

# The Egyptian Foreign Policy Orientations and Its Relations with Russia after June 30<sup>th</sup> Revolution

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## 논문요약

아랍, 아프리카, 중동, 이슬람 그리고 심지어 세계적인 수준보다 이집트의 전략적, 중추적인 중요성을 염두에 두고, 본 논문은 시간이 지나면서 이집트 외교 정책이 어떻게 그리고 왜 변화되어 왔는지를 알아내기 위한 것이다. 그리고 이집트-러시아 관계의 번영이 서구에서 동부로의 변화를 나타내는지를 알아내기 위한 것이다. 이집트와 러시아의 관계에 영향을 준 경험들, 게다가 왜 러시아는 1월 25일 혁명과 다른 아랍의 봄 혁명을 반대하면서 6월 30일 혁명을 지지했는지 그리고 왜 이집트는 반대편에서 러시아와의 관계를 더 발전시키도록 받아들였는지를 설명한다.

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## I. Introduction

Besides being a great influence on the African continent and Islamic world, Egypt has also been labeled the most prominent player in the Middle East and the Arab world. As a result, great powers consider close relations or ally with Egypt essential, and historical experiences clearly prove this.

Just like the priorities, alliances, and options of the foreign policy for any country changes over time, likewise, that of Egypt has also changed over time between the East and the West; the most important here being the recent developments in Egypt following the June 30<sup>th</sup> revolution. Following this event, the priorities and orientations of the Egyptian foreign policy has changed significantly particularly with respect to its Eastern and Western relations, as it approached Russia at the expense of relations with the US.

Although many scholars may attribute this prosperity of the relations between Egypt and Russia to the latter's support for the Egyptian revolution, but indeed this support itself is the effect rather than the cause. Consequently, in order to answer some questions such as how the Egyptian foreign policy changed over time? and why? Does the flourishing of Egyptian-Russian relations represent a shift from West to East? How the historical experiences affecting the relations between Egypt and Russia? Why Russia supported June 30<sup>th</sup> revolution while it opposed January 25<sup>th</sup> revolution only two years earlier and other Arab Spring revolutions? And why Egypt accepted to further develop its relations with Russia? This paper will illustrate the development of the Egyptian foreign policy since the inception of the first republic until now with explaining the different

stages or shifts of this policy, and then focus on the Egyptian-Russian relations with explaining how these relations affected by the policy change in Egypt, especially after the June 30<sup>th</sup> revolution as following:

## II. The Evolving of the Egyptian Foreign Policy

The geopolitical, strategic and even cultural and religious importance of Egypt has always forced it to play a pivotal role in its foreign policy at all levels Arab, African, Middle Eastern, Islamic and even global. But this role has been changing over time due to surrounding circumstances, especially with respect to change in political leadership, where the president plays an important role in the Egyptian political system in shaping its foreign policy. This section reviews the most important features of Egyptian foreign policy throughout the different regimes:

### 1. Nasser's reign

Since the 1952 revolution against the King Farouk I and the establishment of the first republican system in Egypt, followed by the ruling of Nasser as the first Egyptian to rule the country in more than 2000 years, this is one of the most important reasons for the popularity and love of Egyptians and Arabs to Nasser. Also a main factor shaping the Egyptian foreign policy at that time as an independent and valiant policy especially after signing the Anglo-Egyptian evacuation agreement of 1954 in which Britain withdrawal its remaining troops from Egypt(Sharaf and others 2009, 448-461).

The Egyptian foreign policy was focused on certain issues such as achieving security, economic stability, and enhancing the relations

with other states especially the Arab and regional states, and great powers(Hopwood 1982, 32-36). It is worth mentioning that Nasser mentioned the circles of movements for the Egyptian foreign policy in his book as first the Arab circle, then the Islamic circle, and finally the Afro-Asian circle(Nasser 1955, 101-109).

Accordingly, Egypt emerged as a vital and significant actor in the region, adopting the anti-West policy in order to stand against the western imperialist policies and the Western pro-Israel policy; in addition, as the tensions between Israel and Arabs continued, the Egyptian leaders intensified their efforts to solidify the Egyptian armed forces in order to counterbalance the Israeli forces(Rogan & Shlaim 1948, 170-175).

Nasser concentrated mainly on the Arab world, as his first interest circle, promoting an Arab unity against Israeli aggression. This was in addition to supporting the liberation movements in the region including Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Syria...etc. and even the direct intervention in Yemen in 1962(Hopwood 1982, 64-65). The influence of Arab nationalism and Pan-Arabism appeared clearly during the 1956 Suez Crisis through Arab consolidation and support for Egypt, and the establishment the United Arab Republic in 1958(Wiesburd 1997, 30-34). In that context, the Egyptian foreign policy was also aimed at supporting, cooperating and defending African countries, especially in their battles for independence, by providing social, economic, and military assistance(Al-Gammal & Abdel-Razek 1997, 112).

Globally, Nasser also played an effective role by his remarkable contribution in establishing the Non-Aligned Movement(NAM), which gathered together the developing countries who refused to align with or against any major power blocs that were led by the US and

USSR(Alexander 2005, 110). A dramatic change occurred here, when the US tried to put pressure on Egypt to step back from the NAM by withdrawing its promised economic aid to finance the construction of the High Dam in Aswan. In contrast, the USSR took the chance and promised to support Egypt in building the dam(Biswas & Tortajada 2010, 10-19).

