Chapter VII

ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL POLICIES
As pointed out earlier Egypt's economic and cultural interests in Africa, though not quite as important as its strategic and political interests, are by no means insignificant. Its whole life, indeed, its very survival, depends on the Nile river which has its source in Africa. Moreover, it looks at Africa as a source of raw materials for its industries and markets for its manufactures. In the cultural field Egypt is interested in consolidating its traditional Islamic bond and its new contacts with Africa. This chapter examines the potentialities and limitations of Egypt's economic and cultural relations with sub-Saharan Africa.

Both Egyptian and African economies are underdeveloped. The mainstay of the Egyptian economy is agriculture which absorbs more than half of its manpower (about 60 per cent) and contributes nearly 30 per cent of national produce. Its foreign trade also depends predominantly on exports of processed and unprocessed agricultural products of which cotton provides the lion's share. This, coupled with lack of a strong industrial base and a rapidly rising population (2.5 per cent per annum), is the root cause of Egypt's poverty. For, the high rate of its population growth neutralizes the effect of its economic

Sub-Saharan Africa is even more underdeveloped than Egypt. African resources are "not only very little exploited but often very little known". Agriculture accounts for 40 to 70 per cent of the gross product. Between 80 and 90 per cent population is engaged in agriculture. A striking feature of the African economies is their utter dependence on primary products, whether agricultural or mineral. Another notable feature is the lack of infrastructure involving communications, education and managerial skills. Though mines are connected with ports by roads and railway lines, other areas have been neglected. Considering its area and resources, Africa is not over-populated, but owing to the exploitation of its wealth by European nations it has remained underdeveloped.

These features of the Egyptian and African economies would suggest that there is not much scope for close economic co-operation between them. But there are certain factors which made this co-operation possible. Egypt was even before the July Revolution, more advanced industrially and economically than any other country on the African continent except the Union of


South Africa. Besides, in sharp contrast to most sub-Saharan African economies, Egypt has a fairly developed infrastructure of communications, irrigation, education, public administration etc., so much so that it is a net exporter of skills. African countries, as observed earlier, are extremely short of managerial, technical and industrial skills. They need doctors, engineers, teachers and administrators. Egypt is in a position to provide them some assistance in the fields of agriculture, administration, construction, planning and labour organization.

Secondly, even though Egypt has considerable deposits of coal, iron ore, phosphate, manganese and sulphur, it is lacking in raw materials, a large variety of which it imports. Africa, rich in raw materials but without many industries, can meet this requirement. Thirdly, Egypt's growing industries also require markets for their products which Africa, without manufacturing industries of its own, can provide.

There are many other fields in which there is much scope for Egypt-African economic co-operation. For example, Egypt,

5. By 1962 there were more than 700 manufacturing and mining establishments each employing more than 50 persons. Together they contributed about 10 per cent of GNP and employed about 4 per cent of the country's working population. In addition there were some 2,730 small firms of 10-15 workers. See Donald N. Wilber, *United Arab Republic, Egypt Its People, Its Society, Its Culture* (New Haven, 1969), p. 334.

lacking in natural pastures, has to import a large number of cattle. It is a net importer of meat. Since the greater part of Africa is semi-arid, it is suited to pastoral development. Africa could thus meet Egypt's requirements of cattle.

In the cultural field there is vast scope for co-operation between Egypt and sub-Saharan Africa. There are some 40 million Muslims in Africa south of Sahara. The concept of universal brotherhood in Islam binds all Muslims together in a community of common faith and fraternity irrespective of their ethnic and racial differences. The potential power of such a community, if organized and unified into a social and/or political force, is too obvious to need elaboration.

To this traditional cultural bond is added another bond, that of political culture rooted in the historic experience of political subjugation to European Powers. The anti-colonial sentiment is of no mean significance to the totality of Egypt's interaction with the sub-Saharan Asian nations.

ECONOMIC POLICY

Before the July 1952 Revolution Egypt's trade with Africa south of Sahara was very negligible, valued at a few hundred pounds. During the first few years after the Revolution, the revolutionary leadership could not pay much attention to the


country's economic development as it was busy consolidating its hold and solving some of the more pressing problems facing it. This was also the period when Africa was still under the yoke of colonialism. Considering Egypt's relations with the colonial Powers, there was hardly any scope for establishing contacts with Africa, much less for having close economic relations with it.

After the Bandung Conference (1955), and more so after the signing of the arms deal with Czechoslovakia, Egypt came into close contact with the Communist Bloc. This resulted in a shift in its trade from the Western Bloc to the Communist Bloc. With the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company, victory over the aggression that followed and construction of the Aswan Dam in sight, Nasser could sit and chalk out a plan for his country's economic development. A major step in this direction was taken in January 1957 with the approval and immediate implementation of the five-year industrial plan covering the period 1957-1961.

With the launching of the five-year plan, three guidelines were set for Egypt's trade policy: (i) execution of development projects, (ii) catering to the growing local demands for basic foodstuffs, and (iii) diversification of exports.

