Chapter II

FOUNDATIONS OF EGYPT'S AFRICA POLICY
Despite its historical contact with Africa, Egypt's thinking during the period between its occupation by Britain and World War II, did not go beyond the Nile valley. After World War II, it started taking some interest in African problems mainly to express its dissatisfaction with the colonial powers. This was particularly reflected in its role in the United Nations. At this stage came the July Revolution.

The revolutionary leadership did not come out with a readymade foreign policy. After overthrowing the old regime and introducing some urgently needed social and economic reforms, it took a fresh look at the country's stand on world affairs in the context of its geographical position, historical experience, cultural orientation and new urges and aspirations. In this process it also reviewed the country's relations with Africa. The perspective in which Egypt viewed Africa, its interests and objectives in the continent, the machinery set up to formulate and carry out its Africa policy and the process of formulation form the theme of this chapter.

LAYING DOWN THE BASES OF AFRICA POLICY

The revolutionary leadership showed a growing awareness of and interest in Africa from the very beginning. President Nasser in his The Philosophy of the Revolution, said to have been published in 1963, wrote:
Can we ignore that there is a Continent of Africa in which fate has placed us and which is destined today to witness a terrible struggle for its future? This struggle affects us whether we want it or not. 1

He added:

... We cannot under any condition, even if we wanted to stand aloof from the terrible and terrifying battle now ranging in the heart of that continent between five million whites and two hundred million Africans. We cannot stand aloof for one important and obvious reason - we ourselves are in Africa. 2

It is clear from the above quotation of Nasser that the revolutionary leadership understood the importance of Africa to Egypt as Egypt itself was in Africa. It is also evident that Egypt had sympathy with African nationalists in their struggle with the colonialists. However, it had not developed sufficient contacts with or awareness of the continent. In its attempt to establish rapport with African nationalist leaders, the revolutionary leadership initiated moves — to emphasize its anti-colonial affinity and Islamic link with them. In 1954 Cairo Radio started making broadcasts to African countries expressing its sympathy with them. Then through Islam Egypt tried to establish contacts with the emerging African leadership. This is evident from the fact that the Islamic Congress, established in 1954 to propagate


2. Ibid., pp. 60-61.

3. Egypt's broadcasting programme for Africa is discussed in Chapter III.
the message of Islam, was more active in Africa than in any other Islamic area.

The initial difficulties of establishing contacts with African nationalist leaders were mitigated by the Bandung Conference of April 1955. The Bandung Conference, with its emphasis on Afro-Asiaticism, reinforced Egypt's interest in Africa. This made it necessary for it to re-evaluate its foreign policy in the African context. The problem became more urgent after the Sudan's independence in January 1956, for before this, Egypt's Africa policy which had the Sudan as its main focus, had emphasized unity of the Nile valley. With the independence of the Sudan, the dream of unity of the Nile valley faded away. Egypt now started visualizing Africa outside the Nile valley. A new policy orientation was called for.

Accordingly, in January 1956 a Supreme Committee was formed to draw up an outline of Egypt's political, economic, social and religious policy towards Africa. The Committee made detailed recommendations in this regard. An article titled


"An African Policy for Egypt" by "a correspondent" published in the *Egyptian Economic and Political Review* in August 1956 is believed to give a summary of the Committee's report.

The article described Africa as the continent of the future and highlighted Egypt's political, economic and cultural interests in it. It warned Egyptians that being a continent of the future it was bound to be the last hope of imperialism after its retreat from Asia. But as the time had changed and as the Africans were fighting for their independence, imperialism would not be in a position to hold on to its position for long. As the "largest" and "richest" African state and as a state which occupied an eminent position in the Islamic and Arabic world, Egypt, the article argued, should help Africans in their struggle for freedom. It suggested that the country should fight against racial discrimination, work for the unity of Africa and take measures such as the setting up of a diplomatic network, propaganda through broadcasting, films and printed matter, establishment of communications, sending missions to Africa and inviting Africans to Egypt. In the following years Egypt tried to execute this policy in Africa.

