries have succeeded in consolidating the bases, the frameworks and implementation of the Union. EU has expanded its membership to the current twenty seven nations, including eleven former members of the Soviet block from east Europe. Others are awaiting admission, including Turkey which is still trying hard in order to benefit from the economic, political, cultural, scientific, environmental and technological windfalls.

A recent report in Time magazine on the fiftieth anniversary, evaluated the success and achievements of the European Union. These are summarized in a few major points which included:

- The prevalence of peace;
- Common agricultural policies;
- Disappearance of borders, facilitating movement and travel, efficient infrastructure and transportation network;
- A unified European passport to allow unrestricted travel among the member states, and elsewhere;
- A strong Irish economy;
- Common Information Technology agreements promoting efficient communications (GSM);
- Labor agreements allowing equality in pay, employment and fairplay everywhere in the EU;
- Supporting the fledging economies of certain regions and communities, as well as minimizing the social and economic gaps among member states;
- Institution of information network to enable scientists and researchers to efficiently access and exchange information;
- The establishment of the Euro as a new common monetary system on January 2001, which was adopted by 13 nations and is used by 315 million inhabitants, replacing their original national currencies.

In addition there were other benefits, such as:

- The airbus project to build a truly competitive European plane made from components manufactured in several European countries,
- Better sport and athletic competitions and protocols,
- Cleaner beaches,
- Common rules and commitment to the Kyoto Protocols to control CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and
- A commitment to arrest the hazards of climate change and global warming.

These enormous gains were coupled at the human development level with the adoption of protocols of European education enabling 1.5 million students since 1987, with a 9 billion Euros budget, to benefit from better educational standards, rules, exchange, adult education, research and travel.

However, fifty years of unprecedented achievements were not a smooth ride. The EU has also experienced occasional bumps and few failures. The French and Dutch rejection of the referendum on European constitution arrested the momentum for a while. In addition, economic growth, high unemployment rates were coupled with certain social, cultural, economic and political tensions. Globalization was occasionally resisted in order to maintain European entities and identity. The new Europe evolved by the European Union is now a strong rival to the dominance of the single global power of the US, with a GDP reaching \$ 12 trillion mark, equivalent to that of the USA.

The brilliant achievement of the EU should serve as a model and an inspirator to Arab countries, which had envisioned by establishing the Arab league in 1946, the promotion of similar goals, but alas, has embarrassingly failed after 60 years of locomotion with nothing to show for it.

Despite their common heritage, culture, history, habits, language, beliefs, and many other denominators, they are entangled, troubled, divided, oppressed, underdeveloped, suppressed, hopeless and helpless. The oil wealth has not supported – except in a few isolated locations – the emergence of a viable region. Rather the Middle East has been subject to wars, occupation, fanaticisms, interventions, disputes, fights, tensions and strife, fueled with external interests and interventions. The situation is pathetic, edging on despair and depression. Ironically, since WWI and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, in one hundred years nothing of significance has emerged.

The glorious example and achievements of the New Europe triggers one to hope for the New Arabia. But first this must be a sincere will and determination, not just creation of a new league or reforming the present troubled forum.

Is it a myth or a mirage! The dreams must be practical, and realizable. The goals must be achievable and the policies must be implementable. Facts not fictions. Beginnings should start with humble but sure manageable steps in definite arenas, sectors, fields or issues, starting with educational policies and programs. Other aspects of unified approach include telecommunications, transportation, pollution and environmental issues in addition to information technology, cultural programs, water resources, energy, agricultural development, human development, industrial and economic development, illiteracy, women empowerment, labor care, research projects, desertification, solar energy, tourism, clean beaches, clean water, clean air, heritage, archeology, etc ...

Human and natural resources are abundant, the common culture and values are strong propellers, but the will, conviction determination and commitment must prevail in order to catapult the creation of a new efficient and functioning institutional framework and a unique machinery capable of resolve, effective implementation and fruitful achievements for all to benefit from. We should learn from our failures and the successes of the EU; the emphasis must be on achievable real goals in solid steps, phases and doses not ceremonial window dressing in public manifestations for narrow media consumption.

April, 2007

## 4.5 Figures speaking

Al-Ahram Weekly 14 - 20 June 2007- Issue No. 849- Features

**Mohsen Zahran\*** looks into what the latest census has to say about Egypt's future

Last month the Central Organisation for Public Census and Statistics (CAPMAS) released the preliminary results of the 2006 census: 76.4 million, with nine million living abroad: a 24.3 and 44 per cent increase since 1996, respectively. A comprehensive reading of these figures will say much about Egypt's present issues and the development agenda it should be adopting.

The first census in Egypt was conducted in 1882, at which time the population was a mere 10 per cent of the present figure; 13 censuses have since been conducted, roughly once every decade, and they have certainly helped with city planning. It is important to note that, should the population continue to grow by 1.8 per cent per year – the last Human Development Report figure, calculated from the rates in 1975-2006 – it will reach 88.2 million by 2015. It is well to note that in the same period, the figures for demographically comparable countries like France, the UK, Germany, Iran and Turkey, grew by 0.3, 0.3, 0, 1.4 and 1.2 per cent, respectively.

Rural areas are inhabited by 57 per cent of the population (41 million); Egypt's urban population, currently 42.6 per cent, has dropped marginally since 2004 (42.7 per cent); at 43.6 per cent it was also higher in 1975, but it is expected to reach 45.4 per cent by 2015. The current trend being one of immigration into cities, more urban expansion and perhaps a greater number of cities will be needed in the next few years. Contrary to popular belief, the male-to-female ratio is 51.1:48.9. Since 1969 the number of households has risen to 17.2 million, a 35.9 per cent increase; of these 7.5 million are in urban areas, evidencing a 32.7 per cent increase for the same period. Yet with an increase of 38.6 per cent in rural areas, the tendency to settle down and start a family is evidently higher in rural areas. Excluding unregistered marriages, the divorce has grown by 39.6 per cent in 10 years – a significant figure, but not as significant as the media will have us believe. This is one of the more interesting surprises held by the census results.

Some 14 per cent of the population (10.7 million) are under the age of six, while the age brackets 6-10, 10-15 and 15-60 make up 6.9, 10.7 and 61.9 per cent, respectively; in total, no less than 32 per cent of the population are under 15; while, within the biggest and most employable, 15-60 age group, 21.9 out of 44.9 million make up the potential workforce, with only 19.8 million actually employed – some quarter of the whole population, as opposed to 60 per cent in more advanced societies; this explains the difficulties in the way of development, even though an increase in life expectancy to 74 and 76 for men and women, respectively, points to improved medical care and perhaps an altogether more effective retirement pension system.

Families too have grown smaller in size, with the average urban family dropping from 4.2 to 3.9 members since 1996, and rural families from 4.9 to 4.3 members. This should have implications for housing. Literacy and education statistics tell a somewhat more disappointing story, however, with 29.2 per cent of those over the age of 10 (16.8 million) unable to read and write, and some 884,000 out of 20 million students dropping out of school during the decade. This would seem to confirm the suspicion that, notwithstanding the number of university and school staff (100,000 and 500,000, respectively), the education system requires a complete rethink.

Unemployment has increased, too, but only marginally, from 8.9 to 9.3 of the labour market since 1996. This does mean that there are 2.4 million currently out of work, however: some LE100 billion are required to bring unemployment to a safer rate of five per cent or lower -- with an estimated LE100,000 per new job. Unemployment rates are hard to work out, with estimates ranging from 10.5 per cent (the Central Accounting Organisation) to 11.2 per cent (the Central Bank). Cairo remains the first choice of residence, with some 20 per cent of the population living in Greater Cairo, and many parts of the country very sparsely populated: North Sinai, Matruh, the Red Sea, Al-Wadi Al-Gadid and South Sinai, for example, have no more than 0.34, 0.32, 0.29, 0.19 and 0.15 per cent. Population is particularly spared near the borders, which has implications for national security. Certainly, government efforts in the direction of improving infrastructure, services and job opportunities outside Cairo are not misplaced. With 32 per cent of the population under 15, more should be spent on education, sports, and social care. Indeed if we assumed that the pre-job age is 25 -- not a far-fetched assumption -- we should be thinking about 42 per cent of the population in those terms.

The 2006 census cost the country close to LE100 million, and assuming that it was conducted rigorously, its results preliminary have very significant implications indeed. Surprisingly, it offers no figures for Copts and foreign residents, which should be relevant to planners.

### **The Census in brief**

THE TOTAL population grew by 24.2 per cent since 1996, while the number of households grew by 35.9 per cent in the same period. Males outnumber females by nearly two per cent. Divorce has gone up by 39.6 per cent since 1996, illiteracy by 10 per cent; at 29.2 per cent it is the highest in the Arab world. With more students dropping out of school, unemployment has risen. One out of five Egyptians lives in Cairo, while border regions are under-populated. Some 6.2 per cent of the population are over 60 years old, and holders of university degrees amount to no more than 9.5 per cent of the population, compared to 5.6 in 1996, but the standard of education and its relevance to the job market have both dropped. Some 11 million buildings, 95.5

per cent of the total number, are privately owned. Of all housing units, 95 per cent have running water, 99 per cent have electricity, but only 50 per cent are connected to a sewerage system.



## **4.6 The New Europe, The Promising Horizons of Comprehensive Development**

The birth of New Europe, Challenging the Superpower,  
A Historic Achievement of a Miracle

On the first of May 2004, all the world watched with awe, and applauded with admiration, the multitudes of Europeans heralding the celebrations, throughout the old continent, the expansion of the European Union to include ten new members, mostly former members of the Eastern block. The east European new members have joined the fifteen members of the west to form the new global economic power, the largest single market in the world, whose total gross domestic product (GDP) exceeds \$10 trillion, higher than that of the United States, hitherto the only unrivaled superpower! This historic event terminates for good centuries of hatred, animosity, rivalry and conflicts that precipitated two World Wars, tens of millions of human fatalities, destruction, devastation and despair. A new era of political, economic and cultural integration, cooperation and unity is now inaugurated, promising common progress, prosperity and advancements for all members to nurture, share and safeguard.

The admission of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Greek Cyprus and Malta creates a twenty-five-member European Union, called by the media, the New Europe, with nearly 450 million people, pivoted centrally between Russia, the Asian giants and tigers to the East, and the United States and the NAFTA to the West. This historic breakthrough to achieve European unity culminated centuries of earlier ideas and attempts, beginning from Charlemagne in the eighth century, to Louis the Fourteenth in the eighteenth century to ideas expressed by Voltaire, Napoleon Bonaparte in the nineteenth century, to Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin and Winston Churchill in the Twentieth century. The present union was born in 1949, with the establishment of the European Council, and the subsequent creation of the common market among France, Germany, Italy, Holland, Belgium and Luxemburg in 1957. The union was expanded in 1973 to include the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark, with whom Greece joined in 1981, Spain and Portugal in 1986, and finally in 1995 Austria, Sweden and Finland created the fifteen member Union with 375 million people, until the new 25 member gigantic reality of this year! The New Europe will include 480 million by the 2007 with the admission of Bulgaria and Romania, thus constituting more than 500 minority communities speaking 21 languages, multiple cultures, ethnic groups and a wide variety of living standards, economic levels, inclinations, aspirations, attitudes, as well as heterogeneous social and cultural

values! The common aspirations for a better tomorrow have overcome the problems and discords of yesteryears!

#### **4.6.1 The New Europe: A meaningful experiment**

The solid foundations upon which the New Union of the Old Continent have been structured are intelligently fashioned to rise above old sensitivities, residual conflicts, incongruent cultures, archaic nationalism, and narrow ethnicism. Meanwhile, due emphasis was focused upon: safeguarding the fruits of peace, strengthening the economic rewards of cooperation, highlighting the gains of economic growth, serving the needs and interests of the various communities, promoting stability and security and fulfillment of aspirations of individuals and the communities everywhere. The gains are maximized and the losses are minimized in the new formidable regional, integrated framework that is strongly built on the basic pillars of democracy, liberty, equality, justice, free market, sanctity of human rights, interaction, transparency, partnership, dialogue and measured balances. In the Arab region, as well as in other regions, there is a meaningful lesson to be learned, a beacon to be followed, and a pioneering path to be traced from this successful, meaningful experiment of union in the New Europe with its gradual phasing, flexibility, sharing of governance, tolerance cooperation, integration, variety within unity, variances, and variations!

It is also significant to note that the new union is not based on race, creed, religion, origin, language or culture, geography, history or economic deprivation, as are most of regional alliances or organizations, which bemoan infighting, conflicts underdevelopment, and failures! Examples of regional disappointments are embodied in the Arab league, the Islamic Conference, the African Union (formerly OAU), COMESA, NAFTA (North America), Organization of Latin American countries, ESCWA, ECLA, ECA, ASEAN (ASIA). Even the UN system itself is maximal in form and organs, yet minimal in substance and achievement record! Nevertheless, the challenges are abound! The atmosphere of euphoria and celebration did not overshadow or minimize what problems and disagreement that are infecting and challenging the members of the New Europe!

Among the issues of discord and areas of conflict are agreeing on the constitution, monetary issues, subsidies, unemployment, migration of workers (Poland 20% unemployment), security, terrorism, discrepancies in economic growth percentages, illegal immigrations, agricultural policies, trade, environmental protection, equality of representation, etc. Meanwhile, the

European commission forecasts 10-15% increase of the New Europe population by 2050 (Egyptian population will more than double!). However, some countries total population will decrease dramatically: Italy 30%, Scandinavia by 50%! Studies are underway to reduce the workweek to 30 hours, incentives for family size increase, maintenance of economic growth levels and creating a strong linkage of social and economic developments.

#### **4.6.2 National Strategies and Circles of Regional Cooperation and Interaction**

In light of the global economic situation, the New Europe common market, the largest single market ever, boasts a total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$10.124 trillion, as compared to the US \$10.112 trillion, Japan \$4.141 trillion, China 1.159 trillions. Egyptian national strategies must necessarily interact and actively focus on consolidating and open new avenues of cooperation and free trade with these powers in the short, medium, and long terms. President Mubarak has emphasized this strategic necessity to increase agricultural and industrial exports, open free trade markets and conduct economic partnership agreement with various parties in all regional circles regardless of geography or history!

There is no alternative to face the challenges and shouldering the responsibilities of increasing economic growth, reduce unemployment and curtail the high population increase, which overwhelms economic progress! Fortunately, the European Commission has recently informed Egypt of the ratification of the partnership agreement with Egypt which opens its market to Egyptian exports as of June 1, 2004 (at present, Egyptian Exports to Europe constitute 46% and imports 48% of the total national trade). Free trade negotiations are underway with the U.S., following the first regional agreement that has been signed with Jordan.

In fact, Egyptians foreign policy was based on active interaction with overlapping regional circles: the Arab, the Islamic, the African, the Euro-Mediterranean, the Asian, the U.S. and Russian. It is of paramount importance to recognize these circles according to priorities and interests. For instance, the Arab circle involves political, security, religious, economic, cultural, social dimensions, as the Euro-Mediterranean involves a different order of priorities: political, economic, security, technology, cultural, etc. The knitting and weaving of interrelationships and linkage of these circles to national priorities and interests are of crucial and cardinal national strategic importance.

#### **4.6.3 The Importance of Comprehensive, Integral Development Between the North and South Med Regions**

The expansions and consideration of the New Europe opens broad vistas for the conception and implementation of an indispensable strategy of a comprehensive integral development of the countries constituting the Euro-Mediterranean circle, which calls for a high priority in the

structuring of national and regional strategies. As the first Director of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina throughout the nineties, I recall my tireless contacts and efforts to enlist the financial and in-kind contributions of the Euro-Mediterranean countries and members of the Friends of the BA associations, especially in Europe, to help in the support of construction, furnishing, staff training, book collections and facility maintenance and operation activities. I emphasized the integral relationship between the countries of the North Mediterranean and those at the south, with the Mediterranean Sea, the cradle of ancient civilizations, acting as a unifier, an integrator, a magnet and a common geographical, political, economic and cultural resource. All have concurred with me and emphatically recognized that the Southern borders of Europe are practically not in Greece, Italy, France or Spain, but in North African countries. The peace, security, stability and economic prosperity of Europe is interdependent upon the security and prosperity of the South Mediterranean countries. The generous contributions received, (nearly \$30 million), was in direct recognition of this fact. Furthermore, the UNDP Resident representative in Cairo has pointed out his conviction that the new Bibliotheca Alexandrina will not only become the window of Egypt on Europe but the window of Africa toward Europe, a bridge between the North and the South, promoting dialogue, understanding, tolerance cooperation, linkage and interaction at all levels. The Mediterranean has always facilitated this integral relationship since ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman civilizations, during the Middle Ages with the silkroad trade until Mohamed Aly dynasty in recent history.

The European Union also recognizes too well this fact, and in its adoption of the partnership agreement is underlining the pivotal and strategic role of Egypt in Safeguarding the stability, peace, security and prosperity in Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries, given the acts and threats of terrorism and instability that have shaken the region and the world during the last decade.

#### **4.6.4 Benchmarks on the Road to Comprehensive Cooperation and Development**

Since the Seventies, Mediterranean countries representatives met in various forums and conferences to discuss issues of common concern, with the support of the European Union. In Barcelona, the Declaration and Protocol to prevent the pollution of the Mediterranean was proclaimed. Many meetings were held for Med-cities, Med-Urbs, Med-lib, etc., to promote greater cooperation, twinning, development, training, exchange of experience and institutional support whether in Barcelona, Tunis, Rabat, Limasol, Athens, Naples, Alexandria or Marseilles. Twinning among Mediterranean Ports was also declared on numerous occasions. Linkage of Mediterranean ports and cities has already taken place with coastal expressways, by rail, sea and

air. Egypt has already built the international coastal highway from Rafah to Salloum, to continue westward passing through Libya, Tunis, Algeria and Morocco. Spanish and Moroccan teams are already working on building a tunnel under the Mediterranean to link North Africa to Europe, thus linking South Med countries to North Med Countries circulation networks. The rail networks (already Egypt is extending its railroad system into Libya through bilateral protocols) help prompt and expand trade, economic, cultural, and social cooperation. Gas lines and Electric national grids are already linked to Jordan and Syria as well as to Libya. The thrust of cooperation and physical development has already energized and accelerated greater interdependence and linkage among several Mediterranean countries. The great natural resources of Energy, Water as well as the implementation of various information technology networks and operations (Telecom) will further reinforce and expand the promising horizons of cooperation.

#### **4.6.5 Promising Horizons of Comprehensive Development**

The promising horizons of economic cooperation and integral development are already dawning upon us to recognize and support. These must be given a high priority in the national strategy and long-term goals. History tells us that through Spain, Cyprus, Malta, Venice, that the Arab civilization and pioneering knowledge in the fields of medicine, physics, chemistry, mathematics, algebra, astronomy, etc., have reached Europe, and sparked its '**Age of Enlightenment**' and renaissance from the dark ages! The Irish ambassador in Cairo (Ireland is at present the President of the European Union) declared in Alexandria during the celebration of the expansion of the Union that the strategy of European assistance to Egypt and the South Mediterranean countries is aimed at supporting structural reform, and the projects that improve social, health educational and cultural services and not on specific developmental projects. He praised the Bibliotheca Alexandrina as a pioneering regional institution that embraces and promotes the cultures of the Mediterranean countries. He insisted that Alexandria is the link between Egypt and the Southern and Northern Mediterranean countries as well as European countries, with Egypt being the kingpin of peace and stability in the region and a model of political, economic and cultural reform for sister countries to follow! To confirm this conviction, the European Commission has endorsed the nomination of the BA as the center for Euro-Mediterranean dialogue and understanding of civilizations.

There are several promising horizons of solid co-operation, strong interaction and meaningful interdependence amongst Euro- Mediterranean countries:

- **Road and Transport Networks:** Countries around the Mediterranean should agree on a plan of action to design and implement a comprehensive network of highways and railroads encircling the Mediterranean basin to promote greater trade, mobility, tourism, transportation,

migration, employment and interaction among Mediterranean institutions, corporations and communities. Border and custom formalities should be gradually eliminated as was already adopted in New Europe.

• **Electric and Solar energy:** National power grids should be linked for the benefit of all parties, as already implemented in Europe and North America.

• **Oil and Gas Networks:** Linking the rich oil and gas resources of south med countries to European consumers around and across the Mediterranean will strengthen greater cooperation, interdependence and economic benefits to both the oil producing South to the dependent user countries to the North.

• **Employment:** Given the increasing need of European countries for labor, due to their decreasing population, and the high unemployment of the mushrooming North African population, there is an obvious need to fulfill the supply and demand labor market needs with all parties to benefit, according to the quality, standards, skills and conditions to be mutually agreed upon.

• **Tourism:** Egyptian touristic resources are varied, attractive and unique, which cater to the preferences of many Europeans. This trend should be capitalized upon as a lucrative revenue for integral economic and cultural development.

• **Agricultural and industrial Exports:** The new agreement of free trade and partnership with the Union should be implemented with great insistence on quality control and quality assurance. It is a golden opportunity to capitalize upon and insure credibility and continuity.

• **Environment:** No doubt that as a closed sea, the Mediterranean is a major resource of linkage, trade, tourism and recreation for many Mediterranean cities. Its protection from pollution by dumping of waste will endanger its ecosystem as well as human life. Safeguarding the Mediterranean is a common goal that must be adopted by all, as well as the implementation of the Earth Summits of Rio, Johannesburg and Kyoto protocols. The greenhouse effect will cause the rise of seawater by 3 mm annually resulting ultimately in the flooding of coastal areas, erosion of beaches and loss of human life and investments. Mediterranean countries must cooperate to face this common threat.

• **Urban and Cultural Development:** Mediterranean cities share a rich heritage and common cultural wealth. They must cooperate to preserve its heritage grid and uplift its urban

character and architectural identity. Use of materials, finishes, crafts, vocations and skills need to be coordinated to ensure quality, unity, identity and character.

**The Advancement of Information Technology:** The fast pace of development in the Technotronic Age necessitates greater cooperation, sharing of know-how and investments to keep pace with needs of development, and accelerating progress in the fields of information and communication technologies.

**Political Reform and Civic Society:** East European countries have miraculously changed their institutional structure, political, legal and administrative frameworks from socialistic to democratic governance before joining the Union. There are lessons to be learned, especially with the widely expanding role of the N.G.O.s and civil society as partners of development, reform and change. The experience of east European countries should be studied closely to learn and adopt relevant means, machinery, policies and practices.

These are a few of many vistas and horizons to be pursued and capitalized upon in order to join and partake in the rapidly rising development of the New Europe which will promise greater peace, stability, progress and prosperity for all. This window should never be missed or eclipsed...The horizons are promising, the tasks are enormous, the challenges are multitudinal, However, the goals are honorable, the will is truly determine, and the sky is the limit!!

15/05/2004



## 4.7 The Looming End of Mankind?

### With the proliferation of WMD Types and Denial of Kyoto

December, 2003

The ninth International Conference on the Environment was held in Milan, Italy (from December 1 to 12, 2003). Representations of 189 countries met to discuss, among other topics, the future steps for the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol which was adopted and proclaimed in Kyoto in 1997, calling for drastic measures and commitments by the international community to reduce the greenhouse effect, and the reduction of emission of harmful gases in the earth atmosphere and the dilapidation of the natural environment. The Protocol warned that the continuing rise of air temperature, with expected increase of six degrees in the coming decades, will result in grave and apocalyptic consequences in the environment, on development and on mankind.

In conscious concern with the state of natural environmental dilapidation, and the recorded acceleration of climate changes, which have caused natural disasters, the Kyoto Protocol insisted that it should be ratified and implemented soonest by all signatory countries, especially by the industrialized nations of which the USA is responsible for nearly 30%, and Russia for 17% of total global pollution. The targets, according to the approved timetable, is to reduce greenhouse emissions by 8% by 2012 and 20-40% by 2020 as compared to the 1990 levels. The Protocol required that at least 55% of countries producing global gas emissions should sign the Protocol before it becomes mandatory and operational.

However, the position of the great culprits producing substantial emissions, namely, the USA and Russia has been both bewildering and disappointing! President George W. Bush announced in March 2001 that the US will not sign the Protocol due to its negative effect on industrial production, transport and economic activities. Russia, sitting on the fence and watching the situation in view of bilateral relations and beneficial agreements with other countries, alluded to its intention to sign the Protocol during the Environment and Development Earth summit Rio+10 held in Johannesburg in September 2002, while India and China have been watching with interest this mercurial situations instead, hinting of the possibilities of signing the second phase of the Kyoto Protocol. The World was stunned by the shocking disclosure of the representative of Russia who announced on December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2003 in Milan during the Environment Conference that his country will not sign the Protocol in its present form, thus joining USA, and Australia (*Al-Ahram, December 4, 2003*). No doubt, India and China will be soon inspired to do likewise!

Consequently, the Kyoto Protocol, considered to be the cornerstone of the UN Treaty on Climate Change is thus arrested and held in abeyance. *The looming glooms of Doom's Day for Mother Earth and Mankind are thus rapidly approaching!!*

The consequences of the Kyoto denials are monumental, multitudinal and universally shattering. There will be a continuing progression of global climatic changes, worsening of the greenhouse repercussions, rise of the earth's atmosphere temperature, and thus increasing the occurrences of natural disasters (The recent Southern France worst flooding ever is labeled by President Jacques Chirac the flood of the century), such as:

- The steady melting of the polar ice caps (this has caused the closing of ski resorts in Spain, Switzerland, Italy and Scotland).
- The continuing rise of the sea and ocean levels.
- Further depletion of the ozone layer.
- The flooding of Coastal regions.
- The increase of earth tremors, Hurricanes, Cyclones, increase of the amount of carbon monoxide and dioxide and
- The decrease of the amounts of oxygen in the atmosphere due to frequent incidents of forest fires in expanding dry zones, increase of desertification, spreading deforestations.

The dire consequences on human health, development and the future of mankind are incalculable and inescapable. The annual cost of climate change is estimated at spiraling several \$ trillions.

On the other hand, with the worsening affect on global climate and the environment, given Agenda 21, the topic and recommendations of Johannesburg Earth Summit of 2002 (Rio + 10), the situation concerning biodiversity is also especially alarming! For the two Earth Summits in Rio and Johannesburg emphasized the necessity of the restoration and protection of Biodiversity and that the structure and functioning of natural ecosystems be maintained and safeguarded by all nations (*Alas!*). It was urged that governments must cooperate in stopping the continuing loss of biodiversity around the globe, regardless of the level, or lack, of development. The recommendations stressed that the efforts and actions should include: stopping the spreading of desertification (and its terminal effect on wild life), protection and promotion of sustainable development of forests (to make up the for losses due to fires, desertification, development and industrial activities), conservation and restoration of landscape, protection of plants and animals from ionizing radiation, protection of soil, protection and restoration of marine habitat and coastal regions as well as support of research in the fields of biodiversity and natural

conservation! *However, nothing was reported toward implementation of these recommendations, thus accelerating the gravity of deterioration and devastation!*

On parallel apocalyptic fronts, mankind is threatened by a multitude of disasters and crises precipitated, and generated also through intentions, interests or benign neglect, by a few of the industrialized developed nations. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

The widely heralded amplification of the threats of the proliferation of the nuclear, biological or chemical weapons of mass destruction (WMD), we are reminded, have been invented, produced and marketed by the great powers. The acquisition of these weapons by certain developing countries was condemned and sanctioned by these powers. Whereas, some countries are allowed to stockpile and test these weapons like India, Pakistan, Israel and South Africa, others, nonconformist countries, are paralyzed and sanctioned for attempting to acquire (WMD), and thus they are included in "Axis of Evil" to be contained and punished. An equally alarming cause and form of WMP is the spread of poverty, despair, hunger, disease, misfortune, dwindling development, and lack of hope for a decent secure life, which resulted in rebellious acts of violence, terrorism and hatred, dissatisfaction and resistance everywhere. Sept. 11. 2001 catastrophe was a symptom; *but the roots are there, alive and active, whether in the developed or developing regions of the world!*

The spread of AIDS/HIV epidemic around the world is claiming 9000 lives daily in poor countries, mostly in Africa (this daily human loss almost double the number of the victims of WTC on Sept. 11). Forty million cases are known, of which 30 million in Africa. The real numbers of inflicted cases are more than double. By 2010 the numbers will also double!! Available medications are produced by the industrialized nations and are expensive, beyond the affordability of poor communities, which earn less than \$1.00/day/capita. WHO announced on the World AIDS Day a Plan 3 x 5 for the treatment of Inflicted 3 million AIDS patients by 2005 at the expenses of \$ 5.5 billion, most of which are yet to be raised!

The UN Secretary General Kofi Anan called AIDS/HIV a more devastating weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD). Nelson Mandela, the Former President of South Africa, labeled it also a global catastrophe during a recent concert attended by an enormous crowd in Cape Town for the mobilization of international attention and support to contain and fight the mushrooming epidemic, proliferating into most communities worldwide.

The infusion of fanatic terrorist groups in all countries and the coordination of their international activities and operations, with the support of the mafia-like organizations, have been threatening most societies in all developed and developing countries alike. National, regional and global stability, peace and security has never been more shaken and exposed to

violence and terror. There are more than 12 minor wars waged nationally and annually with millions of lives lost and human tragedies inflicted. From USA, Ireland, Spain Turkey, Russia, Afghanistan, the Congo, Kenya, Somalia, Angola, Morocco, Saudi Arabia to Indonesia, The Philippines, Japan, the incidents of terrorism and minor wars are two many and the human and material toll is astronomical, with its negative repercussions on political, economic, social, and cultural developments everywhere.

Despite the military campaign in Afghanistan and Iraq terrorist activities are thriving and rising. The Taliban, Ben Ladin and Saddam Hussein are still at large active and hurting. This is a major powerful and penetrating WMD that has no cure in sight without relentless international agreements, cooperation, action and concerted commitment to tackle the roots of the crises drastically!

The rising proliferation of the narcotic trade and consumption, through a labyrinth of international covert operations, organizations and finance, corruption and money laundering mechanisms, is gigantic and spiraling despite UN and national treaties, military drives, government interventions and actions. The Middle East and Central America are major narcotic centers. Afghanistan, despite allied powers has doubled its narcotic production after the Taliban. Clandestine production and distribution activities are increasing worldwide. The damaging effects of narcotics and cigarettes smoking on human health, economic and social development are enormous.

In thirty years, the world population will reach ten billion. Nearly three billion people will be born to suffer with the present 6.8 billion the grave consequences of natural disasters and proliferation of the man-made weapons of mass destruction. The majority of the world population lives in the developing world, which represents the open market for the goods and services of the rich nations. The development apartheid is too glaring; and the discrimination is too insulting, and basic human rights are denied; hence, justice is pale, lame, and impotent. It is again the disparities between the North and South, the rich and the poor, the developed and developing the United Nations G8 and the G77+. *The developed world is responsible for intentionally, by benign neglect or by the narrow prevalence, of self-interest for the beginning of the end.*

Is there a hope for the poor and underprivileged, and misfortunate to find food to eat, shelter to house, clean air to breathe, and clean water to drink, and a promise of a dignified, safe and secure life protected from the weapons of mass destruction (WMD), actual and/or virtual! Can the three billion children of the universe, yet to be born during the next three decades be promised a world free from nuclear, biological chemical weapons, hunger disease and poverty as

well as other lethal weapons like global warming, harmful emissions, polluting the global atmosphere, coupled with other forms of pollutions like cultural social, economic, ethical moral , visual noise, physical and health pollution. The much heralded and quoted views of Huntington & Fukuyama have proven limited, narrow as well as lame and biased.

Is it the beginning of the end? Is it the looming glooms of Doom of Mankind? Is there a way out? Is there a chance for salvation and revival of human values long lost? Or is it a terminal case slowly meeting its global apocalypse.

There is no alternative to the commitment to the United Nations Charter of human rights and international treaties in word and in deed. There is no road to the wide, open horizons of hope, peace, security and progress without due cooperation, interaction and bondage of all cultures, and our dedication to the present continuum of civilizations in all countries and peoples, regardless of creed, color, sex, origin or belief. The will to change and reform is strong, the resources are abundant, the challenges are stupendous, but the power of the people is real, true, and enormous.

## 4.8 Egypt Tackling The Global Challenges of The Future

### Prologue:

People are the wealth of nations. There comes a time when destiny calls upon the peoples of all nations to confront the inescapable challenges, and make vital brave decisions, that will shake the Present and shape the Future of the forthcoming generations.

The time for Egypt is right now. The place is right here.

The cry out for reshaping the destiny of the "cradle of human civilizations" is loud, clear and echoing in the corners of Egypt, our Holy land.

This overview of the present status quo is revealing, alarming and propelling. It is intended to urge everyone to question, ponder and act with caution, vision, balance and motivation. Though the Arab world is at present in a state of abeyance at a critical and decisive period of history, at the crossroads of many intersecting circles of the North and the South, the East and the West, the Rich and the Poor, the challenges are multitudinal but revealing, the difficulties are enormous but exposed, and the dilemmas are staggering, but bare stripped in the open..

There are no illusions and no confusions? The will of change and the power of human awakening and recognition will shape destiny and the course of history. The spark of propulsion has been ignited.

From the Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean, the entire Arab region has endured with inspiring patience, the two devastating World Wars, as part of the theater of their operations, which wasted away a substantial share of the Arab financial, natural, and human resources. During the last two trying centuries, the Arab destiny was entangled and intertwined with those dominant world powers. The Arab countries were divided in opposing camps and divided parties, with Egypt, its beacon, subject to threats, conflicts, and crises, while her younger sisters on the other hand, were self absorbed and anchored. The pace of development, and slow progress must be inspired, ignited and stirred to move from stagnation to ascension

### 4.8.1 A Global Overview

During the WTO Ministerial Meeting in Doha in November 2001, the rich nations on one hand, and the developing countries on the other, revealed the facts, and deceptive cards were set on the table in the what so called "Green Rooms", developed countries intended to respond to the

grievances and protests of the poor and helpless. Fortunately, true evidence has emerged, exposing the accelerating political pressure mounting in concert on developing countries, drawing the Hippocratic inevitable conclusion, "Some win, all the rest lose". Unfortunately, the bright facts of the status quo were too glaringly compelling.

Whether in Seattle, in Doha, in Rio, in Kyoto, in Johannesburg, or in any other place on earth, with the evident lack of a pre-set Agenda, solid commitments, huge accountabilities, and an active plan of action, all efforts are in vain, or as some critics like to call it "medieval, the *deja vu's*", all over again.

The tide is rising, the surge is urging each and everyone, to wake up and act! now!

As a matter of fact, while globalization, on one hand, has actually promoted certain economic equality, and reduced poverty a little, as an example, the change that has been accelerating the enormous growth of initially poor countries, such as China and India, however it widened the gap between the haves and have-nots, thus increasing inequality between and within nations such as in the Philippine in Indonesia, in Venezuela and in Argentine, and within nations in the East and West.

#### **4.8.2 The Arab Region's Dilemma:**

From the Bottom (Revelations) to the Top (Initiations)

The September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, a shocking global earthquake, that has shaken the corners of the entire world, revived earlier ideas of "clash of civilization" by Francis Fukuyama, Samuel Hentigton and others, which were stressed all over again.

All of a sudden, the Arab countries, with Islamic roots, or origins were the first suspect and accused of crime, violence, even classified security risks, amplified by certain based media coverage exasperating the situation, inflaming, and exaggerating feelings at both sides. Forgotten or eclipsed have been the fundamental contribution of Islamic and Arab civilization to world knowledge and the advancement of human civilization during the last centuries. This time of trial, recriminations and indictments, the United Nations Development Program published in June 2002 its long awaited "Arab Human Development report 2002, thus creating new horizons for opportunities for a new future.

The Report, which was cosponsored by the Arab Fund for economic and social development, has equally sent certain tremors in the corners of the Arab countries, because of its shocking statistics, revelations, assessments, and conclusions. The western media and institutions rushed to expose their own assessments and conclusions.

The AHDR, which covers the present situation in 22 countries from the Atlantic to the Gulf, seeks to point out glaringly and confront bravely a growing range of political, social, cultural, economic, technical and environmental challenges for the lack of proper education, poor health, unemployment, poverty, economic deprivation, helpless youth, to peace and human freedom, women empowerment participation and security. Despite the alarming indications, and warning signals the report stresses certain encouraging developments and successes over the past three decades.

#### **4.8.3 Overview of the Arab Human Development Report 2002**

Despite stagnation of the political and economic conditions, coupled with unrest, and conflicts in the region, the report focuses ample light on specific positive developmental aspects such as:

- \* Reduction of infant mortality rate by 2/3 for children ages less than 5 years;
- \* Increase of daily calories intake by individuals.
- \* Increase of population served by potable water;
- \* Adult literacy has doubled during the last three decades;

On the negative side, the Report points alarmingly, that the average income of the Arab citizen is the least in the world, despite oil revenues, coupled with continuing decline of GDP per capita and low human development indicators. The Report attributed these distressing indicators to absence of political freedom, marginal women participation in political and economic development, alarming information technology illiteracy rate and poor education. The Report reveals astonishingly, that certain interest groups in the region benefit from the current status quo, and resist development!!