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Africa, which could offer neither surplus food nor anything in
the execution of development projects, did not fall into this
scheme except in the diversification of Egypt's export trade.

As in the political field, so in the economic field Egypt
wanted African countries to reduce their dependence on the former
colonial Powers. It was also not happy about their association
with the European Common Market (ECM). It warned them, that
the ECM would monopolise their raw materials markets to support
its own highly developed industrial organization. There was
also a danger that they would be reduced to the position of
mere raw material producers. This would result in a lowering
of their standards of living, prices and economic colonialism.

Nasser's attitude towards the Africans' association with
the ECM was influenced by his attitude towards neo-colonialism.
He viewed the aid and trade of the colonial Powers as a means
to exhaust the resources of other nations to the benefit of
exploiters. He also saw in it a setback to his attempts to seek
outlets for his country's own industrial products in African
countries. He feared that ECM aid would turn the attention of
African states to Europe rather than to Egypt.

(Cairo), no. 92, 26 March 1962, p. 19.
12. Ibid.
13. Statement by the Egyptian Minister of Economy quoted in
\textit{Three-Monthly Economic Review, Egypt (IAR), Libya, Sudan
(London), no. 41, April 1963, p. 3.}
14. United Arab Republic, Information Department,
President Gamal Abdel Nasser's Speeches and Press
As an alternative, Egypt advocated close co-operation among the African countries. The Casablanca Conference created an economic institution aimed at fostering co-operation among the participants. Egypt suggested the establishment of an African Common Market (ACM) to raise the level of trade between the African countries. Abdel Moneim El Banna, Under-Secretary to the Egyptian Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade, stressed the importance of such a step in order to face the ACM's "threat" of continuing the pattern of trade that existed between Europe and Africa during the heyday of the colonialist period.

**Instruments of Policy**

Egypt's economic relations with Africa are managed mainly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs determines the nature of these relations, generally through its African Department and the Committee on Technical Assistance. After the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has prepared the ground, the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade steps in and handles the negotiations on the technical side. It plans and signs the trade agreements. This is done by the Africa Department of the Ministry. The agreements are then forwarded to El Nasr Export & Import Company for execution.

El Nasr Export & Import Company was originally a private company known as Ghanem and Co. established in 1958 by one

15. Statement by Egyptian Minister of Economy, n. 13, p. 3.
16. The department was established in 1956. The strength of this department is about twenty to thirty persons.
Mohammed Ghanem. In 1961, along with many others, this company was nationalized and it got its present name. After the nationalization of foreign trade, organization was created in the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade to co-ordinate the activities of all companies. This organization at its very first meeting decided that instead of following the East European pattern of one company dealing with one product throughout the world, it should divide the world into different zones, each company concentrating on an area rather than on a product. Accordingly, Africa was assigned to El Nasr Export & Import Company.

In 1961, the company started three branches, one each in Guinea, Ghana and Nigeria. Then it extended its activities in both east and west Africa. By 1967 it had twenty-one branches in Africa and has since then opened some more. These branches are generally managed by a small staff. Trilingual Egypt (Arabic, English, French) has immensely benefited by its trilinguality in Africa. To French-speaking Africa it sends from the staff of the El Nasr Export & Import Company persons knowing French and to English-speaking Africa persons knowing English.

17. The author is grateful to Mohammed Ghanem, the founder of Ghanem and Co. for this information.


19. Afterwards branches at Bargui, Fort-Lamy, Mombasa, Okagadoigou and Port Sudan were added. Besides this the Company is having some branches in Arab and European countries.
The main activity of the Company is to look after the export and import of Egyptian goods and to survey and study the possibilities of increasing the volume of trade with Africa. It also enters the worldwide competitions announced by African governments for different projects. It takes up construction works and makes investments in Africa. The Company also undertakes international transactions and exports products such as coconut, groundnut, coffee, vegetable oil, palm, etc. on behalf of African countries to Europe, West Asia, and North America. It handles various articles from European countries to Africa.

Survey of Economic Relations

In its attempt to diversify and expand its trade in Africa Egypt sent a delegation to Ghana, Liberia and Belgium Congo in November 1967. This was a modest beginning to improve its economic relations with sub-Saharan Africa. The volume of trade was quite negligible since most of these countries were not independent. The emergence of many independent states on the map of Africa in 1960 paved the way for Egypt to improve its political and economic ties with the continent. At home the period coincided with a heavy dose of nationalization which expanded the public sector considerably. With the growth of its industries Egypt, now interested in finding markets for its products, started looking towards Africa. A large trade delegation headed by Mahmud Hamza of the Ministry of Economy

20. Author's interview with Mohamed Ghanem, n. 17.

and Foreign Trade was sent in March 1961 to eleven countries in West and East Africa to explore markets for Egypt's manufactures.