Once convinced of the importance of Africa and having decided to play an active role in that continent the

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6. Ismael, n. 5, p. 34. See also *The Times* (London), 2 October 1956. *The Times* stated: "A detailed programme for the assumption by Egypt of leadership of the African Continent is suggested... The *Egyptian Economic and Political Review*... article is anonymous but probably presents government policy."

revolutionary leadership now wanted to create an "African consciousness" among the Egyptian people to match its interests and involvement in Africa. In this attempt as early as 1963 the revolutionary leadership published a series of books on Africa to propagate the ideas of the revolution. As Egypt's involvement in Africa increased, the need for creating African awareness also assumed special significance. It was felt that for the success of Egypt's Africa policy it was necessary to draw the attention of the Egyptian people to Africa. The task of creating an African consciousness among the Egyptian people was entrusted to Egyptian academics and publicists. Nasser said in a speech at Alexandria University:

> During long years, we were kept isolated from Africa; colonialism prevented us and separated us from unity with Africa; and today, we find our brothers in Africa extending their hands to us, and we find that we are in need of increasing our knowledge about Africa. Who can undertake this task...? The Universities are our Vanguard in this field...

Meanwhile Egypt established in 1956 an African Association in Cairo. The Association was a socio-cultural body which aimed at bringing together the Egyptian and African peoples. It consisted of (i) Egyptian intellectuals, university teachers and journalists; (ii) Officials interested in or encouraged to


take interest in Africa; (iii) African students studying in Egypt; and (iv) Egyptian students interested in Africa. The Association had its headquarters in the fashionable Cairo suburb of Zamalek, and was headed by a Secretary-General, Mohamed Abdul Aziz Isaak. It had two Committees -- social and cultural. It published a journal, Nahdatu Ifriqiya, in English and Arabic. The Association was wholly financed and controlled by the government, with officials mostly from the African Bureau in the Presidency and the Foreign and Education Ministries taking a prominent part in its affairs.

The government also showed an awareness of the need for Egyptians to study Africa in a systematic manner. In his The Philosophy of the Revolution Nasser had observed:

"Indeed, I shall continue to dream of the day on which I shall see in Cairo a great African Institute seeking to reveal to us the various...

11. This information is based on interviews by the author with persons connected with the African Association.

12. Isaak was a nationalist leader of Egypt. After the Revolution he went to the Sudan ("to avoid imprisonment"). There he started a college. In 1955 he took active part in establishing a branch of Cairo University in Khartoum. At the end of 1955 he came to Cairo and became Secretary-General of the African Association (1956-66). He was also Editor-in-Chief of the Association's journal Nahdatu Ifriqiya. Afterwards he was appointed a counsellor in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He visited many African countries. At the time of the first Congo crisis he was in the Congo. Before Lumumba was arrested, he told Isaak to take his children out of the Congo. He managed to take them to Europe and from there to Egypt where they are still having their education.

13. Later the African Association also started publishing African Association Review in English.

14. The author has personal knowledge of this.
aspects of the continent, to create in our minds an enlightened African consciousness and to associate itself with all those working in all parts of the world for the progress, prosperity and welfare of the peoples of Africa. 15

This theme was also reflected in the article referred to earlier which suggested the establishment of an Institute of African Studies to be manned by a group of scientists and professors specializing in African affairs. Egypt's Africa policy, the article argued, should be planned and directed in the light of an accurate knowledge of the conditions in African countries. Accordingly, in 1960 Cairo University converted its Institute of Sudanese Studies, founded in 1947 and attached to the Faculty of Arts of the University, into an autonomous Institute of African Studies for post-graduate study and research. The Institute is housed in an old building in Dokki, a suburb of Cairo, and is headed by a Director. It has six departments: Geography, History, National Resources, Anthropology, African Languages and Social Studies. The students are required to do a two-year course followed by research on African subjects for one year leading to the Master's degree. After that they can enrol for Ph.D. There is a growing interest among the Egyptians to study Africa and every year some 300 students are admitted to the various departments of the Institute which has


17. It seems that in Egypt the study of Politics and International Relations at university level is the monopoly of top-class bureaucrats and journalists. The popular subjects for research are Antiquities, Anthropology and Israeli Affairs.
its own library covering a wide range of subjects: from
Antiquities to Administration and from Fine Arts to Foreign
Relations.

EGYPT'S INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES IN AFRICA

Of all the factors that guide a country's foreign policy,
it's national interest as seen by the ruling elite is the most
important. Seen thus, Egypt's interests in Africa fall into
seven broad categories: (i) Geo-strategic, (ii) the Nile Basin,
(iii) Political, (iv) Containment of Israel, (v) Economic,
(vi) Cultural, and (vii) Sense of mission. We shall discuss
these interests one by one in the following pages.