#### **4.8.4 Egypt in Focus:**

##### **Difficulties, Problems, and Challenges**

As the cradle of human civilization, the greater Arab country in terms of its central role, leadership, population and economic activity and as the cultural, religious, touristic hub of the Arab world, Egypt has carried the burden of sacrificing its own development needs in favor of its younger Arab brothers states. It has dedicated its resources in fighting five wars during the last 50 years, at the time when other Arab countries concentrated on building their own economics,



and furthering their own physical developments, in self appraisal and unquestioned devotion toward helping others.

The indicators in AHDR are a cause of concern for the future Human development in Egypt. This overview has become mandatory to examine, to evaluate and to point out the directions and horizons for a better future for Egypt, which She has long been deserving.

Here are some of these disturbing indicators in the Report of the AHDR 2002:

\* The average age is 66 years in Egypt as compared to 70 years in Jordan, Oman, and Bahrain. This also reflects on health care, standards of living, as indicated expenditure on health, which is 3.7% of GDP in Egypt as compared to 10.1% in Lebanon and 6.5 in Qatar.

\* Illiteracy is 45, 4 % in Egypt, whereas it is 10,8% in Jordan, 14,4% in Lebanon, and 13% in Bahrain. In fact, except for Mauritania, Egypt ranks as the highest in illiteracy in the Arab world.

\* In the Information and communication technology field (ICT) Egypt also is one of the last with 12 computers / 1000p, as compared to 140 in Bahrain, 136 in Qatar, 46 in Lebanon and even Mauritania, least developed Arab country boasts 27 pc./1000 p. As to Internet sites, Egypt has only one site/1000p. as compared to 12 sites/1000 p. in the UAE. As to the number of users, there are 7/1000p in contrast to 167 users/1000 p in the U.A.E.

A pathetic indicator of the lack of regional integration is reflected in the fact that inter regional trade in the Arab world amounts to nearly 30 billion, whereas the trade between the Arab countries and western world is tenfold (\$ 300 billion ??!).

It is therefore of paramount importance to maximize regional trade and economic cooperation.

It is high time that Egypt, concentrated on the fulfillment of its own national aspirations, and focuses upon the uplifting of the conditions of its own population, who have waited for too long with patience to fulfill their overdue rightful needs and accomplish their well deserved hopes for a better future.

It becomes of paramount importance, that the order of priorities must be re-examined and a visionary new strategy and national renaissance plans be formulated and realized in order to address the changing needs and demands, of a brave new world, that could accomplish their long-awaited dream.

National strategy in this direction should be adopted with proper, scientific, financial and technological resources. Rewards, compensation, incentives must be guaranteed. A comprehensive integration and capitalization upon natural and human resources is indispensable to meet the current challenge of beleaguered development.

The example of integration, cooperation and partnerships among geographical entities in Europe, the Americas and Asia only highlight the necessity for the right atmosphere and conditions for achieving such regional integration at all levels in the Middle East region, and, by all means, such inter and intra regional cooperation, partnerships and integration in trade and in other facts of the economic sphere as is already evident in the successes of multi-national, transcontinental companies, which assume a substantial share of global economy.

On the other hand, there is a persistent demand for an intellectual consensus among Arab thinkers, and scholars to agree upon basic common national, cultural and intellectual goals and objectives aimed at achieving a total Arab renaissance and march forward a brighter future disentangled from traditional taboos, systems, archaic customs and thoughts, indulging religious and spiritual values and trends that can bridge the gaps of backwardness and venture new frontiers befitting the new challenges in today's world. This will necessarily require that we stop blaming others for our ills and faults, and that a western devious plot is orchestrated aiming at destroying our culture and values.

A radical approach is needed to face our own problems and believe in cooperation to demonstrate to all, the continuum of human civilization, in synchronization with the differences of cultures, that should be invested creatively for the good of all.

This strategic creative approach should be capitalized upon and that we need to benefit from the relevant experiences and successes at other regions in advancing our own developmental strategies and implementation.

#### International Perspective, Overview and Conclusion

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in June 1992, in Rio de Janeiro proclaimed the Rio Agenda 21, a broad general program of recommendations and actions by the world community underscoring new ways of investing into main future on earth to reach sustainable development during the 21st century. The recommendations included new ways and means of environmental care, education, and sustainability toward achieving a safer and just world, in which all life dignity and is celebrated and upheld by all for all.

It was agreed that the UN will convene after 10 years a follow up conference in Johannesburg, South Africa, in September 2002, to review, evaluate the implementations by the member nations of the Agenda 21, and to recommend a proper plan for action for the future, with greater participation by the civil society and NGOs and citizen groups, to become active partners, and to pressure their governments and all institutions to be more concerned and committed to implement the Agenda 21, given the disappointing performance and inaction during the last decade. The Johannesburg Earth Summit Agenda was aimed at fostering discussions of specific environmental issues, as such Climate, oceans, water, forests, energy, bio diversity, agriculture, among others. These will be based upon the Rio Agenda 21 declaration signed by 168 countries.

The disturbing climate change and the Green house effect, which have resulted in massive floods, disasters, destructions, fatalities and losses that exceeded \$10 billions in Europe, the America and Asia underscore the necessity for implementing Agenda 21, Kyoto protocols and all environmental treaties to save our planet and to achieve a sane sustainable development for a better, safe future for mankind everywhere. The procrastination and "cold feet" and lack of commitment by the US and similar industrialized countries can only lead to a global catastrophe, which will harm all people everywhere.

The Human Development plans, policies, and programs and projects, at the global, regional, national and local level must incorporate the Agenda 21 recommendations to achieve a sustainable development, out to invest wisely for the future of the coming generations. The thrusts of these plans will incorporate all aspects related to the protection of biodiversity, conservation of water resource, and expansion of agriculture in the war on hunger and lack of shelter, the protection of forests, and oceans, and the air from pollution and green house gases, as well as better education and health for all people everywhere. There is no escape from the glaring realities and the ultimate challenge.

#### **4.8.5 Conclusion:**

##### **Future Outlook and Horizons**

Nations change their course only after a radical awakening that shakes their conscience and institutions at the roots. This fundamental shift must be a basic consensus among all social, intellectual and cultural directions on a national social strategic plan on the shape of the future to come for which all parties and factions subscribe and to which they are committed.

This Plan springboard should include necessarily political partnership and participation of all major directions and colors in a pluralistic democracy to contribute to and share in plotting the path ahead and shaping the future.

It is necessary to ensure participation of all social groups, factions, and beliefs in governance, decision making, management, and implementation at all levels and sectors.

The plan is mandatory to respect and observe that the rule of law is upheld and safeguarded by all no matter what or who.

The protection of private property, investments and personal and corporate rights be supported and defended by all, through the protection and patronage of the human rights. The provision of opportunities and possibilities for the fulfillment of human identity and aspirations under protection of the law needs to be maintained. Implementation of the amendments of human and spiritual values, especially in Islamic countries should be upheld and shielded, in addition, to religious beliefs, in unity, integrity, solidarity, cooperation, encouragement of morality, ethics and goodness.

The engagement of the individual and family on one side, and the civil society and government organizations on the other side, should lead to shared shouldered responsibilities and joint implementation of national goals with government civil societies and individuals at all levels.

The eradication of illiteracy, the improvement of health care, the upgrading of educational contents and standards, the greater participation of women in all walks and levels of life, the recruitment and employment of all marginal groups, regardless of age, sex, creed, color, or ethnic origin, are primary springboards of any sensible and dependable national plan.

The openness towards other cultures and experiments is a necessary element of any national resurrections: other cultures or civilizations must not be branded as good or bad, hostile or enemies.

Human development must benefit from and cooperate with developments worldwide, based on interest and mutual benefits in the age of globalization.

Horizons of a Fulfilling Strategic and National Comprehensive Human Development

The horizons and thrusts of a comprehensive human development should be translated into various spheres and axes of action and operations:-

**\* AT THE STRATEGIC REGIONAL LEVEL:**

Because of Egypt's geopolitical pivotal role, Egypt should pursue and become an active partner to cooperate and interact with the European, Mediterranean, Arab, African, and Islamic circles with balanced priorities and interests.

**\* AT THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LEVEL:**

It is fundamental that industrial, touristic, and agricultural developments, with emphasis on natural expansion be emphasized. The aim is to adopt a national development plan, strategy, which aims at a balanced redistribution of the population away from the present narrow corridor development along the Nile River. New untapped regions East and West should be focused upon to reach development of 25 % of Egypt, instead of the current 9%. A new national circulation and transportation network should support the new development regions in three dimensions, North and South and East and West.

Meanwhile, the unemployment problem is crucial. According to the AHDR, open unemployment in the Arab regions, has been estimated to be 12 million 1995. This figure is expected to rise to 25 million by 2010.

As a matter of fact, 500,000 are added to the job market annually in Egypt alone, and there is no hope for their employment, given the current 2 per cent annual growth of the Egyptian Economy and the 2.2 per cent population increase, estimated by the World Bank declarations.

**\* AT THE WOMEN EMPOWERMENT LEVEL :**

According to the Arab Human Development Report, a deficit in women's empowerment has manifested itself in women's political and economic participation, which remains the lowest in the world in quantitative terms. Women occupy only 3.5 percent of parliamentary seats in Arab countries, compared to 11 per cent in Arab Sub Saharan Africa. One in every two women can neither, write or read, and in many countries of the region, women suffer from violence (more than 40%) from unequal citizenship and unfair legal entitlements.

**\* AT THE POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT LEVELS :**

There is a persistent need to adopt a more effective family planning program, for all development improvements are consumed by the spiral of the population bomb", keeping the

hope of advancement in abeyance or distant. The current population of seventy million people in Egypt is expected to reach 100 million in the year 2020. The Ministry of Health and Population is working at present toward controlling the population increase in a five year program.

**\* WATER RESOURCES LEVEL :**

The next war will certainly be triggered by water shortage. Egypt must conceive its water resources limited annually to its share of 55 millions m<sup>3</sup> to meet demands of increase of population, agriculture, urbanization and industry.

**\* AT THE EDUCATION LEVEL :**

A very important propeller of a sane development lies in the upgrading of educational standards and quality of education, elimination of illiteracy and its interactive synchronization with the national development goals.

The current brain drain to western countries may be stemmed by offering better opportunities at home that is more lucrative, a matter which would attract distinguished Egyptian professionals abroad to come back home to help in enriching research on development efforts and operations.

Without a national strategic plan for education reform program, there is a little hope accelerate forward.

**\* AT THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH LEVELS**

Although medical and healthcare have substantially improved, yet there is a great deal of work and projects that must be implemented. Human development is dependent entirely on the two legs: education and health. Generally speaking, population and civil society participation are vital for the present central top to bottom directions, which are insensitive and irresponsive to actual needs. Through such participation the flow of information and fulfillment of needs could move from the bottom - upwards.

**\* AT THE ENVIRONMENTAL LEVEL :**

Although new oil and gas reservoirs are steadily discovered, but still with growing population development needs, Egypt may not be able to export oil or gas in the very near future. New sources of renewable energy through solar, wind or wave or geothermal sources must be tapped to meet development needs. Through using regional and international power grids, Egypt

could continue to cooperate with the countries in the region in maximizing the use of its energy output.

**\* At the Information and communication technology levels**

The current HDI show Egypt trailing some Arab countries in this field. It is most crucial that the current deficiencies and shortages be overcome, in order to match and interact with the information revolution. It has become a major foreign exchange resource in China, India, and Israel. Egypt is trailing behind. Silicone valleys in Sinai or elsewhere must not compete now in a declining market that is suffering a tough competition. She is a comparatively a late comer. New horizons in this growing field must be studied and focused upon to accomplish an assumed advantage in the world market.

**\* REFLECTIONS:**

In conclusion, the bells of alarm have tolled, and the call for reawaking and self appraisal and commitment is loud and clear. The targets are well defined and the challenges are awesome, but the path forward is well known. The resources are available, and the will to change the destiny and the history is strong and mighty. There is no alternative but to march forward to a brave horizon of unlimited potentials and promises.

## 4.9 Development as apartheid

Al-Ahram Weekly 22 - 28 August 2002 Issue No. 600-Opinion

Technology may still be harnessed to create a better future, write **Mohsen Zahran\*** and **Sherine Amin\*** -- but only if we address the divisions which it has caused.

It is over 50 years since George Orwell predicted in 1984 that technological and political developments would create a new world -- one in which human beings would be designed, standardised and systematised, and only the healthy, the intelligent and the useful would be permitted to survive.

At the time, the proposition bordered on science fiction, and was easily dismissed as fantasy. Then, no one could have predicted that the rapid pace of scientific and technological breakthroughs during the last two decades of the twentieth century might lead to at least part of Orwell's prophecy being realised.

The present global situation is marked by huge disparities between the industrialised countries and the "developing" world. This gap represents a shocking injustice by any measure, whether it be in terms of the pace of progress, the quality of life, economic growth, access to education, knowledge and information, the standard of social services, employment opportunities or respect for human rights.

Not only do these gaps exist, but they are constantly widening along numerous lines of segregation: between the North and the South, the 'haves' and the 'have nots', the G8 and the G77/ G15, the black and the white, the developed and the less developed, the hopeful and the hopeless, the donors and their "beneficiaries". The world we live in is marked by a multi-dimensional apartheid, as people are separated from one another over and over again -- by colour, creed, race, social status, language, and economic condition.

Yet behind this technicolour display of rampant de facto, if not de jure, discrimination, the underlying cause is only too glaringly obvious.

It is the affluence and intense economic development of the rich which threaten both the survival of our global environment and the livelihoods of the poor. Despite the Rio Earth Summit, the Kyoto Protocol and countless UNEP conferences, global environmental conditions continue to deteriorate at an alarming rate. The greenhouse effect and global warming, caused by fossil fuel emissions from motor transport, electricity generation, factories and agriculture, have



now reached a terrifying level. The effects are there today: a rising sea level and the gradual melting of the polar ice caps are already leading to the destruction of homes, the loss of investments and jobs, and the aggravation of poverty. Meanwhile, the developing countries suffer disproportionately from failing crops and natural disasters, while the industrialised nations continue to support systematic deforestation in the South and President Bush reneges on the US's support for the Kyoto Protocol.

Elsewhere, new breakthroughs in genetic engineering and biotechnological research have opened up a previously unimagined Pandora's box of promises and challenges. And again, it is the industrialised countries which have benefited most from such fantastic developments, while the majority of the world's 6.5 billion people continue to suffer under the combined burdens of poor health, poverty, debt, epidemic disease and moral desperation.

Consider the following disturbing indicators:

- \* Only one-sixth of the world's population have access to potable water.
- \* Nearly one billion people are hungry or malnourished.
- \* Almost 200 million children are underweight.
- \* 40 million people are infected with HIV, nearly 75 per cent of them in Africa alone. Three million die annually of HIV-related illnesses.
- \* One billion people live on less than one dollar a day, and two billion have to get by on less than two dollars a day.
- \* The wealth of the 250 richest individuals in the world is equal to that of the poorest three billion.
- \* 40 per cent of agricultural land in the developing world is already degraded, and that percentage is constantly rising.
- \* Serious health problems are reflected in rampant epidemics, high infant mortality rates, shorter life spans and malnutrition. Unless drastic steps are taken to increase access to treatment, it is expected that within one generation almost half of the world population will die.
- \* The developed countries spend 250 times as much on research as the less developed nations.

The last two decades have seen substantial funds poured into research in the industrialised nations, by governments, academic institutions and the private sector. For example, the Western biotechnology industry spent 11 billion US dollars on research in 2000 alone.

The list of pioneering achievements which this kind of money can buy is endless. Take the area of public health and medical research. We have seen new medication developed, tested, and marketed to treat a previously "untreatable" condition -- HIV/AIDS. Over 100 approved recombinant DNA products have been developed, along with new treatments for TB, malaria and cancer, to name but a few. There have been major breakthroughs in our knowledge of genomics and proteomics, including the recent triumph when the human genome code was cracked. Stem cell and bone marrow cell technologies have provided new ways of addressing the problem of organ replacement and transplants. Nanotechnology, once a science fantasy, is now increasingly widely used in biological research, as in medical practice. Human cloning, and designer babies, are both apparently within our reach.

Agriculture too has been a focus for heavy investment in research, and the results are everywhere to be seen. Globally, nearly 55 million hectares are now under genetically modified (GM) crops, which promise higher yields and pest resistance. Even now, GM strains of common crops are being developed which could be irrigated with salt water. This holds out the prospect that one day we will be able to harvest the sea and ocean floors, as we wage war on hunger and food shortages. Faced with the needs of the growing world population, we need a new agro-industrial revolution. This will not be achieved without a profound commitment to investment in research and development.

Yet these huge technological achievements are not 'free'; the moral and political problems they pose are as great as the benefits they promise. To date, these achievements have largely served the needs of the developed nations, who are the primary funders of massive research efforts. But the needs of the 'rich North' are fundamentally different from those of the 'poor South'. Northern consumers want variety and quality, whereas Southern consumers crave access to essentials they are currently denied. As a result, what the people of the South see is less a string of glorious triumphs, than the power of technology, and the power of those who control it, together with all the attendant risks and inevitable compromises. They believe, for example, that genetic research is primarily reserved for application in the North. And they know that when developing countries are allowed to benefit from new technology, it is often only available to them at a prohibitively high cost (e.g. HIV drugs).

For them, this radiant future can look uncannily similar to Orwell's dystopic vision or Huxley's "brave new world". DNA screening could easily lead to the invasion of privacy and

infringement of human rights through discrimination. Human cloning and designer babies are felt by many to be morally repellent, whether on religious grounds or not, while the GM revolution is seen in many quarters not as abolishing hunger, but as opening up a new era of bio-colonialism. While lurking in the background we can discern the spectre of eugenics.

Meanwhile, the majority of the world's population continue to live in an environment characterised by injustice, inequality, deprivation, poverty and suffering. These conditions breed violence, crime, and terrorism. It is out of this instability that challenges will arise to the established system. Indeed, what we are seeing now may well be the beginning of the end for that triumphant liberalism which has denied so many their basic human rights.

Francis Fukuyama has pointed out that in biotechnology good and evil are intimately linked. The same technology that promises to cure children of cystic fibrosis, or their parents of Alzheimer's disease, also opens up possibilities which are the cause of grave moral doubts: human cloning, designer babies, drugs that enhance rather than heal, and the creation of human-animal hybrids.

In the face of this challenge, Fukuyama argues that countries must regulate and control the development and use of biotechnology by political means. He calls for national, regional, even global bodies to be set up, which can discriminate between those technological advances that could help humanity flourish, and those which threaten human dignity and well-being.

Arriving at any kind of consensus on such delicate issues is likely to be a long-term project. But even if regulation can be made to work, it will be meaningless, unless we also take steps to address the unequal distribution of the world's scientific and technological resources which is responsible for so much violence and despair.

We need a pro-active international policy to overcome the apartheid that lies at the heart of the "information society". We need to promote science and education in our societies, through the media, schools and other public fora. Centres of excellence for scientific research and technological development should be established in the developing regions, as is already the case in India and China, to encourage cooperation and share knowledge, resources and expertise.

We need to look at how we can restore public confidence in biotechnological advances. In particular, we need to ensure that the benefits of biotech are equally available and affordable to all countries and societies.

Then, if we do manage to eliminate the divisions that disfigure our world, we may be able to restore some sense of our common destiny, and there may even be a future for us to look forward to.

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#### **4.10 Energy Future and Sustainable Environmental Development: The Absolute Necessity of the Renewable and Nuclear Alternatives**

The Rio Earth Summit was pivotal in bringing global attention to the understanding that our planet's environmental problems were intimately linked to economic conditions and problems of social injustice, instability and security. Rio emphasized that social environmental and economic needs must be met in balance, synchronization and complementarity with each other for sustainable outcomes in the short, medium and long terms. It showed that poverty and decline of national economy reflect negatively and seriously on the environment and the human conditions. Similarly, the abuse and deterioration of the environmental resources and situation cause human suffering and economic decline. It was glaringly clear to all participant governments and NGOs that local actions and decisions may induce, or trigger, global repercussions of far-reaching dimensions and consequences. Having reviewed the events agenda and activities, the recommendations of Johannesburg Summit 2002, and having reviewed in detail the UNDP Human Development Report 2002, the Arab Human Report 2002, the UNCTAD 2002 Report overview and the International Nuclear Council's Committee Report, Visions and Strategies for the first half of the 21st Century, it was abundantly clear that energy lies at the root of most global problems facing environmental development, sustainability, security, stability, peace and globalization. It has become the common denominator and propeller of most global crises, problems and urgent issues. The World Summit 2002 recommendations would be worthless and pointless if common understanding, commitment and concerted actions are not addressed agreed upon and implemented vigorously by all.

Overview of UN Resolutions on the Environment Energy and Development shows that energy future is now most critical for future social, economic and environmental sustainability, the key theme of Agenda 21. Accordingly, it is no exaggeration that Energy Future could be addressed as the Earth Future for it fundamentally affects all the contents in the constitution of Agenda 21. To implement its recommendations, various U.N. Agencies and regional commissions held annual meetings in preparation for the Earth Summit to assess and evaluate the implementation of the Rio Summit after 10 years.

##### **4.10.1 Future Challenges and Horizons:**

The current global rate of population increase is adding 100 million people annually since 2001, population of 6.5 billion. This increase is occurring mainly in the poorer countries, while

the population of the rich countries is steadily decreasing. This world population will be nearly doubled by the middle of the 21st century reaching approximately 10 billion people. The quality of life is related to the national wealth, which is strongly dependent on the use of energy. Now the citizens of the affluent societies, due to the increasing energy consumption and the higher level of the quality of life it affords, enjoy healthier living, live longer and happier, comparatively the less fortunate countries suffer from hunger, disease underdevelopment, and debilitating poverty. They manage far fewer resources, and use about one-tenth as much energy per person as compared to the wealthier societies. Obviously, they need more energy to overcome the present distressing scourges and underdevelopment.

Chemical energy from fossil fuel (coal, oil, gas) accounts for 80% of global energy use. Fossil fuel use is projected to increase. In fifty years oil reserves will support this rising demand. However, there is a considerable uncertainty about the amounts of both fossil fuels and uranium that will be discovered in the future, while there is a growing international concern and commitments through the Rio Agenda 21, of 1992, the Kyoto protocol of 2000, and the Johannesburg 2002 Declarations about the adverse environmental effects of emissions and the devastating greenhouse gases, global warming and proven climate changes and global natural disasters. Accordingly, it is of a paramount importance that the energy and oil industries and research establishments continue to develop options for future energy supply and new renewable energy resources that are environmentally, friendly, affordable, dependable and promising.

#### **4.10.2 The Future of Renewable Energy**

Among other available clean energy resources, hydroelectricity is the only renewable energy used commercially, projected to supply about 2% of the future energy demand, whereas the biomass energy, a renewable chemical energy, could be doubled to about 12% of future demand. While intensive research is being intensified for other renewable energies such as wind, wave, geothermal, solar or other, non are yet in commercial and affordable use. The prospect of harnessing the sun energy has spurred a number of recent developments and advances that may lead in the near future to economical solar energy. However, experts argue that this renewable energy sources, recommended to increase to 15% of the total energy use in the next two decades, will not contribute substantially to global energy consumption in the foreseeable future. However, the final declaration of the second Earth Summit evaded inclusion of this percentage.

In consideration of development of fuel resource diversity, environmental concerns factored heavily into electric utility resource planning, renewable energy technologies, through the use of biomass, geothermal, hydropower, photovoltaic, solar or thermal. Wind or wave as possible

energy source are beginning to find their proper focus in the utility resource arena. Special attention is being given to economic, performance, environmental impact and benefit dimensions of renewable energy resources and technologies. Meanwhile, as "Technology Review" asserts, massive R&D projects have concentrated on finding other sources than fossil fuel to overcome air pollution from gas emissions, and the subsequent global warming. Already engines have been developed using hydrogen gas derived from water, which gives clean energy to engines especially to motor vehicles. The horizons of this renewable energy resource are very promising and wide open to unlimited potentialities and benefits. However, the cost of the use of hydrogen is so far three times that of gasoline. Serious R&D efforts, in view of the prototypes developed by BMW using space rocket technology, coupled with proper marketing, operation and maintenance networks and other technicalities are yet to be perfected. In his state of the Union address in January 2003, President Bush stressed the US commitment to the development of energy sources, especially hydrogen, for meeting the present needs and future demands. "Technology Review" reports in the August 2002 issue, that recent research and development in the renewable energy source of wind power has produced a wind turbine that takes in and replaces profitably fossil fuels. Similarly, wave power research has led to the invention of a promising renewable energy resource for electric energy using the tide movements which is also as promising and rewarding for the production of a new cheap clean energy resource, as proven by solar energy developments, have already been demonstrated by MIT scientists (TR, Feb. 2002)

#### **4.10.3 The Nuclear Alternative:**

Although there has been much fear and concern regarding the use of nuclear energy, given Chernobyl and the Three-mile island accidents, as well as the problem of disposition of nuclear wastes, nuclear power accounts at present to nearly 7% of the world energy needs, mostly in the developed world. With the constraints of environmental, psychological and human dimensions, and the limitations of the fuel resources, the International Nuclear Societies Council envisions that Nuclear power, based on the use of mainly uranium and thorium, will be called upon to provide as much higher percentage of the escalating energy demand, especially for generating electricity, which is economical, convenient to use, clean and comparatively, and environmentally, more appealing. The dependence on electric energy is increasing steadily. Accordingly, the present demand for the construction of 30-50 1000 M.W. nuclear power plants annually will be nearly doubled to about 100 GW. per year, by the middle of the next century. However, due to the potential hazards international and human fear, the topic of the use of nuclear energy is emotive and fundamental to the future of nuclear energy as a sustainable technology. With responsible efforts made by the industry, studies have shown that the safe disposal of radioactive waste technologically, environmentally and economically is achievable.

Convincing decisions must be made especially with regard to the green parties, civil societies and other NGOs, world wide, to demonstrate the effectiveness of the technology of safe handling of the disposal of wastes, balancing risks and benefits in the public interest and the good of humanity. Resolution of this issue will require the cooperation, effort and determination of the industry, regulations and politicians. The use of this technology will lead to public reassurance on the safety of nuclear energy, and a greater acceptance and implementation of its usage.

#### **4.10.4 The Energy Future in Egypt:**

The Energy future in Egypt is promising, especially after the recent discoveries in the Mediterranean Sea, the Western Desert and the Gulf of Suez. These discoveries have increased the oil resources to nearly 4 billion barrels of crude oil and 60 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, 90% of which is near the Mediterranean coast. This reassures the Egyptian energy future demands during the next two decades. However, the spiraling rise in consumption and demand due to mushrooming urbanization and rapid development necessitate serious planning and development of other energy alternatives. The situation is now urgent and requires national action and solid commitment. Egypt has been emphasizing other renewable energy sources from hydroelectric, wind and solar energy. According to the UNDP Arab Human Development Report 2004, electricity consumption per capita has risen from 380 Kg/cap in 1980 to 900 Kg of oil equivalent/capita in 1999. GDP unit of energy use (PPP US\$/Kg of oil equivalent) has increased from 3.5 to 4.9. Energy production, thus, has risen from 1.45 quadrillion btu to 2.72, while energy consumption has almost tripled from 0.08 in 1980 to 0.22 in 1999, which has increased carbon dioxide emissions from 1.48 to 3.98 million metric tons of carbon equivalent in 1999 (1.7 metric tons/capita). To tackle this situation, there is a greater need to implement quickly national program and plan of action, aimed at expanding renewable energy sources, including the nuclear plan, in order to insure the energy needs and future demands of a comprehensive and integrated human development, environmentally, socially, economically, technologically and culturally.

The recent Government decision to pursue seriously the construction of four nuclear power plants of 1000 megawatts each , after nearly 20 years of postponement due to fear of probable contamination and pollution hazards after the Chernobyl tragic explosion, is both wise and timely, especially after new nuclear technology improvements , measures and safeguards have been developed and successfully implemented worldwide! The future of energy development and use in Egypt is also related to capitalization on sharing resources and cooperation with countries in the Arab and Mediterranean regions through integrated electricity and gas networks, for mutual strategic benefits and interests, within integrated regional plans, projects and treaties.



#### **4.10.5 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the future of energy is linked cardinally to the future of sustainable development worldwide. The Earth Summit of 2002 in Johannesburg has emphasized the role of renewable energy in development in its final Declaration. Although the conference participants have expressed their disappointment at the achievements of Agenda 21 since the UN Rio conference in 1992, there has been an agreement among all participating nations, youth groups and NGO that greater efforts and commitments by all nations, organizations, corporations and individuals to implement the Summit Declarations to save our planet earth and to help alleviate grievances, injustices, insecurity and violations by governments, institutions or industries.

The challenges of sustainable human development are abound, but the will to address the problems and overcome the obstacles is determined. Certainly, the horizons for a brighter, healthier and promising future for all mankind, in both the developed north and the poor underdeveloped south, are wide open and indeed unlimited. They shall be truly enlightening and abundantly fulfilling, in which all life has dignity, and is celebrated and upheld by all for all.

## **Chapter Five: Education**

- 5.1 Egyptian Education In Crisis ?!**
- 5.2 A Betrayal of Trust and Conscience!**
- 5.3 Rout learning**

## 5.1 Egyptian Education In Crisis ?!

Recently a 25 year old master's class research student revealed to me that she has never before opened a single book and read it fully , or even read any newspaper! Like her colleagues, she betrayed her scant knowledge of her undergraduate courses or pre-college education. Elsewhere, my 12 year old car mechanic apprentice told me that he dropped out of elementary school during the sixth grade, and he can't read or write, and has not learned basic math of addition and subtraction! These examples are omnipresent and typical everywhere. They are staggering, penetrating, revealing, shocking and alarming; they reflect the present status quo of the Egyptian educational fallacy!

A few decades ago the US Presidential Commission published a report entitled "A Nation in Crises" depicting the disturbing situation of education in the US. It could have as well reflected the situation in Egypt, or even worse. However, the US administration took it seriously, and confronted the challenge head on, and acted upon it promptly to rectify their problems and upgrade the deteriorating situation. The condition in Egypt is bewildering indeed and demands national action and cardinal commitment -- relentless , comprehensive and uncompromising!

The fallacy and consequences of free education are painfully recognized and endured by all. The state is subsidizing the education of the rich who provide cars for their children to drive daily to college , as evidenced in the thousands of parked cars in and around campuses everywhere , they pay LE 5000/course/student for private lessons, with a total annual cost of LE 50000/student !?The 2007 UNDP World Development Report reminds us that the annual per capita income in Egypt was in 2005 \$1207 (LE 6500)!?. Meanwhile, college graduates "study" primarily course summaries and digests, only to pass exams , and learn very little about curriculum content; hence the sharp decline in the quality of education! Thanaweya ama diploma (High school certificate) is only good for securing a high score for admission in the prestige colleges (Kolleyat Alkema). The national rush to reserve a place in the university is the goal of every child and parent. The hectic race begins even much earlier, when parents rush to reserve a place for their newborn at the nursery school.The viscous empty circle is truly disheartening, illusive and disappointing! The old nostalgic folk song reminds all: Where have all the flowers gone?...Will they ever learn/...??

The virtual collapse and critical situation of education is plainly recognized and felt by all concerned, the symptoms and manifestations and grave indicators are both glaring and alarming, as evidenced in the emphasis on quantity versus quality, the multitudes of large virtually incompetent student pupation , overcrowded classes , shortages or lack of resources, meager educational spaces and facilities, shortage of qualified teachers, low pay, inadequate curricula ,

minimal or no labs, poor languages even in language schools , inadequate and faulty examinations , capitalization on memorization at the expense of intellectual comprehension , lack of fairplay , lack of transparency, burglarization of research work and manuscripts , nepotism , partiality,... among many others. The result is millions of "jobless" graduates" , who have very little hope in the future, and who are not equipped or prepared to work professionally , inapt , disqualified, inefficient , undependable , and barely accountable! This is a critical inflammable national liability—alarmingly ticking and seriously hurting! Disappointingly, the national development manpower needs are not met or reflected in the educational system, which doesn't provide needed professional capabilities or technical abilities. Consequently, graduates must receive proper training , and additional knowledge to meet developmental tasks and needs.

Thus , it is not surprising, therefore, to learn that the latest 2007 Spanish report on the top 200 universities worldwide, published recently in Madrid, has echoed the earlier 2005/2006 Chinese reports indicating that 62% of the top universities are located in north America , 31% in Europe , and 4% in both Asia and Latin America , with none in Africa !? The reports thus prove that the developed world prides itself in having most of the top universities, which have bolstered the high performance of economic achievements, coupled with social , cultural and human development. They spend more than 5% of their GDP on their research projects as compared to 0.2% in Egypt! The reports also expose the known facts that most Noble Price laureates in the various fields of knowledge illuminate brilliantly the research achievements of those top universities staff. It also goes without saying that during the last Olympic Games in Athens the athletes of the developed countries reaped most of the medals! Concurrently, developing countries , alas , are suffering consequently from the absence of distinguished colleges and a continuing decline in economic , social , cultural , and human conditions , except in the few cases of the leaping tigers of south east Asia, like South Korea and Malaysia, which capitalized during the last two decades on educational reform and uplifting.

In Egypt it was hoped in the beginning that private universities would improve the situation , beside absorbing the many thousands of high school graduates who had no chance to enter government universities. However, the nearly 15 new private universities are charging nearly LE30000/year for tuition , and they have burglarized the national universities staff , lack proper academic resources and facilities and thus have failed to provide quality education, as have done the prestigious, non-profit private universities in the US or Europe. "The education business" now is in fashion with most prominent business tycoons involved for reasons of their own. The current inflation spiral is exponentially boosting prices of goods, services and real estate, as well as the educational bill, thus maximizing the cost, burdens, distress and despair in every household!

The solution must originate from a national comprehensive commitment to catapult the quality of education to a high world level, and to capitalize on the pursuit of world level excellence in education and research without adherence to bureaucratic framework or salary scales. Free education has become lame and impotent, and has failed to propel the nation forward. It has certainly caused decline and regress! What is given free is considered valueless and worthless! In fact it has been defacto not free but very costly both tangibly and intangibly, to the detriment and the future of the nation. Education must be at cost , with scholarships provided only to support the education of the gifted , the distinguished and the underprivileged. Let us abandon the ostrich – like approach and rise to the call of radical reform and renaissance, as have Japan , Korea , Malaysia , China , and India. Private universities must not be established before securing their own adequate material and human resources , facilities and capabilities even if they have to employ highly qualified foreign staff or reputed expatriates who could be seconded from top universities worldwide, whatever the cost. Research budgets must be boosted to not less than 5% of the GDP, and proper educational facilities and capabilities must be provided to meet the new challenges. The horizons are vast and open , the hopes of the awaiting millions are ambitious and plentiful ,the future is unfolding and the will to change is abundant.

28/4/2008

## 5.2 A Betrayal of Trust and Conscience!

July 6, 2008

The latest embarrassing disclosure of wide-scale cheating and a labyrinth of corruption at the final examination of the General Certificate of Secondary Education in the Menya Governorate, and perhaps elsewhere in Egypt, has exposed flagrantly the depth and breadth of corruption and betrayal of responsibility, trust, and conscience. Officials at various levels in the education, security, health and other sectors as well as members of the Parliament have been implicated. Although the Attorney General and his staff rushed to the scene to investigate, the proliferation of the crisis of the disclosure and selling of exam papers has been shocking, embarrassing and scandalous to the government and to the Egyptian people, for it revealed beyond a doubt that the education system is in a dilemma, fallacious, lame, and impotent.

Although cheating and corruption in the General Certificate of Secondary Education has been well known, and similar incidents have been reported for years, this tragic breakdown of the system and conscience has sent tremors everywhere in Egypt and abroad, exposing the dilapidation of the educational system as well as its well known serious flaws and short-comings. This has been long pointed out and known involving teachers, administrators, officials, parents and society in general. It betrays poor standards, archaic curricula, private lessons, profit-seeking private schools and universities, poor salaries, inadequate classes, shortage of facilities and resources, over population, among other culprits, with emphasis only on proforma exams and the award of diplomas and certificates, at the expense of the quality of education, which lays abound in shambles. Students are trained only in the techniques of answering questions and scoring high grades in general certificate exams to enter higher education with scant comprehension of real knowledge or proper learning !! This has been recognized in many studies, media reports and conferences held recently at the national level, as being unfit to propel Egypt forward to meet the challenges of poverty, the pressing demands of the 80 million population explosion, and the long awaited need for progress and prosperity.

The crisis is not limited to education but it has its parallels in services and production sectors, including elections, on which the government is spending massive subsidies of hundreds of billions of Egyptian pounds , alas, without achieving the intended goals and the needed objectives. The current situation tolls the bells loudly for all to wake up and act conscientiously without hesitation, but with ample will, resolve and determination to save the nation. Any hope for a promising future rests upon a dedicated leadership to institute urgent reform immediately,

coupled with a needed and enlightened renaissance in order to propel a far reaching, extensive, intensive and comprehensive development on all fronts and at all levels. The time is now and the place is here.