The American decision to withdrawal their promise to finance the High Dam led Nasser to nationalize the Suez Canal, and consequently led to the Suez Crisis so-called the Tripartite Aggression(Alteras 1993, 165-166; Kissinger 2011, 529). The crisis has brought great consequences not only to Egypt and the Middle East, but the whole world, where it revealed the French and British decline and allowed the US to play a greater role in the region and put both the US and the USSR in a direct confrontation(Awrych 2000, 54-57).

As the tensions between Israel and its Arab neighbors have never ended, in 1967 war, so-called the setback, Israel surprised Egypt, Syria, and Jordan with a military aggression and occupied the Syrian Golan Heights, Sinai Peninsula, and the West Bank including East Jerusalem. Accordingly, Nasser admitted his responsibility for the defeat and decided to resign, but he backpedaled because of the great Egyptian popular pressure; in addition, although his foreign policy was severely restricted, but he restored the relations with the Gulf States and they pledged to offer financial support to Egypt and continued to face Israel during the War of Attrition(Testa 2014, 132). Moreover, the Egyptian attitude toward Israel started to change, where among the political initiations to solve the conflict at that time Egypt and Oman agreed in 1970 with Rogers Plan, the American Secretary of State at that time, which proposed the Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories in exchange for peace with the Arab States.

## 2. Sadat's reign

After Nasser died in 1970, his vice Al-Sadat took his place but his regime didn't enjoy the same popular legitimacy of his predecessor and was facing huge challenges after the defeat in 1967 and the miserable economic situation; in addition, Sadat's ideology was different to Nasser's. He initiated a Corrective Revolution expelling the socialist figures from the country's institutions and put in prison the opposition figures(Dawisha 1979, 158-160; Petry 1998, 359).

Sadat paid much attention to the internal issues in order to transform from socialist to democratic ideology and achieving more economic openness and development; he supported the multiparty system, formed his political party and other parties, and adopting a new economic policy that reduced the control of the public sector and encouraged both domestic and foreign investment in the private sector(Baker 1990, 195-200). These efforts crowned with the great victory over Israel in the 1973 war that changed the map of the region and the nature of the relations among the states in this area(Gawrych 2000, 130-133).

Most importantly is that the Egyptian foreign policy have fundamentally changed during the Sadat's era for many reasons, for example the appeasements between the US and USSR at that time, the effects of the 1967 defeat, the USSR unwillingness to provide Egypt with up-to-date weapons, and the growing of the US power and its economic aid(Amstutz 1995, 125-129). Therefore, although Sadat concluded a friendship agreement with the Soviet Union in 1972, but shortly after he expelled the soviet experts in July 1972(Hopwood 1982, 105-106), and despite the 1973 victory being

the result of cooperation with other Arab states, Sadat concluded the peace accord with Israel and made Egypt the first Arab country to recognize Israel.

In conclusion, the foreign policy of Sadat concentrated mainly on achieving the Egyptian national interest, therefore, he succeeded in achieving two main goals which are; avoiding the security threat from Israel, and restoring the relations with the US in a strategic way. On the other hand this policy placed Egypt in a difficult position and even isolated Egypt among the rest of the Arab countries, and fundamentally troubled relations with the Soviet Union, especially after cancelling the previously signed Friendship agreement and recalling the Egyptian ambassador from Moscow which was reciprocated on the Soviet side.

### 3. Mubarak's reign

Mubarak took over the rule of Egypt after the assassination of President Sadat in 1981, as the vice president at that time, facing some internal and external challenges. Such challenges include the domestic agitation, dispersion among the political forces, the re-emergence of the extremist groups, and the economic deficiencies. In addition to these challenges was a troubled relation with the Eastern camp and the Arab countries.

Accordingly, Mubarak's foreign policy was focusing mainly on restoring the internal and external stability; regarding the Arab circle, from one side to maintaining the peace agreement with Israel, and from the other side to restore the relations with the Arab countries (Covarrubias & Lansford 2007, 163). Therefore, although the great Egyptian condemnation and censured of all the Israeli

continued violations such as the invasion to Lebanon in 1982, Sabra and Shatila and other massacres, and violation acts in the Palestinian occupied territories, the withdrawal of the Egyptian ambassador to Tel-Aviv and linking the return of the ambassador as a condition to stop the violation remains keen to keep the peace agreement with Israel(Fisk 2001, 382-383). Furthermore, Egypt's foreign policy concentrated on providing all possible support to its Arab neighbors, such as assisting Iraq in its war against Iran, and its help to end the Beirut siege. These efforts resulted in readmission Egypt to the Arab league in 1989 and returning the headquarters back to Cairo. By the end of the decade there was more political and economic cooperation which resulted in establishing the Arab cooperation council, and Damascus declaration(Sutherland 2004, 8).

It is worth mentioning that during the First Gulf War between Iraq and Iran, the Gulf countries realized the strategic importance of Egypt to protect them, especially after Mubarak's announcement that the security of the Arabian Gulf is an integral part of Egypt's security(Inbar 1995, 110-112).

The same approach has been adopted to deal with the major powers by balancing interests among them. The Egyptian diplomacy succeeded in maintaining a close relation with the US through a growing economic, social, and military cooperation without detracting from its independence. The Egyptian position was always clear even when it meant opposing the American point-of-view or even putting pressure on the US administration. Example of such instances are the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982(Davis 1995, 97), the American attack on Libya, and the American policy towards the Middle East and Palestine in particular(Martel 2006, 149).

The Egyptian role in the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and its

effective participation in the peace process in the Middle East that started with the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991 strengthen the Egypt's position in the region, and its relation with the US. These milestones resulted in dropping billions off the Egyptian debts consequently allowing further economic growth and cooperation (Rabinovich & Reinharz 2008, 437).