(1) Geo-strategic Interests:

As mentioned earlier, geographically Egypt belongs to
Africa and is situated in the north-eastern corner of that
continent. One of the marked features of its geography is that
it is situated at the point of convergence of three continents;
Asia, Africa and Europe. This strategic position and its past
experience made Egypt to think that the continued presence of
colonialism and imperialism in Africa was a danger to its
security and hence colonialism and imperialism must be thrown
as far away from its borders as possible. "In our view", said
Al-Akhbar, "the survival of imperialism and despotism near our

18. It must, however, be added that the library and its
resources for documentation are still meagre and its
teaching of African languages is not much advanced,
frontiers is a direct threat to our liberty and independence." If colonialism had bases in nearby areas these would be used to attack or pressurize Egypt. Thus the colonial powers' domination of Africa, Mediterranean or Red Sea areas was viewed as a danger to the country's security.

Many of Egypt's actions in this region have been motivated by this consideration. In the nineteenth century, when pressed by Mahdi's forces and pressurized by Britain to withdraw from the Sudan, the Egyptian Prime Minister, Sharif Pasha, declined to comply. One of the reasons given by him was that "it would strip Egypt of its national frontiers" which were essential to its security. President Nasser's statement, quoted above, also reflected this concern when it said, "We ourselves are in Africa." So the struggle going on in Africa was "our" struggle.

Egypt saw African independence as an integral whole and considered imperialistic domination of any country in the continent as a threat to all the other independent countries. "Needless to say", said The Scribe, the Egyptian journal, "any


20. Speaking at a dinner given by the Greek-Arab Friendship Society and the Cypriots Association in honour of Archbishop Makarios of Cyprus in Cairo on 4 June 1968 Nasser said: "Cyprus was used in the aggression launched against us as a base for the aircraft which attacked us ... its freedom is necessary for our security." United Arab Republic, Information Department, President Gamal Abdel Nasser's Speeches and Press Interviews 1958 (Cairo, n.d.), p. 201.

encroachment on freedom in any part of Africa jeopardises the cause of freedom in other parts of the continent." So Egypt must work for the liberation of the whole continent. By doing so it would in fact be safeguarding its own independence. "When we support African issues and independence movements elsewhere, we actually consolidate our own independence", Nasser told his Damascus audience.

(ii) The Nile Basin:

While the location of Egypt explains its security concerns, the Nile has been its source of physical sustenance. Herodotus described Egypt as the gift of the Nile and it is a truism to say that "Were it not for the Nile, there would be nothing to make Egypt any different from any other part of the Sahara". A country with a negligible rainfall, limited cultivable area and growing population, it wholly depends on the waters of the Nile for its agriculture which is a predominant sector of its economy. As Fabunmi puts it


25. Agriculture is the mainstay of the Egyptian economy. It absorbs more than half of the manpower (about 60 per cent) and accounts for nearly 30 per cent of the national produce. It also constitutes the major part of the country's exports.
"... Egypt depends upon the flow of the Nile waters as the individual depends upon the blood circulation." Nasser himself described Nile as "the life artery of our country."

The importance of the Nile river to Egypt can hardly be over-emphasized. Egypt depends on the Nile, but the sources of the Nile are not in Egypt. They are deep in Africa. The Nile which enters Egypt is made up of three rivers: the White Nile, the Blue Nile, and the Atbara which is the Blue Nile's tributary. The White Nile has its origin in Lake Victoria near Tanzania, and the Blue Nile and Atbara in the highlands of Gojam Amhara and Shera in the northern districts of Ethiopia. Khartoum is the confluence of the Blue and the White Nile -- the centre of its hydrographic system.

The year-round rains in the Equatorial region feed the White Nile. It flows northward through Uganda and into the Sudan. Though the volume of its flow fluctuates very little it loses a great deal of its waters by evaporation. The Blue Nile and the Atbara rivers rise in the mountains of Ethiopia and derive their waters from the heavy summer rains there. They have a strongly seasoned flow with a flood crest that moves downstream from Ethiopia and reaches Egypt in summer. The Blue Nile contributes to Egypt's summer floods while the White Nile provides a smaller but more steady flow that