Egypt entered into bilateral payments agreements with many African countries with a view to facilitating exchange of goods with them. These bilateral agreements provided for exchange of commodities, reciprocal granting of the most-favoured-nation treatment etc. The duration varied from one to three years with a provision for automatic renewal thereafter for a similar period unless previous notice to the contrary was given by either party before the date of expiry. Current payments were to be made in sterling and or in any other convertible currency. Many of the agreements provided for the setting up of a joint committee which would meet at the request of either party in order to review the implementation of the agreement. Some of them also provided for the granting of facilities for the establishment of trade centres and participation in exhibitions and fairs.


23. Thus Egypt signed Trade and Payment Agreements with Ethiopia in 1959; with Somalia in 1960; with Cameroon, Ghana, Guinea and Mali in 1961; with Dahomey, Niger and Nigeria in 1962; with Kenya in 1963; with Congo (B), Congo (K), Mauritania, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda in 1964; with Sierra Leone in 1965; with Zambia in 1966; with Burundi and Senegal in 1967; with Ivory Coast in 1968; and with Central African Republic in 1970.

Trade

As a result of these efforts Egypt's trade with Africa has been on the increase since the July 1952 Revolution and more particularly since the independence of the majority of African states in the early 1960s. The value of the trade with Africa south of Sahara increased from a few hundred pounds in 1952 to LE 2,261,000 in 1962. The table on page 293 shows trade figures for the year 1962.

The chief customers for Egypt's goods in 1963 were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Export 26 (Value in LE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>1,511,004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>754,863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>570,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>545,137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>321,679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahomey</td>
<td>82,607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>86,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>31,151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo</td>
<td>15,451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>1,825</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is obvious from the above list that in its economic dealing with Africa Egypt has more concentrated on countries which were politically close to it, for the top three countries in the list were Egypt's allies in the Casablanca group.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Exports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon (Trusteeship Territory)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo (Brazzaville)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo (Leopoldville)</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahomey</td>
<td></td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia (and Eritrea)</td>
<td></td>
<td>429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Somaliland</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Mauritania</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivory Coast</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malagache (Island of Madagascar)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Rhodesia</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyasaland</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruanda-Urundi</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Denis and Mauritius</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sao-Tome Island</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Rhodesia</td>
<td>259</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanganyika</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Togo</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Volta</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zanzibar (and Pemba)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Less than 500 £E.

27. Adapted from Foreign Trade of the UAR 1962 & 1963, n. 25, pp. 4-5.
By 1964 the value of Egypt's trade with Africa south of Sahara had risen to £8,760,000, an increase of four and a half times over that of 1960. Yet, as the following table indicates, it was barely one per cent of its total foreign trade.

Egypt's Imports from and Exports to different world regions and the place Africa occupied in it: 1964/65

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Exports - Relative value of the world</th>
<th>Imports - Relative value of the world</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Western Bloc countries</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. United States</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. West Germany</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Italy</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Northern European countries</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. United Kingdom</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. France and Spain</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Arab countries</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Latin American countries (Cuba)</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Eastern Asian countries</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Africa</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Other</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the year 1968 Egypt's exports to Africa were worth £8,760,000 and its imports worth £4,805,000. The


corresponding figures for the year 1970 were: exports £8,986,000, imports £4,556,000.

The main items of Egypt's export to Africa are raw cotton, and products made of it, artificial silk, raw wool, woollen goods, rice, sugar, onions, manganese ore, lead ore, zinc ore, phosphate ore, crude oil, petroleum products, motor cars, bicycles, car and cycle tyres, agricultural machinery, sewing machines, radio sets, electrical refrigerators, heaters and cooking stoves, electrical appliances, wireless sets, and pharmaceutical cosmetics.

The main items of import from Africa are groundnuts, coffee, palm oil, cocoa, bananas, wheat, honey, tobacco, cattle, sheep, meat, raw and tanned hides, dried fish, timber, raw rubber, sesame and edible oils, jute sacks, copper and lead.

**Economic Aid**

As the opportunities for direct exchange of goods were limited, Egypt had initiated a small-scale foreign aid programme for Africa to improve its economic contacts with certain African countries which had an ideological affinity with it and which could be expected to stand up against the colonial Powers, and more particularly against Israel. Under this programme Egypt


32. Nasser justified these loans in the Egyptian National Assembly as essential to Egypt's foreign policy especially as a means to counter Israel's influence in Africa. See *Quarterly Economic Review, Egypt (NAR),* Sudan, Libya, no. 43, December 1964, p. 2.
offered loans to the following countries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value of loans (in million £8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo (B)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These loans were generally repayable in seven annual instalments. The rate of interest charged was 2½ per cent. The loans were to be used for getting machinery and technical assistance from Egypt.

Egypt also established joint companies with some African countries for undertaking construction of industrial and other projects, irrigation of land and facilitating trade between the partners.

**Technical Aid**

Egypt also undertook a technical assistance programme in Africa. For this purpose it signed agricultural agreements and

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33. Ibid. See also *Egyptian Mail* (Cairo), 18 February 1961.