### 5.3 Rout learning

Since the Shanghai Jiao Tong University's Institute of Higher Education published its annual report on the world's top 500 universities, many of us have been gripped by despair. Cairo University excepted, not a single Arab institution of higher learning made it onto the list. In all of Africa, only Egypt and South Africa appeared at all. According to the study, 433 of the world's top universities are in Western Europe, North America and Japan, 350 in the G-8 countries.

The message is that economic development is inextricably linked to academic excellence. The opposite holds equally true. Backward nations typically suffer from low scientific as well as social and humanitarian standards; scholars don't seem to prosper in the developing world. As it stands, scientific achievement is exclusive to industrialised nations.

A country of over a billion people, China is now growing at 12 percent, yet the report reveals it has only nine of the world's top 500 universities. Likewise Taiwan and Hong Kong, with 10 institutions between them; though these two countries' standard of living is much higher than China's. India, with nearly a billion people, does not boast more than two universities. India is well known for its scholarships; but together with Russia -- also rated at two universities -- much of its research is not published in international periodicals, rendering it irrelevant. When all is said and done, the economic factor is the most decisive. At \$21 trillion, NAFTA's gross national product is nearly equal to that of the European countries combined; North America has 290 institutions on the list, 85 more than Europe, including Eastern Europe, and more than half of the world's.

Egypt's appearance on the list would have been good news if not for one small detail. In an *Al-Ahram* interview published on 4 September 2006, the university president concedes that, if not for three graduates who went on to receive the Nobel Prize -- Naguib Mahfouz, Mohammad El-Baradei and Yasser Arafat -- the institution would never have made it. That the Nobel Prize is among the criteria was just a stroke of luck. Of the Nobel laureates in question, indeed -- one novelist and two politicians -- not one received the prize in recognition of academic achievement. Compared to 55 universities from the northern Mediterranean (Greece, Italy, France, and Spain) -- four from South Africa and five from Latin America -- there were none at all from the southern Mediterranean, except for Cairo University. Crisis? It would seem so. We are always complaining about Western dominance, but the proverb says, "He who works with his axe thinks with his head." If we want to break the West's hegemony, we need to make some academic headway.



Of course, academic listings are not the only sign of progress; and China's study gives too much weight to international awards and research published in English. Humanities figure prominently, for example, but in the Arab world the vast majority of humanities research is never published in English. Criteria relating to size and proportionate academic distinction further diminish Arab chances. All of which should not detract from the message that it is time we started fixing our educational system. According to former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, progress in Malaysia started with an overhaul of education. Even countries that are far ahead of us -- the US, the UK, France and Russia, for example -- are continually reassessing their academic work.

In this context a few points come to mind. An overhaul of the pre-college schooling is required, and admissions should be governed by department-specific exams, not general secondary school results. Educators, especially university professors, should be granted lucrative wages in return for working full time in a specific institution -- we must put an end to the system whereby their time is divided among several institutions, with no time set aside for research. Private universities that do not have adequate material and human resources should not be built, let alone allowed to rob the state-run universities of their faculty. Bylaws for faculty promotion, too, must be revised -- putting an end to nepotism, plagiarism and substandard research. The institutions must be provided with sufficient funding for reference material, laboratories and other facilities.

This is not an exhaustive list, but with these ends in view, it will at least be possible to reconsider the educational system as part of the country's infrastructure, which the recent spate of train crashes shows is in dire need of reform. Schools and hospitals are being privatised, presumably to save money, but the result is that the country will be losing out in the long run. Perhaps it is time to pay attention not to how much we are spending, but to how we spend it.

| <b>Criteria used by the Shanghai Jiao Tong University's Institute of Higher Education to rank universities</b> |                            |                                                                           |                                    |                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|
|                                                                                                                | <b>Criterion</b>           | <b>Index</b>                                                              | <b>Area</b>                        | <b>Relative weight</b> |
| 1                                                                                                              | <b>Education quality</b>   | <b>Graduates with Nobel Prizes and excellence awards</b>                  | <b>Graduates</b>                   | <b>10%</b>             |
| 2                                                                                                              | <b>Faculty excellence</b>  | <b>Faculty with Nobel Prizes and excellence awards</b>                    | <b>Awards</b>                      | <b>20%</b>             |
|                                                                                                                |                            | <b>Researchers with scientific and international awards</b>               | <b>Scientific acknowledgements</b> | <b>20%</b>             |
| 3                                                                                                              | <b>Scientific research</b> | <b>Articles published in international science and nature periodicals</b> | <b>Nature and science</b>          | <b>20%</b>             |
|                                                                                                                |                            | <b>Articles and scientific research in science, humanities, and arts</b>  | <b>Various sciences</b>            | <b>20%</b>             |
| 4                                                                                                              | <b>University size</b>     | <b>Academic performance in proportion to university size</b>              | <b>Size</b>                        | <b>10%</b>             |

*Source: the 2006 annual report of the Shanghai Jiao Tong University's Institute of Higher Education*

**Mohsen Zahran\*** casts a troubled eye over the future of the academy

Al-Ahram Weekly 1 - 7 November 2006-Issue No. 818

## **Chapter Six: Environmental & Climate Change**

- 6.1 Lessons from Sandy**
- 6.2 A Sobering Nuclear Warning**
- 6.3 Egypt and global warming**
- 6.4 Challenges of Global Warming (From Kyoto to Montreal)**

## 6.1 Lessons from Sandy

Issue No.1121, 8 November, 2012

Preparedness in the face of natural disasters is an obligation governments must bear all the more as global warming intensifies their impact, writes **Mohsen Zahran**

Along with the rest of the world, we followed the news of Hurricane Sandy as it swept up the eastern seaboard of the US, threatening the lives and property of people in eight states, especially in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York. Local and federal authorities had to caution some 40 million people against the dangers of this unprecedentedly huge and vicious storm. But thanks to advanced satellite and meteorological technology, it was possible to monitor Sandy's progress, to predict when it would head north from the Caribbean, and to identify the major centres it would strike, thereby enabling the implementation of precautionary measures to minimise human and economic loss.

The damage that Sandy wrought as it tore through the Caribbean made it clear just how destructive this hurricane was. Having claimed hundreds of casualties and decimated residential communities and tourist and recreational sites there, Sandy notified American cities to the north of exactly what it had in store for them. To prepare for this, President Barack Obama declared states of emergency for several states, rendering them eligible for federal financial aid and relief services, while several state governments acted similarly for cities and towns that would fall in Sandy's trajectory. In addition, two days before the hurricane would hit land at Atlantic City, New Jersey, numerous precautionary measures were implemented, notably:

- Schools, government offices and the New York Stock Exchange were closed.
- The operations of underground and surface transportation networks were suspended.
- Some 350,000 people were evacuated from coastal areas that would be affected by the storm.
- Commercial and US naval vessels docked in the area's ports were moved out to sea.
- Hospitals, the Red Cross and civil defence units were put on alert.
- The National Guard was brought in to assist employees in local utility and public service administrations and to guard evacuated areas.
- Private vehicles were banned from using public thoroughfares except in cases of emergency.
- Media outlets were instructed to publicise up-to-the-minute reports on developments related to the storm.

On Tuesday night, 30 October 2012, the mammoth hurricane struck the states of New Jersey and New York, and particularly the coastal New York City, the world's capital of trade and finance, destroying docks and yachts, seaside resorts and coastal residential areas. Torrential rain and high-tide seas flooded streets under several feet of water which, in New York City, poured into the subways and flooded the tunnels connecting Manhattan with other parts of the city and New Jersey. The rushing floods swept through the streets and into houses throughout the 12 long hours of this unprecedentedly huge hurricane whose flood-related damage was exacerbated by the fact that it coincided with a high tide.

But emergency and relief teams speedily moved to the rescue of the stranded and to put out fires that broke out in some 100 houses. Meanwhile, utility repair teams set to work to restore electricity to 10 million people, to get transportation services in operation again, to remove fallen trees and debris, and to pump out water from flooded homes and buildings. Initially, government authorities estimated that Sandy had caused \$15 billion worth of damage. They subsequently raised the figure to \$50 billion.

In spite of the early warning, precautions, repeated alerts, and material and human resources support at all levels, there were certain other measures that US local and federal authorities could have taken. Had they done so, they would have averted considerable material and human loss, and the breakdown of utility networks and businesses for several days. Whether contingency planners were unaware of the necessity, or simply forgot, they should have:

- Cut off electricity and gas for the 12-hour period of the storm. Naturally, they would have given sufficient advanced notification to people beforehand. Implementing this measure would have saved hundreds of houses from fire caused by falling electricity poles. The current could then have been turned back on as soon as the storm passed and the electricity grid was tested for safety.

- Constructed steel gates to seal off the entrances to the Metro and installed large underground drainage tanks that would have collected flood waters and could then have been emptied out as soon as the storm had passed. These precautions would have prevented heavy damage to the subway grid and subway cars, and enabled the resumption of operations soon after the storm passed. Unfortunately, since such measures were not taken, the subway system is still out of order and repair work is expected to continue for several more days.

- Study maritime currents and construct barriers and levees in coastal areas. Certainly, such precautions would have protected seaside facilities from flooding caused by the onslaught of high waves and spared the economy billions of dollars worth of damage.

- Warned private yacht and boat owners to bring their vessels to shore and house them temporarily until the storm passed.

- Sheathed and anchored large trees located next to major roads or houses, thereby preventing them from falling and killing people, destroying property or damaging electricity lines. Many of the casualties from the storm were the result of trees falling on their cars or homes.

- Create special storm drainage networks separate from the normal drainage networks in coastal areas.

- Redesign coastal urban strips to better equip them against natural disasters.

- Create citizen defence teams equipped with the necessary training to assist government authorities in times of natural disasters and similar emergencies.

- Establish specialised natural disaster and emergency administrations endowed with the necessary material, technical and human resources. These administrations would be required to hold periodic drills throughout the year and to remain constantly prepared to contend with any emergency situation.

- Enact laws and regulations to ensure that all public institutions, especially schools, hospitals and government administrations, as well as commercial and industrial establishments, conduct regular drills and training courses for their staff on the emergency procedures to be followed in the event of earthquakes, fires, hurricanes and other such crises, as is already the case in airplanes and ocean liners. Sufficient funding should be made available for this purpose.

The foregoing analysis underscores how necessary it is for relevant authorities to be equipped with the necessary resources and potential to prepare for and contend with the challenges posed by natural disasters. Certainly, if government authorities follow guidelines such as those described above, they would avoid unnecessary risks and pitfalls and spare the state and society considerable human and material loss.

I can only pray that God spares Egypt from such cruel natural disasters. In addition to our 2,500 kilometre long coastline, our country is located along a major fault line and has experienced a number of earthquakes in recent years. It is only logical that we should heed the lessons that Sandy and earlier disasters, such as the catastrophic Tsunami in Japan a year ago, have taught us. Perhaps the foremost among these lessons is that global warming has heightened the likelihood of natural disasters and increased their magnitude. Surely this is all the more reason why we should take all appropriate measures and precautions to avert as much of the destruction they can cause as possible, rather than repenting for having left these matters until it

was too late.

## 6.2 A Sobering Nuclear Warning

March 11, 2011 marks the wrath of nature and the litany of earth on Japan. The shocking tragedy was caused by the 9.0 magnitude on the Richter scale disastrous earthquake, the destructive tsunami that followed and, in the aftermath, the tremors and the nuclear radiation that lingered. The major repercussions were focused on the utter eradication of the towns and villages in and around Sendai, and the radioactive fires and explosions in the Fukushima nuclear power plant. These stand as tragic witnesses and horrific evidence of the apocalyptic disaster that afflicted Japan since World War II, especially the August 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, 1945 devastating explosions of the US atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki respectively.

According to media reports, the Japanese disaster is unparalleled in the amount of devastating destruction that this 7<sup>th</sup> highest recorded earthquake in history has inflicted on the northern tip of the Japanese island, which sits on the borders of three major tectonic plates and has been historically prone to such quakes. But this high magnitude earthquake is also a new terrible reminder of the continuing disasters that have been occurring due to the steady rise in global warming and climate change around the globe, which has resulted in major earthquakes, massive floods, hurricanes, cyclones, torrential rains and other natural disasters worldwide. This steady, alarming increase of global warming and the subsequent pattern of natural disasters, logically indicate that similar natural tragedies will continue to afflict various corners of the globe in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, the international community keeps on failing to agree on a unified agreement to effectively reduce global warming, as evidenced in the UN conferences in Kyoto, Copenhagen or recently in Cancun!

This recent Japanese disaster was multifaceted: it claimed thousands killed, hundreds of thousands missing; thousands of homes destroyed; and several towns and villages were leveled in ruins. To top it all, the Fukushima nuclear power plant suffered from several fires and explosions, and the subsequent radiation that followed, causing the evacuation of thousands of residents from an area within a 30-mile-radius of the nuclear power plant. The radiation emissions have spread reaching the capital, Tokyo, 250 miles away. Alas, Japan is now enduring not only the calamities of the earthquake and the tsunami, but also, the harmful radiation from the breakdown and radioactive leakages from four, or more, of the six reactors of the nuclear power plant at Fukushima. This has culminated in tragic human, material, social and economic losses exceeding \$100 billion. It is ironic that despite the reputed safeguarding measures built in the power plant to overcome breakdown, or meltdown, of the nuclear core, and in spite of the

known high quality control and quality assurance standards, procedures and rules observed in the construction, operation and management in Japanese production and performance, the Fukushima power plant alerts, the ensuing fires and explosions are shocking reminders of the dangers and threats associated with nuclear power plants!?

The Chernobyl nuclear plant explosion in 1975 in the USSR and the Three-Mile Island radioactive leakage in Pennsylvania, USA in 1979 (must we resort to *Wikileaks* to learn more about other unreported radioactive leakages elsewhere?) have served as warnings to Europe and the USA to seriously reevaluate their current construction and operations of nuclear power plants and to phase out the dependence on existing ones. The green political movement and party in Germany, Scandinavia, Canada and USA demand the cessation of continued environmental pollution and the subsequent abandonment of dependence on nuclear plants for electricity production all together. The Fukushima explosion has renewed calls for the revaluation of the nuclear power programs in the US and Europe.

After nearly thirty years of Egyptian government freeze on their nuclear program, and the proposed construction of a new nuclear power plant on the north coast near Dabaa, 150 km. west of Alexandria, the government has now revived the program recently and decided on the Dabaa site for the building of the first 1200 megawatt nuclear power plant in Egypt, at the probable cost of four billion dollars. Preliminary tenders for the design and construction were scheduled for this summer, according to the announcement of the former cabinet, before the January 25<sup>th</sup> Revolution. Since Egypt is located at the third earthquake zone with 2500 km. coastline on the Mediterranean and Red seas, and after the accidents of Chernobyl, Three-Mile Island, Fukushima, and other unreported radioactive leaks elsewhere in Europe and the USA, a major reevaluation is now mandatory! National authorities should reconsider seriously the proposed nuclear power plant in Dabaa, near Alexandria, the second largest city, with its 6 million residents, given the known negligence, apathy, lack of quality control in construction, operation and maintenance, which is endemic in Egyptian public life, production, services and administration. In view of the continuing depletion and rise of consumption of national oil reserves, the escalating need for electric power by the spiraling population explosion can be satisfied by building hydro-electric plants at the Qattara Depression in the western desert, and the erection of hydroelectric plants on the Nile barrages. There is an urgent need to capitalize on the intensification of investment in solar and other renewable energy sources, tapping the abundant solar energy year round in the vast expanse of the Egyptian deserts for the production of both electric and heat energies.

We need to learn from the experiences, failures and tragedies of others, in order to conserve our resources, and safeguard the life, prosperity and future of the Egyptian population.



There is no more noble aim; there is no greater national energy strategy; there is no higher and crucial environmental undertaking! Anything less is imponderable, nothing less is acceptable.

March 11, 2011

### **6.3 Egypt and global warming**

Al-Ahram Weekly 26 January - 1 February 2006-Issue No. 779- Opinion

Early December, representatives of 190 countries attended the Montreal United Nations Conference on Climate Change, which lasted for two weeks, in order to address the alarming issue of global warming and to agree upon an agenda and plan for action after 2012, when the Kyoto Protocol of 1997 expires. With lukewarm support from the United States, which refrained from signing Kyoto, the conference adopted unanimous resolutions to pursue Kyoto commitments after 2012, with certain reservations. The goal was to accommodate US reluctance and maintain present momentum towards curbing the immanent threat and apocalyptic consequences facing human civilisation.

In Montreal, attending nations were classified into three categories: the first inclusive of 30 industrial nations fully committed to Kyoto; the second consisting of China, India and Brazil and others whose annual economic growth surpasses eight per cent and are pursuing means to control emissions while maintaining industrial momentum and the third group inclusive of Third World countries whose gas emissions are below the world average due to their limited industrial activities. These countries may trade the differential of low emissions with nations exceeding the world average. After ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, Egypt could gain \$20 million annually by trading its low emission certificates with countries like India whose emissions exceed the average. It can also benefit from international cooperation in the adoption of clean energy production methods, to reduce emissions further, and the sharing of clean technology expertise, know-how and capabilities.

## 6.4 Challenges of Global Warming (From Kyoto to Montreal)

In December, 2005, representatives of 190 countries attended the United Nations Conference on Climate Change met in Montreal, in order to address the exasperating situation of global warming and to agree upon an agenda and plan for action after 2012, when the Kyoto Protocol of 1997 expires. With lukewarm support from the United States, which refrained from signing the Kyoto Protocol, the conference adopted unanimous resolutions to pursue Kyoto commitments after 2012 with certain compromises. The intension has been to accommodate the U.S. reluctance and to maintain the present momentum to curb the continuing threats and apocalyptic consequences of global warming on the human civilization.

The Kyoto Agreement required the signatory countries to keep the level of gas emissions due to industrial and automotive consumption of hydrocarbons, which cause rising global warming, to the 1994 levels, beginning from 2008 to 2012, reaching a total reduction of 2.5% in 2012.

After Russia agreed to join the Kyoto Protocol in 2004, it is hoped that Egypt becomes the 127<sup>th</sup> nation to be fully committed to Kyoto after the approval of the Parliament. Yet, the U.S. continue to refuse to join the world community in supporting the Protocol, although its harmful gas emissions contribute to 25% of the world total levels. President Bush insisted upon the refusal of Kyoto due to its negative influence on industrial production, and on the US massive dependence on cars in mobility! This refusal is very alarming and certainly dooming, for to become operational and effective, at least 55% of industrial nations must ratify the protocol before its implementation! Thus the global warming situation remains dangerously stagnant if not worsening!

In Montreal Conference the 190 nations participating, including Egypt, were classified in three categories: the first includes 30 industrial nations fully committed to Kyoto; the second consists of rapidly developing nations, such as china, India and Brazil among others, whose annual high economic and industrial growth surpasses 8% and are pursuing ways and means to control emissions yet maintain economic and industrial momentum; and the third group includes the third world countries whose gas emissions are far below the world average due to their limited industrial activities. These countries may trade the differential of low emissions with nations exceeding the world average. After ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, Egypt could gain \$20 million annually by trading its low emission certificates with countries like India whose emissions exceed the world average! It also can benefit from international cooperation in adoption of clean energy to reduce emission and transferring of international clean technology expertise, knowhow and capabilities. However, still, the U.N. conventions on climate change

required in Kyoto that nearly 39 nations reduce their harmful gas emissions in order to arrest the rising threats and dangerous global repercussions!

The consequences of global warming on climate change are devastating, deadly and monumental. NASA scientists have recently warned of the increase of the rate of melting of the polar ice caps which will result in their total disappearance by the end of this century, due to the rise in world levels of gas emissions and the consequent steady increase of the earth temperature. The evidence of global warming are recognized worldwide especially during the last few years, such as:

- The noticeable rise of air and earth temperature which have caused the Greenhouse Effect and global warming.
- The increasing occurrence of natural disasters of flooding, storms, hurricanes and typhoons (such as Tsunami tidal wave in southeast Asia in last December, hurricanes Cathrina and Rita in Louisiana in August, 2005.)
- The continuing melting of the polar ice caps, steady rise of ocean and sea water levels, which ultimately will flood deltas and coastal areas worldwide.
- Spread of forest fires, during the summer seasons in various continents. .
- Increase of the rate of desertification, as seen in Africa especially.
- The rise of disastrous earthquakes coupled with shocking earth tremors and eruption of volcanos, have resulted in massive distruction and thousands of human fatalities, as tragically seen in Pakistan, Iran , Turkey and elsewhere.
- The continuing depletion of the ozone layer , with its dangerous effect on climate change, human health and the natural ecosystem .

It is ironic that academic research and professional organizations in the U.S. have repeatedly published reports on the disasters which will invariably hit all corners of the earth because of global warming and climate change. They reasserted that the continuing rise in the ocean temperature and the air pollution caused by Carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide and methane will tigger a "global time bomb" far exceeding the disasters to human race, caused by the weapons of mass destruction, whether nuclear, chemical or biological.

It is truly unethical, unfair and paradoxical that the conduct, life style, policies and practice of industrial nations have perceptitated global warming and climatic change endangering the life and future of the majority of the world population living in the developing world. The present human race of 6.5 billion, are expected to reach 9 billion in thirty years, with no food to eat, water drink or oxygen to breathe, due to the looming doom of global warming.

It is unfortunate that the U.N. Conferences on Climate Change in both Kyoto and Montreal failed to address and confront other forms of pollution than gas emissions by the affluent industrial nations. These include social, economic and cultural pollution, ethical pollution, physical pollution, academic pollution, moral pollution, environmental pollution, and health pollution (40 millions people are afflicted and 9000 die daily due to HIV/AIDS) ,as well as acoustic pollution, visual pollution and other forms of weapons of mass destruction. The sources of these forms of pollution were initially developed and deployed by the great powers during the last century indiscriminately. They invented nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and used them devastatingly during World Wars I and II and other regional mini local wars? Ultimately, it is the poor who pay the price and suffer the multitude of injustices caused by the rich!

We hope that all forms of pollution, not only global warming and climate changes, be addressed by the international community after Montreal in order to safeguard a promising just, and peaceful future of the total human race on Planet Earth.

20/12/2005

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## 7.1 Egypt's path to a better future

Issue No.1178, 2 January, 2014

Egypt has a glorious horizon ahead, if its people and new authorities grasp together the initiative and inaugurate a comprehensive national plan for development, writes **Mohsen Zahran**.

The year 2013 will remain indelibly marked in the memory of most Egyptians for its whirling events, difficult challenges, terrible confrontations, elating triumphs, bitter conflicts, horrible tragedies, massive demonstrations and bloody clashes, coupled with continuing instability, violence, lawlessness and insecurity.

The Egyptian people were inspired on 30 June, the highlight of 2013, by Lao-tse's wisdom: "In dwelling, be close to the land; in meditation, go deep in the heart; in dealing with others, be gentle and kind; in speech, be true; in ruling, be just; in business, be competent; in action, watch the timing; no fight, no blame." They rose in an unprecedented wave of national defiance constituting a multitude of millions, regardless of age, gender, faction or belief, demanding the unseating of the first democratically elected president, Mohamed Morsi, nominated by the Muslim Brotherhood during the 2012 presidential elections. Indeed, the timely intervention of the military in response to the multi-million popular revolution was fundamental, in order to avert bloody national strife and dire consequences threatening national survival.

The 30 June Revolution was campaigned for, during the spring of 2013, by the Rebel (Tamarod) movement, which collected signatures from over 25 million Egyptians. It called for a national, mass demonstration on the prescribed date of 30 June. It mobilised more than 30 million Egyptians in most provinces and cities nationwide, calling for the immediate termination of the almost one year of Muslim Brotherhood rule, in which it proved inept and unfit to govern. The Brotherhood were oblivious in fulfilling their promises to implement the 25 January Revolution's noble objectives of "Bread, freedom, dignity and social justice," which had claimed admiration and unanimous support worldwide. The Brotherhood, its leadership and their candidate for president, Mohamed Morsi, proved once and again that their words were empty, their declarations void of truth, and their actions only self-serving, their motives untrustworthy. Promises made before elections to be fulfilled during the first 100 days in office were forgotten or baseless. This became their modus operandi, as evidenced in their illegal and unconstitutional acts, practices and performance throughout their 365 days in office. Both the 25 January 2011 and 30 June 2013 revolutions were unprecedented demonstrations of



people power, irrespective of colour, religion, gender, origin or income level a true proof of national cohesion, will, determination and unity. Aristotle's idealism of people themselves practicing democracy was first put into practice 2500 years on by the people of Egypt, dissimilar to any order or system recognised in democratic nations in this third millennium. The grassroots of democracy was recalled and applied in unprecedented fashion in an historic, exemplary model.

The summer of 2013 will be long remain remembered in the history of modern Egypt for its unforgettable ecstasies and agonies. The masses during the 30 June Revolution demanded the military intervene and support their will. Commander-in-Chief General Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi tried to reason with Morsi to respond to the peoples' demands, but the latter continued to live and behave in a state of denial and refusal. The people continued to demonstrate through 3 July, when General Al-Sisi, after consultations with SCAF (the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces) and various political and religious figures, declared 3 July the removal of Morsi, the suspension of the 2012 Constitution and the adoption of a "roadmap" plan for the future. This included the appointment of Chief Justice Adli Mansour, of the Supreme Constitutional Court, as interim president, the swearing in of a transitional cabinet, the creation of a new Constitutional Committee to author a new draft constitution, correcting the biased and unacceptable 2012 Muslim Brotherhood constitution, to be followed by the holding of new parliamentary and presidential elections in nine months.

The train of events and challenges that led to the showdown needs to be critically examined and evaluated. During nearly 12 months of Muslim Brotherhood rule of the nation, the parliament's Shura Council (the upper house) was dominated by their deputies, echoing a similar domination of the People's Assembly (the lower house), which was dissolved earlier by the Supreme Constitutional Court for being unconstitutionally elected. Likewise, they had wasted no time in controlling the executive branch as well as the judiciary. They were not ashamed to support nepotism in public appointments, allow for rampant corruption, and fill key governmental posts with their members and sympathisers. They ignored Lao-tse's counsel: "Claim wealth and titles and disaster will follow. Retire when the work is done, this is the way of heaven." The Muslim Brotherhood executed unhesitatingly their determination and familiar tactics of exclusiveness, and rushed towards the implementation of their hidden agenda of invading the state and filling its posts at all levels, whether in the cabinet, ministries, local government, syndicates or labour unions. The once prevalent national unity was alarmingly divided, evidently threatening civil strife and civil war.

The swelling stream of events, crises, confrontations, clashes, and strikes had resulted in costly,

painful repercussions, especially evidenced in the hundreds of deaths and thousands of casualties, a heavy toll that has inflamed Egypt during 12 months of pain, despair, animosities, volatility, insecurity, instability and flagrant chaos. The bloody clashes and scores of deaths and wounded near the Presidential Palace caused not by the police or army, but by the Muslim Brotherhood militia ordered in by Morsi, together with the casualties in the Port Said confrontations, as well as almost weekly bloodshed in various Egyptian cities, were too horrifying, inflammatory and intolerable. Brotherhood thugs and armed gangs roamed the streets, looting, damaging property and killing or hurting innocent civilians and anti-Morsi protesters.

As a consequence, there were repeated calls for civil disobedience and protest marches against the government and the president, demanding change and reform. Their demands fell on deaf ears. This further exasperated the nation, accelerating the continued deterioration of the national condition on all fronts. The economic crisis worsened further (the economic rate of growth fell below two per cent), with a sharp decline in foreign reserves (\$13.5 billion in 2013, as compared to \$32 billion at the end of 2010), large budget deficits (30 per cent), spiralling inflation (25 per cent), rising unemployment (13.4 per cent with 50 per cent of the youth of the age 15-35 unemployed), petrol, gas and bread shortages, frequent electrical power blackouts, lack of productivity, loss of exports, rising imports by Brotherhood tycoons, coupled with a serious decline in tourism, the major foreign exchange earner and the backbone of the Egyptian economy. As a result, the value of the Egyptian pound against the US dollar fell by 25 per cent. Furthermore, terrorist attacks in Sinai threatened the porous border with Israel and undermined the peace treaty. In addition, the affiliation of Hamas in Gaza Strip with the Muslim Brotherhood leadership in Cairo allowed intensive use of tunnels for smuggling of Egyptian subsidised goods, petrol and electricity to support the Hamas government. Adding insult to injury, the rumoured agreement to allocate 1600 square kilometres of Sinai to Hamas to resettle Palestinians angered Egyptians, realising that this intolerable national treason was engineered by Morsi and Hamas involving a multi-party, international deal, infested with bribery, corruption and betrayal.

The repeated disregard of human rights and the continuing imprisonment, condemned by human rights groups, of key leaders of the January youth revolution coupled with the numerous incidents of deadly sectarian clashes in Cairo and in Upper Egypt further inflamed and sparked protests and demonstrations, not only in Egypt but in various capitals in Europe and the United States. The attack on churches, especially the Coptic Cathedral in Abbasiya in Cairo, resulted in deaths and casualties, more bloodshed and agonies. The systematic Muslim Brotherhood attack on notable media personalities, who rebuked steadily the Brotherhood government, persisted in their efforts in condemning the opposition, including prominent leaders of various parties, who had been outspoken in their critical denunciation of Morsi's rule and Brotherhood practices. It

was evident to all that Egypt was facing a serious national crisis that was multi-faceted, deep and divisive, threatening the very unity, foundation and existence of the nation. It was of paramount importance to act quickly and thus to institute the proper order of priorities to overcome the persistent and dangerous instability, debilitating animosity and socio-economic divides. It was mandatory for the survival of the nation to intervene immediately in order to eradicate the infecting virus of national decline and despair, to eliminate the weekly human toll, to overcome frustrations, hatred, confrontations, disparities, disappointments, rampant corruption, and infiltrating apathy. It was a matter of national urgency to embark decisively on meeting and managing pressing national challenges here and abroad. Lao-tse's wisdom was a golden rule to follow when the military intervened supporting the popular demand to end the Muslim Brotherhood social contract, to unseat Morsi, who betrayed the peoples' trust, acted as a proxy for the Brotherhood's goals and objectives, regardless of national priorities and interests, and betrayed the very constitution according to which he was elected and vowed publically to uphold. His actions were treasonable.

Concurrently with, and subsequent to, the 30 June Revolution, the Muslim Brotherhood wasted no time amassing their own support in demonstrations in various cities, which were violent and ended in heavy casualties. They decided on sit-ins and squatting in Rabaa Al-Adaweya Square in Nasr City, in Cairo, and in Nahda Square, opposite Cairo University, in Giza, blocking traffic, together with initiating daily, violent bloody confrontations with surrounding communities. Furthermore, they focussed on daily contacts with world media, capitalising on IT resources to enlist external power support, as well as on the crucial solidarity with the International Federation of the Muslim Brotherhood, in order to maximise internal and external pressure for the return of Morsi and Brotherhood rule in Egypt. This was accompanied with daily terror attacks in Sinai, as well as the destruction of nearly 80 churches around Egypt, in order to incite civil strife and secular civil war. The Church acted wisely, not to respond in kind. The US, the European Union, Turkey, Iran and Qatar's response was not supportive of the Egyptian popular 30 June Revolution — if not indeed outright aggressive against it, as in the case of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, and Turkey. It was incredible and puzzling that the declared US strategy and commitment to fighting terrorism at home and abroad, especially in Afghanistan and Pakistan, had become paradoxically tolerant of Muslim Brotherhood violence and terrorist acts in Egyptian cities, in Sinai and Upper Egypt. They turned a blind eye and ear when a prominent Brotherhood leader declared at the Rabaa camp in early July that terrorist attacks in Sinai would cease once Morsi returns to power. Ironically, tacit US accommodations with the Muslim Brotherhood since 2005 were unravelled by 30 June Revolution.

From the beginning, the Western media described the revolution as a military coup d'état against

democratic legitimacy, echoing the Muslim Brotherhood orchestrated media campaign. But Arab countries unequivocally supported the revolution. It was both admirable and gratifying that Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait declared their explicit support, pledging nearly \$12 billion in grants, as well as in no-interest loans to augment Egypt's dwindling foreign exchange resources. The daily instability and confrontations at Rabaa and Nahda Square had to be dealt with. General Al-Sisi asked for massive national demonstrations in order to reassert popular support, and to give him a clear mandate to deal with this challenge of violence, insecurity and terrorism nationwide. The people came out in scores of millions to reaffirm their trust, as well as a delegation of authority on 26 July 2013 in General Al-Sisi. After Ramadan, the Muslim Brotherhood crowds and sympathisers at the camps and sit-ins in Rabaa and Nahda were served repeated warning to evacuate the squares. They refused adamantly, which prompted the police, supported by the army, to forcibly vacate the squares and restore civil order. This mop-up operation, however, was performed at the regrettable cost of hundreds of lives, including casualties on both sides. Accusations of massive bloodshed and deaths in the thousands were spread by the Brotherhood's active propaganda machine, as well as in the world media, in order to tarnish the image of the Egyptian revolution. Nevertheless, the country proceeded forward, cautiously and steadily implementing its roadmap for the future:

- The interim president, Adli Mansour, assumed office and discharged his duties with wise and steady statesmanship.

- The interim cabinet, composed mostly of technocrats, was sworn in headed by a renowned economist, Hazem Al-Beblawi.

- The police force was given a new mandate to deal with insecurity and violence, after the people in Tahrir renewed their trust in the police, and the police declared their commitment to behave professionally and abandon their old role as a faithful guard of the political establishment.

- The new constitutional committee was established in September. It prepared a new constitution to replace the suspended Muslim Brotherhood constitution. A national referendum is expected to ratify the new draft in January.

- Parliamentary elections are planned in Spring 2014, and presidential elections will take place three months hence.

- Most countries that suspended touristic group visits to Egypt have now lifted their bans, and tourism is beginning to return to normal operations.

- A Russian delegation, headed by the ministers of foreign affairs and defence, visited Egypt in November in a new rapprochement initiative, promising stronger multifaceted relations and a more active cooperation. This is seen as a balanced new foreign policy strategy in response to the lukewarm US reaction towards the June revolution. US relations with Egypt have been mercurial since the summer, but warmed slowly in October during the visit by Secretary of State John Kerry. However, the Egyptian foreign minister hastened to declare that the historic meeting and future cooperation with Russia would not be at the expense of Egyptian relations with other countries or powers.

- Meanwhile, China, the second largest world economic giant after the US, has also voiced its support and solidarity for the Egyptian people.

- Following high-level visits by officials on both sides, Saudi, UAE and Kuwaiti investors announced their plans to invest heavily in various projects in Egypt, in order to revive its economy, thus boosting economic opportunities in the short and long terms. **THE ROADMAP TO RECOVERY AND REVIVAL:** The interim cabinet is expected to hand over its duties to a new cabinet after the completion of parliamentary and presidential elections by mid-2014. However, authorities should immediately establish and launch for the future an unprecedented roadmap of socio-economic, political and cultural development and lay the foundations for its plans, policies, programmes and projects. They must adopt an ambitious framework of integrated, comprehensive development with a timetable in short, medium and long-term phases of implementation.

- A Comprehensive National Integrated Development Plan must capitalise on the forgotten, deserted regions of Egypt, especially the Sinai, Upper Egypt, Qattara Depression and the eastern desert oases corridor. The goal is phased, integrated, urban-rural industrial and agricultural progress for the entire Egypt. A strategic 2050 National Development Plan with achievable targets to be implemented in 2020, 2030, 2040 and 2050 is highly recommended.

- A National Defence Plan for safeguarding Egypt's borders, east, west, north and south, by focusing on maximum military preparedness, coupled with the development of productive defensive conglomerations that bolster Egypt's defence strategy, achieve perennial development and ensure the continuing prosperity of regional zones, which are invariably threatened by both friends and foes. Vacant regions, in Sinai, the southern or western deserts, whet the appetites of invaders, colonisers, speculators and troublemakers.

- A National Road Transportation Plan to cover comprehensively the total development needs of the nation is compulsory, starting from the north corridor to the east and west corridors and south corridor with parallel corridor grids east-west and north-south, with the Nile Valley as the principal spine. Roads and transportation networks are the backbone of urbanisation and development. A new capital for a new Egypt, a national undertaking, which I personally supported and initiated seven years ago, has become a must, to be planned and implemented gradually. There is no use for piecemeal urban redevelopment projects in the Greater Cairo, 20 million plus metropolitan area, whether in the form of ring roads, tunnels, bridges or underground Metro lines, for they will not relieve over-crowdedness, reform, or uplift the deteriorated and congested capital. Cairo is burdened and overloaded with the escalating pressures of surrounding new towns that are dependent upon the old city, leading to further congestion, dilapidation and deterioration. The example of Brazil, a rising economic world power, in building its new capital, Brasilia, in the hinterland away from the urban corridor of Rio/San Paolo on the Atlantic Ocean, should be a guiding example.

- A National Population Redistribution Plan needs to be integral with these proposed national plans and should accommodate housing, employment, needed facilities and services to serve the nation's projected 150 million people by 2050, given its current 2.6 per cent annual rate of population growth. Egypt has been historically dependent on agriculture and the problem of hunger will become a global phenomenon that will require nations to harvest deserts and ocean floors. Food self-sufficiency must be a national strategic objective. This must be a national undertaking, for land and people are Egypt's precious capital that needs to be truly focused upon.