27. Nasser, n. 1, p. 56.
Another important feature of the Nile basin is that there is only one point in the country at which floods of the Nile can be regulated. All other points are beyond Egypt's frontiers. In addition, Ethiopia and other East African countries command the most direct route of access to the Nile valley. All these make this area -- through which Nile flows and which commands direct access to its resources -- a "sensitive area" for Egypt. A hostile Power in the upper reaches of the Nile, particularly in Uganda, Ethiopia and the Sudan can bring to bear pressure on Egypt by threatening to dry up the river. Though the task would be enormously difficult and costly, instances of such threats are not entirely lacking. In late nineteenth century when France was anxious to end British occupation of Egypt, "an eminent French engineer" put forward the suggestion that dams be built at the outlets of Lake Victoria and Lake Albert and at the confluence of the Sobat at the White Nile. He said that these reservoirs, if built, would control the fate of Egypt, for if they were kept closed Egypt would be deprived of the needed supply, while if they were opened in flood time they could be used to wash out the


entire Egyptian civilization. In the fifties of this century when Egypt decided to construct the Aswan Dam with Soviet assistance, the United States proposed "a Nile River Development Project, evidently to keep the Soviet Union out of Africa. The project was to include the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, the Sudan, Tanganyika and Uganda. That the United States could not make the other riparian countries to agree to the project which had to be abandoned is a different story. Had they agreed to it, Egypt would have found it difficult to proceed with its own project.

For these reasons, Egypt could not feel secure until the whole course of the great river was either under its own control or in the hands of friendly powers. Cairo Radio announced that Egypt's geographical situation required that it should work for the liberation of the African continent, in which the Nile flows, from all forms of imperialism. In fact, protection and utilization of the waters of the Nile have always been significant factors in Egypt's foreign policy. The well known Egyptian political scientist, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, observes:


Langer said that though the French engineer was indulging in dangerous speculation, it could be shown "that the French, anxious as they were to free the British evacuation of Egypt, formulated their policy in the Congo and in Ethiopia on this idea of getting control of the Nile waters."


From Cheops to Mohammed Ali, from Mohammed Ali to Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egyptian foreign policy has been dominated by two challenges: the first has been the physical task of mastering the waters of the Nile; the second has been the moral task of deciding how the Egyptian rulers should use the wealth resulting from the cultivation of the Nile valley.... 33

It was the realization of the importance of the Nile that was one of the motives of Egypt's conquest of the Sudan in early nineteenth century. It was this importance of the Nile to Egypt that led Britain after its occupation of Egypt in 1882 to expand its control over those areas of Africa where the sources of the Nile are located. Britain's subsequent campaign into the Sudan was undertaken both to protect its position in Egypt and to guarantee the flow of the Nile waters. Egypt's demand for the unity of the Nile valley, discussed in the previous chapter, was motivated more by its desire to safeguard the life-giving waters of the Nile than by its desire to dominate the


34. Langer, n. 30, p. 261.

35. Once in Egypt Britain saw "... new frontiers of insecurity". Egypt is the gift of the Nile, so the sources of the Nile must be safeguarded. This took Britain to areas through which the Nile flows. For an excellent exposition of this argument, see Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism (London, 1961). See also Lois A.C. Raphael, The Cape to Cairo dream: A Study of British Imperialism (New York, 1936).

Sudan. Egypt believed that "in unity alone lies her definite guarantee for the protection of Egypt's vital interests in the Sudan". And when it found that this was not acceptable to the Sudanese, Egypt worked for the elimination of British influence from the Sudan by supporting its independence.

In its attempt to protect its life-giving waters and to give it legal sanctity Egypt had also signed many treaties with riparian countries in regard to the utilization of the Nile waters. Not only that, when Uganda under British rule decided to construct the Owen Falls Dam at the outlet of Lake Victoria, the Egyptian Government contributed a million pounds in order to raise its level and to compensate property owners along the shore and thus ensured its presence at the Dam.

(iii) Political Interests

The political significance of Africa to Egypt is derived from the obvious fact that Egypt itself is an integral part of the continent. "Our people live at the north-eastern gate of the struggling Africa and cannot be isolated.


40. George B. Cressey, Crossroads: Land and Life in South West Asia (Chicago, 1960), p. 354. The Dam was completed in 1954. Egypt has a resident engineer at the Dam.
from its political, social and economic development", said the Charter, the policy document of the Egyptian Government. This led Egypt to support the national liberation struggle in Africa. By doing so, Egypt hoped not only to engage the colonial powers in their own trouble-spots, but also to win the friendship of African nationalists.

Nasser realized that after the independence of African countries, the course of developments in them was of crucial importance to the future balance of international forces. If these states were to join either of the blocs it would bring the Cold War to Egypt's backyard. On the contrary, if they kept away from Cold War politics it would add to the strength of the countries following a neutral policy -- a course Egypt had chosen for itself long before the independence of the African countries. So closer co-operation with African countries was essential. This would also increase Egypt's diplomatic influence which could be a defensive weapon in protecting its independence from foreign, especially Western imperialist, pressure.