34. The trade and credit agreement signed with Guinea in May 1961 provided for the establishment of a joint Egyptian Guinean Company. An Egypt-Kenya Joint Commercial Company was formed with capital £ 750,000. Timber and furniture plant was established in Nigeria with joint capital.

35. Egypt signed agricultural agreements with the following countries: Guinea, Liberia, Mali and Somalia in 1961; Dahomey and Nigeria in 1962; Senegal in 1963; Congo (B) and Togo in 1964; Sierra Leone and Tanzania in 1965; Ghana in 1966; Burundi and Mauritania in 1967; Cameroon in 1969; and Central Africa in 1970.
technical co-operation agreements with various African countries. Sometimes provision for technical assistance was made in trade and payments agreements. Under these agreements Egypt sent agricultural exports, teachers, doctors and specialists in other fields to African countries, and also undertook public works projects such as construction of schools, hospitals, small factories and roads there.

There is a two-way traffic under these agreements. In addition to sending experts to African countries, Egypt receives students and officials for training. The Higher Technical Institute at Shubra, a suburb of Cairo, trained African students through a four-year course in technical education. Many African students have received intensive training at this Institute. Besides this, there are the Egyptian Planning Institute, the Institute of Public Administration and the Egyptian Federation of Labour which have arranged many courses of short duration for students, officials and trade unionists.

Egyptian co-operation with the African States in the military field has been on a moderate scale. Somalia was given

36. Egypt signed technical agreements with Guinea and Mali in 1961, with Congo(B) in August 1964, and with Ghana in 1966.

37. For example, Egypt undertook the construction of huge network of roads, a big hotel, and the new Government and National Assembly building in Mali.

38. For example, since 1965, the Egyptian Federation of Labour had conducted ten seminars, participated by some fifteen organizations (countries). Each seminar was of the duration of one month. So far some twenty-two countries participated. Author gathered this information from the office of the Egyptian Federation of Labour.
equipment for 5,000 soldiers, armoured and transport vehicles and two aircrafts which formed the nucleus of its air force.

Egypt has also been associated with Africa through the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Economic and Social Commission of the Organization of African Unity. Both these organizations have the same members -- all African states except South Africa and Rhodesia. Both these commissions are forums for discussion of economic and financial problems common to all Africa and for co-ordination of their activities for development.

Another institution through which Egypt has been working is the African Development Bank (ADB). The Bank came into existence in September 1964 and started its business in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, on 1 July 1968. Its membership is open to all independent African states except South Africa. Egypt took the lead in working out the charter and organization of the Bank and


40. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was established by Economic and Social Council of the United Nations by its resolution no. 671A and B (XXV) dated 29 April 1968. The main purpose of the Commission was to give effective aid to the countries and territories of Africa. For resolution 671 see United Nations, Office of Public Information, Year Book of the United Nations 1965 (New York, 1969), pp. 194-5.

41. The first meeting of the Economic and Social Commission of the OAU held in Niamey, Niger, in December 1963 adopted a resolution stating that the "Economic and Social Commission of the Organisation of African Unity is basically a policy making and executive body while the role of Economic Commission for Africa is generally limited to technical and advisory function." See Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Early Years of the OAU: The Search for Organizational Preeminence", International Organization (Boston), vol. 20, no. 4, 1966, p. 779.
contributed $30 million to its authorized capital of $250 million. The Bank seeks to contribute to the economic development and social progress of members either individually or jointly.

Egypt's endeavour for close economic co-operation with the African countries is also reflected in its participation in various economic conferences. It played host to some of them.

CULTURAL POLICY

Egypt's cultural policy in Africa was aimed at consolidating its traditional ties with sub-Saharan and African states and to forge new bonds. Muslims in Africa attracted Nasser's attention because these "brethren-in-Islam who, wherever their place under the sun, turn with us towards the Qibla, their lips solemnly saying the same prayers." Nasser recognized the

42. *Arab Observer*, no. 186, 13 January 1964, p. 36. Egypt purchased 3,000 shares of $10,000 each. Next comes Algeria which has contributed $24 million. Nigeria took third place with its contribution of $8 million.


44. For example, the following conferences were held in Cairo:


importance of this religious bond in bringing Africa closer to Egypt. In his Philosophy of the Revolution Nasser observed:

... As I ponder over these hundreds of millions of Moslems, all welded into a homogeneous whole by the same faith, I become increasingly conscious of the potential achievements; co-operation among all these millions can accomplish -- co-operation naturally not going beyond their loyalty to their original countries, but which will ensure for them and their brethren in Islam unlimited power. 46

Nasser underlined the importance of religious gatherings (such as Haj) and observed that, if used properly, these could become a great political force. He, therefore, wanted the Muslims to change their attitude towards going on pilgrimage. To him a pilgrimage, instead of being considered as a passport to paradise or as a crude attempt to buy forgiveness after leading dissipated life, should become a political conference where heads of Islamic states, leaders of opinion, scientists, eminent industrialists and prominent businessmen "... assemble to draw up at this world Islamic Parliament the broad lines of policies to be adopted by their respective countries and lay down the principles ensuring their close co-operation, until they have again gathered together in the following session." 47

The Egyptians also believed that African Muslims would turn to Cairo for assistance in learning the language of the Quran and understanding religion after their centuries long isolation by imperialism from the sources of their language and religion.