Notably, the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks of 2001 affected the relations among Egyptian-American relations. Although the Egyptian support for the war against terrorism was glaring, it refused to send troops to Kabul or Baghdad preferring technical assistance and training; in addition to its opposition to the American intervention of 2003 in Iraq.

It should be noted here that the relations among Egypt and Israel at that time was characterized by the cold peace. Despite the keenness to maintain peace, there have been many disagreements between the two sides. Egyptian criticism has continued to follow Israeli violations such as the invasion for Lebanon, establishing of settlements in the occupied territories, the continued Israeli massacres and atrocities against Palestinians, and the Israeli rejection to pull out from Taba. Keeping in mind that since the collapse of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Camp David negotiations in 2000, followed by the visit of Ariel Sharon to Al-Aqua mosque resulting in the second Palestinian uprising, until the ouster of Mubarak in 2011 the opportunities of peaceful settlement between the two sides became more complicated which in turns restricted the Egyptian role.

On the other hand, the Egyptian diplomacy has also concentrated its efforts to restore and develop the relations with the USSR, Russia later, starting with the invitation of Soviet experts to participate in maintaining and developing some projects, holding

several economic and trade agreements which have strengthened the diplomatic cooperation between the two countries gradually.

With regard to African relations, the continued foreign challenges that surrounding Egypt have led to the neglect of Egyptian-African relations, especially with the assassination trial of President Mubarak in Addis Ababa. However, with the passage of time, the Egyptian diplomacy has gradually recognized the importance of the African dimension and has worked to consolidate these relations, especially with the Nile Basin countries; by concentrating on the development and economic cooperation, not to support the national liberation movements as Nasser did.

#### 4. Post-January 25<sup>th</sup> revolution period

Following the first phase of the Arab spring with the fall of the Tunisian regime and the miserable economic, social, and even political situation faced in Egypt, there were widespread demonstrations against the Mubarak regime. This forced him to step down his position in favor of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces(SCAF)(Saffar 2011, 23-26), and then the social interactions led the Muslim Brotherhood to take over the power under President Morsi, but were soon overthrown again after it became apparent that they are incompetent in carrying out governance tasks. It is worth mentioning here that the failure of Muslim Brotherhood in dealing with the foreign policy files was among the main reasons for their overthrow, especially with the spread rumors that they would cede Halaib and Shalateen to Sudanese and a part of Sinai for the Palestinian, which was categorically rejected as it is vital for the Egyptian national security.

There were dramatic and fundamental changes in the Egyptian domestic and foreign policy after the 25<sup>th</sup> of January revolution, and even in the other countries' policies toward Egypt. First of all, the chaos that followed the revolution led to the explosion of the internal situation. In addition to the decline of the Egyptian external role especially with the rise of its regional rivals and the increased challenges it faced, namely, the dangerous spread of terrorist groups at the international level and in the Middle East region; increased public opinion effect in forming the state policies; disruption of relations with the Nile Basin countries and Ethiopia in particular; the deterioration of the economic situation; the tension in the Egyptian-American relations; the massive smuggling to Egypt after being surrounded by dysfunctional states such as Libya, Sudan and Palestine, and disruption of relation with other countries for instance Turkey and Qatar because of the different adopted policies, especially with regard to the terrorist groups. The aforementioned confirmed the saying "Bad-order is better than disorder." (Hemaid 2017, 181-185).

It should be noted that the classification of the Muslim Brotherhood itself as an Islamic political actor has significantly affected their foreign relations; in addition, the horrible consequences of the lack of security combined with the economic collapse led the successive regimes during this period to pay more attention on the domestic level and respond to the unprompted public opinion.

In short, this period has exacerbated the domestic and foreign challenges in Egypt significantly; and negatively affected Egypt's relations with various countries and undermined the Egyptian strategic role.

## 5. Post-June 30<sup>th</sup> revolution

Based on the worsening situation in Egypt, another revolution took place on 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2013, which led to the replacement of the Brotherhood with an interim regime and interim president “Adli Mansour” for one year, followed by presidential elections in which President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi took power, and since then Egypt has begun a new phase in its internal and external policy.

The international reactions of the 30<sup>th</sup> of June revolution have greatly varied from strong support to severely condemnation. While some international actors labeled what happened in Egypt as military coup, others considered it as revolution, and even democratic coup by others. The important thing here is that most of these perspectives have been changed over time to admit that what happened was a popular revolution supported by the army.

With regard to Israel and US, the relations with Israel became more stable after Sisi expressed his commitment to the peace accord and his attitude towards Hamas, in addition to the efforts of anti-terrorism in Sinai. On the other hand, although the relations with the US witnessed some tensions after the revolution, where the American administration supported the previous regime which culminated suspending the military aid to Egypt for the first time in over 30 years, but soon the American perspective changed again and restored to provide aid to Egypt, especially with the common interest for anti-terrorism, and the establishing of an international or regional coalition against terrorism(Rosen, 2012). On the other hand, President Sisi declared his commitment and call to resolve the Palestinian issue in a judicious way, emphasizing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to live in freedom with dignity, confirming

Egypt's believe that they have an usurped right to establish an independent state on the 1967 borders with its capital East Jerusalem.

The disagreements with the US and Israel during the 2014 Israeli aggression on Gaza Strip, the US resolution to shift its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem in 2017 have had resulting consequences, especially the submission of a draft resolution in the Security Council against the US decision forcing America to use the veto power in response. However, the Egyptian diplomacy has succeeded to maintain the balance between its internal independence, its steadfast stance on the Palestinian issue, and condemnation of all forms of Israeli violation on the one hand; maintaining a close relations and common interests, and resume the peace process with the US and Israel on the other hand.