43. The article by a correspondent referred to above asked Egypt to work for "Africa for the Africans". It said that that would help Egypt to win a high position in the hearts of the peoples of Africa. And "this will make all these countries direct their gaze towards Egypt and gather around her". See A Correspondent, n. 7, p. 23.
From Egypt's point of view it was not enough to have close relations with Africa. It also wanted African countries to take a unified stand not only on African issues but also on other international issues. The article by a correspondent published in *Egyptian Economic and Political Review* suggested that Egypt "... must endeavour to unify the peoples of the continent and discover a tie to join them so that they may form a united blocks (sic) in economy, defence and politics vis-a-vis the big blocks (sic) now existing in the world."

Once this was achieved, Egypt thought it would be in a position to influence Africa, if not control it. Egypt's leadership of independent African states would not only matter in the international field but it could also be used as a lever in its struggle for Arab leadership.

(iv) Containment of Israel

Containment of the growing Israeli influence in Africa was a comparatively new factor in Egypt's Africa policy. This was clear from the fact that there was no reference to it either in Nasser's *The Philosophy of the Revolution* or in the suggested programme for Egypt's Africa policy published in the August 1956 issue of *Egyptian Economic and Political Review*. This factor assumed importance after the independence of Ghana in 1957.

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44. Ibid., p. 21.

After the independence of Ghana Israel started cultivating friendship with it by helping it in the reconstruction of its economic life. This it has done mainly by giving it technical assistance. The successful Ghana-Israel collaboration on the one hand provided an ideal example for other African countries to follow, and on the other hand it gave Israel the much needed confidence and stimuli to cultivate friendship with the emerging African states. Henceforth, as soon as an African country became independent Israel approached it with an offer of technical assistance and a request for the establishment of diplomatic relations. Within a short period it spread its diplomatic and technical assistance network throughout Africa. Israel's main objective in befriending African countries was its desire to overcome the diplomatic and economic isolation imposed on it by the Arab countries surrounding it. It was equally concerned with neutralizing the emerging African nations vis-à-vis the Arab-Israeli dispute and even winning them over to its own side.

The penetration of Africa by Israel was a source of concern to Egypt which viewed the Jewish state as a creation of colonialism and an agent of imperialism. Therefore, Israel's presence in Africa was tantamount to the presence of colonialism and imperialism in the continent and, to that extent, it constituted a threat to Egypt's security and even to its survival. The Charter, an Egyptian policy document

46. Israel's objectives in and penetration of Africa are more exhaustively discussed in Chapter VI.

issued in 1962, says: "Our pursuit of Israeli policy of infiltration in Africa is only an attempt to limit the spread of a destructive imperialist concern." Israel's infiltration in Africa also meant its acceptance by African countries which because of Egypt's non-recognition of Israel and because of the continuing Arab Israeli conflict Egypt did not like. To curb, and if possible to eliminate, Israel's political, diplomatic and economic presence in Africa, therefore, became one of the main objectives of Egypt's Africa policy.

(v) Economic Interests:

Egypt's interests in Africa cannot be explained in geopolitical terms alone. Besides the Nile, which closely links Egypt with the Sudan, Ethiopia and Uganda and on which its economic welfare and very survival depend, it has also other important stakes in Africa.

As pointed out earlier, ninety per cent of Egypt's total area of about one million square kilometers (3,600,000 sq. miles) is desert and hence unsuitable for settlement or cultivation. The real Egypt consists essentially of a narrow valley -- some 3 to 16 km. (two to ten miles) wide -- cut by the Nile river in the plateau of north-east Africa and the Nile delta. The inhabitants and cultivable land is only about 35,000 square kilometers (1,351 sq. miles) which makes Egypt one of the most thickly populated countries in the world with a density


of 369 persons per square kilometer (956 persons per square mile). It is not surprising that Egypt should look towards neighbouring countries for openings for its growing population. Reference has already been made to Egypt's attempt to find a remedy in emigration to the Sudan when the 1927 census revealed an alarming increase in its population. The scope for this avenue diminished in the wake of Sudanese independence. At the same time, the advance of Africa towards political and economic emancipation opened up new opportunities for educated and skilled Egyptians in the continent.

Compared with other African countries, Egypt has a relatively developed industrial base. After the 1952 Revolution there was greater emphasis on rapid industrialization. In this context, Egypt looked at Africa as a source of the raw materials it required for its growing industries and as a market for its manufactures. Speaking of Africa's raw materials, Mohamed Hassanein Heikal observes: "... Our future depends to a large extent on economic co-operation with the African continent which is considered the richest

50. Ibid., p. 549. "While Nigeria's 33 million are spread comfortably over an area of 373,250 square miles (about 84 persons per square mile); Egypt's 23 million are packed in an area of 13,578 square miles - the inhabitable part of the total area of 383,198 square miles." Fabunmi, n. 26, p. 1231.

