

МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ, ПОЛИТИКА И ЭКОНОМИКА СТРАН АЗИИ И АФРИКИ

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The Role of Bureaucratic Politics in Egypt's Africa Policies under Mubarak. Part Two

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The decision-making process in Egypt during the rule of President Hosni Mubarak was dominated by the president and a very small core group comprised mainly of advisers whom he appointed and dismissed. Towards the end of his rule, Mubarak was no longer capable of resuming his duties effectively. Therefore, several issues were left to be handled by the relevant ministry. It became possible for some parts of the bureaucracy to make a significant impact on foreign policy, particularly on topics not of interest to the ruling elite. The Nile Waters issue is one of the most important manifestations of the dynamics of Egypt's foreign policy decision-making process under Mubarak at this stage. The analysis explores the role of institutions in water policy making, aiming to draw attention to the dominant role of the Ministry of Water Resources during the Cooperative Framework Agreement talks compared to other institutions, such as the foreign ministry. Also it examines the phenomenon of 'bureaucratic rivalry' that prevailed at that time, while demonstrating that the Egyptian delegation faced great difficulties during the talks. Thus, the argument remains that the bureaucratic institution, despite its subordinate role, is partly responsible for Egypt's foreign policy unhappy ending under Mubarak.

Keywords: decision-making process, bureaucratic politics, African politics, Egypt's Africa policies, Egyptian foreign ministry, President Mubarak, Nile Waters issue.

Introduction

The River Nile has always been a great concern of Egypt's rulers, who have adopted internal and external policies in order to secure what is almost Egypt's sole water resource.

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Domestically, the state has sought to enhance its capacity to exploit the Nile Waters and to secure the irrigation process [1, pp. 125–146]. In fact, Egypt has invested billions in the construction of a huge irrigation network of 35,000 kilometres of canals and banks, at an estimated cost of nearly 200 thousand trillion Egyptian pounds in today's currency [2]. Regarding external policy, policy objectives pursued throughout history have been, on the one hand, to ensure the greatest possible benefit from the Nile Waters and to secure the continuous and sufficient flow of waters to Egypt every year, and on the other, to avoid any water crises between the riparian states as a result of disputes over the distribution of water [3, p. 27]. Increasing the possibility of a water crisis is the intervention of politically influential external parties in the Nile Basin region. [4, pp. 372–373]. In this context, the Egyptian position is built on the following principles: not to allow the water issue to be used as a weapon to enforce certain views towards Egypt's policy; to maintain stability; to avoid being engaged in conflicts; to enhance political, economic, and developmental cooperation among the Nile Basin countries; to promote efforts that seek to increase the water yield; to provide technical assistance to the riparian states in various domains, especially infrastructure; to refuse individual water projects that lack the consent of all of the riparian states; to establish the necessary platforms for mutual cooperation; and to adopt continuous dialogue as the sole means of resolving conflicts [4, pp. 377–378]. Evidently, the absence of a coercive power in the south capable of challenging Egypt's 'rights' to the river has helped Egypt to implement its vision for decades. Furthermore, until recently, no other country had acquired the technological expertise to control the river's flow on its way north. [5, p. 127]. Consequently, it was the responsibility of the Egyptian state actors to endorse the water policies that act according to the aforementioned principles. The following part shows the mandate and the behaviour of each of the state institutions, responsible for the Nile Waters issue particularly during the Cooperative Framework Agreement's talks.

Perceptually, the formulation of Egypt's water policy is the responsibility of the Supreme Committee for Nile Waters. This committee is the product of intensive discussions and decisions made by multiple state institutions. The committee is headed by the Prime Minister and is composed of the foreign minister as well as the ministers of irrigation, international cooperation, defence, and electricity, alongside the director of the GIS (General Intelligence Service). The committee is primarily concerned with the political implications of the Nile Waters issue, and thus meets only as necessary. Examples of the issues with which the committee deals are the legal and political debates between Egypt and upstream countries about the rights to use the Nile Waters; external intervention in the region and its effect on Egypt's water interests; and the relationship of international water treaties to the Nile Waters agreements. It has the right to raise its proposals and decisions in this regard directly with the president [6].

By and large, different institutions have had to adopt policies that correspond to the policy orientations formulated by the Supreme Committee and approved by the president [4, p. 372]. However, with regard to decision-making, President Mubarak was the principal decision-maker on the Nile Waters issue. Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that there were opportunities for others to participate in the decisions made on this issue [6]. The Nile Waters issue is primarily characterized by its scientific and legal natures, which make it difficult for a political leader to make decisions without consulting experts. Furthermore, one must consider the personality traits of President Mubarak that led him to

endorse his predecessor's views. For decades, Egypt insisted on the principle of "historical and acquired rights" towards the Nile Waters. Naturally, President Mubarak did not dare to deviate from such a policy, which the Supreme Committee also recommended. In this regard, Mubarak repeatedly stated: "Egypt's rights in the Nile Waters is a red line." [7]. Moreover, President Mubarak's tendency to consider every minister his advisor in his domain of expertise and the subsequent effect on Mubarak's decisions to be based on the information given to him by those advisors, supports this analysis. By virtue of his technical competence on the Nile Waters' issue, the influence of Mahmoud Abu Zeid, the Irrigation Minister, on Mubarak's decision thus exceeded that of the other officials including the foreign minister and the chief intelligence officer [8].