46. Ibid., p. 63.
47. Ibid., p. 62.
Egypt's cultural policies in Africa were by no means confined to forging Islamic unity. After all, not all Africans are Muslims. Moreover, religion and religious institutions have their own limitations. Secondly, as a "pioneer of liberty", Egypt "properly appreciated its duty towards the friendly countries of Africa and Asia...". Hence along with the pursuit of Islamic fraternity Egypt also resorted to modern means such as radio broadcasting, scholarships, and exchange of delegations to forge close relations with the African countries.

**Policy Instruments**

Many ministries and institutions were involved in the formulation and execution of Egypt's cultural policies. One of the important ones was the Islamic Congress. It was established in 1954 for the educational and social welfare of all Muslims; translation of the compendium of Islamic traditions into Asian and African languages; propagation of the message of Islam in Africa and Asia; teaching of Arabic; publication of the Holy Quran for wider distribution; initiation of studies on the economic problems of various Muslim countries; and promotion of commercial and trade relations between them. The Congress was designated as the agency of the Presidency of the Republic. Colonel Anwar Sadat, the present President, was appointed its first Secretary-General. He was to be advised by a panel of

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Islamic scholars.

Another instrument was the African Association established in 1956. The Association was meant to be a cultural body aiming to bring the African and Egyptian peoples together. The Department of Cultural Relations and Technical Co-operation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the official link between the cultural organizations at home and their counterparts abroad. There is an African Division in the Department which formulates and co-ordinates cultural policy as part of foreign policy, and organizes liaison with foreign organizations. It drafts cultural agreements and takes follow-up action.

The Ministry of National Guidance (renamed the Ministry of Information in 1970) was responsible for Egyptian publicity and propaganda in the African countries.

Though the main job of the Ministry of Higher Education is the administration and planning of universities and higher institutes in Egypt, it is also entrusted with cultural activities. The Ministry is responsible for the promotion of cultural and scientific co-operation with foreign countries. One of its functions was the administration of Egyptian cultural centres in Africa and other parts of the world.

The Ministry of Waqfs is responsible for the propagation of Islamic teachings in Egypt and abroad. Within the Ministry there are two main bodies which carry out this policy, the Directorate General for the Diffusion of Islam and the Higher

Council for Islamic Affairs. While the former looks after the diffusion of Islamic teachings in Egypt, the latter mainly concentrates on their propagation abroad through bursaries, grants-in-aid to Muslim students studying in Egypt, supply of libraries of Islamic knowledge. It contributes financially and technically to the establishment of mosques and centres of Islamic studies abroad. The Council was particularly active in Africa.

The Ministry of Al-Azhar Affairs has inter alia the following functions: supply of preachers and religious instructions to Muslim communities and Islamic cultural centres abroad; reception and accommodation of foreign students of Islamic theology; and supply of copies of the Holy Quran and religious books to the governments of Muslim states.

Survey of Cultural Relations

As mentioned earlier, before the July 1962 Revolution Egypt had lost almost all contact with Africa. Whatever contact there was, was mainly through Islam. This was maintained through Al-Azhar University, a leading centre of Islamic studies, where Muslims from Africa and other countries go for religious education. Many African pilgrims on their way to Mecca travelled through Egypt and forged another link with it.

51. Though the author visited all these institutions and offices (except Islamic Congress which was abolished then) for the above information, he was greatly benefited and has heavily drawn from Magdi Wahba, Cultural Policy in Egypt (UNESCO, Paris, 1972).
After the Revolution Egypt tried to strengthen this traditional cultural contact with Africa through the Islamic Congress and Cairo Radio. The Islamic Congress concentrated on strengthening Egypt's relations with other Islamic countries. It was very active in Africa, particularly in Somaliland, where it opened a cultural centre at Mogadishu (capital of Somaliland), and in northern Nigeria. There were thirty Egyptian teachers at the cultural centre at Mogadishu.

Egypt introduced broadcasting programmes for Africa in July 1954. Gradually the frequency and duration of daily transmission were increased, so much so that by 1966 Cairo Radio was broadcasting to Africa in 20 languages for 20 hours daily. Recitations from the Qur'an, cultural talks, music, songs and other cultural items formed an important part of this programme for Africa.

Cairo also felt the need to establish cultural contacts with Africa through secular forums. The setting up of the African Association in 1956 was a step in this direction. The Association organized meetings and seminars and published a monthly magazine on African culture titled *Nahdatu Afriquiah*. In its early days the Association also looked after African students who came to Cairo without making any previous arrangements.

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arrangement. It established an office to meet their residential and academic needs. Before 1967 it also used to grant scholarship to some of them. Even today many needy African students approach it for help, not necessarily financial.