The relations with Russia witnessed a new phase since the outbreak of the Egyptian revolution, as the Russian supported the revolution and expressed their intention to develop the relations with the new regime in Egypt. Dramatic developments have been witnessed in the relations between the two countries. Some evidence includes the conclusion of various economic, social, and military deals, increased tourist revenue, and the mutual diplomatic visits, especially the presidential ones.

Regarding the relations with African countries, although the relations witnessed some tensions since the 30<sup>th</sup> of June revolution, particularly after the African Union decision to suspend Egypt, but relations soon returned to normal and Egypt restored its position in June 2014. In addition the African Union participated in monitoring and inspecting the presidential elections in May 2014, furthermore, Egypt won the membership of the African Peace and Security Council in 2016 to represent the North Africa region parallel with

its membership in the UN Security Council. The important thing here is the relations with the Nile Basin countries and Ethiopia with respect to the Renaissance Dam. While the relations reached an impasse during the Morsi tenure, it improved significantly after the Egyptian diplomacy focused on addressing the issue as one of its top priorities. Numerous visits, meetings, and agreements on the technical and political levels have been held during this period, headed by the Sisi's visit to Ethiopia as the first presidential visit in 30 years.

Except for relations with Qatar which supported the previous regime and strongly condemned the Egyptian revolution by considering it as a military coup which consequently led to mutual accusations between the two countries, that have resulted in the imposition of economic embargo on Qatar; the relations with Arab countries has witnessed a remarkable development which is illustrated in the recognition of the Egyptian revolution and respect the Egyptians people choice, providing economic assistance, the mutual diplomatic visits, and even the mutual understanding and interests such as the anti-terrorism, the situation in Syrian and Yemen, and even establishing of a joint Arab forces to counter these challenges.

It is worth mentioning here that the economic reform in Egypt after Sisi took over the power has had a great effect on many sides. Though, on one hand it reduced the popularity of Sisi as the standard of living for Egyptians was affected, on the other hand, this reform combined with very bold or courageous decisions such as floating the currency, and launching many national projects that increase the Growth Domestic Product and the growth rate which allowed Egypt to restore confidence of investors and financial institutions headed by the agreement with the International Monetary Fund(IMF,

2018).

In short, based on the previous foreign policy experiences especially under Mubarak and Morsi combined with the demands of the revolution, the independency and rejection of concessions for any external actors, especially the west, became the main feature of the foreign policy. In addition, adopting a moderate and balanced foreign policy among the great powers further intensified efforts to fight all forms of terrorism whether domestic or international; and in the normal way, focusing more attention with the national security threats and main problems such as the water issue, besides restore the country's image domestically and worldwide.

### **III. The Evolving of the Egyptian-Russian relationships**

The diplomatic relations between Egypt and Soviet Union(USSR and current Russia) started officially in 1943 by establishing embassies in both Moscow and Cairo. By 1948 an economic agreement had been reached between the two countries by which they could exchange some commodities. Between the 1950s and 1960s, the reign of Nasser, the relationship improved dramatically, for example many Soviet experts were sent to help improve the infrastructure of some cities, establish factories, and construct of the High Dam as well as the electricity networks and sending Egyptian students to study in the Soviet Union(The Russian embassy, 2010).

It is worth mentioning here that the improvement of the Egyptian-Soviet relationship at that time had many reasons such as the effect of the NAM, where the British and American influence on Egypt decreased dramatically allowing the USSR to play a greater role, in addition to the American pressure on Egypt regarding

the High Dam that gave the chance to the Soviet to develop its relation with Egypt.

By 1955, the Egypt and Soviet Union started their military cooperation through a military visit to Czechoslovakia which resulted in finalizing an agreement to provide all the Egyptian army's demands, followed by many other agreements through which the cooperation between the two countries reached a strategic and strong level(Cook 2012, 66). Furthermore, in order to protect Egypt from the Israeli raids after the 1967 defeat, Nasser requested the Soviet Union to help in establishing defense systems throughout the Suez Canal; most importantly, in 1968 Nasser visited Moscow, based on this visit a great cooperation and military agreement was finalized, especially with regard to the Air-force and missiles.

Although the Sadat's era was culminated with the signing of the friendship agreement between Egypt and the Soviet Union in 1972, and the Soviet participation in the negotiations of disengagement agreements among Egypt, Syria, and Israel together with the Soviet role in the Geneva conference in 1973; however, the relations among the two states reached its lowest when Sadat decided to expel the Soviet experts in July 1972, cancel the friendship agreement and even recall the Egyptian ambassador to Moscow, in turn, the USSR also recalled the Soviet ambassador to Cairo(Kumaraswamy 2015, 190-193).

The Sadat's decision to shift from East to West was driven by many factors at the time, such as the refusal of the Soviet Union to supply Egypt with the desired weapons, and the Soviet trend itself to improve the relations with the US and the adoption of the appeasement policy, in addition to Sadat's efforts to achieve the Egyptian national interest and eagerness to end the serious security threat from Israel, moreover, the great rise of American power and

its offer to support Egypt economically, as well as the fact that it is the only international actor capable of influencing Israel at that time.

When President Mubarak took over the rule of Egypt, his approach was also different from his predecessors, while he was keen to maintain close relations with the US, he also concentrated on keeping a good relations with the Soviet Union; therefore, he invited the Soviet experts to take part in the maintenance process of the High Dam and other projects, signed scientific and cultural cooperation agreement with the USSR in 1983, re-exchange the ambassadors, and even the USSR became the second largest trading partner after the US(Quandt 2010, 89).