- A National Energy and Water Plan that supports and encourages desalinisation plants on the Mediterranean and Red Sea 2500-kilometre long coasts has become indispensable in order to meet future energy and water shortages, in addition to the production of needed electricity from renewable sources, using the Masdar example of the UAE as a proven guide. Egypt's annual share of 55.5 billion cubic metres of Nile River water is insufficient; it falls short of the yearly consumption of nearly 75 billion cubic metres. This alarming situation requires an urgent national commitment to conclude an equitable accord with the 11 countries of the Nile Basin that fulfils the necessary provisions to meet rising needs in water resources. A new multi-party agreement must be negotiated and concluded as soon as possible, in order to ensure the equitable share of Nile Water in the face of Egypt's vital needs. An urgent agreement with Ethiopia is mandatory, after their large dam construction project is progressing, and in view of the regrettable reaction of Morsi in May towards our African partner.

- A National Plan for Education and Healthcare Reform is obligatory and should be given top priority. Recent Malaysian and Chinese achievements have recognised and capitalised on this necessity, which has boosted their economies and propelled their respective leaps forward. The recent successful educational reform experiments in Finland, Poland, China and Japan need to be examined and henceforth adopted. There is no alternative. This plan must be a national priority and needs to be comprehensively implemented at all levels.

- An ambitious National Commission on Informal Communities must be launched immediately, together with meeting the mushrooming challenges of informal housing in most Egyptian cities, defiance of law and order, and undermining the meanings and essence of urbanity, civility and basic humanity. The alarming crisis of slums is explosive, for vast squats have become a breeding ground for drugs, crime, violence, disease, illiteracy, immorality, hatred, neglect, rebellion, insecurity and disorder, infesting nearly 30 per cent of major cities and housing 35 per cent of the total population. The objectives of the January 2011 and June 2013 revolutions that have sparked Egyptians' hopes for a better future must be fulfilled. The expectations of 40 million people living under the UN poverty line, enduring inhumane conditions, intolerable hunger, disease and illiteracy must be met. Promises made must be fulfilled. The road to Tahrir is very well travelled and too well known to neglect or ignore. It is too costly, bloody and painful to all. The security and stability of Egypt is crucial to several regions, far and near. The challenges are enormous, the problems abound, the obstacles seem insurmountable, but the martyrs of demonstrations, the spirit of patriotism, the will to change and the resolve to thrust forward are abundant, as the horizons are glorious, boundless, open and ready.

## 7.2 Egypt in Transition

The year 2013 will remain indelible in the memory of most Egyptians for its whirling events, difficult challenges, terrible confrontations, elating triumphs, bitter conflicts, horrible tragedies, massive demonstrations and bloody clashes, coupled with continuing instability, violence, lawless-ness and insecurity!

The Egyptian people were inspired on June 30<sup>th</sup>, the highlight of 2013, by Lao-tse's wisdom, "*In dwelling, be close to the land; in meditation go deep in the heart; in dealing with others, be gentle and kind; in speech be true; in ruling, be just; in business, be competent; in action, watch the timing; no fight, no blame.*" They rose in an unprecedented wave of national defiance constituting a multitude of millions, regardless of age, gender, faction or belief, demanding the unseating of the first democratically elected President Mohamed Morsi, who was nominated by the Moslem Brotherhood (MB) during the 2012 presidential elections. Indeed, the timely intervention of the military in response to the multimillion popular uprising was fundamentally vital, in order to avert bloody national strife and dire consequences threatening national survival!

The June 30<sup>th</sup> Revolution was campaigned for, during the spring of 2013, by the rebel, "**Tamarod**," movement, which collected signatures from over 25 million Egyptians. It called for a national, massive demonstration on the prescribed date of June 30<sup>th</sup>. It mobilized more than 30 million Egyptians in most provinces and cities nation-wide calling for the immediate termination of almost one year of Moslem Brotherhood rule in which it proved inept and unfit to govern. They were oblivious in fulfilling their promises to implement the January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011 Revolution's noble objectives of "bread, freedom, dignity and social justice", which had claimed the admiration and unanimous support world-wide. The Moslem Brotherhood (MB), their leadership and their candidate for President Mohamed Morsi, proved once and again that their words were empty, their declarations void of truth, and their actions were only self-serving and their motives untrustworthy. Promises made before elections to be fulfilled during the first 100 days in office were empty and elusive! This has become their *modus operandi*, as evidenced in their illegal and unconstitutional acts, practices and performance throughout their 365 days in office.

Both the January 25<sup>th</sup> 2011 and June 30<sup>th</sup> 2013 Revolutions were unprecedented demonstrations of people power irrespective of color, religion, gender, origin or income level, a true proof of national cohesion, will, determination and unity. Aristotle's Idealism of people themselves practicing democracy was first put into practice 2500 years on by the people of Egypt, dissimilar to any order or system recognized in democratic nations in this third



millennium. The grass roots of democracy is recalled and applied in unprecedented fashion in an historic, exemplary model.

The summer of 2013 will be long remembered in the history of modern Egypt for its unforgettable ecstasies and agonies. The multitudes of masses during the June 30<sup>th</sup> Revolution demanded the military to intervene and support their will. The Commander-in-Chief General Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi tried to reason with Morsi to respond to the peoples' demands, but he continued to live and behave in a state of denial and refusal. The people continued to demonstrate through July 3<sup>rd</sup>, when General El-Sisi, after consultations with SCAF and various political and religious figures, declared on July 3<sup>rd</sup> the removal of Morsi, the suspension of the 2012 Constitution and the adoption of a "Road Plan for the Future." This included the appointment of Chief Justice Adly Mansour, of the Constitutional Court, as Interim President, the swearing in of a transitional cabinet, the creation of a new Constitutional Committee to author a new draft correcting the biased and unacceptable 2012 MB constitution, to be followed by the holding of new parliamentary and presidential elections in nine months.

The train of events and challenges that led to showdown needs to be critically examined and evaluated. During nearly twelve months of MB rule of the nation, the parliament Shura Council (Upper House) was dominated by their deputies, echoing a similar domination of the Shaab (Lower House) People's Council, which was dissolved earlier by the Constitutional Court for being unconstitutional. Likewise, they had wasted no time in controlling the executive branch as well as the Judiciary. They were not ashamed to support nepotism in public appointments, allow for rampant corruption, and filling governmental key posts with their members and sympathizers. They ignored Lao-tse's counsel: *"claim wealth and titles and disaster will follow. Retire when the work is done, this is the way of heaven."*

The Moslem Brotherhood executed unhesitatingly their determination and familiar tactics of exclusiveness, and rushed toward the implementation of their hidden agenda of invading the government posts at all levels, whether in the cabinet, the ministries, local governments, syndicates and labor unions. The prevalent national unity was alarmingly divided, evidently threatening civil strife and civil war.

The swelling stream of events, crises, confrontations, clashes, and strikes had resulted in costly, painful repercussions, especially evidenced in the hundreds of deaths and thousands of casualties, a heavy toll that has inflamed Egypt during twelve months of pain, despair, animosities, volatility, insecurity, instability and flagrant chaos. The bloody clashes and scores of deaths and wounded near the Presidential Palace (El Attihadia) caused, not by the police or army, but by the MB militia ordered by Morsi, together with the casualties in Port Said

confrontations, as well as almost weekly bloodshed in various Egyptian cities were too horrifying, inflammatory and intolerable! The MB thugs and armed gangs roamed the streets looting, damaging property and killing or hurting innocent civilians and anti-Morsi protestors. As a consequence, there were repeated calls for civil disobedience and protest marches against the government and the president demanding change and reform. Their demands fell on deaf ears! This further exasperated the nation, accelerating the continued deterioration of the national condition on all fronts! The economic crisis worsened further (the economic rate of growth fell below 2%), with a sharp decline in foreign reserves (\$13.5 billion in 2013 as compared to \$32 billion at the end of 2010), large budget deficits (30%), spiraling inflation (25%), rising unemployment (13.4% with 50% of the youth of ages 15-35 unemployed), petrol, gas and bread shortages, frequent electrical power blackouts, lack of productivity, loss of exports rising imports by the MB tycoons, coupled with a serious decline of tourism, the major foreign exchange earner and the backbone of the Egyptian economy. As a result, the value of the Egyptian pound against the US dollar fell by 25%.

Furthermore, terrorist attacks in Sinai threatened the porous border with Israel and undermined the Peace Treaty. In addition, the affiliation of Hamas in Gaza strip with the MB leadership in Cairo allowed intensive use of tunnels for smuggling of Egyptian subsidized goods, petrol and electricity to support the Hamas government in Gaza. Adding insult to injury, the rumored agreement to allocate 1600 km<sup>2</sup> of Sinai to Hamas to resettle Palestinians angered Egyptians, realizing that this intolerable national treason was engineered by Morsi and Hamas involving a multi-party, international deal, infested with bribery, corruption, betrayal and treason!

The repeated disregard of human rights and the continuing imprisonment of key leaders of the January youth revolution, which was condemned by human rights groups, coupled with the numerous incidents of deadly sectarian clashes in Cairo and in Upper Egypt have further inflamed and sparked protests and demonstrations, not only in Egypt but in various capitals in Europe and the USA. The attack on churches, especially the Coptic Cathedral in Abbassia in Cairo, resulted in deaths and casualties, more bloodshed and agonies. The systematic MB attack on notable media personalities, who rebuked steadily the MB government, persisted in their efforts and practice in condemning the opposition, including prominent leaders of various parties, who had been outspoken in their critical denunciation of Morsi's rule and MB practices. It was evident to all that Egypt was facing a serious national crisis that was multi-faceted, deep and divisive, threatening the very unity, foundation and existence of the nation. It was of paramount importance to act quickly and thus to institute the proper order of priorities to overcome the persistent and dangerous instability, debilitating animosity and socio-economic divides. It was mandatory for the survival of the nation to intervene immediately in order to

eradicate the infecting virus of national decline and despair, to eliminate weekly human toll, to overcome frustrations, hatred, confrontations, disparities, disappointments, rampant corruption, and infiltrating apathy. It was a matter of national urgency to embark decisively on meeting and managing pressing national challenges here and abroad. Lao-tse's wisdom was a golden rule to follow when the military intervened supporting the popular demand to end the MB social contract, to unseat Morsi, who betrayed the peoples' trust, acted as proxy to the MB's goals and objectives, regardless of national objectives, and betrayed the very constitution, according to which he was elected and vowed publically to uphold. His actions were treasonable!

Concurrently with, and subsequent to, the June 30<sup>th</sup> Revolution, the MB wasted no time amassing their own support in demonstrations in various cities, which were violent and ended in heavy casualties. They decided on sit-ins and squatting in Rabaa El Adawia Square in Nasr City, in Cairo, and in Nahda Square, opposite Cairo University in Giza, blocking traffic, together with initiating daily, violent bloody confrontations with surrounding communities. Furthermore, they focused on daily contacts with world media capitalizing on IT resources to enlist external power support, as well as capitalizing on the crucial solidarity with the International Federation of Moslem Brotherhood, in order to maximize internal and external pressure for the return of Morsi and the MB rule in Egypt. This was accompanied with daily terrorist attacks in Sinai, as well as destruction of nearly 80 churches around Egypt, in order to incite civil strife and secular civil war. The Church acted wisely, not to respond in kind. The U.S.A., the European Union, Turkey, Iran and Qatar's response was not supportive to the Egyptian popular June 30<sup>th</sup> Revolution, if not outright aggressive, as in the case of Hamas in Gaza strip, and of Turkey. It was incredible and puzzling that the declared US strategy and commitment to fighting terrorism at home and abroad, especially in Afghanistan and Pakistan, had become paradoxically tolerant to the MB violence and terrorist acts in Egyptian cities, in Sinai and Upper Egypt. They turned a blind eye and ear when a prominent MB leader, declared in the Raaba Square camp in early July that terrorist attacks in Sinai will cease once Morsi returns to power! Ironically, the tacit US accommodations with the MB since 2005, was unraveled and shattered by the June 30<sup>th</sup> Revolution!

From the beginning, the western media described the Revolution as a military *coup d'etat* against the democratic legitimacy, echoing the MB orchestrated media campaign, but the Arab countries unequivocally supported the Revolution. It was admirable and gratifying that Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait declared their explicit support, pledging nearly \$12 billion in grants as well as in no-interest loans to augment Egypt's dwindling foreign exchange resources. The daily instability and confrontations at Rabaa and Nahda squares had to be dealt with. General El-Sisi asked for popular, massive national demonstrations, in order to reassert their support, and to give him a clear mandate to deal with this challenge of violence, insecurity and terrorism

nationwide. The people came out in scores of millions to reaffirm their trust, as well as a delegation of authority on July 26, 2013 in General El-Sisi. After Ramadan, the MB crowds and sympathizers at the camps and sit-ins in Rabaa and Nahda were served repeated warning to evacuate the squares. They refused adamantly, which prompted the police, supported by the Army, to forcibly vacate the Squares and restore civil order. This mop-up operation, however, was performed at the regrettable cost of hundreds of deaths and casualties on both sides. Accusations of massive bloodshed and deaths in thousands were abound by the MB active propaganda machine, as well as in world media, in order to tarnish the image of the Egyptian Revolution. Nevertheless, the country proceeded forward, cautiously and steadily implementing its roadmap for the future:

1. The interim President Adly Mansour assumed office and discharged his duties with wise and steady statesmanship.
2. The interim cabinet, composed of mostly technocrats, was sworn in headed by a renowned economist, Dr. Hazem El-Biblawy.
3. The police force was given a new mandate to deal with insecurity and violence, after the people in Tahrir renewed their trust, and the police declaring their commitment to behave professionally and abandon their old role as a faithful guard of the political establishment.
4. The New Constitutional Committee was established in September. It has been preparing and drafting a new constitution to replace the annulled MB 2012 document. A national referendum is expected in December to ratify the new draft.
5. Parliamentary elections are planned in March, 2014, and Presidential elections will take place three months hence.
6. Most countries, which suspended touristic groups visiting Egypt, have now lifted their blockade, and tourism is beginning to return to normal operations.
7. A Russian delegation, headed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense visited Egypt in November, in a new rapprochement initiative promising stronger multifaceted relations, and a more active cooperation. This is seen as a balanced new foreign policy strategy in response to the U.S. lukewarm reaction toward the June Revolution. The U.S. relations with Egypt have been mercurial during the summer, but have warmed slowly in October during the visit by Secretary John Kerry. However, the Egyptian Foreign Minister hastened to declare that the

historic meeting and future cooperation with Russia will not be at the expense of Egyptian relations with other countries or powers.

8. Meanwhile, China, the second world economic giant after the US, has also voiced its support and solidarity for the Egyptian people.
9. Following high level visits by officials on both sides, Saudi, UAE and Kuwaiti investors announced their plans to invest heavily in various projects in Egypt in order to revive its economy, thus boosting economic opportunities in the short and long terms.

#### **FUTURE ROADMAP FOR RECOVERY AND TAKE OFF:**

The Interim Cabinet is expected to hand over its duties to a new cabinet after the completion of Parliamentary and Presidential elections by mid 2014. However, they should establish and launch for the future an unprecedented roadmap of socio-economic, political, and cultural development, and lay the foundations, plans, policies, programs, and projects. It must adopt an ambitious framework of integrated, comprehensive development with a timetable in short, medium and long term phases of implementation.

1. **A Comprehensive National Integrated Development Plan** must capitalize on the forgotten, deserted regions of Egypt, especially the Sinai, Upper Egypt, Qattara Depression and the eastern desert oases corridor. The goal is phased, integrated, urban-rural industrial and agricultural progress for the entire Egypt. A strategic 2050 National Development Plan with achievable targets to be implemented in 2020, 2030, 2040 and 2050 is highly recommended.
2. **A National Defense Plan** for safeguarding Egypt's borders, east, west, north and south, by focusing on maximum military preparedness, coupled with the development of productive defensive conglomerations that bolster the defense strategy, achieve perennial development and ensure the continuing prosperity of regional zones, which are invariably threatened by both friends and foes. Vacant region whet the appetite of invaders, colonizers, speculators and trouble makers!
3. **A National Road Transportation Plan** to cover comprehensively the total development needs of the nation is compulsory, starting from the North Corridor to the east and west corridors and south corridor with parallel corridor grids east-

west and north-south, with the Nile valley as the principal spine. Roads and transportation networks are the backbone of urbanization and development. A new capital for a new Egypt, a national undertaking, which I personally supported and initiated seven years ago, has become a must, to be planned and implemented gradually. There is no use for piece-meal urban development projects in the Greater Cairo 20-million-people metropolitan area, whether in the form of ring roads, tunnels, bridges or underground Metro lines, for they will not reform or uplift the deteriorated and congested capital. Cairo is burdened and overloaded with the escalating pressures of surrounding new towns that are dependent upon the old city, leading to further congestion, dilapidation and deterioration. The example of Brazil, a rising economic world power, in building its new capital, Brasilia, in the hinterland away from the urban corridor of Rio/San Paolo on the Atlantic Ocean, should be a guiding example,

4. **A National Population Redistribution Plan**, needs to be integral with these proposed national plans, and should accommodate housing, employment, needed facilities and services to serve the nation's projected 150 million people by 2050, given its current 2.6% annual rate of population growth. Egypt has been historically dependent on agriculture, and the problem of hunger will become a global phenomenon that will require nations to harvest deserts and ocean floors. Food self-sufficiency must be a national strategic objective! This must be a national undertaking, for land and people are Egypt's precious capital that needs to be truly focused upon.
5. **A National Energy and Water Plan** that supports and encourages desalinization plants on the Mediterranean and Red Sea 2500 km long coasts has become indispensable in order to meet future energy and water shortages, in addition to the production of needed electricity from renewable sources, using the Masdar example of the United Emirates as a proven guide. Egypt's annual share of 55.5 billion m<sup>3</sup> from the Nile River water is insufficient, it falls short of the yearly consumption of nearly 75 billion m<sup>3</sup>. This alarming situation requires an urgent national commitment to conclude an equitable Accord with the 11 countries of the Nile basin that fulfills the necessary provisions to meet the rising need of water

resources. A new agreement, must be negotiated and concluded as soon as possible, in order to ensure the equitable share of Nile water to meet Egypt's vital needs. An urgent agreement with Ethiopia is mandatory, after their Huge Dam construction is now progressing, in view of the regrettable reaction of Morsi last May toward our African partner.

6. **A National Plan for Education and Health Care Reform** is obligatory and should be given top priority. Recent Malaysian and Chinese achievements have recognized and capitalized on this necessity, which has boosted their economies and propelled their respective leaps forward. The recent successful educational reform experiments in Finland, Poland, China and Japan need to be examined and hence adopted. There is no alternative. This plan must be a national priority and needs to be comprehensively implemented at all levels.
7. **An Ambitious National Undertaking to Confront the threats of Squatter Conglomerations** must be launched immediately, together with meeting the spread of mushrooming challenges of informal housing in most Egyptian cities, defying law and order, and undermining the meanings and essence of urbanity, civility and basic humanity. This alarming crisis is explosive, for squatters have become a breeding environment of drugs, crime, violence, disease, illiteracy, immorality, hatred, neglect, rebellion insecurity and disorder, infesting nearly 30% of major cities and housing 35% of the total population.

The objectives of the January, 2011 and June, 2013 Revolutions that have sparked the Egyptians hope for a better future within the span of two years must be fulfilled. Expectations of 40 million people living under the U.N. poverty line, enduring inhumane conditions, intolerable hunger, disease and illiteracy must be met. Promises made must be fulfilled. The road to Tahrir is very well travelled and too well known to neglect or to ignore. It is too costly, bloody and painful to all. The security and stability of Egypt is crucial to several regions, far and near. The challenges are enormous, the problems abound, the obstacles seem insurmountable, but the martyrs of Tahrir, the spirit of patriotism, the will to change and the resolve to thrust forward are abundant, as the horizons are glorious, boundless, open and ready.

20/11/2013

### 7.3 An Egyptian priority?

Issue No.1172, 14 November, 2013

"It's as if we had returned to the good old days when [Palestinian President Mahmoud] Abbas would come to Egypt to discuss developments in the peace process or reconciliation efforts. But the situation is different now," said Sherif, a taxi-driver, commenting on Abbas's visit to Egypt.

Some commentators regard Abbas's visit as a sign that Egypt is gradually regaining its status in the region and that it will soon be able to play a more active role in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. These are apparently Abbas's wishes as well. During the visit, Abbas expressed his hope that Egypt would once again mediate the peace talks with Israel and resume its past role as a broker of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

However, Mohsen Zahran, a political science professor at Alexandria University, said that it would be premature to assume that Egypt could play a leading role in the negotiations at present. "Abbas's visit is to show support for Egypt rather than to ask for its support at present," Zahran told Al-Ahram Weekly. Egypt had more pressing priorities on the internal front, he added, and the country should concentrate on these for the moment. But other Palestinian officials also reiterated Abbas's wish for Egypt to mediate in the Palestinian issue. After a high-level meeting of Fatah members earlier this month, Abbas spokesperson Nabil Abu Rudeineh said that it was important for Egypt to sponsor Palestinian reconciliation efforts, adding that no alternative to Egyptian mediation was acceptable.

One diplomat who talked on condition of anonymity agreed that it would be premature for Egypt to play any role in the peace process. "Egypt should set its priorities. Its internal matters are a top priority, at least until the country has elected a new president and parliament," he said. In his three-day visit to Cairo, Abbas met interim President Adli Mansour, Foreign Minister Nabil Fahmi and Defence Minister Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi. A statement issued by the presidency after Abbas's talks with Mansour said that Abbas had expressed the wish that Egypt would reclaim its role as a mediator between Israel and the Palestinians.

Presidential spokesperson Ihab Badawi said after the meeting between the two leaders that the visit had come at a time when Egypt was regaining its regional role, which includes its long-standing support for the Palestinian people. During his meeting with Abbas, Al-Sisi said that Egypt would always support the demands of the Palestinian people and their right to establish their own independent state.



Abbas and Al-Sisi also discussed other regional developments, such as the reconciliation efforts between Palestinian rivals Fatah and Hamas, and the effects of these on the Palestinian-Israeli peace process and Middle Eastern stability. However, the talks on Fatah-Hamas reconciliation were expected to be marginal, given the deteriorating relation between Egypt and Hamas since the 30 June Revolution.

Fatah considers reconciliation and Egypt's role in mediating it to be a priority for the Palestinians, Abu Rudeineh saying that it would be followed by the formation of a national unity government and presidential and parliamentary elections. Hamas, an off-shoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, is in a weak position after it lost the support of the group in Egypt following the ousting of former president Mohamed Morsi on 3 July.

"The reconciliation efforts failed when Hamas was in a stronger position. Now that Fatah is in a relatively strong position and Hamas is weaker, reconciliation has become more difficult," the diplomat said. Fatah, the Palestinian faction chaired by Abbas, and Hamas, which rules the Gaza Strip, have been involved in a war of words in recent months, and this has been affected by the polarisation in Egypt.

Fatah was also against the former Brotherhood regime in Egypt, while Hamas supported it. However, divisions between the two factions date back to 2006, when Hamas won the parliamentary elections in the Gaza Strip. It took control of the strip in 2007, and it has been suffering under an Israeli land, air and sea blockade ever since.

Goods smuggled via the Rafah crossing and tunnels from Egypt have eased the effects of the blockade on Gaza. But in recent weeks, Egypt's interim government has imposed tougher border restrictions in a bid to control terrorist groups in Sinai. It has demolished or sealed the tunnels and imposed strict rules on most passenger traffic.

During Abbas's visit to Cairo, he also met Arab League Secretary-General Nabil Al-Arabi and Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmed Al-Tayeb. This is his second trip to the Egyptian capital after the ouster of Morsi, and it is the first time that he has held talks with Mansour aimed at showing support for the interim government.

Abbas was the second Arab leader, after Jordan's King Abdullah, to visit the country following the Egyptian army's removal of Morsi from power.

Fahmi, who assumed the position of Egypt's foreign minister in July, has also given the Palestinian Territories special attention during his term in office, his second external tour being

to Jordan and the Territories. During the visit, Fahmi reiterated that the Palestinian cause remained an Egyptian priority and thanked Abbas for his support for Cairo.

“Abbas was among the first to come to Egypt to show support,” Fahmi told a news conference in Ramallah during his visit there.

“I have come to Palestine to express our position and in full support for the rights of the Palestinian people. Egypt will be continuing this support despite present difficulties,” he said.

## 7.4 National strategic plan, now

Egypt under the Muslim Brotherhood and Morsi has lost the majority of goodwill it gained globally in its revolution, though it is not too late to turn the tide around, writes **Mohsen Zahran**.

Issue No.1147, 9 May, 2013

The Egyptian peaceful youth revolution of 25 January 2011, which led to the downfall of former president Hosni Mubarak, and the assumption of power by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), was universally acclaimed by the world, especially by the United States. President Barack Obama declared on 11 February, the eve of this momentous event, his admiration, commendation and support for the Egyptian people. Regardless of age, income, gender or origin, Egyptians celebrated their unprecedented triumph in Tahrir Square and elsewhere in Egypt's cities, and unanimously proclaimed to the world their peaceful objectives of freedom, dignity, bread and social justice. The universe skipped a beat, in awe, respect and admiration. The US supported and cooperated fully with SCAF, sending emissaries to Cairo, including the US secretary of state, in addition to significant visits by US military generals and key US senators and congressmen, who met with SCAF, and also visited the Muslim Brotherhood leadership at their headquarters in Cairo.

From the outset, it was plain to all that there was a strong Muslim Brotherhood alliance and cooperation with SCAF. Strategic meetings had been held between Brotherhood emissaries and US officials in Washington several years earlier, a matter that was clearly reflected later in the formation of the Muslim Brotherhood sympathetic judiciary committee that authored amendments to the 1971 Constitution, readily adopted in late March in a national referendum after the Brotherhood propaganda machine cast that those who would reject the amendments as "anti-Islamic". This was an early warning of things to come. Their adopted policy has been branding liberals as "anti-Islam", hence igniting divisive forces and polarisation in Egyptian society: Islamist parties on the one side confronting liberal parties across the divide.

The honeymoon of national unity was soon over and the stream of events, hopes, confrontations, clashes and strikes resulted in costly, painful repercussions, especially in the hundreds of martyrs and thousands of casualties, a heavy toll that inflamed Egypt during nearly 28 months of pain, despair, animosity, volatility, insecurity, instability and chaos. This in addition to 5,000 missing — until now — in the revolution. The economic crisis mushroomed with a sharp decline in foreign reserves, large budget deficits, spiralling inflation, petrol, gas and

bread shortages, lack of productivity, loss of exports, increased imports and a sharp decline of tourism. Terrorist attacks in Sinai and across the borders with Israel undermined the tranquillity that prevailed during the 30-year Peace Treaty, a matter that prompted vocal concern from Tel Aviv and Washington. Signs of erosion in US Congress support were unmistakable.

It appeared to all that the 25 January Revolution was kidnapped without ransom, with almost none of its noble goals realised, thus doubling the feeling of confusion, anger, repulsion, mistrust, uncertainty, pain and despair, as if the bloodshed and lives were lost in vain. This tragic human, material and time loss has been too large to swallow, tolerate or accept.

All along it was evident that there was collusion between SCAF and the Muslim Brotherhood with tacit US support, a matter that was evidenced in the Brotherhood's absence during confrontations with security forces in Tahrir Square, Mohamed Mahmoud Street, the cabinet clashes in 2011, in the 2012 Abbasiya clashes with the army, and elsewhere. The election of the parliament's upper and lower houses, during 2011 led to the domination of the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis. Later on, the selection of the Constituent Assembly echoed a similar composition in order to ensure that the new constitution would reflect the religious parties' agendas, as was evidenced later in the adoption of several key articles curtailing personal freedoms, women involvement and youth participation.

Delegations from the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis made several trips to the US to assure Washington of their determination, and commitment, in maintaining their cooperation with and the interests of the US, especially the peace treaty with Israel, which is particularly vital to Washington. The presidential elections, held one year ago, in May 2012, resulted in the election of Mohamed Morsi as the first civilian president after nearly 60 years of military rule. He wasted no time in assuring Washington emphatically of his support for all Egypt's treaty obligations, especially honouring the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty, and of maintaining the status quo.

The first 100 days in office passed uneventfully, though void of any tangible accomplishments that Morsi had promised during his campaign. The abandonment of pledges was truly disappointing to most Egyptians, particularly to non-Muslim Brotherhood voters who elected Morsi lest their vote for his opponent, General Ahmed Shafik be tantamount to re-electing Mubarak again. Morsi wasted no time in firing SCAF members and appointing his own loyalists to key armed forces posts, thus proving his disloyalty to those who handed him power as promised. That was early evidence of mistrust and betrayal. This disappointment was doubled after his lack of action against those who massacred 16 Egyptian army soldiers near the border in Sinai during Ramadan, especially that Hamas in Gaza, who are loyal to the Muslim Brotherhood hierarchy in Cairo, were accused of executing this hideous act. Although the allegations were

vehemently denied by Hamas and Morsi, it was clear to all that official statements were empty and untrue. Moreover, the supply of needed Egyptian gas and electricity to Gaza caused frequent blackouts and gas shortages in Egypt, which further infuriated Egyptians.

To the US, the continued support of Hamas, the suspense of army mop-up operations to flush out terrorists in Sinai after the massacre and the cessation of army actions in sealing more than 1,000 tunnels across the Egypt-Gaza border were a clear signal of the Muslim Brotherhood's modus operandi. They are now de facto in charge of the presidency, and are in real control of most government posts. Furthermore, they have infiltrated most key ministries, particularly those that directly influence the daily life of most Egyptians, in public services, supplies, and agrarian activities, especially the ministries of interior, supply, local government, education, health, agriculture, irrigation, information and housing. Accordingly, since the employees of these ministries staff polling stations, they become more effective in influencing, and even shaping, election results.

The decision of the Supreme Constitutional Court in June 2012 to dissolve the lower house of parliament was criticised and later cancelled by Morsi, which reflected his impulsiveness and stubbornness. The court was surrounded by Muslim Brotherhood demonstrators who forced the suspension of its sessions when it faced making a similar decision about the Constituent Assembly. This was followed by Morsi issuing a constitutional decree to fire the prosecutor general and replace him with a Brotherhood sympathiser. The Muslim Brotherhood's determination to hastily convene the Constituent Assembly in order to draft a new constitution favourable to its agenda was followed by quick action to hold a national referendum to have it adopted without discussion or delay. Thus it has become a *fait accompli*, despite public demonstrations in Tahrir Square and at the presidential palace, and persistent protests by jurists, liberal parties, women's groups, and various high courts.

Relations between the United States and Egypt were maintained almost flawlessly during the first few months of Morsi's rule, culminating in warm recognition of Morsi's intervention in November 2012 to reinstitute calm after 10 days of Israeli air bombardment of Gaza and Hamas rocket barrages fired into Israel. Morsi worked on halting hostilities on both sides and on consolidating quiet fronts, with Egypt playing the role of guarantor. Both the US and Hamas acknowledged Morsi's mediation. However, subsequent events in Egypt turned relations sour:

- Weekly demonstrations in Tahrir against Morsi and his inept cabinet have been met by harsh and violent confrontations with the police, causing weekly casualties during the last few months. This was criticised by Washington time and again.

- The curtailment of women in public affairs and the sexual harassment of women to scare them from involvement in public demonstrations were on the rise. This was rebuked by Washington repeatedly.

- The disregard for human rights and the continuing imprisonment of key leaders of the youth revolution, coupled with reported acts of torture, imprisonment and killing, was condemned by human rights groups and echoed in Washington.

- Despite sanctions on Iran by the US and the UN Security Council, together with the condemnation of Tehran's nuclear programme, which could lead soon to the production of Iranian nuclear weapons, the Egyptian government's hosting of high Iranian officials, delegations and tourists left Washington uneasy. In addition, an Egyptian presidential delegation flew to Tehran last week to discuss matters of mutual interest. This was received with suspicion in Washington, NATO and Israel, for they have gotten accustomed to suspect and mistrust Muslim Brotherhood public statements, which belie true intentions and actual performance.

- The Egyptian media also viewed the warm reception of Iranians as encouraging the future spread of Shiism in Egypt (which is predominantly Sunni and is the home of Al-Azhar, the centre for tolerant Islam worldwide). This situation triggered uneasy reflections in Gulf States and in Washington.

- After several months of no confrontations between the Muslim majority and the Coptic minority, numerous incidents of deadly sectarian clashes in Cairo and in Upper Egypt erupted, igniting dormant animosities and causing terrible losses of life and property. This culminated last month in violent clashes in Cairo leading to the killing of several Copts, attacks on churches and the regrettable confrontation with riot police during funerals at the Coptic Cathedral in Abbasiya, which resulted in more bloodshed and agonies. The Coptic Pope was unusually critical and apprehensive. Washington spared no effort in expressing indignation at this appalling incident.

- The media in general, and non-government newspapers and TV channels in particular, continued to criticise the policies, practices, inefficiencies and incompetence of the Muslim Brotherhood cabinet. Morsi continues to ignore protests and persistent public demands to institute change and needed reform. This massive criticism was met by rebuke, harassment and investigations of key critics of Morsi, together with his inept premier, despite their lack of accomplishments. This Muslim Brotherhood government's aggressive attitude to curtail criticism was met by resistance on the part of the leaders of liberal parties as well as by public rebuke from Washington. Bassem Youssef, who used to criticise Morsi in his widely viewed TV show, magnified his satirical approach in making fun of Morsi and Muslim Brotherhood personalities and was heralded by Time magazine recently as among the 100 most influential media

personalities worldwide. Moreover, the minister of information continues to criticise and harass anti-government media personalities. This unacceptable attitude by the Egyptian government was publicly criticised by Washington.

- The constant harassment and condemnation by Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood supporters of prominent figures of the National Salvation Front (NSF), which includes Nobel Prize laureate Mohamed Al-Baradei and Amr Moussa, former secretary general of the Arab League (he recently described the current situation in Egypt as more dangerous than the defeat of the 1967 war), along with Kifaya and April 6 Movement leaders, and the Wafd Party, have continued unabated. Such leaders have been investigated, hassled and accused of being agents of external interests, or as power seekers. This steady attack on the opposition has aimed to discredit them nationally, in order to leave the political scene solely to the Muslim Brotherhood and the one party system, reminiscent of National Democratic Party (NDP) policies and practices in the Mubarak era. This attitude towards the opposition is considered by Washington to be anti-democratic and against the principles of freedom, dignity, openness and transparency that characterised the Arab Spring.

- The attack on the judiciary by the Muslim Brotherhood and the current discussion of passing a new law for the judicial authority that will interfere in their independence and lead to the early retirement of nearly 4,000 judges, to be replaced by Muslim Brotherhood sympathisers, is met by public condemnation and viewed as a flagrant violation of the sanctity of the judiciary. This action has been described as the second massacre of the judges and thus sparked national outcry and demonstrations condemning this blatant intervention. Washington has also expressed its disappointment, calling for the independence of the judicial institution to be respected.

- Since Washington has strong influence on the IMF, it supported earlier Egypt's application for a badly needed \$4.8 billion loan to shore up its economic crisis. However, the statements and practices of Morsi and Muslim Brotherhood government officials, as well as their turning deaf ears on US Secretary of State John Kerry's vocal advice to Morsi to accommodate some of the opposition's demands, to appoint a more able cabinet, and to make necessary changes in the constitution in order to redress opposition and women's grievances, as well as to appoint a new prosecutor general by due process through the High Judiciary Council, has resulted in their reluctance to push the IMF loan to grant the loan. This was compounded by a slowdown of European Union financial support as well as the indifference of most Gulf States in honouring their pledges.

- The recent violation of détente between Hamas and Israel through Hamas factions hurling shells into Israel, and the subsequent Israeli air force raids on Gaza, have threatened the quiet on

the eastern front. This again has discredited Morsi's negotiated agreement of five months earlier. Continuing Hamas activities across the porous border with Sinai coupled with the steady smuggling of arms, military equipment, cars and other goods across through the many tunnels, cast Morsi as a placid supporter of Hamas and thus anti-Israel. In retaliation, Israel has recently closed border access points and curtailed the fishing zone in the Mediterranean Sea for Palestinians. However, both the US and Israel need the strong influence of Egypt and Muslim Brotherhood to start meaningful peace negotiations towards a final settlement and the conclusion of the two-state solution, as agreed upon by all concerned.

Consequently, it is clear that both the internal scene and the external performance of Morsi's Egypt, and the Muslim Brotherhood, have required the US to place mutual relations under sharp focus and place Morsi under both careful scrutiny and cautious reconsideration in order to plot objectively the roadmap of bilateral relations in the near future.