51. See Chapter I.

52. An article written by a correspondent suggested to the Government to encourage the emigration of Egyptians to many African countries, to facilitate their journey and grant them subsidies. See A Correspondent, n. 7, pp. 23-24.

53. Ibid., p. 23.
continent on earth," Cairo took measures to promote the entry of its products into the African markets. In 1965 Heikal was "indescribably happy" to see many Egyptian commodities on display there.

Egypt's economic interests in Africa were further strengthened by its need to diversify its foreign trade. Its initial attempts to reduce its dependence on the Western Bloc had led to close economic relations with the Soviet Bloc. By the end of 1957 the Soviet Union had received about 20 per cent of Egypt's total exports. Cairo apprehended that the Soviet Bloc might break its trade links with Egypt without the least hesitation as these were based purely on political considerations. Should this happen, the Egyptian economy would sustain a setback. Hence, Egypt's search for alternative economic links with non-communist countries, especially in Asia and Africa.

(vi) Cultural Interests

Egypt's cultural interests in Africa are mainly derived from two sources: the existence of a large Muslim population in Africa and the common colonial experience. There are some 50 million Muslims in Africa south of the Sahara. Islam is

55. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
predominant in Gambia, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Somalia. In Chad, Guinea and Mali more than 50 per cent of the population is Muslim. Nigeria is a Muslim stronghold, two-thirds of its northern region and much of its western region professing the Islamic faith. In Cameroon, Ethiopia, Portuguese Guinea and Sierra Leone, Muslims are between 30 and 40 per cent of the population. In Dahomey, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Togo and Uganda they are between 2 and 10 per cent.

Egypt has a long association -- as old as Islam itself -- with these countries. Many African Muslim pilgrims on their way to Mecca had travelled through Egypt and used Egypt as a halting place. But more than this, a more lasting contact between Egypt and Africa was established through Al-Azhar University. The existence of Al-Azhar, the highest institution of Islamic learning in Egypt, attracted many African Muslims who went there for religious education and provided an opening for the spread of Egyptian influence in Africa. All this made Egypt to think that these Muslims would turn to it "to safeguard their Islamic personality".

The subjection of both Egypt and Africa by the colonial powers also created a sort of solidarity between them. Having suffered at the hands of colonialism, Egypt could not but sympathize with the African peoples living under colonial servitude. It was always sympathetic towards the struggle of

African people for their independence. After the July Revolution Egypt not only successfully linked its own liberation struggle with that of Africa but it also came out vigorously in support of the latter. This helped to create solidarity between Egyptians and Africans.

(vii) Sense of Mission:

Egypt somehow believed that it had a moral duty towards the peoples of Africa. This was not something new. Egypt had felt a moral obligation for Africa even before the Nasser era. Thus, in 1947 in an essay on the unity of the Nile valley, the Press Department of the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs talked about "Egypt's civilizing mission among other African peoples".

In his The Philosophy of the Revolution Nasser observed: "We certainly cannot, under any conditions, relinquish our responsibility to help spread the light of knowledge and civilization into the very depth of the virgin jungles of the continent." Afterwards, as a justification for its support to the African Liberation movement, Cairo Radio declared: "We the son of the Nile valley have a political duty towards the


African peoples." And this sense of mission is frequently found in the writings and utterances of Egyptians.

INSTRUMENTS OF POLICY

Before the July Revolution African affairs were dealt with by a small section in the Political Directorate of the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After the Revolution a small unit was established at the Presidency to co-ordinate policy and action in Africa. But this unit acted more as an information-gathering unit than as a policy-making body.

After the Bandung Conference, in September 1955 a decision was taken to reorganize the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in view of Egypt's expanding diplomatic relations. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was divided into two main divisions: Political and Technical. The Technical Division was further divided into three main sub-divisions, namely, Information, Economic and Cultural. The Political Division too was divided into several sub-divisions or departments dealing either with areas such as the Arab world, Western Europe, or with functions such as consular affairs, legal matters and treaties. As a result of

64. SWR, pt. 4, no. 557, 5 April 1966, p. 32.


this reorganization an African Department was established in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Simultaneously, the African unit at the Presidency was converted into the Department of African Affairs. Its main functions were to advise the President and to co-ordinate policy. By 1960 with the independence of many African countries, the Department of African Affairs at the Presidency was again reorganized and renamed the Bureau of African Affairs. The Bureau was placed in the charge of a Director. Closely allied to this was the Bureau of Political Refugees which primarily looked after the affairs of African political refugees.