The role of the Egyptian institutions

Among the Egyptian bureaucracy, the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation plays a central role in managing Egypt's water resources. Besides its role on the domestic level with regard to managing and developing water resources, the Ministry of Water Resources coordinates with the ministries of foreign affairs and defence, in addition to the intelligence service, which is pivotal due to their roles regarding cooperation with the Nile Basin countries (NBCs). Under the Ministry is the Nile Waters Sector, which is responsible for managing water resources coming to Egypt from the Nile Basin region. The sector's mandate is to work to maintain Egypt's historical rights towards the Nile Waters and to defend it in different international forums; to represent Egypt in talks on the Nile Waters, to examine the Nile Basin states' technical assistance needs and to work to achieve them; to study projects that the Nile Basin states are planning to construct; and to determine the effect of these projects on Egypt's water share. In addition, the sector is entitled to supervise the implementation of the 1959 agreement with Sudan, and to review the operation of the Owen Reservoir according to the 1953 agreement with Uganda. It is noteworthy that the Nile Waters Sector is considered the architect of Egyptian attitudes towards the Nile Basin Initiative projects and the Cooperative Framework Agreement talks (1999–2010) [7; 9]. The head of the Nile Waters Sector has been authorized to invite representatives of the national institutions involved in the Nile waters issue to coordinative meetings, particularly the ministries of irrigation, foreign affairs, the intelligence service, and the legal consultant of the ministry of water resources. Participants in these meetings formed the Egyptian Negotiating Committee, in charge of preparing the institutional and legal framework of the NBI (Nile Basin Initiative). The committee formerly met at least once a month at the headquarters of the Nile Waters Sector and led discussions of the 39 articles comprising the draft agreement, which were presented to the prime minister and the president [7; 9].

As for the Foreign Ministry, the organizational structure of the ministry included specific departments that should have allowed it to play an influential role in decisions related to the Nile Waters issue. The departments of political planning and crisis management, international legal affairs and treaties, Nile Water affairs, relations with the Nile Basin countries, and the minister's cabinet were all engaged in the making and implementation of the ministry's policy towards the Nile Waters issue. With the exception of the department of political planning, which had various structural and technical weaknesses that undermined the reasons for its existence as a research organ of the ministry [10, pp. 980–

993], the remaining departments were actively engaged in monitoring the development of the issue; attending the relevant national, regional and international forums; negotiating; making assessments and recommendations to the foreign minister; and coordinating with other relevant national institutions. During the 1980s, certain actors helped the ministry to make significant contributions to Egypt's water policy. In this respect, the personality of the foreign minister played a great role. During the 1980s, when Boutros-Ghali was the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, African affairs and the Nile Waters issue witnessed a strong boost. Boutros-Ghali exploited his good connections with President Mubarak to convince the latter to adopt an active policy in the continent and towards the Nile Waters issue in particular (e. g. extending the work of the Egyptian Fund at early to include more African countries and creating the Undogo in 1983, the first forum aiming to enhance cooperation projects between the NBCs) [8]. The second element was the comforting and calm atmosphere that dominated relations between the riparian states. No points of dispute arose during that time between the upstream and the downstream countries. The calm environment that surrounded the Nile Waters issue allowed the foreign ministry to play an active and relatively independent role, without pressure from other institutions [11].

Following Boutros-Ghali's nomination as UN Secretary-General in 1991, the foreign ministry lost the initiative towards African issues in general and the Nile waters in particular [12]. Nevertheless, in the first half of the 1990s, there were some indications that suggested that the foreign ministry under Amr Moussa was continuing to influence Mubarak's decisions with regard to the Nile Waters issue. This influence was evident in the 1993 memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed by Egypt and Ethiopia, of which the foreign ministry was considered to be the main architect. The agreement was signed against the will of the GIS and the ministry of irrigation, both of whom were concerned at the absence of the expression "Egypt's historical and acquired water rights" in the MOU's text. "We were concerned that the absence of an explicit text on the historical right of Egypt might open the door towards questioning these rights in the future", said an ex-intelligence senior official, who participated in these efforts early nineties [13]. This incident demonstrates that, at this time, the foreign ministry enjoyed an advantageous position with the President regarding the Nile Waters issue. This can be explained, on the one hand, within by the personal factor, as foreign minister Amr Moussa enjoyed President Mubarak's confidence [8]. On the other hand, the effect of the momentum created by Boutros-Ghali towards an active role for the foreign ministry in Africa continued throughout the early nineties [13].