With the independence of African countries, Egypt came in direct contact with them. It started consolidating its old religious links with African Muslims by helping them in religious and educational matters. For example, it presented a Teachers Training Institute to Somalia in 1965. It has granted £6,000 to build a mosque at the Fourth Bay College, University of Sierra Leone. 55 An agreement with Tanganyika concluded on 11 May 1964 provided for Egyptian engineers to design a mosque, a school and a cultural centre to be built in that country. The agreement also provided that "Muslims in the United Arab Republic will supply the Muslim Association at Dar-es-Salaam with a complete library of Islamic works".

Egypt distributed religious materials to African Muslims free of charge. This was mainly done by the Higher Council for Islamic Affairs which was responsible for the diffusion of Islamic teachings abroad. The Council, since its inception in 1960, had distributed 562,000 copies of the Quran in some thirty

54. This was the time (1956-1960) when many students from different African countries such as Chad, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Niger, Somalia, and Uganda used to come to Egypt without any previous arrangement and in some cases even without any valid visa. This information is provided by the Secretary, African Association.


56. Ibid., vol. 5, no. 5, Mid June 1964 (cover 1-31 May 1964), p. 86A.
African countries south of Sahara besides some 1,000 records of Quranic recital, 5,600 teachings of Salah and about 2,411,000 Islamic books. At one stage, Egypt was also thinking of appointing "Religious Attachés" to its missions in Africa.

However, as all African countries are not Islamic and as most of them even do not have Muslim majorities, Islam could not be a universal consolidating factor in Africa. So in those having substantial numbers of Muslims, Egypt tried to project itself as an Islamic country while in those where Christianity dominates it projected itself as a secular country. The existence of 5 million Christians among Egypt's 33 million population was capitalized upon. Links between the Christians of Egypt and Ethiopia were emphasized. Advantage was also taken of the Coptic Church's membership of the All African Council of Churches.

Egypt consolidated its cultural bonds with Africa by signing several agreements between 1961 and 1970. These were

57. These figures are reluctantly given to the author during his field work in Cairo by the official of the Council without giving any documentary proof.

58. The original idea was to appoint graduates of Al-Azhar University who would also have a good command either of English, French or Swahili. But it appears that the idea has subsequently been abandoned. See Netanel Lorch, "Israel and Africa", World Today (London), vol. 19 (1963), p. 362. See also Miles Copeland, The Game of Nations: The Amoralities of Power Politics (London, 1969), p. 157 and Jerusalem Post, 24 January 1961.

59. President Nasser, Emperor Haile Selassie and the Coptic Patriarch Kyrillos VI jointly unveiled a memorial tablet to mark the consecration of the new Coptic Cathedral of St. Mark on 25 June 1968.
concluded (either separately or as part of trade agreements) with Chad, Cameroon, Congo(B), Dahomey, Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somaliland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Upper Volta and Zambia. They provided for exchange of scientists, teachers, experts, students, T.V. and broadcasting programmes, supply of instruments required by educational institutions, opening of cultural centres etc. The agreement with Guinea also provided for mutual recognition of university degrees and school certificates, and research into the history of West Africa in general and Guinea in particular. Under the agreement with Niger Egypt agreed to send a mission of Egyptologists to the former to compare early Touareg writings with the hieroglyphics of the Pharaonic era.

The Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education opened cultural centres in some African countries such as Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Somalia. These centres organized cultural activities, including lectures, film shows, libraries and seminars. They were provided with magazines and documentary films highlighting Egypt's progress. The attaches and counsellors at the centres arranged lectures and technical and cultural exhibitions.

One of the most important aspects of Egypt's cultural relations with Africa is the presence of a large number of African students in the country. Egypt has attracted a large

60. *Africa Report* (Washington), vol. 8, no. 8, August 1963, p. 27.

number of students from all over the Muslim world. The number of African students began to increase after the advent of independence in sub-Saharan Africa. In 1953-54 there were 5,600 foreign students in Egypt. Their number went up to 22,514 in 1962-63 and to 33,415 in 1965-66. In the year 1970-71 it was estimated at 40,000. Nearly half of them come from the Arab world. An area-wise break-up for the year 1966-66 shows that out of a total of 33,415 foreign students, 24,745 were from the Arab world and 1,360 from sub-Saharan Africa.

The reason why so many Afro-Asian students are attracted to Egypt is firstly the existence of Al-Azhar University in Egypt. Egypt's early cultural contact with Africa was mainly through this University. Secondly, secular education is much more advanced in Egypt than in other Arab or African countries. It is also less expensive. Moreover, the Egyptian Government awards thousands of scholarships to foreign students to promote cultural intercourse.

Students coming for secondary education and technical education and undergraduate students are given £2 15 on first arrival in Egypt and £2 10 per month thereafter. In addition they get free tuition, free medical care and a yearly book allowance which varies between £2 10 and £2 20. If a student stays in a government hostel, as most of them do, he gets free food and lodging but only half of his £2 10 as pocket money.