By this time many other government departments and semi-government organizations had also established special administrative and/or research units for African affairs. Thus the Ministries of Information, Foreign Trade, Education (and later Higher Education), the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, and Al-Azhar University set up special African sections, departments or bureaux.

Before the July Revolution Egypt had diplomatic relations with three independent African countries, namely, Ethiopia (1930), South Africa (1944) and Liberia (1951). After the Revolution diplomatic ties were established with Ghana and Guinea in 1957 and 1968 respectively. In 1960 seventeen African countries became independent. Out of these, Egypt was able to establish diplomatic relations only with seven, namely,

68. This information is based on the author's discussions with Egyptian journalists, academicians, officials and intellectuals.
Cameroon, Congo(L), Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia and Togo. Because of its involvement in African groupism (as a result of its attitude on the questions of Congo, Algeria, African unity and Mauritania) Egypt could not establish diplomatic relations with any of the French-speaking African countries. Between 1961 and 1967 it entered into diplomatic relations with fourteen African countries: Dahomey, Niger, Sierra Leone and Upper Volta in 1961; Burundi and Tanzania in 1962; Kenya and Uganda in 1963; Congo (B), Ivory Coast, Malawi and Zambia in 1964; and Gambia and Mauritania in 1965. Between 1968 and 1970 diplomatic relations were established with four more sub-Saharan African countries: Central African Republic and Equatorial Guinea in 1969 and Chad and Mauritius in 1970, thus bringing the total to twenty-nine independent African countries.

**FORMULATION OF POLICY**

In the early years of the Revolution all basic decisions on policy, including foreign policy, were taken by the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) which remained in almost

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69. It was only after the 1963 Addis Ababa Conference when the two African groups came together and formed the Organisation of African Unity that Egypt could establish diplomatic relations with French-speaking countries.

70. Till the end of 1970 Egypt could not establish diplomatic relations with Botswana, Gabon, Lesotho, Malagasy and Rwanda. I am thankful to Ahmed Youssef for allowing me to use some of this information from his then unpublished article, "Egypt's Diplomatic Presence in Africa". The article was subsequently published in *Al-Siassa* *Al-Dawla* (Cairo), July 1972.
continuous session. The decisions were arrived at either by consensus or by majority vote. This practice continued so long as General Neguib remained the titular head. After his removal the importance of group discussion diminished.

The RCC had many tools for policy formulation. In addition to routine reports received from the embassies, it had at its disposal reports from the secret intelligence agencies -- a tool generally not available to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During this period the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were limited to the execution of foreign policy without having much say in its formulation.

After the promulgation of the 1956 Constitution, policymaking became, almost wholly, a prerogative of the President. The biggest change took place after the Suez crisis which increased Nasser's prestige enormously. After this, he as a person and the Presidency as an institution became undisputably a source of authority, initiative and decision. This happened not only because of the change in Nasser's stature but also because of a corresponding change in the attitude of the people around him; those who used to argue with him now began to quote

71. Cremeans, n. 42, p. 249.
72. Ibid., p. 32.
74. The Revolutionary Command Council was dissolved in June 1956.
75. Cremeans, n. 42, p. 32.
his opinions as the final word. The President was assisted by a small group of trusted and responsible men who had become specialists in various fields of government, but they were only 'advisers' and Nasser had the final say on every issue.

This trend continued after Egypt's union with Syria and even after the latter's withdrawal from the United Arab Republic in February 1961. The provisional Constitution of Egypt drafted in 1964 gave the President the power to lay down the general policy of the state in all political, economic, social and administrative domains and to supervise its implementation (Article 113). The President was also given the power to conclude treaties (Article 125) and declare war (Article 124).

Thus in both theory and practice Nasser became the supreme policy-maker. Professor Boutros Boutros-Ghali, a leading Egyptian political scientist, observes: "The extent to

76. Ibid.

77. Vatikiotis, n. 46, p. 341. Vatikiotis said: "While a cabinet assists the President of the Republic in governing and a National Assembly records its approval of policies already decreed by the executive, the President continues to make policy in consultation with the Core of Free Officers closest and most loyal to him, and presently in executive position, but not necessarily with their real participation; ... the President is not constitutionally responsible to any institutional checks upon his authority."