The 1995 assassination attempt against Mubarak marked the beginning of the foreign ministry's waning influence. This was in part due to the changing nature of African issues, which greatly concerned the security agencies. In general, all the issues considered relevant to national security were shifted from the foreign ministry to the security agencies. The explanation given at that time was that the foreign ministry deals with such issues during times of normal relations and through the use of classic diplomacy. But when there are crises (e. g. those occurring in Darfur, Somalia, South Sudan, and the Great Lakes) these issues are no longer compatible with the foreign ministry's working nature, and thus must be shifted to other institutions. As a result, the foreign ministry's performance sharply declined due to this shift. In this sense, the Nile waters were among the issues that were shifted from the foreign ministry to other institutions [11]. The second half of

the 1990s witnessed the replacement of the foreign ministry's influence with that of the Ministry of Irrigation regarding the Nile Waters issue, particularly with the nomination of the new Minister of Irrigation, Mahmud Abu Zeid, in 1997. Moreover, Amr Moussa had no genuine interest in African issues. Therefore, when the president turned away from Africa following the Addis Ababa incident, the foreign ministry was not willing to take on this role. Indeed, the foreign minister could have played a stronger role with regard to Africa and the Nile Basin region to contain the negative impact of Mubarak's refusal to visit the African countries. However, Moussa's inclination towards the West led him to pay scant attention to Africa. Furthermore, the abolition of the position of Minister of State for Foreign Affairs restricted the ministry's ability to conduct active personal diplomacy in Africa, due to the foreign minister's busy schedule. Finally, the launch of the NBI and CFA (Cooperative Framework Agreement) talks coincided with the nomination of foreign minister Ahmed Maher (2001), who was primarily concerned with the Middle East Peace Process. Thus, the Nile Waters issue was arguably not on Maher's agenda. In addition, Maher's weak health condition and his tendency towards seeking peace led him to endorse low-profile diplomacy, which indeed restricted the ministry's role [11].

This is, of course, not to suggest that the foreign ministry was left without any role in the Nile Waters issue. In addition to its participation on the Supreme Committee of the Nile Waters and the Legal and Technical Committee, the foreign ministry was a permanent member of the Negotiation Committee, which participated in the CFA talks. Moreover, the Egyptian embassies in the Nile Basin countries continued to carry out data collection work and information analysis related to the NBI [4; 11]. Furthermore, the foreign ministry succeeded in pushing for a stronger role for the private sector in the region. Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit (Foreign Minister 2005-2011) supported this idea, believing that the foreign ministry's resources were insufficient to fund Egypt's policy in the Nile Basin region and that trade should be a key instrument of foreign policy. Therefore, Egyptian businessmen and the private sector were invited to invest in the region, with the aim of creating mutual interests among Egypt and the region's states that might lead to ultimately political outcomes. Aboul Gheit engaged actively in the Nile Basin as he visited its countries, especially Ethiopia several times, accompanied by a large delegation of Egyptian businessmen [11; 14, pp. 252–253].

As for the GIS, it continued to occupy an influential position in foreign policy formulation under Mubarak. Given the importance of the Nile Waters issue to Egypt's national security, the GIS was certainly involved in the decision-making process related to it. For example, the intelligence service was active in collecting information about the Nile Waters issue, the internal situation in the Nile Basin countries, and their foreign relations with other countries through specific bureaux stationed in the region, participation in various political and economic events taking place in the region, and other clandestine sources [15, pp. 89–103]. The information collected was subject to analysis and assessment by intelligence officers, who then presented their reports, including their recommendations, to the chief of intelligence. There were multiple channels through which the intelligence service presented its perspective to the decision-maker and to the other national institutions. First of all, the president received a daily report from the intelligence service through his Secretary for Information. Secondly, the chief of intelligence was a permanent member of the National Security Council and the Supreme Committee of the Nile Water. Finally, since the chief of intelligence was one of the "president's men" — he was the president's

number-one advisor with regard to national security — he could easily reach the president and convey the intelligence service's views and recommendations [16]. Consequently, it is quite plausible to assume the GIS's active involvement in policy formulation and decisions related to the Nile Waters issue under Mubarak.

The Entebbe Agreement Crisis

The negotiation process began in 2003 despite existing differences in the upstream and the downstream countries' positions on the right to use the Nile Waters. The main points of dispute were the "existing agreements" and "prior notification". Egypt insisted the proposed framework should not touch the "historical and acquired rights" according to the principle of "state succession", which shifts the legal commitments of former governments to new governments. The upstream countries adopted a common position (based on the Nyerere Principle) that viewed these agreements as "colonial" and as a challenge to their national sovereignty [17]. The "Negotiating Committee" continued meeting with the delegations of the upstream countries for seven years, without the member states reaching a consensus. In fact, the seven upstream countries turned their backs to the Egyptian position (viewed as inflexible), vowing to move on and sign the CFA on 14 May 2010 [17]. Consequently, the following part examines the behaviour of the Egyptian institutions involved in the CFA talks in order to determine their role.