There is no doubt that Egypt needs to muster all the support of its friends that it can get. This is not the time for Egypt to jeopardise strategic relations with Washington, the EU or Gulf States. Egypt must therefore adopt a wiser course of action that will serve best its national interests in the short, medium and longer terms. This strategy is fundamentally important, especially during the current dire and threatening economic situation. It is of paramount importance for Egypt to institute the proper order of national priorities, and to overcome the present serious socio-economic divide, cultural crisis and debilitating animosities. It must overcome the virus of national decline, its weekly human toll, frustration, hatred, confrontation, disparities, disappointments, corruption, apathy and unprecedented national dangers, and embark immediately on a path towards meeting and containing pressing national challenges.

To confront these challenges there must be solid will and a firm determination to rise above divisive forces and to institute fundamental reforms through national dialogue with all political parties and factions, no matter who or what. A national strategic plan of action must be adopted in short, medium and long-term phases. The plan must include a political, physical, economic and social and cultural renaissance that is comprehensive, integrated and inclusive of all segments, factions and parties, regardless of origin, religion, gender, colour, occupation or orientation. It must be well synchronised, professionally orchestrated and well balanced in time and place, capitalising on national, material and human resources at home and abroad. Egypt is entitled and deserves to assume its pivotal role in the region and globally. The time is now, for the alternatives are apocalyptic and unthinkable.



## 7.5 Meeting the challenges ahead

Issue No.1143, 11 April, 2013

In order to meet the challenges facing the country, a national plan of action must be designed that can move the nation forward, writes **Mohsen Zahran**.

The events, confrontations, hopes, clashes, deaths, casualties and disappointments that have taken place over the 25 months since the 25 January Revolution have been truly perplexing and disappointing.

This progression of highlights started with phase one and the fall of former president Hosni Mubarak, together with the assumption of power by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), the adoption of the referendum on amendments to the 1971 constitution, and the trial of Mubarak and prominent figures from his corrupt government and the former ruling National Democratic Party.

Phase two of this progression was packed with demonstrations, strikes and sit-ins by workers and unions, coupled with waves of violence and protests coming in a prevailing atmosphere of instability and insecurity. At the same time, free elections were held for a new parliament, which was then dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood in apparent collusion with the SCAF.

Phase three was ushered in by escalating and almost weekly demonstrations and marches against the SCAF, accused of betraying the revolution and of leniency towards former Mubarak supporters. This phase was also marked by denunciations of the prevailing violence, inaction, inflation, unemployment and low pay, all of which ended with bloody confrontations between demonstrators and units from the Armed Forces and police.

Phase four was marked by the holding of free presidential elections and the selection of Mohamed Morsi, head of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, as the first democratically elected civilian president of the country after 60 years of military rule. Once in office, Morsi evicted the SCAF from power. Phase five then featured disturbing terrorist acts in Sinai, the Supreme Constitutional Court's ruling to dissolve the parliament, the invasion of the sanctity of the judiciary, and the disappointing performance of the Brotherhood government after eight months of weak and distressing inaction, together with the appointment of Brotherhood loyalists to key government posts.

The worsening economic situation, characterised by a huge national debt and alarming budget deficits, coupled with continuing insecurity triggering weekly confrontations with the Central Security Police in front of the presidential palace and in major Egyptian cities, led to calls for the resignation of the cabinet, a new constitution and new presidential elections. The opposition demanded that urgent measures be taken to save the national economy and for the passage of unfulfilled socio-economic reforms.

As a result of these five phases, two years after the triumph of the Revolution the goals of bread, freedom and social justice remain unfulfilled. Conditions in Egypt have become truly alarming, and the country faces difficult challenges as a result of the virtual breakdown of government operations, the economic crisis, and the rising polarisation and confrontation between the Islamist movement, championed by the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis, on the one hand, and the civil/liberal parties headed by the National Salvation Front on the other.

The situation has been further exacerbated by alarming shortages of petrol, with long lines of cars waiting for hours at petrol stations, shortages of food, escalating prices, endemic shortages of goods, the raising of taxes, and the rampant violation of building and planning laws, leading to the speedy construction of illegal high-rise towers coupled with mushrooming urban expansion onto precious agricultural land.

All this has resulted in a widening gap between the rich and the poor, the "haves" and the "have-nots," leading to a dangerous economic and social divide and the consequent social animosity, violence, and aggressive behaviour that has led to crimes against property and bloody confrontations among the various factions. While this potentially explosive situation has been escalating, the Arab Gulf states have been unresponsive to requests for assistance, and the IMF has been dragging its feet in approving a \$5 billion loan. As a result, the situation has become ever more alarming and threatening.

Could this lawlessness, chaos and disorder be intentional and thus fall within the ambit of the grand plan for the New Middle East and the "creative chaos" strategy that was proposed a few years ago? Whatever the answer to this question may be, Egypt will weather the present crisis. It has experienced many equally difficult challenges in its recent and more distant history, and it has survived them, emerging more robust regardless of the magnitude and strength of its adversaries.

Yet, in order to confront today's challenges, there must be a solid will and firm determination to rise above the present divisions and to institute fundamental reforms through a national plan of action over the short, medium and long-term periods. This plan must lead to a political, economic, social and cultural renaissance that will be comprehensive and inclusive of all

segments and parties of society, regardless of origin, religion, gender, colour, occupation or orientation. This plan must be well-synchronised, professionally orchestrated and well-balanced, and it must capitalise on material and human resources at home and abroad.

Regarding the present political situation, the objective should be to institute a political dialogue that will include all the different groups in the country. These must shoulder their responsibilities and be entrusted with constructive roles in all government branches in order to overcome the present state of polarisation. The legislative and executive and legal frameworks should be overhauled in order that they can better face the continuing corruption, apathy, nepotism, instability and violence that plague the country.

This economic and social development plan should be part of a comprehensive plan for national development that will implement urban and rural development in new regions of Egypt following a physical development plan that will connect north and south and east and west and cover the entire nation from the Sinai and Suez Corridor to the Red Sea with the construction of the proposed bridge on the Aqaba Gulf to Saudi Arabia in order to boost development. It should link, in its northern corridor, the Qattarah Depression and Western Desert westwards to the southern border.

The plan should also envision the integration of development corridors with the Sudan and the African continent, in order to open new development regions for the 100 million population that is expected in Egypt in 2020 and to serve the needs of 150 million people by 2050, including the creation of a new capital for a new Egypt. The construction of roads, bridges, tunnels and public projects could involve 40 per cent manpower and could help boost the country's economic and social development. It could entail the adoption of a new Marshall Plan, or echo the plan adopted by the Roosevelt administration to create jobs and restart national development during the Great Depression in 1930s America.

Meaningful lessons need to be applied in order to bring about the new Egyptian renaissance. Meanwhile, government spending must be trimmed and fiscal policies reformed, with the emphasis placed on foreign investment, the maximisation of exports and the minimisation of imports. The 40 per cent of young people who are unemployed today should be capitalised upon to carry out this plan as a valuable human resource, and the armed forces and the country's other human and material resources should be mobilised in the service of implementing projects.

The plan should draw upon the assistance of the IMF, the World Bank, the European Union and the Gulf states as partners in development in order to help initiate new hydroelectric projects to generate energy and develop new water resources. These are particularly important given

Egypt's dwindling share (55.5 billion m<sup>3</sup>) of River Nile water under the soon to be adopted Entebbe Agreement with the other River Nile Basin countries.

The emphasis of industrial and agricultural development must be placed on meeting rising demands for food and shelter. The housing supply in particular must be quadrupled in order to fulfil the annual need of 900,000 new dwelling units (10 units per 1,000 of population), as UN standards recommend. These new units should be built in the new settlements development regions in order to safeguard the country's borders.

The proposed national development plan also needs to be integrated with socio-economic and cultural development. This means insisting on the legal protection of human rights, together with the adoption of legal frameworks to safeguard the rights of all citizens, including the empowerment of women, as prescribed in the United Nations charter and other international agreements and demonstrated in the national and spiritual commitments that have been made during the development of Egypt throughout the ages.

Educational reform is the cornerstone of any sound national development plan, as the examples of Malaysia, Indonesia and China have proven. With 40 per cent illiteracy in the country, and sub-standard educational provision afflicting many public schools and universities, high-quality education at all levels must be a national objective and commitment. At present, private-sector schools and universities in Egypt are business oriented and depend on government educators in order to maximise their profits, whereas other private-sector universities, among them Harvard and MIT in the United States, are at the top of the list of world universities.

Emphasis must be placed on quality control and quality assurance at all levels, whether educational, economic, social, cultural, industrial or agricultural. In industry, low-quality products should not be tolerated. Elsewhere, tourism should be focused upon as a major economic and cultural resource for Egypt. The kind of soft power that the tourist industry can bring must be capitalised upon in order to boost development, reduce unemployment, increase foreign exchange and develop the nation's role worldwide.

The future is unfolding, the resources are boundless, the horizons are unlimited, and the dreams are enormous. Egypt must assume its deserved position and its prominent role regionally and globally. Egyptians must ignite their wills, realise their potentials, and properly shoulder their responsibilities, in order to move forward and fulfill their long-awaited dreams of stability, security, progress and prosperity.

## 7.6 The United States and Egyptian Relations in Focus

The Egyptian peaceful youth revolution of January 25, 2011, which led to the downfall of former President Hosni Mubarak and the assumption of power by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), was universally acclaimed by the world, especially by the United States. President Barack Obama declared on February 11, at the eve of this momentous event, his admiration, commendation, and support for the Egyptian people. Regardless of age, income, gender, or origin, they celebrated their unprecedented triumph in Tahrir Square and elsewhere in Egyptian cities, and unanimously proclaimed to the world, their peaceful objectives of freedom, dignity, bread, and social justice. The universe skipped a beat, in awe, respect, and admiration. The U.S. supported and cooperated fully with SCAF, sending emissaries to Cairo, ranging from the US Secretary of State, in addition to significant visits by the U.S. military generals and key US Senators and Congressmen, who met with SCAF, and also visited the Moslem Brotherhood leadership (MB) at their headquarters in Cairo.

From the outset, it was plain to all that there was a strong MB alliance and cooperation with SCAF. Strategic meetings had been held between the MB emissaries and US officials in Washington several years earlier, a matter which was clearly reflected later on in the formation of the selected MB sympathetic judiciary committee that authored a few amendments to the 1971 constitution, which was readily adopted in late March in a national referendum, after the MB propaganda machine reiterated that those who reject the amendments would be labeled as "anti-Islamic!" This was an early warning of things to come. Their adopted policy has been branding the liberals as "anti-Islam," hence, igniting the divisive forces and polarization among Egyptian society, thus creating opposing factions: the Islamic parties on one side, confronting the Liberal parties across the divide.

The honeymoon of national unity was soon over, and the stream of events, hopes, confrontations, clashes, and strikes has resulted in costly, painful repercussions, especially in the hundreds of martyrs and thousands of casualties, a heavy toll that has inflamed Egypt during nearly twenty-eight months of pain, despair, animosity, volatility, insecurity, instability, and chaos, -- not to mention the 1,000 martyrs, 2,000 casualties and 5,000 missing (until now) during the revolution. The economic crisis mushroomed with a sharp decline in foreign reserves, large budget deficits, spiraling inflation, petrol, gas and bread shortages, lack of productivity, loss of exports, increased imports and a sharp decline of tourism. Terrorists' attacks in Sinai and across the borders with Israel undermined the tranquility that prevailed during the thirty-year

Peace treaty, a matter which prompted vocal concern from Tel Aviv and Washington. Signs of erosion in the US congress support were unmistakable!

It appeared to all that the January 25<sup>th</sup> revolution was kidnapped without ransom!, with almost none of its noble goals realized, thus doubling the feeling of confusion, anger, repulsion, mistrust, uncertainty, pain and despair, as if the bloodshed and lives were lost in vain. This tragic human, material and time loss has been too large to swallow tolerate or accept.

All along it was evident that there was collusion between the SCAF and MB with tacit US silence, a matter that was evidenced in the Brotherhood's absence during confrontations with the security forces in Tahrir, Mohamed Mahmoud Street, the Cabinet Street, Abbasya clashes with the army, and elsewhere. The election of the Parliament's Upper and Lower Houses, during the first year has led to the domination of the Moslem Brotherhood and the Salafis. Later on, the selection of the Constitutional Committee echoed a similar composition in order to ensure that the new Constitution would reflect the religious parties' agendas, as was evidenced later in the adoption of several key articles curtailing personal freedoms, women and youth involvement and due participation.

Delegations from the MB and Salafis made several trips to the US to assure Washington of their determination, and commitment, in maintaining their cooperation and interests of the US, especially the 1981 Peace Treaty with Israel, which is particularly vital to Washington. The presidential elections, held one year ago, in May 2012, resulted in the election of Mohamed Morsy as the first civilian president after nearly 60 years of military rule. He wasted no time in assuring Washington emphatically of his support of all treaties, especially honoring the Peace Treaty, and of maintaining the *status quo*.

The first hundred days in office, passed uneventfully though void of any tangible accomplishments that Morsy had promised during his campaign. The abandonment of pledges was truly disappointing to most Egyptians, particularly to non-MB voters who elected Morsy lest that their vote for his opponent, General Shafik was tantamount to reelecting Mobarak again! Morsy wasted no time in firing SCAF members and appointing his own loyalists to key armed forces posts, thus proving his customary disloyalty to those who handed him the power as promised. That was an early evidence of mistrust and betrayal(?) This disappointment was doubled after his lack of action against those who massacred 16 Egyptian army soldiers near the borders in Sinai during Ramadan, especially that Hamas in Gaza, who are loyal to the MB hierarchy in Cairo, were accused of partaking in the execution of this hideous act. Moreover, the supply of needed Egyptian gas and electricity to Gaza caused frequent black-outs and gas shortages in Egypt, which further infuriated Egyptians. Although these allegations were

vehemently denied by Hamas/Morsy, it was clear to all that such false official statements were empty and untrue.

To the US the continued support of Hamas, the suspense of Army mop-up operations to flush out terrorists in Sinai after the massacre and the cessation of the Army actions in sealing the more than 1,000 tunnels across the borders were a clear signal of the MB *modus operandi*. They are now *defacto* in charge of the presidency, and are in real control of most government posts. Furthermore, they have infiltrated most key ministries, particularly those that directly influence the daily life of most Egyptians, in public services, supplies, and agrarian activities, especially the Ministries of Interior, Supplies, Local Government, Education, Health, Agriculture, Irrigation, Information (media) and Housing. Accordingly, since the employees of these Ministries staff polling stations, therefore they could become more effective in influencing, and thus shaping the election results!

The decision of the High Constitutional Court in November 2012 to dissolve the Lower House of the Parliament was criticized and canceled by Morsy, which reflected his impulsiveness and stubbornness. The Court was surrounded by the MB demonstrators who forced the suspension of its sessions. This was followed by Morsy's issuance of the Constitutional Manifesto to fire the Attorney General and replace him by a pro-MB new Attorney General. The subsequent MB's determination to hastily convene the Constitutional Committee in order to draft a new Constitution favorable to their agenda was followed by a quick action to hold a national referendum to have it adopted without discussion or delay. Thus it has become a *fait accompli*, despite public demonstrations in Tahrir, and persistent protestations by Jurists, Liberal parties, Women's groups, the Judiciary Syndicate and various high courts.

The relations between the United States and Egypt was maintained almost flawlessly during the first few months of Morsy rule, culminating in a warm recognition of his intervention in November 2012 to reinstitute calm, after ten days of Israel's air bombardment of Gaza and Hamas rocket barrages fired within Israel killing innocent civilians on both sides. Morsy has worked on halting all hostilities on both sides and on consolidating quiet fronts, with Egypt playing as a guaranteeor. Both the US and Hamas acknowledged Morsy's peaceful role and recognized his mediation. However, succeeding events in Egypt turned the relations sour later on, as the following events have demonstrated:

1-Weekly demonstrations in Tahrir against Morsy and his inept cabinet have been met by harsh and violent confrontations with the police force causing weekly casualties during the last few months. This was criticized by Washington time and again.

2- The curtailment of women in public affairs and the sexual harassment of women to scare them from involvement in public demonstrations were on the rise. This was rebuked by Washington repeatedly.

3- The disregard of human rights and the continuing imprisonment of key leaders of the youth revolution, coupled with the reported acts of torture, imprisonment and killing was practiced on several occasions. This was condemned by Human rights groups, which was again echoed in Washington.

4-Despite the sanctions on Iran by the US and the UN Security Council together with the condemnation of the Teheran nuclear program, which could lead soon to the production of nuclear weapons, the Egyptian government's hosting of high Iranian officials, delegations and tourists left Washington uneasy. In addition, an Egyptian presidential delegation has flown to Teheran last week to discuss matters of mutual interest. This was received with suspicion in Washington, NATO and Israel, for they have gotten accustomed to suspect and mistrust Morsy's public statements, which belie his and the MB's true intentions and actual performance.

5- The Egyptian media also viewed the warm reception of the Iranians as an encouragement of the future spread of the Shiite doctrine in Egypt, which is largely Sunnite, and is the home of Al-Azhar, the center for tolerant Islam world-wide. This situation triggered uneasy reflections in the Gulf States and in Washington.

6- After several months of no confrontations between the Moslem majority and the Coptic minority, numerous incidents of deadly sectarian clashes and threats in Cairo, and in Upper Egypt have erupted thus, igniting dormant animosities and causing terrible losses of life and property. This culminated last month in violent clashes in Cairo leading to the killing of several Copts, the attacks on churches and the regrettable confrontation with the riot police forces during the funeral at the Coptic Cathedral in Abbasia, which resulted in more bloodshed and agonies. The Coptic Pope was unusually critical and apprehensive. Washington spared no effort in expressing their indignation at this appalling incident.

7-The media in general, and the non-government papers and TV channels in particular, continued to criticize the policies, practices, inefficiencies and incompetence and of the MB cabinet. Morsi continues to ignore protests and persistent public demand to institute change and needed reform. This massive criticism was met by rebuke, harassment and investigations of key critics of Morsy, together with his inept Premier, and their lack of accomplishments. This MB government's aggressive attitude to curtail criticism was met by resistance and exposure on the part of the leaders of the Liberal parties as well as by public rebuke from Washington. Basem



Youssef, who used to criticize Morsy in his widely viewed TV show, in which he magnified his satirical approach in making fun of Morsy and MB personalities, was heralded by *Time* magazine recently and hence he was selected among the one hundred most influential media personalities worldwide. Moreover, the Minister of Information (media) continues to launch his drive to criticize and harass anti-government media personalities in various radio and TV shows. This unacceptable attitude by the Egyptian government was publically criticized by Washington.

8-The constant harassment and condemnation by Morsy and his MB supporters of the prominent figures of the National Salvation Front (NSF), which includes the Nobel Prize laureate, Mohammed El-Baradi, Amre Mousa, the former Secretary General of the Arab League (he recently described the current situation in Egypt as more dangerous than the defeat of the 1967 War!); of Kefaya, of the April 6th movement and the El -Wafd party leadership have continued unabashed. They have been investigated, hassled and accused of being agents of external interests and as power seekers. This steady attack on the opposition has been viewed to be tantamount to discrediting them nationally, in order to leave the political scene solely to the MB and the one party system, reminiscent of the NDP policies and practices of the Mobarak era. The containment of the opposition is considered by Washington as anti-democratic and anti-Arab spring movement's spirit of freedom, dignity, openness and transparency.

9-The attack on the Judiciary by the MB hierarchy and the current discussion of passing a new law for the Judiciary that will interfere in their independence and lead to the early retirement of nearly 4,000 judges, to be replaced by MB sympathizers, is met by public condemnation and viewed as a flagrant violation of the sanctity of the judiciary. This action has been described as the second massacre of the judges and thus sparking national outcry and demonstrations condemning this blatant intervention. Washington has expressed also its disappointment, calling for needed stability, safety and security.

10- Since Washington has a strong influence on the IMF, it has supported earlier Egypt's application for a badly needed 4.8 billion loan to shore up its declining economy. However, the statements and practice of Morsy and the MB government officials have been both puzzling and disappointing. Their turning of deaf ears on the US Secretary of State John Kerry's vocal advice to Morsy to accommodate some of the opposition's demands, to appoint a more able coalition cabinet, to make necessary changes in the Constitution in order to redress expressed the opposition and women grievances, as well as to appoint a new Attorney General as recommended by the due process through the High Judiciary Council was disturbing. This has resulted in US reluctance to push for granting the IMF loan. It was compounded by the slowdown of the European Union's financial support as well as the indifference of most Gulf States in honoring their promised financial support.

11-The recent violation of détente between Hamas and Israel through the Hamas factions, hurling shells into Israel and the subsequent Israeli air force raids on Gaza have threatened the quiet on the eastern front. This again has discredited Morsy's negotiated agreement five months earlier. The continuing Hamas activities across the porous border with Sinai coupled with the steady smuggling of weapons, military equipment, cars and other goods across through the many tunnels, highlight Morsy as a placid supporter of Hamas and thus anti-Israel. In retaliation, it has recently closed the borders' access points, and curtailed the fishing zone in the Mediterranean Sea for the Palestinians. However, both the US and Israel need the strong influence of Egypt and the MB on the PLO and Hamas in order to start meaningful peace negotiations toward the final settlement and the conclusion of the two-state solution, as agreed upon by all concerned.

Consequently, it is abundantly clear that both the internal scene and the external performance of Morsy's Egypt, and thus the MB, have required the US to place the mutual relations under sharp focus and place him under both careful scrutiny and cautious reconsideration in order to plot objectively the roadmap of bi-lateral relations in the near future.

There is no doubt that Egypt needs to muster all the friends' support. This is not the time for Egypt to jeopardize the strategic relations with Washington, the EU or the Gulf states. Egypt must therefore adopt a wiser course of action that will serve best its national interests in the short, medium and long terms. This strategy is fundamentally important, especially during the current dire and threatening economic situation. It is of paramount importance for Egypt to institute the proper order of national priorities, and to overcome the present serious socio-economic divide, cultural crisis and debilitating animosities. It must overcome the infecting virus of national decline, weekly human toll, frustrations, hatred, confrontation, disparities, disappointments, corruption, apathy and unprecedented national dangers, and hence embark immediately on meeting and managing the pressing national challenges.

To confront these awesome challenges there must be a solid will, and a firm determination to rise above the divisive forces, and to institute fundamental reforms through a national dialogue with all political parties and factions, no matter who or what. A national strategic plan of action must be adopted in short, medium and long-term phases. The plan must include a political, physical, economic and social and cultural renaissance that is comprehensive, integrated and inclusive of all segments, factions and parties, regardless of origin, religion, gender, color, occupation or orientation. It must be well synchronized, professionally orchestrated and well balanced in time and place, capitalizing on national, material and human resources at home and abroad. Egypt is entitled and deserves to assume its historic pivotal role in the region and globally. The time is now, for the alternatives are apocalyptic and certainly unthinkable!

May 4, 2013

## 7.7 Power and possibility

Al-Ahram Weekly 25 - 31 July 2012 -Issue No. 1108-Opinion

As the global quest for power continues, pushing and pulling events, there may be emerging a new entity on the global stage: the revolutionary Arab nation, writes **Mohsen Zahran**

Sixty long years have passed since 23 July 1952 coup d'État by the young Free Officers and the ousting of King Farouk of Egypt and the Sudan. The subsequent quest for power and control of Egypt's destiny, and the establishment of the new revolutionary Republic of Egypt witnessed a succession of authoritarian rule by ex-army officers: president Gamal Abdel-Nasser for 16 years, Anwar El-Sadat for 11 years and Hosni Mubarak for 30 years. These were six decades of totalitarianism, injustice, conflicts, decline, corruption, economic stagnation, suffering, dependence on foreign aid, despair, and desperation politically, economically, socially and culturally.

The 25 January youth revolution sparked new hope for Egypt to institute dignity, social justice, freedom, and respect for human rights. Throughout the history of human civilisations, mankind has been preoccupied with, and motivated by, quests for power, authority and control. The manifestations of such quests have ranged from the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt by the Pharaoh Menes during the First Dynasty in about 3000 BC, to the conquests of Ahmos, Thotmosis and Ramses II, to Alexander the Great's armed invasions of Asia Minor, Egypt and Mesopotamia, to the Roman Empire's colonisation of whole regions of Europe, Egypt and the Middle East. The early Islamic campaign to spread the Islamic faith from Egypt to North Africa, southern Europe, to the Middle and Far East (600-900 AD) reflected similar *modus operandi*.

Three centuries later, the several expeditions of the Crusades, which lasted for nearly two centuries (1100-1300 AD), were aimed at capturing for Christianity the Holy Land of Palestine, together with defending Eastern Europeans against the Turks. They were essentially religious missions of conquest. These were followed shortly thereafter by the emergence and prominence of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of Istanbul as the seat of the Islamic Caliphate (1400-1900 AD), which lasted for nearly five centuries until the end of World War I, in the early 20th century. Mohamed Ali Pasha established his Alawaite dynasty in Egypt in 1805, and dispatched his armed expeditions into central Africa in order to secure the origin of the River Nile, into the Arab peninsula, into the eastern Mediterranean region of Palestine and Syria, as well as into Turkey, and even into Latin America. Elsewhere, colonial military powers were used consistently by West European countries -- especially England, France, Spain, Portugal, Germany and Italy as well as by Russia, Japan and China -- to conquer neighbouring regions to

accomplish their colonial objectives of power, control, security, procurement of needed resources, and subsequently, political, economic and cultural dominance.

Throughout, human civilisations have witnessed the rise and fall of several empires, the disappearance of many nations, the eradication of established entities, in addition to the eruption of horrific wars, causing the tragic killing of the innocent multitudes of millions. The quest for power has its variety of tools and venues, ways and means, in order to achieve its targets, which are not merely innocent or missionary in form or in content. Political objectives of dominance have been primary; however, of no less meaning, value, or implication have been the undeclared objectives of economic, spiritual, social and cultural consequences, with short, medium and long-term goals. After World War II, the East-West power struggle and confrontations, whether overtly or covertly, dominated world actions and events. Strategic plans for a power build-up and expansion of spheres of influence dominated the global scene for decades, with less powerful or "insignificant" countries used as pawns and venues in the global chess game. The ill-fated Arab unity declarations and limited experiments of Gamal Abdel Nasser during the 1950s and 1960s were quickly ambushed and squashed by world powers, through the tripartite (England, France and Israel) aggression of 1956, the dissolution of the union with Syria in 1963, involvement in senseless tribal wars in Yemen, and the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War of 1967.

Although the "Iron Curtain" collapsed at the end of the 20th century, one could see clearly the emergence of a new polarisation with the US and European Union (EU) on one side confronting the challenging role of Russia and China on the other. This polarisation is now compounded, given the current economic depression in the West contrasting with the thriving economies of the Russia and China. At the regional levels, political analysts could point out several rivalries and polarities fuelling the quest for power and authority, be it political, economic, cultural or religious: the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 between Britain and France, with the consent of Russia, divided the spoils and territories of the "Sick Man of Europe", the Ottoman Empire, after its defeat in World War I. The agreement subdivided their spheres of influence in the Middle East and North Africa, regardless of national aspirations and human rights, thus planting the seeds of future conflicts and instability that have been sprouting confrontations and violence during the last 100 years.

The vested interests of the US and Russia, especially concerning the fundamental issues of energy, oil, natural resources, environment and armaments, have continued to influence world politics and international relationships. One can hardly forget George W Bush's evangelistic statements after the Islamic fundamentalists' terrible attack on the World Trade Centre in Manhattan and the Pentagon in Washington, DC, killing nearly 5,000 people, which he referred to the new crusade. US military interventions, in collaboration with the EU, in Iraq and

Afghanistan in order to eradicate the sources of terrorism represent a new strategy of power quest and dominance, with its full meaning, scope and implications. The continuing challenge and containment of Iran for its nuclear programme is not also an innocent objective. The various mini-wars and armed conflicts in various African countries, in the Middle and Far East, are part of the grand roadmap of geopolitical power manoeuvres, struggles, drives and conquests. The era of the neo-colonialism is rapidly asserting itself, even engulfing the spreading manifestations of the "Arab Spring" in North Africa and the Middle East. The noble aspirations of the Arab youth uprising to demand freedom, justice, dignity, and employment have been partly aborted, used, misdirected, extinguished or contained in view of the larger objectives of dominance, power, authority, manipulation and control.

At the national level, after the glorious victory of the 25 January Revolution, and during the long transitional period, the military have monopolised all executive, legislative and political authority. Many youth groups have been dismayed and disappointed that after 18 months their goals have been scarcely accomplished. The concepts of polarisation, and of divide and rule policy, have been manifested in most declarations, actions and events. The revolution seems to have stalled, lost steam or being hijacked. Polarisation, conflicts and infighting have become too evident to ignore or disregard. Religiously between the Muslim majority and Coptic minority; the rich and poor; the liberals and the Islamists; the old guard and the new torch carriers; the liberals and the conservatives; the armed forces and civil parties; civil societies and governmental institutions; urban communities and rural conglomerations; the radical Salafis and moderate Al-Azhar, capitalism and socialism, Sunnis and Shias; the haves and the have nots; the revolutionists and the traditionalists; chaos and security; lawlessness associated with the revolution versus totalitarian order linked to the old regime; Upper and Lower Egypt; business and labour; public and private sectors; political parties and independents; young revolutionaries and interest groups; and finally, a religious state or a civic state. The list of contrasts and conflicts and depressing dichotomies appears endless.

The intervention and backing of international and regional power players are too obvious to deny or neglect. US support for the Muslim Brotherhood's assumption of power in Egypt, Tunis, Morocco and evidently in Syria, Algeria and the Gulf States seems almost assured, regardless of their policies and actions in Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Iran are now additional regional players supporting their pawns, interests or their own banner carriers, although the dominant radical Wahhabi Islamic movement in Saudi Arabia is behind the fanatic Islamists in Egypt, which embraces traditionally moderate Islam. Politics fosters strange bedfellows!

The processes of change and stabilisation will take their course in due time, provided dedication, transparency, sanity and social justice are given top priority, according to a plan of action with a definite roadmap to accomplish unifying national goals. The peaceful 25 January Revolution erupted and deserved universal acclaim, admiration and support. The multi-million crowd, representing people power, gathered in Tahrir Square, demanding basic human rights, has now inspired similar massive popular protests against governments in democratic countries like Spain, Greece, Italy, France and the US. The whispers of agony have been amplified vividly everywhere from Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan, Syria, Israel and Tunis, to Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania.

The world community will never be silent again, for the torch of freedom and basic human rights is too glaring to disregard, for the consequences could be apocalyptic, as the 20,000 martyrs of Syria have recently justly reconfirmed. In retrospect, with all disappointments, despair, impatience, instability, chaos, lavishness and serious economic decline, a beam of hope prevails. It has ignited patriotic and nationalistic reflections during conflicting events, episodes and demonstrations, strikes in Tahrir and elsewhere. In Egypt, where the central government has ruled for more than 5,000 years, people yearn for stability, order and continuance and prosperity, especially with the election and installation of the first president to be popularly chosen in a democratic and free election. Are the dreams of the renaissance of a multi-national confederation of Islamic states looming on the horizon, with extensive oil wealth, swelling populations of 300 million people of common cultural and religious values and economic aspirations? This new dawn of an emerging regional entity, blessed with multitudinal human and material resources, spread over a land area of nearly five million square miles, roughly equivalent to that of the United States, needs to be recognised, heralded, and nobly upheld.

## 7.8 The Egyptian Condition

The January 25<sup>th</sup> peaceful, youth revolution has been a shining landmark in modern Egyptian history since Pharaoh Menes' unification of Upper and Lower Egypt into one unified nation in 3200 BC. The Revolution's eruption against corruption, tyranny, injustice and denial of basic human rights was symbolized in its declaration of its noble objectives of bread, freedom, dignity, and social justice, which claimed the remarkable admiration and unanimous support from around the globe. Throughout the eighteen days of the Revolution until Hosny Mubarak stepped down on February 11, 2011, a strong national bond of all national factions, regardless of color, origin, gender, age, religion or income level, united admirably the national fabric. It ignited national thrust and heralded national pride among the multitudes of millions that assembled day and night in squares like Tahrir in most major Egyptian cities. These were historic, indelible and truly magnificent demonstrations of people power, that will remain immortal—a model example for people resolve everywhere. However, when Mubarak entrusted the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) to run the affairs of the nation, the innocent revolutionaries trusted that a brief smooth transitional period will follow, to prepare the nation for a true parliamentary democracy. This period was believed to culminate into a new constitution, coupled with needed political, economic, social, and cultural change that will insure the implementation of the Revolution objectives for which 1000 youth gave their lives, and over 5000 wounded.

Yet, the actual performance and conduct of the military was a mixture of inexperience, indecision, tacit approval of the creation of countless political parties in order to induce “divide and rule,” trigger infighting, and spark strikes in various cities, so as to serve their interests! This was accompanied with a virtual breakdown of governmental operations, indifference, apathy, lawlessness, chaos, terrorism, violence, and a continuing failure of national social services and public utilities, together with serious shortages of electricity, water, gasoline, and even bread. Certainly, this nightmare, which persisted for eighteen long months, was never expected, or even imagined, as an outcome of the noble Revolution!

Nevertheless, one positive achievement should be fairly accredited to SCAF, is its insistence on holding national elections of the parliament and a new civilian president, after sixty years of totalitarian rule by ex-military presidents since the July 23, 1952 *coup d'etat*. Despite the installation of the new president on June 30, 2012, and the formation of a new cabinet from the Moslem Brotherhood (MB), SCAF still retained legislation, sharing authority with the new President. He was shrewd on Aug 12 to expel SCAF 42 days later, retire top brass and claim all powers to himself and the MB, who *de facto* run the country now.

An objective overview of the present Egyptian condition is indeed disturbing, disappointing and distressing. This is not what the January Revolution longed for, planned for or aspired for. Except for the transparent, fair elections, very little else has been achieved:

- **Militarily:** Although Field Marshal Tantaway had threatened that the Armed Forces will use its iron fist to squash any aggression on Egyptian borders, it is puzzling that SCAF, which was relieved of its political obligations in running the country by 30/6/2012, was caught unprepared to confront the terrible Rafah murder of 16 soldiers on Aug 5, near the border between Sinai and Gaza. This shocking aggression on Egypt (Palestinians/Hamas/Israel?), the first in forty years, leaves many questions unanswered, especially that intelligence reports had warned of the pending attack two days earlier, regardless of the justified blame on the Peace Treaty restrictions of military hardware in the border zone. The army rushed to combat and eradicate the fanatic Islamic Jihad terrorists in the hideouts in the Sinai Mountains, a mission expected to be lengthy and costly. Remember MB/Hamas allegiance! *The age-old axiom warns that forgotten land is a lost land!* On a different front, it is curious to note the tacit alliance between SCAF and the MB from the very beginning, even during the last waning days of Mubarak. This collusion resulted in the Islamic parties winning the elections miraculously, and once in control they negate on their promises, turning against their former allies. Since their early alliance with the military, the MB is known to reverse their tactics, deny their promises and change their course in order to achieve their hidden agenda! Indeed, *politics harbor strange bedfellows!*
- **Politically:** The Moslem Brotherhood (MB) is working diligently to dominate the Constitutional Committee, in order to control the executive and legislative branches and even the judiciary! Their known objectives and familiar tactics of exclusiveness and implementation of their operations at all levels, institutions, syndicates, labor unions and establishments covertly or overtly, are well known. We are awaiting the adoption of the new Constitution in a national referendum which is expected to be popularly approved, according to the earlier "scenario" of March, 2011. This will be followed by parliamentary elections by this fall. Their political opposition is made futile, ineffectual and impotent, since it is made up of countless weak parties, associations, and factions who squabble and fight, thus rendering them indeed powerless. On the other hand, one should note the prevalence of a new, multi-colored spectrum of political leanings and configurations: from the liberals to the conservatives, from the extreme radical right to the extreme left, from the moderate Islamists to the fanatic Sofis, from the conformists to the anarchists. These opposing factions are bound to shape the future political arena.
- **Socially:** The Egyptian population have now reached nearly 90 million people (2.2 % annual population growth rate), suffering from illiteracy, unemployment, economic deprivation, lawlessness, armed gangs, mushrooming squatter developments sprouting everywhere, lack of proper housing, shortage of resources, inadequate basic services and last, but not least, diminishing hope. The strong bondage of the early days of the



Revolution seems to have disintegrated, and even evaporated, leaving social aggregates and communal entities, more divided and repelling. At present, there is an alarming dissolution of the social pattern and fabric as well as ethical references, despite the apparent persistence on performing religious rituals, regardless of daily life and practices. The "divide and rule" policy has succeeded in implanting a serious virus of apathy, animosity, resistance, violence, sexual harassment and anti-social conduct, disorderliness, chaos, challenge of national references (whether spiritual, moral, ethical, legal or material), anti-institutional groups, anti-management attitudes, and simply anti-government and anti-authority reactions. It is now difficult for any department head to manage or enforce laws or regulations—an anarchy in its ugliest face and practice! This will eventually cause, *alas*, a sudden breakdown of government, flight of investments, degeneration and a serious wear and tear in institutional and social fabric. It will induce serious fissures in the national structure, threatening national institutions, with its tragic consequences!