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 allowed Egypt to strengthen its relations with the Russian Federation, the legitimate heir; therefore, Egypt was among the first states to establish diplomatic relations with Russia; followed by Mubarak's first official visit to the Russia in September 1997, during which the joint Egyptian-Russian statement and seven cooperation agreements were signed, followed by two presidential visits to Russia in 2001 and 2006.

Since the outbreak of the January 25<sup>th</sup> revolution until the June 30<sup>th</sup> revolution, relations between Egypt and Russia were cautious, given Russia's opposition to the Arab Spring in general and the Egyptian revolution in particular considered it as an American-model of democratic transformation, as well as fear of the spread of radical political regimes that could affect Russia's relations with neighboring countries and other factors. Thus, despite the continuation of friendly relations between the two countries, the successive events since the outbreak of the revolution of 25 January until the

June 30 revolution, relations between Egypt and Russia were cautious, given Russia's opposition to the Arab Spring in general as an American model of democratic transformation, as well as fear of the spread of radical political systems that could affect Russia's relations with neighboring countries and other factors. Thus, despite the continuation of friendly relations between the two countries, the current events did not allow for closer relations between them.

#### IV. The Egyptian-Russian relations after June 30<sup>th</sup> revolution

Once the June 30<sup>th</sup> revolution broke out and overthrew the Muslim Brotherhood regime, the Russian orientation was very clear to support the revolution and consider what happen in Egypt as a correction of the path of the Arab Spring, and stressed that the stability in the Middle East, Arab region and even the Islamic and world level depends heavily on the developments in Egypt. In addition, the Russian diplomacy expressed the Moscow's keenness in maintaining stability and security in Egypt and the region. In other words, Russia has strongly supported Egypt's return to the regional and international arena, its participation in all regional initiatives, and resisted any attempt to marginalize the Egyptian role.

It seems that the Russians were looking forward to this moment, when the political change is allowing them to strengthen the relations with Egypt; where both of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Russian ministers visited Egypt in November 2013 as known as "2+2" political talks, followed by the Egyptian Foreign Affairs and Defense ministers visit Russia in February 2014, President Sisi was the Egyptian defense minister at the time.

Since the first days of the Sisi presidency, it has been clear that

Egyptian-Russian relations are developing positively; first of all, the Russian position on the Egyptian revolution gave the chance to the new regime to diversify its foreign policy options by strengthening the relations with Russia. In addition, President Sisi wanted to restore and modernize Egypt's foreign position at the regional and global levels, especially after the difficult historical experiences of recent decades.

In this context, the relations between the two countries could be summarized in political, social, economic and military relations as following:

### 1. Political and social relations

The Egyptian interim president "Adli Mansour" received a telephone call in November 2013 from the Russian President "Vladimir Putin" through which Putin expressed his and his country's full support for Egypt and its transitional administration.

A Russian people's delegation visited Egypt in May 2014 with a group of participants in the construction of the High Dam on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the transformation of the Nile River.

In September 2014 the Egyptian Prime Minister announced the establishment of the "Russian Unit" under the Cabinet to follow up the bilateral relations in various fields, which held its first meeting in the next month with participation of 9 ministers and other officials.

The Presidential Representative for the Middle East and Africa "Mikhail Bogdanov" also visited Egypt in November 2014, discussed with the Egyptian Foreign Minister on the developments of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Egypt's efforts on this issue. Afterwards, in

December the Russian Deputy Prime Minister “Arkady Dvorkovich” visited Egypt to meet President Sisi and other officials for further talks.

The Egyptian Foreign Minister visited Russia in February 2015 and met with his Russian counterpart discussing the two countries relations and common interests, and the Libya’s crisis in particular; then during March 2015 many mutual statements, meetings, and visits were held to further boost the two countries relations such as the President Sisi meeting with the Secretary of the Russian National Security Council “Nikolai Patrushev” in Egypt; and the meeting of the Egyptian Defense Minister “Sedqi Sobhi” with his Russian counterpart “Sergey Shoigu” at the headquarters of the Russian Defense Ministry. Before the end of May 2015 the Egyptian Foreign Minister and his Russian Counterpart stressed on the importance of intensifying the anti-terrorism efforts and enhance the joint cooperation in various fields; followed by the meeting of the Russian Minister of Industry and Trade “Denis Manturov” with President Sisi in Cairo during which they discussed the establishment of a free trade zone between Egypt and the Eurasian Customs Union(EAEU). In September 2015 the Egyptian Assistant Foreign Minister with a delegation visited Russia and concluded further talks related to the disarmament, non-proliferation, Egypt’s candidacy for membership of the Security Council for the period 2016–2017, and issues on the agenda of UN General Assembly.

The head of Russia’s state-owned nuclear firm Rosatom had a meeting with President Sisi in November 2015 during which they inking three agreements between the two countries. Afterwards, the Russian Defense Minister also met President Sisi discussing the cooperation between the two countries regarding the international and common concerns. This was followed by some meetings

between the Russian delegation from one side and the Egyptian Minister of Defense, Minister of State for Military Production and other officials from the other side concluding some protocols and agreements.