The Presidency

Given the fact that Minister Abu Zeid was Mubarak's advisor on the Nile Waters issues, his vision prevailed upon that of the other bureaucracies and was, therefore, adopted by the President. This vision included the belief that there was a great need to increase Egypt's water share so that the country could avoid falling under the 'Water Poverty Line' (1,000 cubic meters per person per year). This required seeking the implementation of mega-projects to reduce water losses in the Equatorial Heights and the White Nile. The second important component of Zeid's view was the belief that it was technically impossible to build big dams for the purpose of water storage on the Ethiopian Heights due to the topography. Therefore, while the NBI provided opportunities to increase the Nile's water yield, it did not present any risk at all to Egypt's water interests, because they were protected by international law and the geographical nature of the region. In fact, many Egyptian officials serving at other institutions, such as the foreign ministry, have always adopted this latter point, especially those who had had the opportunity to visit the Ethiopian Heights [18; 19]. Due to President Mubarak's confidence in Abu Zeid, the former made the decision to participate in the NBI and engage in the framework agreement's talks. Ayman Abdel Wahab commented on Mubarak's vision for the CFA talks:

Foreign policy under Mubarak was based on the idea that Egypt's water rights are secured and that the current situation in the Nile Basin Countries will not adversely affect Egyptian interests. Therefore, the decision-maker has dealt with the water issue by what might be called 'policy of the minimum'. It means: to ensure the flow of water and to avoid escalating the issue or avoiding negotiations that may harm the national interests. But at the same time, Egypt must not stay away from the negotiations. So the trend was to prolong the talks until

circumstances turn in favour of Egypt or until Egypt is able to finish these talks in a way that preserves its strategic interests [20].

Furthermore, Mubarak's knowledge of the issues at stake was not profound enough to enable him to establish his own political vision of such a multidimensional issue as that regarding the Nile Waters. Therefore, it was natural for him to be convinced by the views of Minister Abu Zeid, who was known for his distinguished scientific capabilities. However, Mubarak did not notice that the Ministry of Irrigation did not have employees with political backgrounds, as the staff was entirely comprised of irrigation experts, engineers, and technicians. Therefore, Abu Zeid's absolute scientific vision did not enable him to understand the political nature of the talks — which, over time, had transformed into a political dispute [21, p. 86].

The question that arises here is why the president did not react appropriately when the negotiations began to move against Egypt's interests. To answer this question, a number of elements must be emphasized. First of all, Mubarak's health was in decline; thus, he was unable to fulfil his duties properly, as he previously had. As a result, his son Gamal handled many critical issues. The Nile Waters issue was not among those in which Gamal Mubarak was interested. Gamal was mainly interested in business and money-making activities, whereas Egypt's engagement with Africa was not of economic or financial benefit to him or those who worked with him in the presidency [22]. Furthermore, President Mubarak was surrounded by the "old guard", the president's men, who received sharp instructions from the First Lady not to inform the president about bad news [22]. Thus, it was quite difficult for the Egyptian officials dealing with the Nile Waters issue to inform him properly about the developments of the CFA talks. Therefore, the Nile Waters issue was not monitored closely by the presidency, leaving the door open for the bureaucracy to play a more independent role during the CFA talks.

A stunning example was the situation that took place during the Kigali round of the CFA's talks in 2007. The Egyptian delegation was taken by surprise by the change in the upstream countries' position. Minister Abu Zeid's first reaction was to threaten to withdraw from the negotiations. The Egyptian delegation was at the point of pulling out of the talks. A member of the Egyptian delegation affirms that they received directions from the minister to pack and get ready to leave. At that point, some members of the delegation advised the minister to call Egypt's political leadership before leaving, as the Egyptian president should take such a decision. Fully aware of the presidency's situation, Minister Abu Zeid did not telephone President Mubarak, and changed his mind regarding the decision to withdraw, as he endorsed the view of the World Bank representative and other members of the delegations of NBCs: to stay, in search of a solution that satisfied both the upstream and the downstream countries [9; 23].

Minister Abu Zeid's decision not to bring the issue to the political leadership and to remain in Kigali for further talks can be attributed to the following: Abu Zeid was convinced of the futility of escalating the issue to the level of the president; he also did not wish to take the risk of withdrawing from the meetings without the permission of President Mubarak "who was unable to identify all the matters of the state or the pressing problems that we have; however, he insists to have the final word", according to Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit [14, p.255]. The following story illustrates the extent of the president's lack of mental focus during the latter stages of Mubarak's time in power:

During his visit to the United States in 2006, Mubarak met with a senior official in the World Bank who informed him that the NBI framework agreement talks are proceeding in the right direction. Mubarak's comment was: 'What is it the NBI, I do not have a clue about it' [9].

Indeed, the few decisions that Mubarak made related to the framework agreement talks were in response to the GIS proposal, due to his ultimate confidence on it. For example, in 2007, the GIS strongly recommended that Mubarak "intensify contacts and coordination at the presidential level with the NBCs"¹. Mubarak responded by visiting Uganda in 2008 and receiving the President of Rwanda in 2009. It is noteworthy that the security agencies opposed the idea of Mubarak's visit to Africa; thus, he only visited Uganda for a few hours, while similar visits to other NBCs never occurred [14, p.228].

Due to the signing of the Entebbe Agreement, Mubarak noticed that the Ministry of Water Resources had failed to deal with the political aspects of the Nile Waters issue. Thus, he decided to involve other institutions. "You [the irrigation ministry] are not politicians; the experts in water resources should be in charge of technical matters while the politicians should be in charge of the political matters", said Mubarak [9]. In this context, the Minister of International Cooperation, Fayza Aboul Naga, began to participate in the Nile Waters issues. Accordingly, Mubarak sent her with the foreign minister to Libya to discuss the possibility of Gaddafi intervening with President Museveni in order to soften Uganda's tough position on the CFA talks. Therefore, Aboul Naga began to occupy the position of the Minister of Water Resources [14, p.265].

The Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation

The Ministry of Water Resources had the main responsibility for the NBI, whereas the Nile Waters Sector was in charge of the framework agreement talks. As indicated above, the ministry's policy was based on the so called 'win-win' vision supported by Minister Abu Zeid, aiming to construct water-related projects that would increase the Nile's yield and Egypt's water share. Some analysts think that, despite its great rationality, the 'win-win' vision did not take into consideration the political factors that influenced the Nile Waters issue. This oversight can be attributed to the nature of the Ministry of Water Resources, as the experts working for the ministry are scientists, not politicians. Moreover, they are only concerned with present problems and are unable to make future plans [21]. Aboul Gheit's comment supports the contention that the Ministry's vision disregarded political considerations and future repercussions that would result from agreeing to negotiate the existing agreements:

For a whole seven years in which I worked as foreign minister, I always wondered: Why did we accept to join the World Bank initiative of 1999 that sought to gather the NBCs under an institutional framework that disregards the previous conditions which prevailed throughout the second half of the twentieth century? The answer to such a legitimate question was: It is the desire to enhance cooperation and build an institutional framework to achieve the concept of comprehensive development of the river's resources for all of the riparian countries. I used to reply to that: We should have limited the matter to bilateral cooperation and

¹ The researcher was allowed to read an official report dated 2007 on the condition of not referencing it.

worked to strengthen it in order to achieve our objectives, especially because we knew — for decades — about the view and stance of the [Nile] Basin countries towards our request to acknowledge our water share within the existing agreements.... We should have secured ourselves through receiving prior guarantees from the World Bank that Egypt's participation in the initiative will not affect our interests, instead of delving into the unknown and confronting the NBCs after 10 years of negotiations [14, p.268].

The above-mentioned comment demonstrates that the vision of Minister Abu Zeid prevailed upon the foreign minister, as Abu Zeid monopolized the issue from the very beginning and was the mastermind behind Egypt's participation in the NBI and CFA talks. It also demonstrates that the Minister Aboul Gheit decided not to declare his views leaving the whole issue to be dealt with by the Ministry of Water Resources. Moreover, the reports issued by the foreign ministry to the presidency did not challenge Minister Abu Zeid's position² [24; 25]. Therefore, none of the press or parliamentary statements that the two ministers released included any indication of the difficulties that the Egyptian negotiator was facing in the CFA talks [4].

On the whole, the Ministry of Water Resources under Minister Abu Zeid played a political role that exceeded its original mandate. One of the clearest manifestations of the Ministry of Water Resources' continuous intrusion into spheres generally accepted to be under the domain of the foreign ministry was its monopolization of the framework agreement's negotiation process. Negotiation is an 'inherent jurisdiction' of the foreign ministry, since the water and irrigation experts specialize in technical matters but lack the negotiation skills necessary for tough talks [26]. It was said that the Ethiopian delegation used to play with psychology in order to influence the stances of the other participants: "Definitely they were trained in Israel. I attended some of the Middle East negotiation rounds and I know the Israeli style of negotiation" [9]. This comment signifies that the talks were really tough for the Egyptian negotiator, and included some psychological 'tricks' that the Egyptian delegation had not expected and for which they were not prepared.

Following the replacement of Minister Abu Zeid in 2009, the stance of the Ministry of Water Resources changed completely. The new minister Nasr Allam was convinced that Egypt's water interests were under real threat and accused his predecessor of being soft and compromising on Egypt's 'historical rights'. This was also manifested in Allam's 'negotiation style', which was characterized by toughness, sharpness, and aggression. This led to an increasingly wide gap between Egypt's position and that of the upstream countries, which complained about the nervous attitude of the Egyptian delegation [14, p.242]. Unlike Abu Zeid, Allam was keen to declare his concerns to the public and the government. In his statement to the People's Assembly directly after the Nile-COM meeting in Sharm El-Sheikh in April 2010, he affirmed that the current draft of the agreement that the upstream countries had agreed to sign was not in Egypt's interests. In fact, it jeopardized them, as it did not respect Egypt's 'acquired historical rights' under the existing agreements. Allam declared that the signing of the framework agreement — in its current form — by the upstream countries would constitute a legal violation of the procedural rule of 'consensus', which had been adopted by the NBI. In this case, he said that Egypt considered the CFA non-binding and without legal effect on its own water rights [27]. The

² The researcher was allowed to read several official reports and minutes of meetings issued by the foreign ministry dated 2003-2010 on the condition of not referencing it.

different position adopted by the new minister led to disputes inside the ministry between those who were assistants of Abu Zeid and convinced of his vision, and the new minister. The former believed that the new minister's statements carried too much hype and exaggeration, and saw the minister's stance as an attempt to present himself to President Mubarak as the 'saviour' of Egypt's national interests [19].