78. United Arab Republic, Information Department, The Constitution, March 26, 1964 (Cairo, m.d.), pp. 31-34.

79. Ibid. Though the National Assembly's approval was required for some of these functions such as declaration of war and treaties including ratification of maritime treaties, the President had the power to dissolve the Assembly. Moreover, in actual practice, the President's powers were never challenged by the Assembly.
which the executive is guided by the counsel of his principal associates, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, is a matter of his personal choice, made in the light of the interest of the State. In the absence of a parliamentary or political opposition foreign policy-making under Nasser became a super-elitist business.

The formulation of Africa policy was mostly done in the Bureau of African Affairs at the Presidency which was headed by Mohammed Fayek. The Bureau conducted research and presented policy alternatives to Nasser who made the final policy decision in consultation with his political advisers and special committees. The decision was then transmitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which channelled it to the concerned departments for implementation. There were four levels through which the decision was channelled and it was the duty of the African Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to co-ordinate action at these levels and among the various agencies.

Co-operating with the African Bureau were the Research Bureau, the Conference Bureau, the Economic Bureau and the Cultural


81. The subsequent account of the formulation of Africa policy at various levels is based entirely on Ismael, n. 5, pp. 144-52.

82. Fayek, an army officer, was Egypt's official expert on Africa. It was through him that Nasser gave help to African freedom fighters. He was in charge of the African Department at the Presidency. Even when he became Minister for National Guidance, he took this Department with him to his new Ministry. He was the man responsible for Egypt's Africa policy till he was put in jail by President Sadat in 1971.
Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The African Bureau itself supervised the Egyptian embassies in Africa.

The second level of decision implementation consisted of action taken by those ministries that had African sections. Thus the African section of the Supreme Committee on Cultural Relations in the Ministry of Higher Education channeled the decision directly to the cultural attaches in the Egyptian embassies and to the Cultural Bureaux of Egypt in African countries. Under this section were the section for foreign students, the club for foreign students and the Higher Technical Institute for Afro-Asian students. Decisions concerning riparian issues were channeled to the Agency for Common Water Services and the Agency for the Nile Water Problems in the Ministry of Works. The Bureau of the Information Department of the Ministry of Culture and Guidance co-ordinated policy with the East African Section, the West African Section and the Sudanese Section of the Radio-Programmes Department and with the Office of Press Attaches in Africa. The Ministry also had a special African Journal Section.

At the second level, there was also the African Economic Co-operation Administration of the Ministry of Economic Affairs which co-ordinated the policy with other sections of the Ministry including the International Economics Section, the International Economics Conferences Section, the Anti-Israel Administration and the Office of Commercial and Economic Attaches. The Administration also co-ordinated policy with the Economic Organization under which there were companies dealing with
imports, exports and international trade. The Bureau for Boycotting Israel of the Arab League co-operated with the Anti-Israel Administration of the Ministry of Economics and with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to co-ordinate policy with the Egyptian embassies, especially those in Africa.

At the third level in decision implementation were the ministries that had a general administration which handled African affairs, but did not have an African section. The Ministries of Defence, Labour and Agriculture respectively channeled the decision to the Egyptian African military, labour and agricultural attaches. Within the Ministry of Labour there were also the Organizations for Labour Education and of Regional and Arab Labour Unions, whose activities extended to Africa and who co-operated with the Bureau for Boycotting Israel for the Arab League. The Conference Administration within the Ministry of Agriculture participated in African conferences as did the Ministry of Supplies. The Ministry of Endowments and Al-Asar Affairs had an administration specializing in Islamic missions from Africa which co-operated with the Islamic Missions City and Missions' Institute of the Cultural Administration of the University.

At the fourth level were non-governmental organizations which were supervised and subsidized by the government but were not official organs of decision implementation. These included the African Association, the Afro-Asian Solidarity Council, and Cairo University's Institute of African Studies.
In sum, Egypt's national interest in Africa sprang from its geographical situation, socio-cultural affinity and economic necessity. These interests came into sharper focus after the July Revolution and were reflected in Egypt's Africa policy during the period under study.

Having thus examined the bases, motives and organizational structure of Egypt's Africa policy, we shall now turn in the subsequent chapters to a detailed analysis of its involvement in Africa. The main issues dealt with are arranged in the following order: (i) Egypt's involvement in the African freedom movement, (ii) Egypt's association with the African Unity Organization, (iii) Egypt's response to intra-African issues, (iv) Israel as a factor in Egypt's Africa policy, and (v) the nature and character of Egypt's economic and cultural relations with Africa.