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**Egypt's Political Situation and Foreign
Relations**

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18 days in January-February changed Egypt drastically and had a profound impact on the whole region from January 25 till February 11 – the day former President Mubarak stepped down – a movement that started as a protest and rebellion by a number of young people turned into a full-scale popular revolution that toppled not only the Head of State, the government, and the constitution, but the whole regime.

The young revolutionaries opened a breach in the wall of silence and fear and suddenly this wall fell down and the great majority of the Egyptian people joined the revolution and crossed into a new era.

The young people, the young revolutionaries, were daring, courageous patriots who believed in Democracy, in freedom, in human rights and social justice; they were ready to take huge risks, even to sacrifice their lives for their ideals so that Egypt would change, socially, economically, politically and culturally.

This revolution represents, in my view, a revolution of the 3rd generation A revolution of the 21st century, as much as it relied on advanced information technology, the cyberspace and all new communications techniques... Through the internet, Facebook, Twitter, young people who did not actually know each other and had not met before reached a meeting of the minds and agreed on meeting in El Tahrir Square in a popular demonstration as huge as possible and vowed that their protests, their demonstration would be peaceful, that no arms would be allowed, that they would rely only on their determination and convictions.

They did not belong to a class of poor, hungry, uneducated, jobless citizens In fact they were part of those who have had a good education, jobs and a social standing.

That is to say that it was not out of need or personal ambitions that they ignited the spark of a popular revolution ... but they rebelled against a situation that prevailed in the country with increasing poverty, unemployment, a disastrous social structure They were out against corruption, tyranny, injustice, lack of freedom and for the need for democracy and respect of human rights and dignity...

They did not have and still don't have a declared leadership, they composed a loose coalition, as they came from different political, ideological, religious and social backgrounds. But these men and women were unified by their common objectives.

In fact, conditions for protest and uprising had existed for a long time affecting people's daily life, their future, their dignity.....

The total closing of the door to any possibility of political openness by the "ancien regime" especially after the outrageous, rigged 2010 parliamentary elections that were the last drop that made the glass

overflow and convinced the protestors that the only route to change must be a regime change; and echoing the popular rallying cry in Tunisia, the Egyptians started shouting “People want to bring down the regime”.

The revolution thus succeeded in forcing the departure of Mubarak and demanded a full change of the structures of the state.... The army who refused to execute orders to shoot and disperse the protestors had the responsibility of implementing the building of a new era, a new Egypt.

To avoid chaos, the High Military Council took over the charges and responsibilities of the head of state. They suspended the constitution, dissolved both houses of parliament, formed a new government composed mostly of men and women who had taken part in the revolution or who supported it. The Military insisted on a transition period of no more than 6 months, in which parliamentary and presidential elections would be held, and a new constitution would be established.

Thus, this new Egypt has already started structural and meaningful changes in the country’s orientation both within domestic and foreign affairs policies.

The fact is that a democratic Egypt cannot continue “business as usual” in its relations with the rest of the world.

The new Egyptian Foreign Minister, Dr. Nabil El Araby, made it very clear that the new government wanted to open a new page with all countries of the world. He also made it clear that this new Egypt will comply with every agreement, treaty or convention signed and abide by international law.

Egypt has friends, allies and partners around the world and intends to keep these relations and enhance them, but will insist that no cooperation or any foreign relationships would infringe on its sovereign and independent decisions.

We want to keep our privileged relations with the US, Europe and others, but we also want to increase our relations with other regional and international powers. We are an Arab, an African, a Mediterranean country and we must expand our cooperation in those spheres.

In relation to the Arab countries, 4 months after the Revolution we are moving ahead; in relation to Africa, we have given priority to the Nile Basin Countries, but want to reactivate our cooperation with all African countries.

With the Palestinians, the new Egyptian diplomacy has, in a very short time, succeeded in convincing the different factions to reach an agreement that should unify the two rival governments in Gaza and in Ramallah into a government of national union. In our mind, this reconciliation is not at all, as the Israelis pretend, an aggressive act against Israel and an option against peace.... On the contrary, we believe that this reconciliation is a precondition for all Palestinians to accept negotiations with Israel and to work towards peace. Behind this rapid success lies the fact that Egypt has abandoned a policy of animosity towards Hamas and has thus gained Hamas' confidence and has been able to talk to its leaders in a positive way. In that context, Egypt will certainly not continue the policy of the ancien regime to close its borders with Gaza. We totally refuse to be part of a blockade that deprives the people of Gaza of food, medicine and their basic needs.

The new Egypt will exert every effort to reach a peaceful, just and comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

But as the Egyptian Foreign Minister says, we want peace, not a peace process.... The process is not an aim in itself it should have been the means to reach the aim which is a just, permanent and comprehensive peace.

What we have seen during the last decades was a process that lasted for years and years with no achievement or progress ... in fact, I believe that Egypt will pursue a much more vigorous policy in favour of peace and will probably propose an international conference to end once and for all the Arab-Israeli conflict. We shall also recognize a Palestinian State and urge all other countries to do so.

On the other hand, Egypt's relations with Israel are bound to continue as normal relations. The New Egypt will abide by the peace treaty and respect every commitment it has made. But "normal relations" do not mean special relations. And the fact that we have disagreements with Israel on many important issues like the way they treat, imprison, kill Palestinians, or the suffering of the people of Gaza kept in a Bantustan under siege, the fact that they continue building settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, the fact that they hinder peace negotiations in every way, comes under "normal" relations.

Also our disagreements on the price of gas exported by Egypt to Israel are normal commercial disagreements.

But it is important to point out that in a democratic Egypt, public opinion will play a much more influential part in shaping foreign policy and decisions in the international field. A democratic

government cannot disregard public feelings and though we abide by our commitments, the tone, scope and mood of our relations with Israel will be influenced by public opinion. Thus Israeli actions, declarations, policies must take into account that decisions in Egypt are no longer made by one man or a limited number of high officials, but by the people.

They must realize that raids on the Palestinians, killings, arbitrary arrests, putting Palestinians in prison for decades without judgments or accusations, building settlements are elements that will forge the Egyptian attitude toward them.

After the Revolution, it was imperative to review Egypt's foreign policy and to ensure that decisions were taken after rational deliberations built on knowledge of the files, not on whims or personal interests, but based on Egypt's well-understood national interests with the total respect of our principles and ideals and international law as well as the treaties and agreements we have signed and ratified....a foreign policy that only reacts to the events and to the decision of other countries cannot be conducive to the national aims of a country.... We cannot continue to improvise our foreign policy, but should plan our actions and strategies.

It is an opportunity to review Egypt's relations with the rest of the world based on serious studies and the Minister of Foreign Affairs has announced that Egypt wants to open a new page with all countries of the world, that we have no enemies and want to cooperate with any country, and that we take our decisions in an independent way based on our perception and reading of the merits of each case.

Thus, there is no reason not to have diplomatic relations with a country like Iran for instance, or to have strained relations with a country like Qatar or Syria because personal relations between the former president of the Republic and their leaders were not good. But opening a new page does not affect our relations with friends like the US, Europe or any other countries.

The new Egypt will strive to resume her regional and international role and responsibilities seeking international cooperation in the service of peace, social and economic development, the respect of human rights and dignity, and the rule of law in the international community.