In summary, the departure of Minister Abu Zeid was a turning point for the Ministry of Water Resources with regard to its domination of the Nile Waters issue. Indeed, the president realized that the Ministry was no longer able to carry out the political role that it previously had. One important factor was that the new Minister of Water Resources lacked the political experience that would have enabled him to improve Egypt's declining situation in the negotiations with the upstream countries. President Mubarak was disappointed with the performance of the ministry. Therefore, the Ministry of International Cooperation and the foreign ministry took over the political and economic aspects of the Nile Waters issue from the Ministry of Water Resources. The 'Negotiations Committee' began meeting at the headquarters of the Ministry of International Cooperation instead of the Nile Waters Sector. Indeed, this new situation triggered "bureaucratic rivalry" among the three institutions, which led to the absence of "teamwork", thus introducing more weakness and division into the Egyptian institutions [4].

The Foreign Ministry

The role of the foreign ministry during the CFA talks remained subordinate to that of the Ministry of Water Resources until the removal of Minister Abu Zeid in 2008. Many reports prepared by the foreign ministry regarding the Egyptian position during the negotiations demonstrate similar views to those of the Ministry of Water Resources. The foreign ministry's role in policy-making was limited to the participation of the foreign minister in 'Supreme Commission for the Nile Waters' meetings. As for the talks, a senior diplomat represented the ministry in meetings of the 'Negotiation Committee' and the CFA talks. However, the ministry's participation in the talks had to comply with the guidelines determined by Minister Abu Zeid as the head of delegation. Accordingly, the contribution of the ministry's representative during the talks was characterized by the traditional task of taking notes on the meetings and giving some opinions to Minister Abu Zeid, who might or might not use them. After each round of talks, the participant diplomat would prepare a report about the negotiation progress and describe in detail the position of the upstream countries' delegations. These reports were rather descriptive than analytical, as it always included recommendations (of general nature) to intensify contacts with the upstream countries in search of acceptable solutions and to strengthen bilateral relations in order to motivate each of the seven upstream countries to adopt a more flexible stance towards Egypt³.

There was also a mutual understanding between Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit and Minister of Water Resources Abu Zeid, as the former believed that the latter had "deep knowledge about the Nile Waters issue, the diplomatic means of working in it, and the difficulties which he meets with his African counterparts" [14, p.240]. In fact, analysts believe that the foreign ministry was content to put the most of the burden of a critical and

³ The researcher was able to read some of these reports on the condition of not referencing them.

complex issue like the Nile Waters issues on the shoulders of another institution. Accordingly, the foreign ministry did not present any alternative vision for the framework agreement talks whilst Minister Abu Zeid was in office, due to its belief that the Nile Waters issue [was] in safe hands' [11]. Besides, some analysts and laymen believe that this attitude enabled the foreign ministry to disclaim responsibility for the outcomes [4].

This is not, of course, to suggest that the foreign ministry had no role whatsoever in the CFA talks. Indeed, the Egyptian embassies located in the upstream countries had carefully monitored the official positions of their host countries and media comments on the talks' developments. Some embassies presented views that differed from others. Instead of increasing Egyptian assistance and aid as an instrument to change the tough stance of one of the upstream countries, the Egyptian embassy at one of the NBCs advised Egypt to halt its assistance, or at least not respond to the upstream country's demand to increase it, as it became quite clear to the embassy that the country in question did not intend to change its stance and that Egypt was subject to "blackmail"⁴. In this regard, Aboul Gheit had reached similar conclusions, yet he was not able, despite his political position as foreign minister, to convince the president of his view [14, p. 244, 251].

When Minister Abu Zeid was removed from office, the foreign ministry's role became more active with regards to 'micro' decisions, such as trying to put pressure on the upstream countries to change their positions through other external parties (e.g. the World Bank and France). Furthermore, the foreign minister was the architect of the Egyptian proposal (presented in April 2010) to the upstream countries to resume talks on the controversial provisions of the framework agreement, while launching the NBI High Commission was done via a "presidential declaration". Nevertheless, the foreign minister was not able to convince Mubarak to temporarily halt Egypt's participation in the NBI activities in protest against the signing of the Entebbe agreement in May 2010, demonstrating that the foreign minister was not able to influence the decision-maker with regards to 'macro' decisions [14, p. 250].

Turning now to the role of the foreign ministry with regard to policy implementation, in Egypt, the effectiveness of diplomacy was highest during periods of moderation, as diplomacy took precedence over other instruments (such as clandestine activities, economic assistance, and the use of physical coercion), due to the high financial and technical costs of these instruments [28, p. 162]. This was precisely the case under Mubarak; thus, foreign policy strongly depended on diplomacy [29, p. 31]. In fact, traditional diplomatic activity — conducted on a bilateral basis through ambassadors — was the normal mode of Egyptian diplomacy in the NBCs. There is permanent Egyptian representation in every Nile Basin country, seeking to achieve closer ties with the relevant governments in order to promote Egyptian interests. There are two main functions that Egyptian diplomacy performs: communicating between Egypt and the host country, and supervising the performance of other tools including as economic, cultural, and other instruments, due to the absence of specialized technical bureaux in most of the Nile Basin countries (with the exception of for, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda).