- **Economically:** The economic situation in Egypt has been declining even before the Revolution. It has dipped sharply since February 2011. The economic rate of growth has slowed down to less than 2%; the inflation rate has spiraled upward beyond 20%; and the Central Bank has been moaning the depletion of its foreign exchange reserves, with the pound value falling, reaching 6.10LE against the US\$, losing 10% since January, 2011. Tourism, the major hard currency earner, has never recovered with various tourist sites in Sinai, in Upper Egypt or in the Red Sea, remaining mostly vacant due to group cancellations, owing to instability, insecurity and stagnation. Moreover, unemployment is thus rising steadily, given work stoppages, economic decline, loss of exports, and the rise of imported goods. In addition, both industrial and agricultural production is declining. It has been reported that nearly 50% of the youth, aged 15-35, are unemployed. The government budget deficit is worsening; thus, there is a persistent need to apply for loans from the World Bank, the IMF, as well as Arab Gulf countries, who voiced promises of pending support, which is yet to materialize. How can the hopes of the Revolution, social justice and employment be achieved with the current limited resources and economic deprivation? However, it is puzzling that despite this economic depression, Egyptians seem to spend on luxuries apathetically. Observers point out that the Egyptian informal economy constitutes nearly 40% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which runs unreported, uncontrolled, untaxed and survives in oblivion, employing multi millions, and supporting many families!

Nevertheless, while there are not enough power stations to meet rising electricity consumption, yet the rush to buy and install air-conditioning sets in dwellings is rising. Ramadan light decorations are hung everywhere unabashedly, resulting in frequent black-outs. Water treatment plants do not have enough water to treat and pump into the networks, resulting in periodic and prolonged cuts in the water supply system. Yet, there is a rise in rice plantations, which consume huge water quantities, coupled with extravagant

water consumption in urban areas! Nobody gives due attention to conservation, or to the serious national challenge of losing our current share of the Nile River of 55.5 billion m<sup>3</sup>, although Egypt has actually consumed more than 80 billion m<sup>3</sup> last year! Governments have not negotiated earnestly with the eleven countries sharing the Nile River region, which demand the reduction of Egypt's share, in order to reach an equitable new accord to meet the rising demand.

- **Environmentally:** There is a serious violation of all environmental laws and regulations. Solid waste is piling in streets with local government's operations almost coming to a halt. Furthermore, in flagrant challenge to urban regulations and order, piles of construction rubbish are disposed of on highway embankments, on public streets and on waterfronts, in a direct defiance of the law. Water pollution of canals, of the Nile River tributaries and on waterfronts is omnipresent everywhere. Visual pollution is offensive in streets, on building facades, in the form of banners, graffiti, wall paintings, slogans, billboards and posters, together with a shameless kaleidoscope of colors, dresses, forms, shapes, signs, finishes and materials. These images are in utter discord and, are in fallacious conflict with one another. Noise pollution is also rising exponentially, with people screaming and insulting, blaring loudspeakers, car honking and donkeys braying-- causing a serious health hazard.

In addition, urban pollution in the form of flagrant violations of urban order, urban laws and regulations is a serious threat to the meanings of urbanity, of order, commitment, identity and character. Demolition of architectural and urban heritage icons is continuing unabashed in violation of legal restrictions. Illegal 20-story towers are sprouting feverishly everywhere on small lots, with speedy construction capabilities, in order to avoid legal action by municipalities-- a dangerous practice which threatens the very safety of structures, disregarding the building codes and required factors of safety. Already a couple of new towers have collapsed recently, a dramatic warning to all; however, there is no slowdown or formal intervention! In addition, this wave of urban congestion and sprawl results in the overloading of the electric grid networks, blockage of sewerage, as well as exasperating the already insufficient and limited water supply. This alarming situation will contribute to a sharp increase in the urban, housing and building densities, which will multiply the present unbearable congestion, traffic snarls, as well as the breakdown of urban systems and networks.

Meanwhile, squatter and informal building developments are mushrooming relentlessly inside and outside urban areas, causing intolerable conditions for those who are illegally housed in such informal communities, which now accommodate nearly 25% of the Egyptian urban population. These illegal settlements have become urban insults and urban decay, a direct degradation of urban order, as well as the defamation of urban character

with, no solution in sight. Such social concentrations are like ghettos-- they are havens of crime, narcotics, violence, lawlessness, a vacuum in human conscience, breeding nests of hatred, a defying absence of belonging, immorality and disintegration of social order, in addition to being serious threats to moral, social, and legal frameworks. These shameful conglomerations are truly an alarming deterioration of the national existence and national survival.

- **Culturally:** The challenge to government authority combined with the resistance to, and violent reaction against police brutality, as evidenced during the Revolution, has resulted in a concerted challenge of, and confrontation with, any type of authority or law. This has become a dangerous virus, infecting every aspect of individual and communal conduct, behavior and performance. Evidence of such challenges is abundant, seen daily in rising street quarrels, gang fights, daily assaults, protests and strikes, as well as frequent road blocks, to barricade, to obstruct and to strangle traffic on national highways and railways. This trend of civil disobedience has become common place everywhere. Direct gang attack on policemen and police stations are not infrequent. There is simply no respect of law, discipline or order, coupled with a magnified focus on self interest and selfishness at the expense of others! In addition, the Egyptian cultural fabric and individual conduct are invaded by imported customs and life styles, transplanted from the west as well as the gulf countries, with all their contrasts and conflicts, which are incongruent with the homeland traditions and life styles. We are mostly imitators, and hardly initiators! Meanwhile, religion, which used to dominate Egyptian public life and Egyptians' conduct, is practiced only in form but rarely in practical daily life. Spiritual, moral or ethical values have barely helped to stop or contain the decline of personal conduct, communal strife or illegal practices. The law-abiding citizen of the civilized society has become non-existent in Egypt, regardless of education, income, age, social status or cultural identity.

In retrospect, these examples of national challenges and ailments are tragically serious and, indeed, should never be neglected or ignored, for they tear down and destroy the national fabric, and threaten the age-old national values and national entity. This is not what the January 25<sup>th</sup> Revolution has longed for, or even hoped for. Egypt can, should and will overcome these threats and heed these serious warnings, since their disregard is tantamount to *treason*. Egypt has been the leading pivotal leader of the region for centuries according to history, geography and performance. After decades of regretful withdrawal, this prominent role must be reasserted and implemented unequivocally, politically, socio-economically and culturally. Consequently, a national road map for essential reform, for inherent change and total uplifting is urgently called for, entitled: The National Revival and Recovery Plan. This should necessarily include:

**1. A Comprehensive National Integrated Development Plan** capitalizing on the forgotten, deserted regions of Egypt, especially in Sinai, Upper Egypt, Qattara Depression and the western desert oases corridor. The goal is a phased integrated urban, rural, industrial and agricultural progress in entire Egypt.

**2. A National Defense Plan** for safeguarding Egypt's borders, east, west, south and north by focusing on maximum military preparedness coupled with the development of productive/defensive conglomerations that bolster the defense strategy, achieve perennial, thriving development and insure the continuing prosperity of these regional zones, which are invariably threatened by both friends and foes alike!

**3. A National Energy and Water Plan**, which supports and encourages desalinization plants on the Med and Red Sea coasts, has become indispensable in order to meet future energy and water shortages, in addition to the production of needed electricity from renewable sources, using the *Masdar* example of the UAE as a proven guide. A new equitable Nile Basin Accord must be negotiated and concluded ASAP.

**4. A National Plan for Education and Health Reform** is mandatory and should be given top priority. The recent Malaysia and China remarkable achievements have recognized and capitalized on this necessity, which has boosted their economies and propelled their great Leaps Forward. There is no other alternative! This Plan must be given national priority, and needs to be comprehensively implemented. **5. A National Road Transportation Plan** to cover expansively the total development needs of the whole nation is mandatory, starting from the North Corridor to the east and west corridors and south corridor with parallel corridor grids east-west and north-south, with the Nile valley as the principal spine. A new capital for a new Egypt, a national undertaking, which I have personally supported and initiated six years ago, has become a must, to be planned and implemented urgently. There is no use in the piece-meal urban development projects in the Greater Cairo Metropolitan area, whether in the form of ring roads, tunnels, bridges, or underground metro lines, for they will not reform or uplift the deteriorated and congested capital. Cairo is burdened, overloaded with the escalating pressures of surrounding new towns which are dependent on the old city, leading to further congestion, dilapidation and deterioration. The example of Brazil, a rising economic world power, in building its new capital, Brasilia, in the hinterland away from the urban corridor of Rio /San Paolo on the Atlantic Ocean, should be a guiding example.

**6. A National Population Redistribution Plan**, integral with these proposed national plans, should accommodate housing, jobs and needed facilities and services to serve the nation's 150 million people by 2050, away from the Nile valley housing 95% of the population, congested on 5 % of the country area. Egypt has been historically dependent on agriculture, and the problem of hunger will become a global phenomenon that will require nations to harvest deserts and ocean floors. This must be a national undertaking, for land and

people are Egypt's precious capital that needs to be truly focused upon. The challenges are enormous, the problems are abound, the obstacles seem insurmountable, but the will to change and the resolve to thrust forward are abundant, as the horizons are boundless, open, and ready. .

18/8/2012

Published as: The Egyptian Condition

In: Al-Ahram Weekly 30 August - 5 September 2012

Issue No. 1112

Opinion

## 7.9 - The Quest for Power

Sixty long years have passed since July 23, 1952 coup d'état by the young free Army officers and the ousting of King Farouk of Egypt and the Sudan. The subsequent quest for power and control of Egypt's destiny, and the establishment of the new revolutionary Republic of Egypt witnessed a succession of authoritarian rule by ex-army officers: President Gamal Abdel-Nasser for sixteen years, Anwar Sadat for 11 years and Hosny Mubarak for thirty years. These were six decades of totalitarianism, injustice, conflicts, decline, corruption, economic stagnation, suffering, as well as dependence upon foreign aid, despair and desperation politically, economically, socially and culturally. The January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011 youth revolution has sparked a new hope for Egypt to institute dignity, social justice, freedom, and respect for human rights.

Throughout the history of human civilizations, mankind has been preoccupied with, and motivated by, a wide range of thrusts of power quests, authority and control. The manifestations of such quests have ranged from the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt by the Pharaoh Menes during the first dynasty in about 3000 B.C., to the conquests of Ahmos, Thotmosis and Ramesses II, to the Alexander the Great's armed invasions of Asia Minor, Egypt and Mesopotamia, to the Roman Empire's colonization of whole regions of Europe, Egypt and the Middle East. The early Islamic campaign to spread the Islamic faith from Egypt to North Africa, southern Europe, to the Middle and Far East (600-900 A.D.) reflected similar *modus operandi*. Three centuries later, the several expeditions of the crusades which lasted nearly for two centuries (1100 – 1300 A.D.), were aimed at capturing for Christianity the Holy Land of Palestine, together with defending Eastern Europeans against the Turks. They were essentially religious missions of conquest. These were followed shortly thereafter by the emergence and prominence of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of Istanbul as the seat of the Islamic Caliphate (1400-1900 A.D.), which lasted for nearly five centuries until the end of World War I, in the early twentieth century. Mohammed Aly Pasha established his Alwaite dynasty in Egypt in 1805, and dispatched his armed expeditions into central Africa, in order to secure the origin of the river Nile, into the Arab peninsula, into the eastern Mediterranean region of Palestine and Syria as well as into Turkey, and even into Latin America! Elsewhere, colonial Military powers were used consistently by west European countries, especially England, France, Spain, Portugal, Germany and Italy as well as by Russia, Japan and China to conquer neighboring regions to accomplish their colonial objectives of power control, security, procurement of needed resources, and subsequently, political, economic and cultural dominance. Throughout, human civilizations have witnessed the rise and fall of several empires, the disappearance of many nations, the

eradication of a few entities, in addition to the eruption of horrific wars, thus causing the tragic killing of the innocent multitudes of millions.

The quest for power has its variety of tools and venues, ways and means, in order to achieve its targets, which are not merely innocent or missionary in form or in content. Political objectives of dominance have been primary, however of no less meaning, value, or implications have been the undeclared objectives of economic, spiritual, social and cultural consequences, with short, medium and long-term goals. The twentieth century witnessed two major World Wars with the terrible human loss of nearly a hundred million people! In WWI, Europe was the major theatre of operations, involving the major European countries including the USA, fighting for political supremacy and control, resulting in major geopolitical changes in central and east Europe. In WWII the Allied Forces, involved later on the full commitment of the USA, and Axis powers led by Nazi Germany and Japan fought fierce battles in Europe, North Africa and the Far East, culminating in the defeat of Germany and Japan, especially after the US deployment of Atomic bombs and other WMD, with massive human and material losses. It was crucial, deterrent and Fatal, as well as shaper of the world strategies of power quests!

After World War II, the East-West power struggle and confrontations, whether overtly or covertly, continued to dominate world actions and events. Strategic plans for a power build-up and expansion of the spheres of influence dominated the global scene for decades, with less powerful or "insignificant" countries, used as pawns and venues in the global chess game. The ill-fated Arab unity declarations and limited experiments of Gamal Abdel-Nasser during the 1950s and 1960s were quickly ambushed and squashed by world powers, through the tri-partite (England, France and Israel) aggression of 1956, the dissolution of union with Syria in 1961, the involvement in the senseless tribal wars in Yemen and the Arab/Israeli Six-Day War of 1967.

Although the iron curtain collapsed at the end of the twentieth century, one could see clearly the emergence of the new polarization with the U.S. and European Union (EU) on one side confronting the challenging role of Russia and China on the other, given the current economic depression in the west contrasting with the thriving economies of the Russia and China.

At the regional levels, political analysts could point out several rivalries and polarities fueling the quest for power and authority, be it political, economic, cultural or religious, the Sykes - Picot Agreement of 1916, between the United Kingdom and France, with the consent of Russia, divided the spoils and territories of the "Sick Man of Europe," the Ottoman Empire, after its defeat in World War I. The Agreement subdivided their spheres of influence in the Middle East and North Africa, regardless of national aspirations and human rights, thus planting the seeds of

future conflicts and instability that have been sprouting confrontations and violence during the last hundred years!

The vested interests of the U.S. and Russia, especially concerning the fundamental issues of energy, oil, natural resources, environment, markets and armaments have continued to influence world politics and international relationships. After the 1973 Arab/Israeli war and the subsequent Oil Embargo, the west used The PetroDollar strategy to siphon the oil revenue of the oil-rich Arab states through the investment in expensive armaments, the construction of grand projects and mega development undertakings by western companies and operators! This has become a new arena of power quest and control. Moreover, one can hardly forget George Bush Jr.'s evangelistic statements after the 9/11/2001 Islamic fundamentalists' terrible attack on the World Trade Center in Manhattan and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., killing nearly 3,000 people, in which he referred to *the new crusade!* Using UN Security Council Resolutions as cosmetic cover, the U.S. military interventions, in collaboration with the E.U., in Iraq and in Afghanistan, in order to eradicate the sources of terrorism, represent a new strategy of power quest, control and dominance, with its full meanings, scope and implications. The continuing challenge and containment of Iran for its nuclear program is not also an innocent objective. The various mini-wars and armed conflicts in various African countries, in the Middle and Far East are part of the grand road-map of geo-political power maneuvers, struggles, drives and conquests. The era of the *Neo-colonialism* is rapidly asserting itself, even engulfing the spreading manifestations of the "Arab Spring" in North Africa and the Middle East. The noble aspirations of the Arab youth uprising to demand freedom, justice, dignity, and employment have been, *alas*, partly aborted, used, misdirected, extinguished or contained in view of the larger objectives of dominance, power, authority, manipulation and control.

At the national level, after the glorious victory of January 25, 2011 Revolution and during the long transitional period, the military have monopolized all executive, legislative and political authority. Many youth groups have been dismayed and disappointed that after eighteen months, their goals have been scarcely accomplished. The concepts of polarization, and of divide and rule policy, have been manifested in most declarations, actions and events. The Revolution seems to have stalled, lost steam or being hijacked! Polarizations, conflicts and infighting have become too evident to ignore or disregard. Religiously, between the Muslim majority and Coptic minority; but equally divisive polarities include: the rich and poor; the liberals and the Islamists; the old guard and the new torch carriers; the liberals and the conservatives; SCAF of the Armed Forces and civil parties; civil societies and governmental institutions; the urban communities and the rural conglomerations; the radical Soufists and the Al-Azhar moderate institution, capitalism and socialism, Sunnites and Shiites; the have and the have nots; the revolutionists and the traditionalists; chaos and security; lawlessness associated with the



Revolution versus totalitarian order linked to the old regime; Upper and Lower Egypt; business and labor; public and private sectors; political parties and independents; the young revolutionaries and the interest groups; and finally a religious state or a civic state. The long list of contrasts, conflicts and depressing dichotomies appears endless!

The intervention and backing of international and regional power players are too obvious to deny or neglect. The US support of the Muslim Brotherhood's assumption of power in Egypt, Tunis, Morocco and evidently in Syria, Algeria and the Gulf states seems almost alright, regardless of their policies and actions in Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Iran are now additional regional players supporting their pawns, interests or their own banner carriers, although the dominant radical Wahabis Islamic movement in Saudi Arabia is behind the fanatic Islamists in Egypt, which embraces traditionally moderate Islam. Politics foster strange bed fellows!

The process of change and stabilization will take their due course in time provided dedication, transparency, sanity and social justice are given top priority, according to a plan of action with a definite road map to accomplish unifying national goals. The peaceful January 25<sup>th</sup> Revolution erupted and deserved the universal acclaim, admiration and support, worldwide. Even the power of the multi-million people, who gathered in Tahrir Square, demanding their basic human rights have now inspired similar massive popular protests against their governments in the democratic countries of Spain, Greece, Italy, France and the U.S. The whispers of agony have been amplified avidly everywhere from Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan, Syria, Israel, Libya, Tunis, Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania.

The world community will never be silent again, for the torch of freedom and basic human rights is too glaring to ignore or neglect, for the consequences could be apocalyptic, as the 20,000 martyrs of Syria have recently justly reconfirmed. In retrospect, with all disappointments, despair, impatience, instability, chaos, lawlessness and serious economic decline, a beam of hope prevails. It has ignited patriotic and nationalistic reflections during conflicting events, episodes and demonstrations, strikes in Tahrir and elsewhere. In Egypt, where the central government has ruled for more than 5,000 years, people yearn for stability, order, continuance meaningful development, and prosperity especially with the election and installation of Dr Mohamed Morsi, as the first President to be popularly chosen in a democratic and free election. Are the dreams of the renaissance of a multi-national confederation of Islamic states looming on the horizon, with an extensive oil wealth, swelling populations of 400 million people of common cultural and religious values and economic aspirations? This new dawn of an emerging regional entity, blessed with multitudinal human, natural and material resources,

spread over a land area of nearly five million square miles the cradle of human civilisations, roughly equivalent to that of the U.S.A., needs to be recognized, heralded, and nobly upheld.

22/07/2012

## 7.10 Repelling Ramifications: Prosecuting Civil Societies in Egypt

The triumph of the peaceful Egyptian youth revolution in January 25, 2011 resounded in all corners of the world with outstanding elation and astounding commendation. Undoubtedly, without the active participation, coordinated involvement and energized commitment of the civil societies that were well organized, patriotically mobilized and politically motivated, it is uncertain that this heroic phenomena and unparalleled achievement could have succeeded. Nevertheless, one year on, the objectives of the revolution have been gravely betrayed and scarcely fulfilled.

The current legal clamp-down on civil societies, is puzzling and indeed, intriguing. One could trace the *de facto* displeasure and repellent actions of the ruling Military Council, from the very beginning, since last March, over the repeated calls by civil societies for multi-million demonstrations in Tahrir Square, and elsewhere in Egypt against the callous procrastination, unjustifiable delays and disgusting betrayal of the goals of the revolution. The continuing crack-down on youth groups on several occasions of Friday demonstrations resulted in hundreds killed and thousands injured. Yet, the beacon of the revolution could not be dimmed or extinguished. The massive multitudes, who assembled in Tahrir Square during the first anniversary are a convincing testimony, despite the bloody toll, military trials and subsequent jail sentences involving thousands of the revolutionary youth. This recent legal action against several civil societies from the United States, Germany and other countries, and the subsequent arrest of nearly thirty youth activists from Egypt, 19 members from the U.S., Germany, Serbia, and other countries, suggest that this scenario cannot be isolated from earlier interventions and actions.

The prosecution has accused several civil societies of failing to secure government permits to work in Egypt, as prescribed by law, and for receiving financing amounting to multi-million dollars in aid money from abroad without getting proper approval from pertinent authorities (Ministries of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Social Affairs). Those societies have been plainly at fault for not abiding by the legal procedures. However, one could understand the argument by defendants' lawyers that registration papers were submitted on time to secure the required permits, but they received no official response. They insist that they have been operating in Egypt for years during the Mubarak era and never received a word of warning or a threat of legal repercussions. Furthermore, they had applied last spring and received permission to monitor as independent observers the recent parliamentary elections in Egypt. They toured polling stations along with human rights organizations, and subsequently proclaimed to the world the fairness of the election process and procedures.

International observers hasten to point out that civil societies are in the heart of political democratic processes in many countries, especially in the U.S. and Europe. The United Nations system depends on civil societies direct involvement and input in most international conferences, meetings and world forums. Thus, the recent marring of their image here, coupled with the distrust leveled at their performance is to the detriment and denial of their role, activism, mission and value in supporting democracy, freedom and social commitment to public affairs. On the other hand, one would wonder how such an incriminating action, accompanied with the negative media tinted coverage concerning the illegal conduct of those civil societies on the national scene, would undermine bilateral and multilateral relations at this critical time?. Why ignite feelings and inflame relations now with overzealous charges of interference, violations and wanton plots compromising sovereignty and national security, given the current turbulent situation in Egypt, which is suffering economically, politically, socially and culturally? Any action should be considered carefully and weighed wisely from all angles and levels, both qualitatively and quantitatively. At this time, when officials bemoan the present economic demise of Egypt, which has requested multi-billion loans from the World Bank, I.M.F. and other lending organizations, can Egypt afford to lose the annual U.S. AID (1.3 billion for the military + 250 million for civilian projects) and also risk the disapproval of loans from the international agencies, knowing the influential role of the U.S. National pride has now energized drives to do without external Aid or loans altogether?!

The atmosphere has been over-charged with rising tension and exaggerated emotions on both sides. It is high time to exercise self-control and due restraint with due wisdom and insight, bearing in mind the dire consequences on both sides, as well as the possible ramifications on bilateral relations in the short and long terms. National interests must be the primary goal. Indeed, this is no place for excited emotions or exaggerated nationalism in this era of globalization and the new world order, which entails the full comprehension and due recognition of the new emerging dimensions on the world scene concerning the meanings of borders of time, place, order, sovereignty and national interests, as well as human rights and democratic values.

28/2/2012

## 7.11 Prosecuting civil society

Al-Ahram Weekly 1 - 7 March 2012- Issue No. 1087- Opinion

Without the active participation and commitment of a well-organised and patriotically mobilised civil society it is doubtful that the 25 January Revolution would have taken hold. Yet a year later the objectives of the revolution have been betrayed.

The current legal clampdown on civil society is at once puzzling and intriguing. The growing displeasure of the ruling military council to calls by civil societies for mass demonstrations in Tahrir Square was apparent as early as March last year.

The multitudes assembled in Tahrir Square on the first anniversary of the revolution offer testimony that the fervour for change is unabated. The recent legal action against international NGOs is part of an ongoing scenario of repression.

The prosecution has accused NGOs of failing to procure government permits to work in Egypt, and for receiving financing millions of dollars in funds from abroad without the permission of the authorities.

The NGOs are clearly at fault for not abiding by legal procedures. But it is impossible not to sympathise with the arguments of defence lawyers, who say the NGOs had indeed applied for licences only to receive no response, sometimes for years.

Some of the NGOs in question have been operating in Egypt for a decade or more, never once receiving a legal warning. They applied and received permission to monitor the recent parliamentary elections in Egypt last spring. International observers point out that civil society is at the heart of the democratic processes of many countries, especially the US and European states. The marring of their image here is intended to deflect their role in supporting democracy, freedom and social responsibility in public affairs.

The atmosphere has been clouded by exaggerated emotions on both sides. It is high time to exercise self-control, bearing in mind the dire consequences for both sides of deteriorating bilateral relations. National interests must not be compromised. There is no place for excitability or illogical nationalism in a globalised world.

## 7.12 The Egyptian Dilemma

The Egyptian January 25<sup>th</sup> Youth Revolution has recently celebrated its first anniversary with massive, peaceful demonstrations in Tahrir Square, and elsewhere in many cities nationwide, recalling the admirable, victorious multitudes of millions of people during the historic events of January 25<sup>th</sup>, as well as February 11<sup>th</sup>, the day of Mubarak's departure. The resounding, persistent demand after one year was the insistence on the continuum of the Revolution to achieve its noble objectives of "Bread, Freedom, Dignity, and Social Justice," which are yet to be realized!

The great hopes of change after the relinquishment of power by the former President and the suspension of the Parliament during the early days of the Revolution, have gradually evaporated, due to inexplicable indecision, puzzling procrastination, debilitating stagnation, callous insensibility and devious detours, despite several marches, strikes, sit-ins, and multi-million demonstrations spanning several months hence. Meanwhile, the nation has been suffering politically, economically, socially, and culturally from lack of progress, coupled with regressing development, as evidenced in the reported loss of 50% of foreign exchange reserves, lagging unemployment, a sharp decline in investment, spiraling inflation, an alarming loss of exports, rising imports, deteriorating governance as well as a virtual collapse of local government services and responsibilities. Meanwhile, the Armed Forces Supreme Council (AFSC), to which Mubarak delegated the authority to run the country, have ordered military police, in concert with the security forces, to confront and clash with peaceful protestors on several occasions, in violation of their basic human rights, which resulted in nearly 400 killed and several thousands wounded. *Alas*, this is a painful bloody toll, equivalent to more than 50% of those, who gave their lives and shed their blood after the liberation of their destiny in January 2011. These confrontations have generated rising distrust, anger, and violence, together with a bitter feeling of betrayal and a sinking realization of mistrust. This has prompted millions of people recently to demonstrate again in Tahrir and elsewhere on January 25<sup>th</sup>, and 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012, calling for the continuation of the Revolution, and furthermore, the immediate exit of the AFSC as well as the speedy election and installation of a civilian president.

This loud outcry for the immediate surrender of power by the military was a direct result of the people's realization that the Council is not too keen to have a new constitution be adopted, with full democratic processes and transparent procedures, especially after their insistence on the inclusion of certain clauses giving the military special stature and exemptions from due processes and rules. It has become crystal clear to the majority of observers that there is a hidden agenda perpetuating the distinguished presence and involvement of the armed forces in Egyptian public life. This leading role has continued unabated since the 1952 *coup d'etat*, and the

subsequent authoritarian rule of ex-military presidents: Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak! The stakes, benefits and interests are too great to relinquish or share!. To achieve this agenda and maintain the *status quo*, covertly, or overtly, AFSC decisions and actions have included: diversionary and divisionary tactics; slow and inadequate declarations of a roadmap and a definitive timetable to end the transitional period; the continuation since last February of insecurity, violence, corruption and lawlessness; the repeated instigation of distrust and clashes between the protestors and the police forces; and the continuation of infiltration of political parties, youth alliances, professional federations, together with labor syndicates, social and ethnic groups in order to initiate in-group fighting and induce social instability. Furthermore, revolutionary youth groups and NGOs have been invariably accused of being thugs, pawns of foreign circles, unpatriotic, unruly, and disruptive of public order, aiming at the downfall of Egypt! Such organizations are now formally accused of receiving extensive foreign financial support and are facing court trials. Mubarak is out, but the regime functionaries, machine, and loyalists are ceaselessly plotting and resisting the stability of the nation! Certain segments of society believed in such groundless charges! The classic colonial rule of "divide and conquer" was revived! This devious ploy could culminate ultimately in the Revolution's loss of inertia, self-destruction and anchorage in *loco motion*, an old technique and a devilish tactic frequently applied and maliciously maneuvered by former officials. Many observers are afraid that the Revolution is being viscously attacked, seriously betrayed, and nearly hijacked!

One would only hope that this obvious assumption, which is supported by ample factual evidence, is fueled by exaggerated suspicion or devious doubts. However, evidence from actual realities, questionable decisions, and lagging performance is too compelling for all to ignore or even disregard. Is it a mere allegation that none of the objectives of the January Revolution have been implemented, a concern which is causing great despair, frustration and even doubts about the benefits of the Revolution to the poor masses of Egypt, who have supported it wholeheartedly, and who amount to 40% of the total population? Is it merely circumstantial that the Moslem Brotherhood, the most organized religious/political movement on the Egyptian scene, has on several occasions supported the military's decisions and roadmap, and have also accelerated their presence and dominance of the Egyptian public life. Thus, they are claiming along with the Salafeiah movement (right wing Islamic party) nearly 70% of the Parliament seats during the December/January Parliament elections, whereas the Revolutionary Youth could win less than 5% of the 500+ seat Parliament? While an unprecedented 60% of the total registered voters cast their ballots in the elections of the Parliament lower house (Magles El-Shaab), a mere 6% voted in the elections of the upper house (Magles El-Shurah) recently—an unmistakable indication of the people's disappointment, disapproval and disgust with the ongoing state of affairs! The suspicion points to a *de facto* alliance with the AFSC, a fact asserted by their refusal to partake in the massive demonstrations called by the Youth Federations on 11/2/2012 in Tahrir,

the first anniversary of Mubarak's departure, in order to demand the immediate transfer to civilian rule! Furthermore, the organizers have called for a gradual civil disobedience escalation to maximize their pressure, an action which both the AFSC and the Islamist parties condemned!

Because of Egypt's dominant and geopolitical leading role in the Middle East, Arab nations in the Gulf region are not overtly supporting the Egyptian Revolution and, therefore, have aligned themselves with the former members of the NDP (Mubarak's National Democratic Party) as well as officers/officials of the old regime, in order to fund and instigate trouble underground, thus causing disruption, unrest, violence, instability and insecurity in various governorates, coupled with terrorist attacks against public buildings and institutions throughout the country. On the other hand, certain parties, groups and individuals have hastened after the Revolution to claim their shares of the pie, in order to reserve their influential position of power and to further their profitable interests in the new Egypt. By claiming the majority of the Parliament seats, the Moslem Brotherhood are now practicing the same role and *modus operand's* as the NDP. Media columnists and public personalities, who were the mouth-pieces of the old regime, are now revolutionaries (!), gleaming in the limelight, again, on their own TV talk shows!

Despite the ongoing, belated trials of Mubarak, his sons and former officials on counts of killing of the demonstrators during the Revolution, corruption and bribery, the vicious corruption virus is still infesting every level and every corner in the Egyptian public life, as evidenced in the state of lawlessness and defiance of public laws everywhere. Flagrant violations and illegal practices are witnessed daily in the thousands of deplorable, unsafe building violations as well as the massive urban sprawl invading and destroying precious, fertile agricultural land, which are prohibited by law. Meanwhile, the police workforce, who have pledged a sacred oath of office to safeguard the life, security and human rights of all Egyptians, have betrayed their oath and caused fear, terror, insecurity and loss of human life. Regrettably, they have neglected and abandoned their duties, thus hardly protected the citizens from daily attacks by thieves and thugs, or even defended them against many criminal acts by armed gangs or violators everywhere! This benign, or planned, neglect of duty, and the subsequent state of lawlessness have motivated some people, *alas*, to long to the good old days of stability, security and safety, regardless of the authoritarian rule, corruption, rampant poverty and national decline!

It was evident to everyone from the very beginning since last March, that the Armed Forces Supreme Council have responded too little and too late to the repeated protests by millions, and only after a tragic loss of life in confrontations with security forces. Such incidents are too many to count, from the Maspero Massacre, to Mohamed Mahmoud Street, to the Parliament Street, to Port Said Stadium massacre, which were repeatedly instigated by the former regime loyalists, or



the frequently accused and scarcely identified "third party" plotters!? The belatedly announced review of the roadmap timetable calls for presidential elections in June (now May after the February 2<sup>nd</sup> clashes and the killing of 20 youths and wounding 2000). They promised to secede power to civilian rule by June 30, 2012. However, it is doubtful that even with the election of a civilian president (hopefully not another ex-army General again) the real power will be manipulated by the military, supported by a hidden alliance with the Moslem Brotherhood. If this happened and the noble objectives of the January Revolution were betrayed and remain unfulfilled, the consequences could be disastrous indeed. One is afraid that the poor, angry masses would ignite another rampant revolution of the poor masses, the hungry and the hoodlums. It will be terrifying, violent, bloody and deadly! This will be apocalyptic and catastrophic!?

May Allah Almighty safeguard Egypt and its noble Revolution.\*

12/2/2012

\*P.S. Refer to two articles by the author in the *Al Ahram Weekly* of February, 2011, entitled: "***A Revolutionary Roadmap***" as well as of September, 2011, entitled: "***Unfulfilled Promises.***"

Published as: The Egyptian dilemma

In: Al-Ahram Weekly 16 - 22 February 2011-Issue No. 1085-Opinion

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### 7.13 Unfulfilled promises?

Al-Ahram Weekly 6 - 12 October 2011-Issue No. 1067-Opinion

There is a growing belief that the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which was entrusted by ousted president Hosni Mubarak to run the country during a six-month transitional period until a civilian government could be properly elected and installed, is not too keen to have a new constitution adopted with full democratic processes and transparent procedures.

Fears are that the military presence in Egyptian public life cannot be terminated, spanning the period since the 1952 coup d'état and the subsequent authoritarian rule of ex-military presidents Gamal Abdel-Nasser, Anwar El-Sadat and Hosni Mubarak. The stakes, powers and interests are too great to relinquish or share.

The path to slowly and steadily retaining the status quo has included, among other fundamental issues: divisionary tactics, including absence of a roadmap and a definite timetable; the belated adoption of an elections law that has been rejected by all parties and political factions; the reinstatement of emergency law with tighter measures to control the media and public protests; the enlargement of electoral districts; the postponement of election dates from the originally announced deadline of October 2011 to January 2012; the continuation, since January, of a lack of security, with violence, corruption and lawlessness; the unmitigated growth of distrust between the people and police; the infiltration of political parties and revolutionary groups in order to cause their self-destruction and loss of inertia, an old technique and tactic used by former officials.

Is it a mere allegation that none of the objectives of the January Revolution has been implemented, except the trials of the ousted president and some of his men?

Also, the cabinet has promised to meet the rightful demands of many sit-ins and demonstrations by workers, unions, professional groups and university staff, but failed to fulfil its promises, redress their grievances, and implement their demands. The final account of achievements after eight months is certainly disappointing, distressing and frustrating.

## 7.14 A post-revolutionary roadmap

Al-Ahram Weekly 24 February - 2 March 2011- Issue No. 1036-Opinion

For Egypt's great revolution to be sustained certain practicalities have to be addressed, writes **Mohsen Zahran**

The 25 January Revolution may have come as a surprise, but the writing had been on the wall for some time now. The revolution was the culmination of many things. The demonstrations on 6 April 2008, the activities of Kifaya, and the various protests by professional groups all paved the way.

For the most part, however, it was the young people who started this revolution. In a country where nearly half the population is aged 15-35, this should come as no surprise. With college graduates unable to find decent jobs, resentment has been on the rise.

Some observers note that the 25 January Revolution was mounted by middle class urban dwellers and had little support outside the major towns. This may be true, but so what? Most revolutions are spearheaded by urban dwellers. This was the case with the 1919 Revolution in Egypt, the 1776 American Revolution, the 1789 French Revolution, and the 1917 Russian Revolution. The more recent Hungarian Revolution in 1956 and the Polish Revolution in 1971 were no different.

The 25 January revolutionaries agreed on a number of legitimate demands, including a new constitution, and new parliament. In what follows, I would like to propose a roadmap for the future, one that could meet most of the current popular demands.

Here are the main points:

- We need to put together a national plan to develop various parts of the country, including the previously neglected areas of the western and eastern deserts.

- A national plan is needed for water and energy. This plan should take into account the fact that Egypt's limited share of the Nile waters (55 billion cubic metres) may dwindle in the future. One thing we could do is to revive the Qattara Depression Project and thus boost both our water and energy resources. We may also consider building water desalination stations along the north and eastern coasts. Solar energy is highly advisable at this point. And while at it, let's cut back on the energy we use for luxury purposes.

- New laws for land ownership must be passed to encourage settlement and investment in new areas. If we play our cards right, the new areas could create a lot of jobs for the young.

- We need to prepare a national plan for self-sufficiency in wheat and corn. Encroachment on agricultural land for building purposes must be banned altogether, with stiff punishment for violators. We need to promote agricultural and urban development in the oases, and we already have many plans awaiting implementation in this regard. We also need to revive the Toshka Project, on which billions have already been spent.

- We need to encourage medium-scale industries as well as small and micro businesses and move away from short-term consumer-oriented products. Labour-intensive industries are not such a bad idea if we're serious about creating jobs.

- The quality of education, at various stages of study, is crucial to the entire nation. As experience showed in Malaysia and China, better healthcare and administrative and social services are indispensable to progress.