63. Ibid., p. 185.
A post-graduate student receives between £3 20 and £5 30 per month. As for travelling expenses, one-way ticket is paid by his (student's) government and the rest by the Egyptian Government. Thus Egypt spends a substantial sum of money on foreign students.

Many educational institutions in Egypt have hostels attached to them which are open to foreign students. The biggest hostel for foreign students in Egypt -- perhaps, in the world -- is "the City of Islamic Mission". This is a complex comprising some 42 three-storey buildings. About six thousand students from 70 countries are accommodated in it. Most of the students belong to Al-Azhar University.

For guest students in Cairo there is a social club -- the Foreign Students Club -- which is financed and run by the Egyptian Government. The club takes students to historical places and monuments. The Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs also arranges tours and two-week summer camps at Alexandria for foreign students.

As already mentioned, African students used to visit Cairo to study at Al-Ashar even before the Revolution though

64. "UAR, an African Cultural Centre", Arab Observer, no. 162, 29 July 1963, p. 32.

65. Ministry of Waqf yearly spends nearly £8 5 million. This together with Al-Azhar and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs should come to about £8 15 million yearly. This is a rough estimate made by an official of the Higher Education Ministry.

66. After the incident of 1971 in which foreign students demonstrated against the Egyptian authority and threw out the Egyptian watch and ward staff, there are now in the hostel three thousand Egyptian students along with three thousand foreign students.
their number was small. After the Revolution, in its anxiety to forge closer links with Africa, the Government began encouraging African students, both Muslim and non-Muslim, to study in Egypt. Those who came to Egypt were well looked after. Those who had not been granted scholarships were immediately sent to the African Association which looked after them until scholarships and accommodation for them were arranged. This practice still continues for students hailing from African countries not yet independent. Many independent African countries, on the other hand, themselves sponsored students to various Egyptian universities and institutions.

The number of sub-Saharan African students visiting Egypt for studies is increasing year after year. Their number went up from 979 in 1963-64 to 1,360 in 1965-66. On an average there is a 10 per cent yearly increase. The total number of African students at university level together with those at the training centres in the year 1970 was 1,010. Those in the faculties and at all levels including primary and secondary, numbered 2,500.

The fact that Arabic is the medium of instruction in educational institutions in Egypt posed some difficulties for sub-Saharan African students. But these were partly solved by some institutions which impart education either in English or


68. This is a rough estimate made by an official of the Egyptian Education Ministry.
in French. Thus Egypt could make arrangements for English-speaking as well as French-speaking students from Africa. Secondary school students from English-speaking parts of Africa are placed at El Nasser (formerly Victoria College) and those from French-speaking Africa at El-Hurriyya College (formerly Lycee Francis) where the medium of instruction is English and French respectively. The higher technical institute at Shubra is meant for African students who do not speak Arabic. Here they take commercial, industrial and agricultural courses in English or French as they like. At university level students who speak English and are admitted to Cairo University’s Faculty of Science and Faculty of Medicine can pursue their studies in English. The Faculty of Engineering of Ain Shams University and the Faculty of Agriculture of Alexandria University also offer courses in English. At Cairo University, Social Science students can do their examination papers in English, though lectures are given in Arabic. The language problem is more serious for African students coming from French-speaking Africa because except Law no other Faculty imparts education through French. In recent years this problem has been solved to a great extent. Moreover, students who spend one or two years in Egypt can pick up working knowledge to be able to pursue their studies. There are special classes for Africans wanting to learn Arabic at the famous Saadeya Secondary School.

69. Founded for children of the British civil and military staff serving in Egypt before the Revolution and for children of status-conscious oil Shaikhs.

70. Arab Observer, n. 64, p. 31.
As for the subjects chosen by African students, religious and theological education has attracted quite a large number of students which has been increasing steadily. The number of students going for technical education has also been rising in recent years. But the number of students in the field of Social Sciences is rather small. Of the 970 African students in Egypt in 1963-64, 635 had enrolled for technical education, 242 for universities and 102 for high institutions. Of late, African students have shown interest in institutions of the performing arts. In 1970, there were 22 students -- 15 boys and 7 girls -- learning them.

While Egypt admits African students to its universities, it also sends Egyptian teachers to African Universities. According to Egyptian Gazette, the Committee formed of representatives of the Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Faculty of Education of Min Sham University, had completed a draft plan for training 660 school-teachers for work in African countries every year.

Besides students and teachers, Egypt has been sending political, economic, educational and cultural delegations to sub-Saharan African countries. Though Nasser himself was not a frequent visitor to these countries, he did visit Ethiopia (1965), Guinea (1965), Mali (1965), and Tanzania (1966). Many African delegations and Heads of State and Governments also visited

72. Egyptian Gazette (Cairo), 6 August 1963.
Egypt and the wives of at least three African dignitaries settled down in the country along with their children. They are Mrs. Du Bois, Mrs. Nkrumah, and Mrs. Lumumba.

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Having surveyed the character and course of Egypt's economic and cultural policies towards sub-Saharan Africa, it is necessary to identify the limitations and prospects of its economic and cultural diplomacy in that region.