Throughout 2016 many mutual visits and meetings dealt with issues of coordination on various issues of mutual cooperation and enhancing cooperation between the two sides starting from January when the Russian Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade visited Egypt and met Minister of Defense, followed by the meeting between President Sisi and the Speaker of the Russian State; then the political talks between the Egyptian Foreign Minister and his Russian counterpart; and also the visit of the Egyptian delegation headed by the Minister of Civil Aviation to Russia regarding the Russian Aircraft Accident; and later the Egyptian Defense Minister visited Russia in light of the Egyptian-Russian strategic cooperation; finally, during November an Egyptian delegation from the Federal Veterinary and Phytosanitary Authority visited Russia to discuss the export of Egyptian products, followed by the visit of the Minister of Agriculture and land Reclamation to Russia.

In the same context, the year 2017 witnessed a remarkable political cooperation and mutual visits between the two countries, where in March President Sisi received the Russian Deputy Prime Minister for political talks; after three days he received also Chairperson of the Russian Federation Council and her accompanying delegation to discuss the mutual cooperation in all levels; on May the Pope Twadros II, the Pope of Alexandria and the Patriarch of St. Mark, visited Russia received by Russian President; then the Russian Defense Minister and Foreign Minister visited Egypt again and held talks with President Sisi; in August another round of

discussions between the Foreign Ministers of the two countries in Moscow; in October the Speaker of the Egyptian House of Representatives visited Russia to participate in the 137th session of the Inter-Parliamentary Union; in November a Russian security delegation visited Egypt and had a meeting with the Minister of Civil Aviation

The cooperation between the two countries continued to grow up during 2018, where in May the 2+2 talks between the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Defense in the two countries held a new round in Russia; followed by another visit for the Minister of Defense to Russia in August to discuss the military cooperation between the two countries with his counterpart; and in September the Foreign Ministers held another meeting on the sidelines of the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the UN General Assembly in New York discussing various issues including an assessment of the progress made in the bilateral relations between the two countries(MFA Russia, 2018).

The Russian president, Putin, with high-level delegation visited Egypt in February 2015 discussed the economic and political relations, the main issues in the Middle East, and concluded some deals and agreements, the most important of which is the establishing of the first Egyptian nuclear plant. In addition he visited Egypt for the second time in December 2017, during the visit he discussed with President Sisi various issues especially the regional challenges and the political cooperation, witnessed the signing of the agreement to establish the nuclear plant, and stressed the importance of preserving the current status of Jerusalem(SIS, 2017).

President Sisi has also visited Russia many times, the first time, as mentioned above, when he was the defense minister in 2014; then during his presidency he visited Russia again in August 2014, only

two months after his election and first visit outside of the Arab world, discussing the various issues in the Middle East and agreed for greater global cooperation in the anti-terrorism activities, in addition to the agreement for concluding economic, military, and social deals or agreements (Ahram Online, 2014); President Sisi also visited Russia in May 2015 to take part in the Russian celebrations of the victory over Nazi Germany in World War II; At an invitation of the Russian side, President Sisi with an official delegation visited Russia in August 2015 held talks with his Russian counterpart about the anti-terrorism efforts, joint cooperation, regional and common concern issues, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Furthermore, as part of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of starting the relations between the two countries President Sisi visited Russia again in October 2018, during which he concluded the comprehensive partnership and strategic cooperation agreement together with the Russian President, he gave a speech before the upper house of the Russian parliament, as the first foreign leader to do so, in addition to convene some other meetings between the officials of the two countries and many agreements and decisions have been reached during this visit such as the expanding of the military exercises (Egypt Independent, 2018).

## 2. Economic relations

Since the beginning of the diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1943 until the end of President Nasser's reign, the economic relations between the two countries have witnessed great growth as trade agreements have been signed for the exchange of goods and the establishment of many factories and projects,

especially infrastructure projects. However, the High Dam remains the most important aspect of cooperation between the two countries.

Nevertheless, the economic relations have shrunk due to the political tensions that accompanied President Sadat's reign because of the abovementioned reasons. However, the two countries have restored gradually their relations after Mubarak took over the rule, and continued to grow during the 1980s and 1990s, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union, until Russia became the second largest trading partner, after the US(Trenin 2010, 10).

Since the June 30<sup>th</sup> revolution broke out the economic cooperation between the two countries have greatly flourished between the two countries for instance:

In February 2016, a memorandum of understanding was signed to establish a Russian industrial zone in Egypt as the first country in the world where Russia will establish such project outside the Russian mainland, which represents a gateway for Russia to the African continent; in addition to signing some other cooperation agreements and memorandums of understanding to enhance investment cooperation between the two countries and facilitating efforts to establish a free trade zone between Egypt and the Eurasian Economic Union. Furthermore, a memorandum of understanding has been signed between the representatives of the two countries through which Russia will supply 10 civilian aircraft with Financial Leasing System as a first stage, then supply of 20 civilian aircraft as a second stage with the possibility of supplying 20 other aircraft as a third stage after obtaining the necessary approvals to facilitate the direct flights between Egypt and Russia.

The volume of trade between Egypt and Russia rose during the year 2017 to 6.7 billion dollars, where the volume of Russian imports

to Egypt reached 6.2 billion dollars (with an increase of 64%) and the volume of Egyptian exports to Russia reached 504.5 million dollars (with an increase of 35%).

It is worth mentioning here that the value of Russian exports to Egypt reached 2.418 billion dollars in the first five months of 2018 (an increase of about 32.3% over the same period in 2017), while the value of Egyptian exports to Russia reached 356 million dollars (an increase of 26.5%); more than 416 Russian companies operate in Egypt with capital of over \$ 60 million, trade exchange between Egypt and Russia in the first five months of 2018 reached 2.775 billion dollars (with an increase of about 31.5% from 2017), in August 2018 a contract to buy 180 thousand tons of Russian wheat was concluded, in September 2018 another contract to produce and supply 1,300 new railway vehicles to Egypt has been concluded as the largest deal in the history of the Egyptian railway.