- Quality control is essential not only in production but in many other things. Substandard performance must not be tolerated in administration, education, manufacturing, or construction. Egyptian products that reach Arab markets are often unacceptable in quality and packaging. The quality of road building and construction, in both the private and public sectors, is deplorable. Chinese products have already invaded our market. Why? Simply because they are better and cheaper than ours.

- Supervisory bodies must monitor closely the performances of various production and service departments. We cannot tolerate substandard performance. If we're going to increase wages, then we must insist on workers producing top quality products. Accountability is the keyword.

- National projects that use foreign capital, whether Arab or Asian or European, must be encouraged. Meanwhile, our government should invest in projects that help the taxpayers of this country. Projects requiring long-term investment, such as roads, bridges, airports and tourist resorts can be leased to investors for long periods, thus allowing them to recoup their costs and make profit. The same policy of long-term leasing should apply to agricultural and industrial activities. To create jobs and improve our balance of payments, we need to encourage foreign investment.

- The government should hire people based on their expertise, not their loyalty to the powers that be. Managers must be encouraged to speak out and take initiative without fear of retribution.

Also, government officials should refrain from pandering to the public, especially at elections time, with silly stuff such as the cancellation of fines or the facilitation of certain procedures. To do so is not only dishonest, but also conducive to bribery and corruption. There is nothing wrong with increasing wages so long as productivity increases too. In the past few years, some ministries and institutions have increased wages under threat of industrial action, which is wrong. Management should take the initiative in such matters; it should not wait until its back is to the wall to do what it knows is right.

A new phase is just beginning, one in which we have to do things differently and act in good faith. We need to instil a spirit of commitment and loyalty. We need to let citizens know that the government is there to serve them, not to serve itself at their expense. The challenges facing us are great, and the learning curve is going to be steep, but it's worth it.

### 7.15 Revolution in Quandary or a Devious Betrayal?

Freedom, dignity, change and social justice, the declared noble objectives of the January 25<sup>th</sup> Youth Revolution in Egypt were heralded by all the 20 million peaceful demonstrators in Tahrir Square, as well as in Alexandria, Suez, Port Said, Assiut, Luxor and elsewhere in the New Egypt, regardless of age, creed, sex or belief. The thunderous victory of the Revolution resounded in all corners of the Arab world detonating uprisings in many cities in what was labeled the "Arab Spring," which resulted in the removal of Ben Ali in Tunis, Kaddafi in Libya and, very soon, Saleh in Yemen and Assad in Syria. The whole world watched in exceptional awe, declared acclamation and elated admiration.

The great hopes of change after the relinquishment of power by the former President Mubarak, and the suspension of the nation's constitution, the dissolution of the ill-reputed Parliament, have gradually evaporated due to inexplicable indecision, procrastination, stagnation and insensitivity to the several marches and multi-million people demonstrations, which the Tahrir Square witnessed on Fridays during the last few months. Meanwhile the nation has been suffering economically, socially, culturally and physically from the lack of development, a sharp drop investments, alarming unemployment, and local governments *in loco motion*. The Armed Forces Supreme Council and security forces clashed on several occasions with the protestors, which led to sequences of violations of human rights, distrust, impatience, anger and violence. Although the trial of Mubarak, his sons, former security officials and ministers only started in August, on the charge of killing peaceful demonstrators, six months after the January Revolution, following monumental demonstrations in July in Tahrir Square, yet the slow pace and a continuum of indecision, inaction, despair and mistrust has been on the rise. The political corruption file is yet to be opened! The sinking feeling in most peoples' minds and hearts is that there is a devious betrayal of the revolution and its noble goals!

There is a growing belief that the Armed Forces Council, who was entrusted by Mubarak to run the country during a six month transitional period until a civilian government is properly elected and installed, is not too keen to have a new constitution adopted with full democratic processes and transparent procedures. The hidden agenda is that the military presence in the Egyptian public life cannot be terminated since the 1952 *coup d'état* and the subsequent authoritarian rule of ex-military presidents, Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak! The stakes, benefits, powers and interests are too great to relinquish or share! The path to slowly and steadily maintain the *status quo* has included among others fundamental issues as: divisionary tactics including absence of a roadmap and a definite timetable, a belated adoption of an election law that has been rejected by all parties and political fractions; the reinstatement of the Emergency

Law with tighter measures to control the media and public protests; the enlargement of election districts; the postponement of election dates from the originally announced deadline in October 2011 to January 2012; the continuation since January of the lack of security, violence, corruption, lawless-ness; the instigation of distrust between the people and police; the infiltration of political parties and revolutionary groups in order to cause self-destruction and loss of inertia, an old technique and tactic used by former officials.

Hoping they are merely fictitious or suspicious, the prevalent rumors and signs of a will of continuance of the *status quo* are too evident to ignore or disregard. Is it pure coincidence that the fanatic right Islamists (Salafeiah) movements have mushroomed exponentially to cover the whole nation in a few months? Is it circumstantial that the Moslem Brotherhood, the most organized religious/political movement on the Egyptian scene, has accelerated their activities and involvement, and become strongly vocal and widely assertive in all fronts, after being banned from public life until last January? Is it a pure chance that ethnic and religious violence have sprouted everywhere, intensifying the feeling of insecurity and national divisionism and fissures in the national fabric in various localities? Is it a mere allegation that none of the objectives of the January revolution have been implemented, except one? Is it proper to ignore that the alliance of the business community as well as Arab and foreign interests with government circles during the Mobarak era has continued to fund and instigate trouble underground causing disruption, unrest, violence, security and stability challenges in many governorates, including the tacit intervention of former NDP officials and businessmen instigating demonstrations coupled with violence against government buildings and embassies? Moreover, the cabinet has promised to meet the rightful demands of many sit-ins and demonstrations by workers, unions, professional groups and university staff, but failed to fulfill its promises redress their grievances and implement their demands? The final account of achievements after eight months is certainly disappointing, distressing and frustrating.

Last February, *The Al -Ahram Weekly* published a brief revolutionary roadmap that I had proposed, but no response, and no action! Where are we going from now? The situation is truly ambiguous, illusionary and alarming. It is anybody's guess! The January 25<sup>th</sup> Revolution's 900 martyrs, 5,000+ wounded, and thousands missing (??) are they not enough to ensure the unequivocal fulfillment of the Revolutionary goals and the explicit the implementation of the long-awaited demands? One would only hope so. Otherwise, the consequences could be apocalyptic.

September 25, 2011



## 7.16 An IT World Order

Al-Ahram Weekly 15 - 21 October 2009-Issue No. 968-Opinion

The information technology revolution has proliferated, invading almost all aspects of human activity and the daily life of people everywhere.

Without doubt, the information technology revolution should be fully accredited and acclaimed for great achievements accomplished worldwide during the last three decades.

However, some unlawful practices are a jolting reminder to all that information technology has also facilitated crimes, corruption, larceny, and the narcotics industry, as well as immoral and unethical activities, thus sometimes undermining our safety, security and human values.

Often, governments in both the developed and developing countries can hardly cope with e-crime, e-terrorism, or online financial scams, thus justifying their invasion into public and private online domains, as well as their encroachment on personal freedoms and curtailment of human rights.

Given the at times terrible misuse of information technology and electronic capabilities, will the day come soon when the international community can agree on an appropriate framework for managing, organising, regulating, monitoring and overseeing proper adherence to suitable guidelines aimed to safeguard valid interests and human values of individuals, societies and the world at large?

Any such treaty should not replicate the present Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which has been partly ignored, abused, misused, and even by a few nations refused. The whole issue should be well investigated, properly evaluated and justly managed in order to maximise the great benefits of the brilliant Technotronic Age while containing its dark, negative aspects worldwide.

## 7.17 Electronic Proliferation

The information technology revolution has proliferated and invaded almost all aspects of human activities, and the daily life of people everywhere. The manifestations can be easily recognized and felt in the daily practice, operations and performance in governments, corporations, education, industry, construction, communication, the media, commerce, shopping, entertainment, culture, medicine, social and individual activities, libraries, museums, transport, space explorations, military might, etc.. It has even facilitated crimes, corruption, larceny, drugs and narcotics, as well as illegal, immoral and unethical activities, thus undermining the very safety, security, stability and morality, as well as the inner core of social, spiritual and human values--the very fabric of human existence and survival!

The cyberspace, and the global infiltration of the internet at every home and activity, made the World Wide Web the dominant information resource anywhere and everywhere, without exception or exemption. This revolution has basically upset and radically changed not only governmental, institutional and corporate strategies, plans, methodologies, operations and performance, but also certainly, and dangerously so, human life, relationships, conduct, behavior and attitudes, to better or worse! Things will never be the same again!

The reflections of electronic capabilities can even be readily recognized in various individual activities and interactions. I have marveled, for example, at recently observing how beggars in the street use their cell phones to communicate and coordinate their "work" and movements. Similarly, young garbage collectors roam local alleys and use their cell phones to plan activities and actions! Ironically, even school children behave likewise, though their parents can barely afford the basic necessities, not to mention the phone bill. In parallel, illegal street vendors, as well as thieves emit e-warnings to alert each other against police raids. Incredibly, at the academic level, solid credible research and meaningful academic theses have been compromised and threatened through improper downloading from the internet, by quite a few deceitful researchers, of accredited complete papers and dissertations by others and claiming them falsely as their own without proper citation or recognition of universally established academic ethics and copyrights! Moreover, there are some colleges overseas that offer e-degrees and confer fallacious academic titles immediately against the direct payment of set fees. As in other fields, the e-corruption has infiltrated and damaged mortally, academic integrity and distinction. Since there are no gatekeepers, or watchdogs, true scholarship is in danger!

Governments in both the developed and developing countries can hardly cope with e-activism, e-crime, e-reactionary operations, e-plots, and e-terrorism (re: the horrible events of 9/11/2001), or e-financial scams (the ongoing global economic depression of 9/2008-2009),

which justified the e-invasion of public and private domains, as well as the encroachment on personal freedom and curtailment of human rights. Subsequently, hitherto recognized walls have fallen, borders crossed, curtains removed, thresholds trespassed and sanctities violated! The old rules, frameworks, systems, structures, and boundaries have become lame, useless and impotent! The new situation has necessitated and obligated governments, institutions and individuals to scrape, or fundamentally overhaul the old, and devise new frameworks and standards compatible with the new *modus operandi*.

The swift impact of e-communication on the computer age (MIT has produced a cheap set to be used in the remote jungle areas in Africa or elsewhere powered by solar energy photovoltaic cells at the incredible cost of \$100.00) has been astonishingly astronomical, and the echoes have been reverberating everywhere, regardless of time, place, space, economic level, illiteracy, poverty, age, creed, color or gender. All social, economic, or cultural groups have been infected, from school children groups to college graduates, from urbanites to farmers, from the very poor to the very rich, from the Taliban hideouts in Afghanistan to the Pentagon in Washington. The repercussions have become incalculable, and certainly incredible, for the horizons are truly wide open to even greater conquests, multitudinal achievements and unprecedented breakthroughs at the invention, production and application levels. However, without doubt, the information technology revolution should be fully accredited and acclaimed for the great achievements accomplished world-wide during the last three decades.

The benefits and rewards at the individual, institutional, national and international levels have been intensive, extensive, and magnificent, far outweighing the negative misuse. Nevertheless, those corruptive and unlawful practices should serve as a jolting reminder to all. The great space explorations and mighty military capabilities have been marred, on the other hand, by horrific terrorism, shocking violence, curtailment of the individual, violations of human rights, flagrant aggressions, shady intelligence interventions, institutional eavesdropping, coupled with strong government practices, repressive controls, strategies and tactics.

This massive infiltration and interference have impacted human freedom, eclipsed due process and threatened both local and national stability, security, moral values and ethical conduct of persons, groups or states! It is high time that a comprehensive and meaningful study and a far reaching evaluation be undertaken by an *ad hoc* forum, in order to analyze the impact, repercussions of the electronic age on mankind, specially the negative dimensions, culturally, socially, economically, ethically and environmentally. Nearly seventy years ago, George

Orwell's accounts in "1984" or "Animal Farm", were certainly factual insights into the current *status quo!*

Given the terrible misuse of the information technology and electronic capabilities, will the day come soon when the international community could agree on an appropriate framework for e-non-proliferation treaty, to manage, to organize, to regulate, to monitor and to oversee the proper adherence to suitable guidelines, applications, performance and manifestations which can safeguard the valid interests and human values of both the individual, society and the world at large? This should not replicate the present nuclear non-proliferation treaty, which has been partly ignored, abused, misused, and even by a few nations refused. Certainly, the whole issue should be well investigated, properly evaluated and justly managed in order to maximize the great benefits of the brilliant Technotronic Age, and contain its dark, negative applications, practices and repercussions worldwide.

6/10/2009

## 7.19 Survival at stake

Al-Ahram Weekly 18 - 24 June 2009- Issue No. 952- Opinion

Negotiations among the eight countries sharing the Nile Basin on the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) have been stagnant since 2001. One can only be bewildered and concerned. The NBI should aim at the equitable distribution and management of Nile water among the countries without jeopardising the historical shares of Egypt and Sudan. These have been recognised as 55.5 billion m<sup>3</sup> and 18.5 billion m<sup>3</sup> respectively from the total annual Nile water revenue of 84 billion m<sup>3</sup>. Four southern countries, however, challenge the 50-year-old understanding and are demanding a greater share. This could be detrimental to Egyptian national security and interests, threatening Egypt's development and survival.

Moreover, the current Egyptian share of 55.5 billion m<sup>3</sup> will not suffice to meet essential national hydraulic needs in the coming decades, given current consumption levels, lifestyles, urbanisation, and socio-economic development goals. By the year 2020 Egypt's population is expected to reach 100 million, which will require, at average human consumption levels of 400 litres/capita/day, in addition to the agricultural and industrial requirements, nearly 60 billion m<sup>3</sup> of water. One would hope that the Egyptian position in the forthcoming meeting of NBI water ministers this summer in Alexandria is firm enough to insist on Egypt's historical share of annual Nile water revenue; that this share is fundamental to Egypt's strategic development, stability and security.

## 7.20 The disappearing public

30 April - 6 May 2009- Issue No. 945-Opinion

One of the most obvious symptoms of urban erosion today is the systematic invasion of riverbanks by clubs or public organisations, denying the public free access to -- and recreation on -- the landscaped waterfronts. Instead of developing water edges as green magnets for pedestrian amenities, diverse gated developments proliferate.

This type of invasion is taking place on Alexandria's coastline, which has been partly allocated by the local government for exclusive use as private beaches for various syndicates and organisations. Meanwhile, Lake Mariout continues to shrink by systematic infilling for use by many public and private developers, coupled with dangerous levels of water pollution by sewage drainage laden with cadmium, lead, mercury and other heavy metals. These are serious environmental and health hazards, which could cause definite fatalities and irreparable damage, despite universal and national calls for due respect for the environment, and the necessity of adherence to planning objectives and directives.

The problem is not the shortage of urban regulations, standards or urban laws, which are abundant and well known, but rather their denial and negligence by the formal and informal sectors, as well as various groups and individuals. Education, the national media and information networks have failed to instil environmental urban values and underline the dangers of their violation. The problem lies as well in the lack of enforcement of, and reluctance to implement, the objectives and directives of urban order. The guardians of public trust and gatekeepers of public domains are dangerously threatened, and slowly disappearing.

## 7.21 Quiet patriots

Al-Ahram Weekly 8 - 14 January 2009-Issue No. 929-Opinion

Several Egyptian universities and public organisations have recently honoured Mustafa El-Sayed, who immigrated to the US more than four decades ago, for his outstanding achievements in nanotechnology and its promising applications in the treatment of cancer. President Bush honoured him two months earlier by decorating him with the Medal of Science, the first scholar from the Middle East to receive this distinguished award. Similarly, other Egyptian expatriates were equally honoured and celebrated in Egypt, notably Ahmed Zuwail, who won the Nobel Prize for science a few years ago.

It is indeed commendable that Egypt has recognised and honoured these distinguished scholars. But there is a hidden message in these celebratory events, implying that only those who leave and excel in foreign lands are honoured. Those who stay in Egypt and struggle for excellence are neglected or eclipsed, despite demonstrating their patriotism, immersing themselves in teaching thousands of students, or undertaking research with meagre facilities, limited resources, constricting bureaucracy, and a stifling atmosphere. They are not recognised and honoured like those making their careers outside.

One hopes that young aspiring Egyptian scholars do not misinterpret these celebratory gestures towards distinguished expatriate scholars as encouragement to them to follow in their footsteps and work abroad, believing that scholarly achievements on the home front will be inconsequential. Although the ministries of scientific research and culture offer a variety of annual prizes for outstanding scholars in the fields of the arts, humanities and sciences, nominations and the selection process are invariably imperfect and sometimes tainted with nepotism, political favouritism and underhandedness.

It is high time that all distinguished scholars are treated equally, or even with a certain tilt towards those who persist in working and struggling on the home front, in order that they become beacons and models for others. Given a chance, our home front scholars can unleash new horizons of future achievement as well as inspire a truly challenging research environment bolstered with ample resources, good facilities and enticing incentives that make up the necessary infrastructure of research and culture across the modern world.

## 7.22 Repercussions of the casual

Al-Ahram Weekly 13 -19 November 2008-Issue No. 922-Opinion

Order and discipline must replace the lazy fashion of all things casual if national unity, stability and security are to be maintained, writes **Mohsen Zahran\***

Since the late 1960s and 1970s, casual wear, together with the casual look, attitudes and conduct, have taken the world by storm, including, of course, Egypt. By the end of the 20th century, the rise of the communication and information revolution, together with globalisation and cyberspace technology, has enabled faster and wider dissemination of knowledge, especially regarding habits, fast food, progressive ways of life, including "casual dress mania". The casual way of life has not only undermined formal dress, formal looks, as well as a formal outlook, but more importantly, and of greater consequence, it has shaken respect for authority, the elderly, the learned and the clergy. In addition, the repercussions of the casual have surpassed that of the rejection of formality, rebellion against traditional values, and disrespect for social norms. It has threatened the roots of adherence to legality and shaken attachments to the values of morality.

Some observers are quick to point out that this drastic change in the individual and social behaviour in Egypt has been due to economic reasons, poverty, deprivation and corruption, as well as national tragedies, failures, wars and disappointments. However, the majority concur that globally, casual wear, casual attitudes, casual performance and casual conduct, coupled with the sweeping wave of anti-formality and anti-establishmentarianism, have had earlier beginnings. They generated and maintained the protest movements in the US against the Vietnam War in the 1960s and the student revolution in 1968 in France. They were also echoed in the student uprising in Cairo and Alexandria in the late 1960s and the food riots in Cairo in the 1970s, regardless of the political proponents and instigators behind those anti-government demonstrations.

Ironically enough, in running for public office, even elderly politicians have capitalised on the casual look and outlook during their election campaign in order to portray fallaciously to reluctant voters a false youthful outlook to signify an energetic, healthy and promising image of his or her candidacy.

The repercussions of the general adoption of the casual by almost all individuals and groups in Egypt, as elsewhere, have shown that those who maintain the formal look and outlook are exceptions; they are looked upon as odd, conservative and old-fashioned. The infiltration of casual wear, casual moods and conduct among the multitudes, regardless of class, sex, colour, creed, origin or social and economic group, has intensified the anti-establishment, anti-formal



and anti-legal feelings among the people towards any and all symbols of authority, law, order, discipline, rules, regulations, no matter whoever, wherever and whenever those who stand for them. The law-abiding citizen and the gatekeepers are in danger. This has resulted in de facto disintegration of bonds at the family and social levels, detachment from tradition, resistance of standard formats or established norms, as well as the dissolution of age-old traditions or moral boundaries.

This massive dissemination of "casual mania" in the psyche of the nation has created and justified new conditions and new situations; new attitudes and conduct befitting the new rules of the informal, the casual and the uncommitted, no matter how this was intolerable, unacceptable, or repulsive in some circles decades ago.

Manifestations, ramifications and repercussions of the new status quo are multiple and have taken root in all aspects, levels and activities of the daily life of the common man as well as the community at large. These include: shantytowns, squatters, illegal parking, traffic chaos, cluttered rooftops, crowded billboards, kaleidoscopic building forms, colours and styles, blankets of dust and dirt, conflicting and awkward displays of dressing and attire (suits, *galabeyas*, pyjamas, gowns, veils, hats, scarves, hoods, uniforms, sandals, loafers, sneakers, boots and slippers, etc). Other examples include: visual, cultural and environmental noise, air, land and water pollution, usurpation of public and private property, sexual assault, insulting conduct, foul language, aggressive behaviour, disloyalty, corruption, dishonesty, bribery, immorality, chaos, apathy, disintegration of the family and social cohesion, lack of attachment, absence of belonging, lack of commitment, avoidance of involvement in and lack of support for public causes, etc. This is a great threat to national peace, unity, loyalty, stability and security.

Most crucial and penetrating, and that is almost incurable and irreparable, is the evaporation of the intangible bond of the family and the community. The cost of the deterioration and damage of intangible thresholds and ethical borders that govern social and human relationships is astronomical and, indeed, painful to all, especially future generations. Alas, the repercussions of the casual form and conduct have drowned many human values and reshaped most attitudes and personal behaviour. It has eroded respect for and loyalty to parents and the elderly, threatened the sacred student/teacher relationship and has undermined the work ethic and respect between management and employees at various institutions and establishments, public and private. Regrettably, fear of punishment, shame or retribution has vanished, allowing children, the young and the old each to do his or her own thing, no matter what, so long as they can get away with it, regardless of social condemnation, legal action or public denunciation. "Casual mania" has infected fatally the heart of human conduct and human integrity.

It is high time we rose above the swelling current of the casual look and casual conduct and uphold sanity, spirituality, morality, order and discipline – the very matter that cements together social and human relationships. It is mandatory for all, especially holders of public office, teachers and parents, to set examples of integrity and respect of law, order, tradition and discipline. They must demonstrate to all the way to uphold human values and commitment to the rule of law and formality, as well as adherence to ethical conduct and moral boundaries. These are the essential generators of a sane, comprehensive renaissance, and the springboard of the resuscitation of the national conscience. This is the only way to a lasting and meaningful socio-economic and cultural reawakening, towards a more promising future for all, everywhere. The alternative is truly unthinkable, and almost apocalyptic.

## 7.23 Why not an Arab Union?

Al-Ahram Weekly 3 - 9 May 2007-Issue No. 843-Opinion

Fifty years have passed since the signing of the Treaty of Rome establishing the European Economic Community, a miraculous achievement among nations that had emerged battered from the horror, death, destruction and animosity of World War II. The determination and will of its founding states is consolidated now in the institutions and frameworks of the European Union (EU). And the EU has expanded to a current membership of 27 nations, including 11 former members of the Soviet bloc from Eastern Europe. Others, including Turkey, are awaiting admission, hoping to benefit from the economic, political, cultural, scientific, environmental and technological windfalls the union affords.

The miraculous achievements of the EU should serve as a model and inspiration to Arab countries that envisioned, by establishing the Arab League in 1946, the promotion of similar goals but, alas, embarrassingly failed after 60 years of locomotion to have anything to show for it. Despite their common heritage, culture, history, habits, language, beliefs, and many other denominators, the Arabs are entangled, divided, underdeveloped, hopeless, oppressed and helpless. Oil wealth has not supported the emergence of a viable regional unity. Rather, the Middle East has been witness to wars, occupation, fanaticism, foreign intervention, tension and strife, often the result of external interests.

The achievements of a New Europe encourage one to hope for a New Arabia. The Arabs should start with humble but manageable steps in definite arenas, beginning with education. Other domains that may benefit from a regionally unified approach include telecommunications, transportation, environmental protection, information technology development, water resource management, energy policy, agricultural and industrial development, combatting illiteracy, women's empowerment, tourism management, heritage protection and cultural enhancement.

Human and natural resources are abundant, and common Arab culture and values are strong propellants. It is will, determination and commitment that is lacking, and which must be found and made to prevail.

## 7.24 Reflections of September

There is no doubt that the tragic events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 have shocked the world over and shaken all corners of the earth. Everywhere, all leaders, governments, institutions, communities, writers and media networks have joined in condemning this horrible crime committed against, not only the United States but against human civilizations regardless of political, economic, or cultural entities anywhere.

Many reports and publications have given ample coverage of and commentaries on September 11<sup>th</sup> and its repercussions. In its dominant "Unilateralism", and global role, the United States have championed and amassed international support of the war on terrorism, and the subsequent campaign in Afghanistan. The US declared that it will take years, until the roots of terrorism are eradicated wherever they are especially in the regions that include countries lined up in what is called "The Axis of Evil." Under the banner of "this war" all forms of violence, resistance to colonialism, occupation, suppression, or injustice are to be uprooted, mopped out and eliminated. In the Middle East, the Palestinians' fight against occupation is intentionally labelled as "terrorism" and is thus suppressed, although it was legitimately supported by countless UN resolutions and recognized by the international community. Elsewhere in Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America, Similar calls for fighting "terrorists" are also tacitly sanctioned.

A new world order and new rules have evolved and surfaced according to new standards, justifications, and interests as defined by the unitary world power, which can only call the numbers and pass judgments according to its own visions, definitions, terms and rules.

More than a decade ago, Egypt has called for an international conference on terrorism to define its meaning, scope and dimensions, and to demand a world commitment to fight terrorism, which Egypt itself has suffered from. But no action was taken until the U.S. itself faced that terrible shock. Still, the convening of this much needed World Conference is very crucial and necessary for the achievement of world peace safety, stability, and security, and in order to safeguard legitimate national rights and to ensure the respect of human rights, of all individuals, communities and people everywhere.

September 11<sup>th</sup> joltingly awakened Huntington's and Fukuyama's contentions concerning the Clash of Civilizations. Since government leaders, columnists and thinkers have joined the chorus by condemning Moslems and Arabs as terrorists, and anti-West, thus anti-civilization. They have benignly forgotten that radical religious groups are not only Islamic fundamentalists but they are

also Christian, Jewish or other. The allegations of the clash of western and Islamic civilizations are certainly unjust, baseless, confused and incorrect. The crimes committed, and terrorism induced worldwide, have been blazing upon the fabric of many countries, recognizing no borders of time, place or culture. The Arab Islamic civilization have contributed to western civilization thus demonstrating the common denominator of the continuum of civilizations, based on cooperation, exchange, interpollination and interpregnation, regardless of creed, colour, culture, religion or origin.

September 11<sup>th</sup> has also had its strong impact destabilizing tremors on the world economy, thus affecting the stock markets and trade not only in the United States and Europe, but also in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Rising unemployment (at least one billion youth as reported in the September Youth Employment Summit, held in the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in 7/9/2002). Recognized by all are major bankruptcies, corporate-fraud corruption (uncovered, to the astonishment of everyone) by transnational mega corporations, which have caused definite economic recessions, slowdown of world trade, sharp decline of air travel, and collapse of notable major airlines. These are only a few of the after-shocks that have shaken the world economy and national development plans all over, regardless of region. "The Development Apartheid\*" has glaringly surfaced and thus has become a rude reminder at the international arena, widening the gap between the rich and the poor or the North and the South. The Second Earth Summit held in September 2002, at Johannesburg, has been the theatre of such divisions, frustrations, disappointments and disagreements. The world after September 11<sup>th</sup> has unavoidably become a new world of tensions divisions, suspicion, conflicts, instability and insecurity. Flare-ups have erupted in various corners and regions, even those considered comparatively docile and stable, have shown symptoms of turmoil and unrest. Governments and institutional *modus operandi* have been radically restructured to confront the new challenges and probable threats however, whenever and whatever they may be.

In reflection, the times and events, following the September 11<sup>th</sup>, have demonstrated the futility and incapability of certain groups, institutions and alliances and have exposed bare and barren, international, regional organizations and national networks which have failed to anticipate, resolve or confront the repercussions of the pre and post September tragic situations

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\* Refer to an article in the Al Ahram Weekly by the author in August 22, 2002.

peacefully, and to maintain world order and global security. In fact, more conflicts and eruptions have occurred, and none has been dissipated. Even "the war" on terrorism has neither destroyed the fanatic groups of Al-Qaida in Afghanistan nor elsewhere. The global peace, security and stability have never been farther away with the impending military intervention in Iraq, or North Korea or elsewhere, along the "axis of evil" with Israel adopting the same anti-terrorism slogan to suppress the Palestinian legitimate cause, acting with the sanction and support of the U.S., and other world powers *in loco parentis*.

Consequently, it is vital for world peace and security that international and regional organizations reassume their role and obligations and that all nations must abide by the rule of law and legitimacy in policy and action in word as well as in deed. Measures to reinstitute trust, cooperation and commitments are urgently called for, with major international powers and organizations shouldering their responsibilities to exercise restraint and to recognize that there are limits of power and dominance, and to become engaged in redressing grievances and in assisting the poor, the beleaguered and the afflicted countries and societies in Africa, Asia and the Latin America. They may start by cancelling their debilitating debts and assisting sustainable development. The Second Earth Summit 2002 in Johannesburg betrayed the rift among governments and civil societies. There must be a greater involvement and empowerment of people regardless of their sex, colour, creed or origin. It is high time for all to recognize that we lived in one boat and that any tremor or tragedy in one area will reverberate and shake all other regions. It is also prudent to recognize that the health, stability and prosperity of the poor, or developing countries, reflect positively or on the affluent world, where human and material resources are in abundance, and that they are major contributors to their economy and to the world order, stability, peace and prosperity. There is no other alternative for cooperation, communication and solidarity amongst all. The horizons for a better tomorrow are promising, provided that there will be conviction and commitment.

**The Tremors of September** on the Arab World and Egypt have been profound and far reaching. While President Bush visited the Islamic Centre in Washington for the first time in order to assure America and the World that the war on terrorism is not aimed at Islam or Moslems but against the terrible acts of fundamentalist extremist groups, still, U.S. citizens of Arab or Islamic roots were subject to certain acts of harassment and indictments. Writers and the media in the Arab world recognized that they should embark on a concerted effort to rectify the

ugly picture of the Arab and Moslem culture painted intentionally in the west, or through benign neglect. Egypt and Al-Azhar initiated a media-oriented campaign to inform the world of the correct message of Islam in emphasizing peace, equality, tolerance and goodness to all human beings regardless of colour, creed religion or origin. It was clear to all that the message of Islam was not communicated justly and objectively especially in the West. For the first time, we see positive and constructive dialogue among religious leaders of the various world religions in Cairo, London and Rome.

Meanwhile, the Palestinians found themselves hounded by Israel as terrorists, instead of freedom fighters and defenders of their colonized motherland. Though supported by International treaties and agreements, the Palestinian cause has regressed, and they have become subject to reoccupation, oppression and suffering. The Palestinian and the Middle East problems have suffered a painful setback, and arab countries have become, for the first time in decades, subject to accusations and demands for reform, change and self-examination. New calls for respect of human rights, greater role of the civil society, democracy, institutional reform, and new systems of governance, greater citizen involvement and women empowerment and substantial youth participation, have been aired loudly and effectively with leaders and authorities adopting new corresponding policies and programs for the first time. After September the *status quo* in Egypt and in the Arab countries will never be the same again. Greater national objectives for political, Educational, medical, social, economic and cultural reforms have already been adopted and plans for action have been set in motion. On the other hand, fundamentalism and radical extremism, Islamist groups and activist movements have shrunk and suffered their greatest setback in decades. However, the public sympathy and understanding of the root causes that fuelled the anger desperation of the Arab societies from decades of suffering, poverty, injustice, inequality and oppression have been expressed by many prominent analysts and writers. They have emphasized that the September tragedy was only a symptom of many deep and strong, roots and sentiments that prevail in the Arab streets, and that the west must deal with the root causes not with waging wars on the symptoms only.

Meanwhile, there have been rising demands worldwide by thinkers and writers in Egypt and other Arab countries for radical soul-searching and self-appraisal campaigns, and that the denrise of Arab society and culture is partly to be blamed on local customs, conservative old traditions and archaic systems and disorientation of the true Islamic doctrine. It was painted out

that the west should not always be blamed for all the malaise, backwardness, desperation and underdevelopment. However, the accusations should also be local and regional. Earnest efforts, campaigns and program have been already operational, which may lead to important and meaningful changes in the near future.



## **7.25 The Continuum of Tremors of Terror: FIVE YEARS ON**

September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 is invariably observed with grief, anguish, and sadness in the U.S., as well as in various capitals around the world. Almost one year after the Madrid train bombings, the horrific, orchestrated multiple explosions in London on 07/07/2005, with scores killed and several hundreds wounded, are a jolting reminder of the continuum of terrorism, shockingly omnipresent! During the following months two bloody explosions in Taba and Sharm El-Shiekh in Egypt as well as in Aman, Jordan killed and injured hundreds of innocent residents and destroyed major touristic facilities, in addition to its serious impact on tourism as well as national economies! This year's fifth anniversary of 9/11 is a somber time to remember, to reflect, to review, to resolve and to plan ahead in order to avoid recurrence and eradicate the causes at the roots. The international community is now decisively committed to fight terrorism and eliminate its terrible manifestations of violence on civilians coupled with the massive loss of life and property in various regions without exceptions, as the joint statement of the world leaders attending the G8 Summit in Scotland has emphatically declared!.

The horrific acts of violence and terror have spread all over to become a global deadly epidemic, far reaching, of grave consequences and of tragic repercussions, regardless of location, culture religion or political system. Increasingly, the tremors of September 11<sup>th</sup> have been reverberating all over for the past five years, and there is no let down, and will not be for sometime, a tangible decline or an end in sight. The latest shocking state-performed terroristic and devastating 32-day war on innocent Lebanon has painfully shaken the people of the world. The aftershocks, setbacks and tremors are multitudinal. Some are terribly tangible and terminal, many are intangible, but powerful and immeasurable! The United Nations system as well as International and regional institutions and organizations, especially the Arab League, have been questioned and undermined to the point of uselessness and impotency. National governments strategies, policies, priorities and plans have been investigated as being inefficient, lame and impotent. Thus They have been accused, blamed and restructured (FBI, CIA, DOD, DOS,...etc. in the U.S.). Security, safety, stability, and global strategy issues have been given uppermost precedence and prevalence, at the international, regional and national levels, as well as at the public, quasi-public and private arenas.

The culture of fear, omnipresent threats, terror, insecurity, immediate preemptive response and overkill have infiltrated and overtaken both the public and private minds, attitudes and actions, thus becoming dominant, dictating and overpowering. The waging of the global War on Terrorism (WOT) by President G. W. Bush, was supported with huge financial allocations, in hundreds of billions of dollars( an amount far exceeds the foreign debt of the poor nations!), as well as material resources, with substantial participation by the UN, the European Union and other allies. The target at first was the axis of evil linking North Korea, Iran and Iraq, while the Afghanistan military operation was underway to eliminate El-Qa'ida, the Taliban and Bin Laden. Then Scenario II was launched to eliminate the Saddam regime and the threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), proven afterwards to be non-existent. Consequently, appropriate Security Council resolutions were adopted to condemn and give moral universal justifications to the theatre of military operations in Iraq. The UN Secretary General announced that the war in Iraq was illegitimate?! Scenario III, production is now underway with engineered Security Council resolutions to deal with Syria and the Sudan, and Iran now is in the pipeline. Thus, the Middle East external and internal interventions are working in concert to achieve strategic goals, while the theater in Central Africa is past the conception stage. The political, economic, social and cultural tremors and regional ramifications are monumental and far-reaching.

Even Russia, after the terrible massacre of the nearly 400 Beslan school children and adults by Chechen terrorists, was shaken and hastened to vow revenge and also wage its own war on terrorism! Now the U.S., Israel and Russia are united in the goal and violent, deadly reactions. Although the world condemned with utter indignation, the Beslan murders by Fanatic Islamic groups, as it had had after the Sept. 11 tragic events, yet few governments mentioned that Russia had committed equal atrocities against the innocent population of Chechnya, as it had done before during the Afghanistan occupation 20 years ago. Many other countries have also suffered from various horrible acts of violence and terrorism in varying degrees and intensity with tragic loss of life and property. The War on Lebanon is a landmark with far reaching repercussions on the middle east , Isreal and the USA

However, we should remind ourselves, nevertheless, that the current waves of terrorism and violence were germinated and triggered in the sixties after a period of relative security and stability since the end of WWII. Was not the military confrontation in northern Ireland a flagrant

example of terrorism victimizing innocent lives? Were not the terrible operations of civilian planes hijacking, destruction, killing of innocent passengers, an equally deplorable and terrible acts of terrorism? Equally repulsive and inexcusable is Israeli state- induced violence and major terroristic acts aimed at the killing of thousands of Palestinian civilians coupled with demolishing their homes in several Palestinian camps and towns, topping them all with its flagrant aggression in Lebanon. The terrible atrocities committed by the big powers and their cronies in the middle east as well as by the new colonialists have conditioned, prepared and taught the hopeless, powerless, desperate youth of the region and elsewhere to resort to the same tactics methods and tools. Before September 11<sup>th</sup>, the seeds of terrorism were imported and were not home made! On the other hand, Egypt and other Arab countries have suffered from terrorism since the eighties, and warned the world that it will become a global phenomenon, and that the international community should work in concert to define it, encapsulate it and combat it. The call was left unheeded, until September 11, when the fear, shock and terror hit home, hitherto was virtually safe , secure and impenetrable!?