However, many factors contributed to weakening the efficiency of traditional diplomacy, constraining its capacity to achieve political coordination on issues of mutual interest to these countries, the Nile Waters issue in particular. In general, every Egyptian

⁴ The researcher was able to read an official report sent by the Egyptian Embassy that included this recommendation on the condition of not referencing it

embassy in Africa has a contributory role in supporting bilateral relations. When this fails, it suggests that the embassy had not carried out its mandates properly [30]. Indeed, the specialized department in the headquarters of the foreign ministry has a role to play as well, as it directs the embassy towards the appropriate means of achieving its objectives, in addition to evaluating its performance. In fact, the Nile Basin department did not receive the necessary attention from the ministry, particularly with regard to providing it with knowledgeable and competent diplomats [14, p. 226]. In fact, Egyptian diplomats do not follow the rule of 'specialization' throughout their diplomatic careers. Accordingly, it was not necessary for the diplomats who served in the Nile Waters Unit to have previous experience with African affairs. Furthermore, since diplomats are frequently posted abroad, they did not have enough time to accumulate experience in Egypt. Unlike members of the Ministry of Irrigation and the General Intelligence Service, who keep their mandates for longer periods, different diplomats might handle the Nile Waters issue and relations with the NBCs within a very short time. This has undoubtedly had negative repercussions on the quality of the department's work, constraining its capacity to provide accurate directions to the embassies and correct analysis to the foreign minister. Furthermore, diplomacy in the NBCs was constrained by the problem that most of the diplomats tried to avoid working in Africa. They were interested in serving in more glamorous places, or in those with easier living conditions. Within this context, much difficulty remained in filling vacancies at the embassies in the Nile Basin and providing them with skilled diplomats, especially those of high rank [14, p. 231]. Moreover, there was a lack of a sufficient number of diplomats to serve in each embassy. For example, during the negotiations, the embassies in Juba, Rwanda, Burundi, the Congo, and Asmara sent only the ambassador and one junior diplomat with limited experience. This situation indeed negatively impacted the embassies' performance.

On the other hand, the African tendency toward supporting the patriotic leader, coupled with the highly centralized nature of African political regimes, and African presidents' flair for conducting foreign affairs, make personal diplomacy a pivotal element in achieving foreign policy objectives. President Mubarak adopted the same approach, yet the degree to which he utilized this approach in Africa (and especially in the Nile Basin) was minimal. Mubarak made fifteen visits to ten countries in sub-Saharan Africa during his rule, whereas more than thirty sub-Saharan countries were never included in his schedule. As for the Nile Basin, only one visit was made to any of them, to Uganda during the CFA talks in 2008. It is noteworthy that not a single presidential visit has been made to Ethiopia except when attending the OAU summits, the most recent in 1995 [31].

While President Mubarak was absent, other external parties with different agendas (which in many cases intersected with Egyptian interests) had actively engaged in the region and succeeded in strengthening their influence. For example, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman visited Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda in 2009, at the same time that differences were intensifying between Egypt and the upstream countries about the provisions of the framework agreement [31, pp. 10–11]. Indeed, Mubarak's absence weakened Egypt's efforts to enhance bilateral relations in the Nile Basin region, for it indicated that the Nile Basin states were at the bottom of Egypt's foreign policy agenda [30]. The words of Ugandan President Museveni demonstrated the negative effect of Mubarak's attitude: "We have never been visited by an Egyptian 'Pharaoh' though your [Egypt's] origins descend from Uganda and the Upper Nile... I want the president to visit me, not the Vice

President who became the President”, referring to Mubarak’s comment that he had once visited Uganda when he was vice president under Sadat [14, p. 228]. In the same context, the Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi emphasized to the former Assistant Minister of African Affairs that if President Mubarak had invited the presidents of the Nile Basin countries to a special meeting about the Nile Waters issue, the crisis would have been handled in a better way [32].

Analysts attribute Mubarak’s attitude towards avoiding African visits to the fact that the president’s safety was given priority over water and economic security [33, p. 11]. Moreover, Mubarak’s personality also contributed to this attitude, for he lacked the inclination to work closely with Africa [34]. President Mubarak was consumed with relations with celebrities; at the forefront of this group were the European leaders [14, p. 50]. Ironically, the Egyptian ambassadors in the Nile Basin were directed to exert all diplomatic efforts to strengthen bilateral relations, but their efforts to bring the Egyptian president to the region were always ignored. “It is not on the agenda at the moment”, was how the presidency responded to the ambassador’s frequent requests in one of the Nile Basin countries [32]. Furthermore, given the saying that the heaviest tasks for most Egyptian officials are the African ones [35], and bearing in mind the political fact that the bureaucracy has always been subordinate to the president [32; 36], the Nile Basin occupied a limited place on the agenda of Egyptian ministers’ official visits. These visits were made in cases of a certain crisis or problem that needing to be resolved, for they were carried out in the absence of a strategy for political and economic action and without prior planning [37]. Therefore, the impact of these intermittent visits varied between weak and almost non-existent, especially with regard to the CFA negotiations.