In December 2017 the two presidents signed a document under which they gave the start signal to El-Dabaa nuclear project, where they have signed in 2015 a cooperation agreement to establish this project as the first nuclear plant in Egypt based on a Russian loan, the plant including the establishment of 4 units each capacity of about 1,200 megawatts, at a cost of about 10 billion dollars.

### 3. Military relations

The military cooperation between the two countries has also witnessed a significant development directly after the 30<sup>th</sup> of June revolution; for instance the frequent mutual visits of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense between the two countries since 2013 during which the two countries agreed to modernize the

Egyptian military arsenal and provide it with Russian weapons, allowing the Egyptian political leadership to achieve its goal to diversify the sources of armament.

In August 2015 a military deals to support the Egyptian air defense capabilities through modernization of the short and medium range air defense systems, and the addition of long-range air defense system for the first time within the Egyptian air defense forces were concluded between the two countries representatives. In November of the same year, the Russian warship “Admiral Vladimirsky” visited the Adabiya port in Suez to express the strengthening of strategic military understanding and cooperation between the Egyptian and Russian Navy(Russian Ministry of Defense, 2015).

In August 2016 Egypt received a Russian missile vessel so-called Molniya as a present(SIS, 2017). Afterwards, Egypt hosted the first joint military exercise with the Russian paratroopers so-called “Protectors of Friendship 1” in October of the same year; then the Egyptian and Russian paratroopers carried out the second joint military exercise so-called “Protectors of Friendship 2” held in Russia in September 2017(Israeli defense, 2017); followed by the third joint exercise so-called “Protectors of Friendship 3” in October 2018, which was hosted by Egypt(MoD, 2018). It’s worth mentioning here that after the last visit of President Sisi to Russia in October 2018 the two sides agreed to invite military observers from 13 countries to observe these anti-terror drills.

In August 2018 the Egyptian Defense minister participated in the opening ceremony of the Russian International Military-Technical Forum so-called “ARMY-2018” (The Army Expo, 2018).

## V. Findings

(1) The relationship between Egypt and Russia have gone through different stages; each stage related to the circumstances surrounding both countries, the important thing here is that the current developments in their relations depend heavily on this historical legacy.

(2) During the Nasser's reign, relations between the two countries developed considerably because of Nasser's socialist ideology, the Egyptian foreign policy priorities at the time to promote Arab nationalism and support national liberation movements, the orientation toward the West and Israel, which all allowed the two countries to come closer to the level of strategic friendship.

(3) On the other hand, the Sadat's reign was fundamentally different from his predecessor for many reasons such as the effect of 1967 defeat, his popularity was lower than Nasser, his political ideology was different and even rejected socialism, as well as the change in the policy of the Soviet Union itself at the time, in addition to the different priorities of his foreign policy to achieve the Egyptian national interests in the first place and the victory over Israel and the restoration of Sinai in particular; Which coincided with the rising of the US that made it impossible to achieve those goals without keeping a good relations with the West, all these factors led to the deterioration of relations with the Soviet Union significantly.

(4) During Mubarak reign, the two countries began to restore relations again after it had been cut during his predecessor's reign, since then they have been keen to maintain friendly

relations and work on the gradual prosperity of those relations; the relations between the two countries have also been affected by a number of factors including the deterioration of the internal situation in Egypt due to economic crises and political splits, the fight against terrorism during the 1990s, the Egypt's restoration of Arab relations and its regional and international position, and the collapse of the Soviet Union and the desire of Russia to strengthen its foreign relations; in addition to the significantly growing relations between Egypt and the West.

(5) Since the January 25<sup>th</sup> revolution until the break out of June 30<sup>th</sup> revolution, the relations have experienced a period of caution and confusion or wobble because of the doubt and uncertainty that prevailed at that time; while both states continued the friendly relations, however, the instability in Egypt during that period did not allow further significant flourish in their relations, especially with the different political ideologies at the time.

(6) During President Sisi reign, the relations between the two countries reached a high level of cooperation in various economic, political, cultural and military fields reaching the strategic cooperation agreement; that flourish in relations affected by many factors such as the Russia's support of the Egyptian revolution, nature and developments of the internal situation in Egypt, the political orientation and ideology of both countries' leaders, the historical relations between the two countries, and the importance of such cooperation in supporting the national interests of both countries at the local and international levels.

(7) Russia resisted the Arab Spring an American-fashion democratic

transition; they also don't want the Radical Islamic Movements to take over the power in the Middle East countries where it may affect its relations with the neighboring countries; the Russian regime fears that the revolutions infection may affect its territory; on the other hand, Russia has always been looking forward to playing a bigger role in the region(Katz 2011, 4); In addition Russia also needs to have a strategic ally in the Arab region, the Middle East, and the African continent to obtain the support of these three circles, whether for supporting the Russian foreign orientations such as its position in Syria, the Crimea issue and the political dispute with Ukraine or to build an economic partnerships, securing energy sources, raw materials and production requirements, and opening up new markets. Therefore, based on the abovementioned historical background, Egypt represents the best choice ever since it combines these Arab, Middle Eastern, and African circles and even the Islamic circles; as well as its geographical location which connects the three continents Asia, Africa and Europe; and most importantly is the strategic and pivotal position or influence of Egypt in those circles and also at the international level; moreover, its political orientation and diplomatic history, which is always characterized by stability, clarity, objectivity and neutrality; furthermore, the mutual understanding or consensus over some issues.