Nonetheless, national legitimate uprisings and resistance to occupation, which are sanctioned by the UN, have also suffered the tremors of September. In Palestine, like in other similar cases, Israel has labelled the freedom fighters terrorists, and is exercising the same oppressive and killing acts as the super power, sharing information and experience, as well as using the same techniques, tactics and methods coupled with utilizing well the media coverage to their advantage in order to rally world support! The same strategy and tactics were adopted against Hizb-Allah in Lebanon last July 2006, with grave human and material losses. Alas, how can the oppressor become innocent and the victims become guilty and be condemned?

Under the banner of the War on Terrorism, with the moral justification given by the UN, many flagrant abuses and denial of human rights and violations of the Geneva conventions are committed by the US, Isreal and other countries followed suit. The recent violations in Lebanon are being investigated, but one knows with no consequences! However, thanks to the information technology revolution and instant satellite coverage of events, the atrocities committed are broadcast live for all to watch and abhor, as well as to mobilize public condemnation and call for corrective action. Meanwhile, the indignant human rights violations in Abou Gharieb prison in Iraq and Guantanamo base in Cuba have rallied public opinion, everywhere. With public

pressure, apologies were expressed, investigations were launched and trials of the wrongdoers publicly held!. However, there are many terrible acts against human beings that are committed daily in many countries and are forgotten. Such horrendous terrorist acts of genocides have taken place in massacres in Bosnia, Kosovo, Uganda, Congo, Liberia, Somalia, the Sudan and elsewhere in Europe, Africa and Asia. They are so too many, too bloody, too cruel, and too repulsive to condone world apathy, silence or neglect!

#### **WANTON DEFAMATION OF ISLAM:**

One would wonder why President Bush recent statement labelling freedom fighters in the region as "Islamic Fascists, and referring to the crusades after 9/11? What are his real goals and motivations? It is unfair, untrue and unethical to link Islam and the horrific actions of fanatic Moslems to the teachings of Islam. This would be confusing religion with fanatic extremist acts of specific groups of Islamic Fundamentalists (as if there is no Jewish or Christian fundamentalism doing similar atrocities?). The intention here is not innocent, it certainly is tinted with character assassination and is a wicked indictment of one of the great religions of more than 20% of the world population. Meanwhile, while it is convenient to some Western writers and politicians to link Islam to terrorism and focus on the ugly, unhuman character after any beheading, massacre or repulsive atrocities of hostages in Iraq or elsewhere. While they abhor and condemn fanatic Islamic terrorism, they have not labelled the bloody conflict in Northern Ireland "Catholic Terrorism", or the Serbian horrible massacres of civilians in Bosnia "Orthodox Terrorism", though it was sanctioned by the Orthodox Church, or even call the Israeli killing of Palestinian or Lebanese civilians, including women and children, as "Jewish Terrorism". Certain massive killings by Islamic extremists are quickly linked to Islam, while similar actions by Jews or Catholics or Orthodox Western factions bloody terrorists are brushed aside, and are hardly connected to their religious beliefs. It is ironic, wicked and premeditated!

#### **REFLECTIONS:**

Prominent writers and columnists in the U.S. and Europe, pointing to the fact that almost all terrorists are fanatic Moslems who claim that they follow Jihad as a religious obligation to fight the infidels, have wrongly accused Islam as being anti- civilization, and that the clash of civilizations is inevitable echoing the dangerous views of Samuel Huntigton. Meanwhile, a

prominent Arab columnist wrote last year in Al-Sharq Al-Awasat Daily ,after the Beslan massacre, that:

"Why is it that almost all terrorists are Moslems?," "Why is it that nearly all terrorist acts are committed in the name of Islam?" Blaming the West alone for being the cause of terrorism due to its policies, which perpetuated occupation despair, poverty, oppression and distress should not eclipse the fact that regional and national causes are also equally guilty!! Many Islamic leaders, thinkers and writers have questioned the status quo and the current situation in Arab countries and the common practices of violations of human rights for being responsible and must also be held accountable! They have called for fundamental reform and change politically, culturally, economically and socially. They demand that other national community grievances and misunderstandings of Islam must be addressed intelligently and that the message of peace, tolerance, understanding, cooperation and equality of all human beings before God is in the core teachings of Islam, which also condemns violence and unlawful killings. It is abundantly clear that five years since the start of the global war on terrorism was waged, the violence and crimes committed by terrorists have not receded. Car bombs cause daily killing of scores of innocent civilians in Baghdad! We have even seen in Iraq how fanatics kidnapped innocent civilians, foreign and Arab hostages alike (the Egyptian ambassador was kidnapped, and killed on the same day of the London explosion); proudly slit their throats in the name of Islam in front of cameras to be televised worldwide. The tide of terrorism is rising; the atrocities are spreading and are spiraling in intensity and tenacity. Even the elimination of the persons of Bin Ladens, of the Talibans or Saddams cannot and will not stop international terrorism. Regular army operations will not be able to eradicate guerrilla style terrorism. Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq and Chechnya are too glaring examples. Cells of well-trained and equipped terrorists are sprouting everywhere and mushrooming anywhere. The terrible punishment of over-killing used by the U.S., Israel and Russia further inflames the feelings of revenge and over-killing of civilians by terrorists everywhere. They have managed to adopt the latest knowhow and to use well the multi-media resources in order to maximize the impact on peoples' feelings of insecurity, fear and terror at both industrialized and developing worlds alike! Note the well timing of the London orchestrated explosions in the subway trains and in the bus during the morning rush hour with the G8 Summit! It has become a terrible horrific vicious circle.

The solution and salvation lie in addressing the roots of the problem through the elimination of injustice, oppression, occupation, neo-colonization, deprivation and under-development. This must be done immediately!. There are no alternatives to radical national reforms and instituting needed changes politically, socially, economically and culturally, as well as a total, solid commitment to safeguarding and securing human rights for all communities and individuals of different creeds, origins, sex, color , income or views.

The misinterpreted message and teachings of Islam need to be addressed nationally and internationally. Education, cultural and religious enlightenment and reform must be emphasized with open mind and heart. Equally important and vitally effective in combating deprivation and fanaticism is cultural uplifting, provision of food dignified shelter, jobs and hope for a better tomorrow, with due respect and guarantee of human rights to all citizens, groups and minorities regardless. The choice is for the world community to wake up, stand up and make up. For each member must do his/her share, and shoulder his/her responsibility at the public and private sectors, as well as at the communal and the individual levels. For terrorists will recognize no borders, no doors, and no culture, no one anywhere. All humanity will suffer in the War On Terrorism. There will be no winners and all will be losers!!!

September,2006

Published as: Tremors of terror

Al-Ahram Weekly 21 - 27 September 2006 Issue No. 813 Opinion

## 7.26 The paradoxes of reform

Al-Ahram Weekly 21 - 27 July 2005-Issue No. 752-Opinion

The most pressing domestic debate these days centres round the need for political reform and the ways we might inject new life into our political system by stimulating broader popular participation.

The lack of a comprehensive vision of political reform means demands in this regard have tended to be scattered and incoherent, in terms of substance and timing. The reforms we have seen so far -- the annulment of Law 105 regarding State Security Courts, the amendment of Article 76 and the promulgation of associated legislation, appear ad hoc and disjointed.

A major cause of this lack of cohesion is that demands for reform, and the response to these demands, have been reactive rather than proactive. Current demands for reform seem less an attempt to raise the conditions of political life than a release of three decades of frustration. And the response to these demands seems less an attempt to revivify the body politic than to revive the flaccid Egyptian political system, appease outside powers and, simultaneously, allay growing pressure at home.

The opposition, which not too long ago demanded immediate action regardless of the complexities involved in making the transition from dictatorship to democracy, is now complaining of the speed with which the government has enacted certain reforms, notably the amendment of Article 76. And while the government once pleaded for more time it proceeded with unseemly haste when it came to changing the procedures for selecting the president.

Much of the current confusion and ill-feeling could have been avoided had the government and opposition possessed a clear objective. In order to remedy growing tensions we must develop mechanisms to better manage the socio-political transitions we are undergoing. Lebanon, South Africa and some Eastern European nations have passed through similar transitions and we can learn from their experiences. In each case political reform was accompanied by a pause, allowing time to learn from past mistakes. Only then was it possible to proceed.

## **7.27 A clear way forward**

Al-Ahram Weekly 28 April - 4 May 2005- Issue No. 740- Opinion

The recently released Arab Human Development Report 2004 bravely addresses the issue of transparency in Arab societies and attempts to evaluate the state of freedom and governance in the Arab world. It debates the post-11 September crisis of freedom and democracy, focussing on structural obstacles to liberty at the dawn of the third millennium.

The report arrived at its vision by examining the various options for the future which it lists as "impending ruin", a human flourishing" or a middle way between the two: reform dictated from abroad. The report defines the reform of Arab societal structures as guaranteeing freedom through internal reform along with the need to preserve the peaceful and genuine rotation of power in Arab countries through the provision of just rule achieved by taking the path of a "humanist awakening".

The report seeks to generate a society-wide debate within Arab countries. The correct way to deal with attempts at foreign intervention is to challenge Arab weakness, and to generate vitality capable of transforming aspirations into reality.

Despite certain gaps in the report, there can be no doubt that it contains well-researched and realistic data and presents an accurate and rigorous analysis distinguished by logical and methodical evaluation of events. Its conclusions are solid, aware and focussed. The current situation is difficult, testing and terrifying: we must develop and change. It is our duty to be decisive and choose a course that offers us freedom and security, guarantees rights and order and implants values of justice and peace. Only then will we achieve genuine and deserved comprehensive Arab human development.



## **7.29 New Technological Innovations and their Impact on the World Future**

Everyone marveled at the pace of new discoveries, innovations and technological developments during the last decades of the Twentieth Century that have completely revolutionized the world and utterly changed Man's way of life, behaviour, work, living conditions, accessibility, communications and interactions, to a level unprecedented and to an extent never imagined or contemplated before.

During the last few years, many breakthroughs in scientific innovations and technological developments in the fields of biotechnology, human cloning, designer babies, animal hybrids, energy, nanotechnology, information technology, medical technology, space technology and others have had their profound impact on the global regional and national scales, aptitudes and goals. The scope, meanings and dimensions and borders of space, time, place, global references and world order have been dramatically changed, and are constantly in flux in the rotating dial of the continuum of progress and change. Certainly, the science fiction ideas of George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, among many others, seem to have become comparatively narrow, limited, lame, pale and unimaginative!!

We have learnt recently about reservations for space travel with civilian millionaires traveling and sightseeing in scheduled space voyages. Hydrogen has been used as a fuel for cars. Wind, wave or geothermal energy have been used effectively to illuminate urban areas. In addition, sea floors are being harvested and sea water has been used to irrigate certain hybrids of traditional crops in the continuing war on hunger. The Pandora's Box of discoveries and developments has been jettisoned and unplugged revealing the marvels of ingenuity and intelligence, recognizing no limits, identifying no borders and stopping at no ceilings!!

The intelligent structures, systems, equipment, services and other countless intelligent achievements have already been in production, use and operation for years. Examples:

- Intelligent buildings;
- Intelligent highways;
- Intelligent public transport systems;
- Intelligent cities;
- Intelligent medicine;
- Intelligent investigations and identification of diseases;
- Intelligent medical diagnosis and treatment;
- Intelligent cars with self diagnosis and repair;

- Intelligent media to serve the specific needs of the user;
- Intelligent friendly products;
- Intelligent appliances at home, office, or factory;
- Intelligent robotics;
- Intelligent security systems;
- Intelligent space vehicles and intelligent airplanes;
- Intelligent weapons;
- Intelligent defense and offense systems;
- Intelligent wars (Iraq?);
- Intelligent education;
- Intelligent plants and agriculture;
- Intelligent industries;
- Intelligent entertainment facilities;
- Intelligent recreation facilities;
- Intelligent living systems and networks;
- Intelligent communications and data collection systems (G.I.S., G.I.P.S...);
- Intelligent trade and markets;
- Intelligent monetary systems and intelligent cards eliminating the use of currencies.

These are examples of the many innovations that have changed drastically people's lives and the individual reactions, conduct or behaviour. This is not to mention the already well-known impact of information technology developments in the popularization of the personal computers (have now become miniatures!). The universal use of the internet, mobile (cellular) phones, or video phones is now commonplace. These have had their incredible repercussions on political, social, economic, cultural and human behaviour, comprehension, conduct, morals and attitudes. Old rules, order, customs, practice, habits and conventions are no more valid.

The recent scenarios and theater of intelligent war on Iraq is open for all to witness and to become engaged in. There are no secrets, or camouflage with all intentions, plans and operations revealed beforehand. The entire world we know, whether governments, media, institutions, communities or human beings, is incapable of comprehending, evaluating or predicting the consequences or the outcome. The new innovations and intelligence require people and systems of the same tempo, same rhythm, the same scale, the same complexity, intricacy and intelligence in order to be at the level of challenge and intelligent response in scale, timing and effectiveness.

The established thresholds, barriers, limits, forums, standards, methods and *modus operandi* have simply become unworkable and irrelevant in this brave, "Shocking" New World.

Alas Aldous Huxley!! There are now multitudes of intelligences and intelligentsia that are unfathomable and certainly incredible. The new innovations that have been thrust to the arena on international and national interaction, operations and performance are too many to account for, and too difficult to assess their impact on the national communal or daily lives.

The recent announcements of MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, at Cambridge, Massachusetts) which prides itself in having nearly 25 noble prize laureates on its staff, reveal a few of the already tested and implemented technological innovations which could soon transform, and even further revolutionize, computing, medicine, manufacturing, transportation, energy, infrastructure and superstructure. These emerging technologies will have a tremendous influence on the world future and indeed human life and sustainable developments anywhere. Examples

- **The Wireless Sensor Networks:** This innovation has been used to identify movements, locations and conditions of birds and animals. It is equipped with a processor, a tiny computer memory and sensors that monitor light, humidity, pressure and heat. It is also equipped with transceiver to broadcast data and information to the network.

The impact of this innovation on intelligence gathering and communication is astronomical. The future will be pervaded by network of wireless, battery powered sensors, that monitor the environment, industry, equipment, vehicles (in sea, air, outer space, on land) or even human beings. The horizons and scope of implications are boundless!

- **Injectable Tissue Engineering:** This innovation has been successfully tested. It will eliminate the need for many transplants and surgeries, by mastering the technique of injecting joints with specially designed mixtures of polymers, cells, and growth stimulators that solidify and form healthy tissues. The object is lab-grown alternatives to transplanted organs and tissues. The tissue engineering applications could be delivered by syringe rather than by implants! While this technology has focused on cartilage and bone, it could be well extended and applied to tissues such as those of the liver and the heart! The method could be used to replace diseased portions of an organ, or to enhance its proper functioning. Instead of heart, kidney or liver surgeries, simply the injection of tissue engineering would do the trick.

The health and medical implications are obviously tremendous, far reaching and fantastic, saving life, expenses, pain, suffering, effort and time and thus radically revolutionizing the health and medical fields, industry, medicine and pharmacology.

- **Nano solar Cells:** The innovation of nano solar cells overcomes the relatively expensive photovoltaic cells to convert solar energy into electricity. The use of nanotechnology to produce a photovoltaic material that can be spread like paint or cladding, or can be integrated with building materials and external finishes will become the source of electric power needed for home use, or to operate cars, buses or fly planes. The revolution in producing cheap, clean renewable energy will affect not only urban development, transport or production, but also reflect on geopolitics and global economy as well as industrial and agricultural development.
- **Femtosecond Spectroscopy:** The technique was developed by the Egyptian born American Scientist Ahmed Zewail of Caltech, for which he received the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1999. He has proven by pioneering lab experiment that it is possible with rapid laser technique to see how atoms in a molecule move during a chemical reaction. The pioneering work which has continued in the investigation of their transitional states of chemical reactions, using femtosecond spectroscopy, has led to many innovations and discoveries which will have a profound impact on medical diagnostic and therapeutic optical devices, treatment of cancer and other diseases. In addition ultra fast processes in chemistry and photobiology will affect pioneering research in biology, genealogy, biotechnology, agriculture, industry, medicine and pharmacology.

This innovation may be combined with the proven spectacular results of Modular Imaging, as demonstrated in Massachusetts General Hospital, in order to assist in fighting dangerous viruses and the cure of diseases and achieving needed medical treatment.

- **Innovations in Mechatronics:** This integration of mechanical and electronic components using sensors and intelligent software has become possible to improve engine performance, fuel economy and the control of pollution. In a few years electromechanical activators, and sensors will replace hydraulic cylinders and cables. Wires will replace brake fluid lines, and vehicles will be safer to maintain and operate. Automated highways, with the synchronization between intelligent cars and intelligent highways, will reduce accidents and fatalities, freeing drivers to read, watch television or sleep! This will reflect on urban and regional planning, urbanization, recreation, thus culminating in a cleaner environment and a safer world. In industry, pollution shall be controlled. production shall be improved. Quality control and quality assurance of products and services shall be better managed and guaranteed!!
- **Grid Computing:** Since the 1980's, "Internet working Protocols", to the 1990's, "hypertext transfer protocols," the World Wide Web (www) exploded across the internet. Now the fast emerging "grid protocols" will allow everyone to link almost anything else: database; simulation and visualization tools. We shall soon find ourselves in the midst of

the biggest explosion yet. Grid computing in analogy to the well-known electric grid is not concerned where resources are because all world information resources will be available at your finger-tips. The technotronic revolution has just started.

On the other hand, the recently operational Japan's Earth Simulator puts other fast supercomputers in the U.S. to shame! American computer wizards are frantic about catching up with building these powerful electronic beasts which will complement and become integral with the galaxies of grid, computing super and hyper global networks using powerful satellite telecommunication capabilities. The sky of innovations in information technology has no limits and the vistas of future electronic revolution are quickly unfolding.

- **Software Assurance:** Without the proper software operations, computer hardware is useless. The failure of software, in airplane flights, in ground control, in defense systems, in banking, can cause catastrophes. To help alleviate and avoid bugs (viruses) or failure, it was possible to create tools and programs which will yield error-free software. Needless to say, the implications of this innovation are far reaching and multitudinal in all fields and disciplines. Coupled with this innovation is the development of Quantum Cryptography which aims at fortifying the security of electronic communications. The ultimate objective of this new achievement is to enable the transmission of information in such a way that any effort to eavesdrop will be detectible. This ingenious development will be greatly welcome by businesses, governments, corporations, the intelligence community, industries and research establishments.

## CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the enormous financial resources allocated by governments and industry for research and developments have provided these ingenious innovations which will affect human development and the future of mankind anywhere. The rising tide of progress and advancement is just beginning, thus revealing a bright new world full of promises as well as challenges. The horizons of this "intriguing" future are slowly unfolding with great hope and magnificent expectations as well as problems and difficulties. While the rich countries reap the fruits of their huge investments and initiations in R&D, the developing countries, which are receivers and importers, lag behind with an ever widening the gap of apartheid between the North and the South. The new technological innovations are quickly flooding the markets of the developing countries, which must frustratingly keep up the pace and match the acceleration of needs and progress. However, they must also work harder for their share of progress and shoulder their due responsibility at prohibitive cost!!

In this global village of ours (or is it the global circus with theatre, stage, players and passive audience?) in which we, the children of the universe, face together the challenges of a common future in a hopefully safer and saner environment, we are required to properly accommodate and faithfully implement the resolutions of Agenda 21. This agenda was adopted in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 in the First Earth Summit, and further reinforced in the second Earth Summit in Johannesburg in 2002. It insists upon comprehensive measures and acts for achieving sustainable development and upholding the dignity of life for all. The price is high, but the stakes are both lofty and rewarding for all human beings to uphold, enjoy and treasure. February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2003 was Valentine's Day. Thanks to innovations in information and communication technology, it will go in history as also a day of global people's power. It was an unprecedented manifestation of the global power of millions of people who demonstrated in 600 cities declaring their universal commitment for peace, love, solidarity and unity of human race in demanding a secure, fair and equitable world, despite the might of the only world power!

It is both ironical and paradoxical that while we are making and shaping the world to become in both form and content more intelligent, human beings are changing gradually to become dependent and less intelligent!!. While we are rediscovering ourselves, in a continuing process of self-appraisal, a revealing reality have surfaced that human governance, living and conduct are less human, less humanistic, and less humanitarian. With declining morals, sliding values, disgusting inequality, rampant injustice and oppressive authoritarianism, where is humanity going? And to what end?? Is it the beginning of the end?!

In reflection on Francis Fukuyama's thesis, this is not the beginning of the end! We certainly could, and shall, make it the end of the beginning!!

### 7.30 Two years on

18 - 24 September 2003- Issue No. 656- Opinion

The tremors from the collapse of the twin towers of the World Trade Center continue to destabilise the world. **Mohsen Zahran\*** takes stock

More than a decade ago Egypt called for an international conference on terrorism that would define its meaning, scope and dimensions. The call came as part of a wider demand for an international commitment to the fight against terrorism of which Egypt had itself been a victim. The convening of such a conference is needed now more than ever before if world peace, safety, stability, and security are to be protected and legitimate national rights safeguarded.

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 awakened Huntington's contentions concerning the clash of civilisations. Government leaders, media pundits and thinkers quickly joined the chorus condemning Muslims and Arabs as at best anti-West and therefore anti-civilisation, and at worst as natural terrorists, conveniently forgetting that fundamentalism cuts across religions and that extremist religious groups exist within Christianity and Judaism as well as within Islam.

The events of that fateful day inevitably impacted on the world economy, destabilising markets in the US, Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia. Rising unemployment -- at least one billion youth as reported at the Youth Employment Summit held by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in September 2002 -- is but one aspect of a recession that has brought with it major bankruptcies, the uncovering of corporate fraud on a massive and hitherto unsuspected scale, a slowdown in international trade, a sharp decline in air travel and the consequent collapse of some major airlines. The aftershocks have shaken the world economy and national development plans across the globe.

At the international level the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the North and the South, has resulted in divisions, frustrations, disappointments and disagreements that surfaced so dramatically at the Second Earth Summit held in Johannesburg in September 2002. The post-11 September world has become one of tension, division, suspicion, conflict, instability and insecurity which have erupted in various regions of the globe, including those that in the past were considered comparatively docile and stable.

Events since 11 September have exposed the inadequacies of many international and regional organisations charged with maintaining world order and global security. Indeed, in the intervening years more conflicts and eruptions have occurred, and none has been quite dissipated. The much-lauded war on terror has patently failed to destroy extremist groups such as

Al-Qaeda, in Afghanistan or elsewhere. Global peace, security and stability have never been more elusive in the wake of military intervention in Iraq, and in the future perhaps elsewhere along the "axis of evil" spuriously identified by a US administration whose anti-terrorist slogans Israel has adopted to suppress the struggle for legitimate Palestinian rights.

It is vital for world peace and security that international and regional organisations reassume their role and obligations and that all nations abide by the rules of international legitimacy, in deed as well as in word. Measures to reinstate trust and cooperation are urgently called for. The major international powers must shoulder their responsibilities, recognising that there are limits to the exercise of power. They must become engaged in redressing rather than exacerbating grievances, in assisting the poor and the beleaguered rather than compounding their hardships. A useful start would be the cancelling of debilitating debt, and greater assistance in promoting sustainable development.

The Earth Summit in Johannesburg in 2002 also betrayed a rift between government and civil society. There must be a greater involvement and empowerment of people regardless of sex, colour or creed. It is high time it was recognised that we live in one boat and that a tremor in one part of the boat inevitably reverberates in others.

The aftershocks of 11 September in the Arab world and Egypt have been profound and far-reaching. While President Bush visited the Islamic Centre in Washington for the first time in order to assure America and the world that the war on terrorism was aimed not at Muslims but at the terrible acts of fundamentalist extremist groups, US citizens of Arab or Islamic origins were nonetheless subjected to systematic harassment. In the Arab world, writers and the media quickly recognised that a concerted campaign to rectify the ugly picture of Islamic culture painted in the West was urgently needed. Egypt and Al-Azhar initiated a media-campaign to emphasise Islam's message of peace, equality and tolerance. And for the first time positive and constructive dialogue between religious leaders began in Cairo, London and Rome.

Meanwhile the Palestinians found themselves hounded by Israel as terrorists. Though supported by innumerable international treaties and agreements the Palestinian cause has regressed. The Palestinian people find themselves subject to reoccupation, and to daily oppression. The Palestinian cause has suffered a painful setback, and at the same time Arab countries, for the first time in decades, face accusations and demands for reform.

The status quo in Egypt, indeed throughout the Arab world, can never return to its pre-11 September dispensation. Educational, medical, social, economic and cultural reforms have already been adopted, and plans for action set in motion. Radical Islamist groups and movements have shrunk, suffering their greatest setback in decades. However, public sympathy and



understanding of the causes that have fuelled the anger and desperation of Arab societies subjected to decades of suffering, poverty, injustice, inequality and oppression have been expressed by many prominent analysts. They have emphasised that the September tragedy was a symptom, not a cause, and that the West must deal with the causes, and not wage wars on the symptoms.

Meanwhile, there have been rising demands by thinkers and writers in Egypt, and in other Arab countries, for a radical self-appraisal. The demise of Arab society and culture is partly to be blamed on local custom, conservative tradition and a distortion of Islamic doctrine. The West cannot be blamed for everything. Some responsibilities are local and regional.

## **Chapter Eight: Interviews**

**EIR Magazine**

## EIR Magazine

Volume 26, Number 5, January 29, 1999

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Interview: Mohsen Zahran

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# Alexandria Library to become new center of learning for the world

*Dr. Mohsen Zahran is Director of the General Organization of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, in Egypt. He was interviewed by Mariel Mirak-Weissbach and Jacques Chesnais in December.*

**EIR:** What is the status of the work, and your expectations regarding the construction of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina?

**Dr. Zahran:** The building is 92% completed; actually, the building itself is 99.5% complete, but then there is the parking area, which is not yet ready. This is what makes the difference between 92 and 99.5%. The planetarium is finished; the structure of the science museum and the library is finished. As for the internal furnishings, the partitions, it varies from 50 to 70%. We started, at the beginning of this year [1998], finishing the partitions and the lower floors. The finishing starts from below, the greatest area, which is the amphitheater; it is about 20,000 square meters at the bottom, and goes to about 1,000 at the top. The higher you go, the less space you have to finish. According to the contract, the work should be done by the end of April 1999; it is a joint project between a British firm and an Egyptian firm, and it may be delayed a few months, also due to a lot of rain we had, which held up construction, and general bad weather, which even affected deliveries at the port. So, some of these things affected the schedule, causing a couple of months' delay, and we expect it to be ready by summer.

Phase one was the construction of the foundation, which started on May 15, 1995, and ended Dec. 31, 1996. Phase two, which took 15 months, went from Dec. 27, 1996, and should end by April 1999. According to a declaration of the Ministry of Education, the opening will take place in the last quarter of 1999. Like the French National Library, the Bibliothèque Nationale Française, it was opened by François Mitterrand before he left his office, and then was opened again by President [Jacques] Chirac, and the last portion, the research section, was opened last October, in 1998.

We do not want to open the library for the users right away; the opening of the finished building is one thing, then we have to train some of the staff, and train the users, too, because this will be an intelligent building, state of the art, connected with other libraries around the world.

The users have to be trained; this is not usually done. The user has to be trained to learn how to work with the system. For the first time in the world, this library will have an information system, state of the art, multi-lingual, multi-alphabet, more developed than the Bibliothèque Nationale Française system, which was designed in 1994. (In the information technology world, you understand what I mean, you are always a loser, because what you bought at the beginning of the year, a few months later, is obsolete! This will happen to us.) The library is near completion. They are putting in the finishings, painting, air conditioning, piping, putting up the systems.

**EIR:** The ancient library was a center of learning for the whole world, it was a place which drew great minds from everywhere. Are you planning to revive this aspect, by organizing international symposia, conferences here, for example, to draw scholars and researchers?

**Dr. Zahran:** As you can see in the model of the library, there is a conference center which Egypt has given to the library complex. You have the planetarium, the science museum on one side, and the library building. The library is not a "library," it is an advanced institution for research. It is not a traditional library, not the city library or a university library. It is not the national library. It is the Bibliotheca Alexandrina—if you know what the Bibliotheca Alexandrina was doing, you see. It has institutions, it has centers for scholars, it has places for people from the region, especially of the Middle East and Mediterranean region, to come together, to talk, to confer, to produce quality work, to give the world the excellence of knowledge, comparable to what the ancient library's scholars gave to the world then. Their giving is known to us, their luminaries are known to us, from Euclid to Pythagoras, to Eratosthenes.

**EIR:** What about replicating the ancient works that were kept here? To what extent are you trying to replicate the collection that was here?

**Dr. Zahran:** We are trying to get copies of them. Anybody who has one of these copies, does not want to let go of it, because it is like having a museum piece. Imagine if you

owned the Nefertiti in Berlin, or the Rosetta Stone in London—but we will get copies. We got just recently from the Group of Friends of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Athens, a copy of Claudius Ptolemy's book on geography, in color—most beautiful. The idea is, to have copies of such books, documenting the knowledge of the ancient times, through copies which could be displayed in the library for the dimension of history. The historical aspect will also be represented in some mosaics and artifacts that were found on the site, from the Ptolemaic and Roman eras, they will be in the museum.

But we will not dwell on history for the sake of dwelling on history. We have insisted on the revival of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina—What does that mean? revival of one building? an edifice? or the revival of the idea of the excellence of learning? People of good will, of scholarship, will come and produce quality work here. We will publish their work, and we can meet, and confer and radiate this knowledge to other minds, and other centers around the world. So the library has become a kind of an information center, a place where traditional and electronic media will be available, either on line or in hand [books], for their work.

**EIR:** How are you thinking about the planetarium and science museum?

**Dr. Zahran:** The planetarium takes the idea from the ancient library, one of the areas in which the library gave knowledge to the world, was in astronomy. So, we want to maintain this continuity, continuity in the field of knowledge of astronomy, of the quality of work. The planetarium and the science museum are for this, but using the technologies available, showing people what is happening in the universe, whether natural or man-made, with all the experience in space that we have.

The science museum will educate the public, adults and the young together, about the various sciences, and the various achievements in the science world, even about themselves. They will learn about themselves, about the wonders of nature, what the human body is all about. Yes, they have studied this in school, but we will have models, showing how the human body works. It is a kind of learning about the marvels of Creation, within and without.

The issues of environment and ecology will be treated; the issues of nuclear fusion and fission, what they are, what they do, the pros and cons. These are issues to be brought to the mind of the public, because not many people know what fusion energy is, or what fission is, what the implications are. This is public knowledge, this is what we mean when we say that the library is a public research library, regional library, this is part of the public service, for the public. There will also be a service for the blind, which will make available the same information for the blind, which is made available to those who have the blessing of having eyesight. There will also be a business center, to help development of industry.

Other aspects will include, of course, the audiovisual library, the music library, the general references, an international school for information studies, to educate and to graduate people in the language of information technology.

**EIR:** Does this mean you will offer courses in this?

**Dr. Zahran:** Yes, because you see, we have a deficiency here in this field. If we have libraries throughout Egypt that we want to reach out to, we have to have specialists who can do so.

We are talking about hundreds of years, and I will not be around that long. But, the library is something that will develop itself according to the demands of tomorrow. Perhaps some components needed today may not be required tomorrow. The world is changing. What is fifty years in the length of time behind us? Magnificent new strides have been made in various fields, in fifty or a hundred years. So, the library has to be conversant with that and reflective of that, not only, but also leading this.

**EIR:** Are you considering also involving the users in experiments, like those conducted by Eratosthenes, between Aswan and Alexandria, to measure the Earth?

**Dr. Zahran:** Yes, even beyond the place [where those experiments were done]. We should think of it as a university, where people can study even from outside, where courses are offered from here in a kind of outreach. We want to make available the facilities, and also diplomas to others not here.

**EIR:** What is the relationship between Bibliotheca Alexandrina and the universities in Egypt?

**Dr. Zahran:** This is important, because the chairman of the library is the Minister of Higher Education, and he is also the chairman of the board of all universities, so the linkage is a must, there is no way you can work without it. Without it, we could not make available our resources to our neighbors.

**EIR:** In the case of the Bibliothèque Nationale Française, there was no attempt to expand the library to users, to the young students, for the benefit of the nation.

**Dr. Zahran:** The BNF has a different role. I have visited it several times. We have someone there who is an adviser, a supporter in France of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. He is the director of the audiovisual center there. It is national; it is the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the National Library of France. We also have a National Library in Egypt, which has its own role. This [Bibliotheca Alexandrina] is not a library—it is not any library, it is beyond any reference library that anybody can walk through and consult.

Its role is seen in its name, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. It is like a house of knowledge that has to reach out. In the ancient library, as you know, scholars in Athens or Rome, did not consider themselves up to the standard until they came to

the Alexandria, to be recognized by their peers; then, they would claim that they were experts in this line or that line.

**EIR:** The question that this raises for today is: Who are the peers? Who are the authorities who will establish such standards?

**Dr. Zahran:** This will grow with time. I always warn people, don't expect the baby to become a genius overnight, not to prejudice. The Bibliotheca Alexandrina will grow in time, we will have to give it time, to play the role of having peers, of having radiance, that takes time. We are talking about a span of time, 100, 200, 300 years, whatever it will be. The ancient library took that much time—it did not all of a sudden acquire its place in history in the first year, or ten, or hundred.

So, this is the role of the library, and this is the message we are going to give the generations that follow us, generations which will give the message to others, to follow and to build. Like a wall, you build your own course, course upon course, to build the edifice of human civilization.

**EIR:** We have recently published preliminary work on the great expeditions which took place under the aegis of the Alexandria, at the time that Eratosthenes was the librarian and thereafter. I'm referring to the expedition eastward into Polynesia and further to the coast of the Americas, an expedition led by Captain Rata and Navigator Maui, who left inscriptions at various sites along the way. Among the inscriptions, there is one that actually writes out the proof of the experiment by Eratosthenes, which he elaborated to measure the circumference of the Earth. Another inscription, in Santiago de Chile, claims the land for the King of Egypt.

It is a fascinating story, because it shows that the knowledge existed, to allow them to attempt the circumnavigation of the globe, and to reach America—

**Dr. Zahran:** As Columbus did later—

**EIR:** Yes, but that that knowledge was lost, that's the point. The knowledge was lost in successive centuries, in the Roman period, and the destruction of the library in 48 B.C. was symbolic of that. That knowledge was lost, until it was revived in Italy during the Renaissance, when they revived that knowledge from here, from the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, particularly from the work of Eratosthenes. That means, 1,700 years were lost, in the sense that what could have been accomplished earlier was postponed for many centuries.

This example has become known only recently, in the 1970s, when the inscriptions were deciphered and recognized as an Egyptian dialect spoken by the navigators. Are you familiar with this? Is this in any way included in your plans? It would be a magnificent topic for exhibits, because it is one of the greatest events in human history.

**Dr. Zahran:** Yes, yes, indeed. Although I did not know all this in detail.

**EIR:** Featuring such a development, would certainly fire the imagination of young people as well, coming here.

**Dr. Zahran:** You said the message was there, was left 1,700 years before Columbus. But the message was there; 1,700 years did not erase the message. The message, in time, is kept, for others, of knowledge and vision, like yourselves, to talk about and bring to light. We want to leave a message here to coming generations, to carry on the pursuit of knowledge.

**EIR:** There's also the political question, of whether the political institutions in power recognize the importance of this kind of research, and of making it available to the general population, or, if they try to suppress it. This fight has gone on throughout history.

**Dr. Zahran:** Knowledge is never lost, to my knowledge. Knowledge is never truly lost. It might disappear, it can be eclipsed, for one reason or another, but it will never be lost.

**EIR:** There is also the case of great works of great minds, that have not been lost, but have simply never been published, or translated, or republished, so that they are effectively not available, and largely unknown. For example, massive amounts of material of Gottfried Leibniz are still unpublished in the archives; or the works of Johannes Kepler, some available only in Latin, which not everyone can read today; many works by Nicolaus of Cusa. Many crucial works which have determined the course of human history, have not been published, and could be made available today. Is it the intention of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina to make possible publication efforts of this type, where these rare works could be published, in modern languages?

**Dr. Zahran:** We will do that with our translation center, and we will have our own publishing unit, to publish works that other publishers might not take, for commercial reasons. That would be one of the duties of the library.

I hope you will spread the message to colleagues, others, abroad, because the library is for everyone. We would like to have people contribute to it, books, knowledge, and equipment. For instance, talking about the science museum, there could be help from the United States. So far, the United States has distanced itself from the project, there has been no support from institutions, the foundations, the NGOs [non-governmental organizations], which could send equipment. The government of France has supported the project, but NGOs and other foundations in France could do more. We have the planetarium finished, but the equipment is lacking, for showing films, as well as software. Germany has given the Telediff, a transport system, worth 250,000 marks [roughly \$160,000]. By comparison, Norway has contributed \$6 million worth.

We will, of course, go our own way, and continue, regardless. It does not depend on this or that.