In the economic field the major constraint was that about 90 per cent of the recorded trade of the continent is with countries outside Africa, particularly with former metropolitan countries. African countries have very little trade among themselves. It was only about 10 per cent of their total external trade. Even this very small intra-African trade was mainly concentrated between the ex-metropolitan territories. For instance, in the ex-British territories in east, central and south Africa, 80 per cent of this intra-African trade was with one another. The same is true of the French-speaking Africa.

74. Ibid., p. 152.

The ex-metropolitan territories have made an elaborate arrangement for this purpose:

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While Egypt substantially reduced its dependence on the European Powers, the latter's hold on Africa's economy is still considerable. Thus in African markets Egyptian export products have to face unequal competition in quality and prices from the industrially advanced ex-colonial Powers -- particularly from the United Kingdom in East Africa and France in West Africa.

Another difficulty in the way of Egypt improving its trade with Africa is that the latter can export only raw materials, while the former needs in some cases semi-finished goods. Thus despite Africa's large forest resources, its trade with Egypt has not much developed. For what Africa (Congo, Ghana, Nigeria) exports is raw wood and what Egypt requires is processed wood of a relatively high value. Hence opportunities for direct exchange of goods are limited.

But a major hindrance in the way of intra-African trade is the absence of communications -- roads, rail, air links. Egypt particularly faced this problem in trading with West African countries. The trans-sea routes between Egypt and

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A - The former French colonies and mandates have made various experiments in creating economic and financial links among themselves. The most important which still exists is the Council d'Entente the UOEA (an Economic and Customs Union).

B - The equatorial African States - Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo (B), and Gabon are united in custom and economic union.

C - Three countries of east Africa - Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, maintained substantial economic co-operation. They shared a common market, monetary union, and other services and utilities.

See also Kamarck, n. 3, p. 40.
Africa are inadequate. Moreover, Egypt does not have sufficient number of ships for transportation of goods. It has to hire them.

As pointed out earlier, Africa needs services of experts and Egypt was in a position to supply some of them. But it is not enough to have these services. Africa requires huge funds which Egypt is not in a position to offer. Egypt itself is in need of hard currency and the inability of African countries to pay for their imports further prevents the growth of trade between them. Comparatively low credit terms have to be offered for supply of machinery. Moreover, some of Egypt's export items for Africa including textiles, cement, sugar, shoes and conserves have to be subsidized. These commodities are often in short supply in the home market and Egypt has to import them from West European and Soviet Bloc countries.

Last but not the least, Egyptian trading organizations are often blamed for inefficiency and clumsiness. The Egyptian Director of Trade, Senegal branch, has said that Egyptian shipments of textiles frequently arrive after the licences have expired. The Director of Trade, Nigerian branch, stated that often markets were lost because of minor lapses, such as tins of sardines arriving without openers. The cumulative result


78. Ibid.
of those difficulties was that trade between Egypt and Africa south of Sahara suffered.

However, despite these obstacles, Egypt has made some headway in establishing economic relations with Africa. The value of its trade with Africa increased from some few hundred pounds in 1952 to some £3 12,841,000 in 1970. Since their independence some African countries have been trying to reduce their dependence on the Western Powers. They are also trying to reconstruct their economies which may remove the danger of one-product domination. Economic integration has been in the forefront of discussions in Africa since the independence of many countries. At one time the Casablanca group stood for an African Common Market. Consolidation of economic ties, economic co-operation and harmony are among the objectives of the OAU. After its formation the OAU established an economic and social commission to promote intra-African co-operation in economic and social matters. These developments are favourable to Egypt which stands for the setting up of an African Common Market. Hence, it may be concluded that Egypt's economic co-operation with Africa is likely to increase considerably.

In the cultural field, education has been the main focus of Egypt's activities. But the African education system, shaped mostly on the Western model, has posed a problem. Another barrier is language. Besides, admitting a large number of students and opening up society for them at various levels is not without risk. For if the students are not satisfied with the treatment accorded to them by the host country, they go
back bitter and angry. However, it must be said to the credit of Egypt that it has been hospitable to African students. There is no colour discrimination against them. Many African students have vouched for this to the author.

But that does not mean everything is working smoothly. Social and psychological problems still persist. As an Egyptian student put it, "To many of us black man is still a black man". This is on social level; but even on governmental level, things are not that good. It seems that Egyptian bureaucracy, which is to handle this delicate problem, is not conscious of the political, social and emotional factors involved in it. The author was an eye-witness to an incident in which an agitated African student tried in vain to talk to an Egyptian Education Ministry official who refused to listen to him. The student shouted: "I am talking to you and not to this wall".

In other fields of cultural activity such as broadcasting, television and arts, Africa has yet to make appreciable progress. Religion is still a dominant factor and perhaps the most tangible bond for Egypt to forge closer links with Africa. Egypt has been exploiting it and would go on doing so as long as it is profitable. But as and when other fields of cultural activity open up in Africa, it would change over to more secular institutions and approaches.