(8) Egypt also needs to gain the international legitimacy for the ruling regime; to restore its regional and international foreign position; to diversify and balance its foreign options among East and West, especially after the American position on the revolution and ruling regime from one side, and the popular rejection of the dependence on the US and its intervention; and

to cooperate with strong alliances who shares common interests and willing to offer the political, economic and military assistance. In addition, the historical experiences proof that the priorities of the Egyptian foreign policy changing over time based on the surrounding circumstances and the national security threats; in addition, it also proof that the Egyptian diplomacy has been always keen to maintain a close relation with the great powers.

(9) Accordingly, these mutual interests are the main reason for the two countries close cooperation after the June 30<sup>th</sup> revolution, the main reason for Russia to support the Egyptian revolution and provide great support while it opposed the January 25<sup>th</sup> revolution and also doesn't support other states' revolutions such as the situation in Libya, Syria, and Yemen (Hashim & Tameh 2015), and the reason also for Egypt to further strengthen its relations with Russia. This could be proved through reviewing the content of the political relations among the two countries representatives, which had never devoid of talks on the situation in Syria, Libya, conflict in the Middle East, and the economic and military cooperation.

(10) The historical experiences proof that despite the flourish of the Egyptian-Russian relations, Egypt will always keen to maintain a good relations with the US for many reasons such as the American position as a great power and its dominance over the international system, the American involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict, the historical relations between the two countries, the Egyptian diplomacy trend to maintain a good relations with all states and the great powers in particular, and many other reasons. In addition, it is also proof that the

understanding of the Egyptian–Russian relations can't be isolated from the historical context, can't be isolated from the relations with other states, and even from the international political interactions.

(11) This paper has contributed to summarize the different stages of the Egyptian foreign policy since the rule of President Nasser until the current President Sisi; illustrating how the president plays a significant role in formulating, change, or shift this policy; and how that policy change was affecting the relationships with Russia; in addition to explain how and why the relations between the two countries changed and developed dramatically after June 30<sup>th</sup> revolution, with highlighting the mutual interests of the two countries which urged them to further strengthen their relations.

## VI. Conclusion

Based on the fact that Egypt is a strategic and pivotal country with a significant effect over the Arab, African, Middle Eastern, Islamic and even global level; which make it an essential target for all the great powers; in addition to the fact that states foreign policies options and orientations, including Egypt, are changing over time and reflect the state's domestic situation. This paper aimed to figure out how and why the Egyptian foreign policy has been changed over time; and whether the flourishing of Egyptian–Russian relations represent a shift from West to East; and show how the historical experiences affecting the relations between Egypt and Russia; moreover, explains why Russia supported June 30<sup>th</sup> revolution while it opposed January 25<sup>th</sup> revolution only two years earlier and

other Arab Spring revolutions from one side; and why Egypt accepted to further develop its relations with Russia from the other side.

After exploring the development of Egyptian foreign policy and the relations between Egypt and Russia, especially after the June 30<sup>th</sup> revolution; we found that understanding of such relations can't be isolated from the historical context; and the two countries relations has witnessed different stages based on the some domestic, regional, and external factors; while it was very close to the East during Nasser's era, it has transformed dramatically toward the West and even reached cutting the relations with the USSR during Sadat's era, then restoring the relations and the gradual improvement in relations during Mubarak's era; followed by the cautious relations after the January 25<sup>th</sup> revolution, finally the booming relations after the June 30<sup>th</sup> revolution. In addition, although the Egyptian foreign policy has been also changing over time, based on the surrounding circumstances, but it also have to maintain a strong relation with the West.

The national interests is the main reason for Russia to support the political transition in Egypt and June 30<sup>th</sup> revolution, while it oppose the Arab Spring in general and even oppose the January 25<sup>th</sup> revolution in Egypt itself only two years earlier, and for Egypt to further strengthen its relations with Russia; where the Russian leaders admitted in many occasions the significant importance of Egypt in the Arab, African, Middle East, and Muslim circles, the Russian perception about the radical political regimes in the region, their perspective about the Arab Spring and fears of the revolution infection and their relation with neighboring countries, and the Russian position in some issues such as the Syrian, Libyan, and Crimea crises; all of these factors shows the great interests for

Russia to strengthen its relation with Egypt.

On the other hand, Egypt also was in urgent need for Russian support after the revolution for gaining the international legitimacy of its ruling regime especially after the American position on the revolution, to diversify and balance its foreign options, to face the domestic pressure and popular rejection of the dependence on the US, and for the Economic, Social, Political, and military cooperation and assistance; all of these interests, and more, make it rational for both sides to seek more cooperation.

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<Abstract>

## The Egyptian Foreign Policy Orientations and Its Relations with Russia after June 30<sup>th</sup> Revolution

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Bearing in mind the strategic and pivotal importance of Egypt over the Arab, African, Middle Eastern, Islamic and even global level; this paper aimed to figure out how and why the Egyptian foreign policy has been changed over time; and whether the flourishing of Egyptian-Russian relations represent a shift from West to East; and show how the historical experiences affecting the relations between Egypt and Russia; moreover, explains why Russia supported June 30<sup>th</sup> revolution while it opposed January 25<sup>th</sup> revolution only two years earlier and other Arab Spring revolutions from one side; and why Egypt accepted to further develop its relations with Russia from the other side.

**Key words** : Egypt, Russia, January 25<sup>th</sup> Revolution, June 30<sup>th</sup> Revolution, Foreign Policy