The General Intelligence Service

There is no doubt that the GIS was present during the CFA talks, as its representative regularly attended the ‘Negotiations Committee’ meetings and the Egyptian delegation’s preparations that precedes each meeting. However, the question here becomes what the impact of its presence on the Egyptian position was during the talks. To answer this question, sufficient information about the exact mandate of the GIS was during the CFA talks, and how far it succeeded in implementing its goals, is required. Due to the confidential nature of intelligence work and the low degree of transparency within developing countries in general, it is difficult to access the necessary information to answer these questions. However, observing the talks’ developments does lead to the following analysis.

As previously indicated, the principle mandate of the intelligence service is gathering, examining, and spreading information to the president and to other institutions. Thus, the fact that the Egyptian delegation was taken by surprise by the sudden change in the stances of the equatorial countries at the Kigali meeting in 2007 demonstrates that none of the delegation members had prior knowledge of it. Notably, since the Egyptian delegation included representatives from various institutions, it is clear that none of these institutions had been informed of the new developments prior to the meeting. Furthermore, the way President Mubarak acted during the talks demonstrates that he did not perceive that the situation was moving against Egypt’s interests.

From this analysis, we can conclude that something went wrong with the GIS’s work on the issue of the CFA negotiations. Therefore, several questions arise: did the intelli-

gence offices located in the region manage to gather correct information about the upstream countries' positions? If the answer is yes, was the information brought to the head of intelligence, Omar Suleiman, or was it blocked at some stage for one reason or another? Assuming that the information had already reached Suleiman, was he convinced of its plausibility and did he submit it to the president? Finally, was President Mubarak convinced by the materials that he received from the GIS, and did he begin to make decisions according to it? In summary, unless answers are found to these questions, the role of the GIS during the framework agreement negotiations will remain difficult to assess⁵.

Conclusion

The paper analyzed the Nile Waters issue under President Mubarak given the geographic fact that the Nile River the main water source for Egypt and that waters originate entirely from outside the Egyptian territory. The question raised is: what was the role of national institutions with regard to Nile Waters issue decisions? It appears that, unlike other foreign policy issues in Egypt, national policy towards the Nile Waters issue was the outcome of a comprehensive discourse among multiple national institutions, and that there was a consensus among these institutions about the general direction of Egyptian policy. The policy outlines emphasized that the Nile Waters issue was directly related to Egypt's national security and that the country was already suffering from a water scarcity situation. The situation would require immediate action to increase water resources, and to ensure there is no shortage in the current water share of 55 BCM. However, the decision-making process has another story to tell, for it was concentrated mainly in the hands of the president. This answers the above-mentioned question. Among various national institutions, such as the Ministry of Irrigation, the foreign ministry and the intelligence service, it is evident that President Mubarak's decisions regarding the Nile Waters issue depended largely on the vision adopted by the Ministry of Irrigation, particularly during the last decade of his presidency, which coincided with the Nile Basin Initiative talks. The development of each institution supports this analysis: the most important of these factors was Mubarak's tendency to diminish the role of the foreign ministry after the appointment of Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher, on the one hand, and some personality factors which led him to confide in the Minister of Irrigation, Mahmud Abu Zaid, who became his key advisor on Egypt's water policy, on the other.

In this context, throughout the different phases of the Cooperative Framework Agreement negotiations under the Nile Basin Initiative (from 2003 to 2010) the paper examined the role national institutions played regarding foreign policy-making during the given period. The analysis examined a number of elements regarding the foreign policy decision-making process in Egypt, and the degree to which the president was responsible for the final policy outcomes. It also highlighted the fact that Egypt's foreign policy diplomatic instrument suffer from clear deficiencies that did not enable the Egyptian state to achieve the water policy objectives, no matter how rational the foreign policy decisions were. Accordingly, the concluding section will attempt to abstract from this specific issue (Egyptian policy towards the Nile Waters issue) a number of general remarks relating to Egypt's African foreign policy-making under President Mubarak and the role of the bureaucracy:

⁵ The researcher had great difficulty to have access to data related to the General Intelligence Service's work. Her request was officially rejected by the competent authorities

First, the one-to-one approach adopted by President Mubarak in decision-making (considering each minister his principal advisor while neutralizing the role of other national institutions) gave the opportunity to some senior officials to play more influential roles than others relating to certain foreign policy issues that should not have been subject to institutional monopoly because of the multi-dimensional nature of these issues. In the Nile Waters issue, this explains some ministers' refrainment (including that of the foreign minister and perhaps the chief of intelligence) to provide the president with opinions differing from those of Minister Abu Zeid (Mubarak's advisor on the Nile Waters issue), as they knew that Mubarak was convinced of Abu Zeid's view.

Second, the president's weak health, which even affected his ability to make rational assessments during the last five years of his rule, left the door open to the inner circle (the President's men) to separate him from other political advisors. In the absence of the decision-maker, institutions stepped forward to fill this gap. The result was the emergence of institutional rivalry, as each institution attempted to impose its own vision and to monopolize micro-level decisions.

Third, in terms of the high political cost of military usage and the lack of economic capability, traditional diplomacy was the most widely used instrument of Egypt's Africa policies. However, despite the extensive existence of the Egyptian embassies in Africa, due to various deficiencies, this instrument was unable to realize the ultimate target of achieving Egypt's foreign policy objectives. In the Nile Waters case, the instrument utilized was not sufficient to reinforce the positions of the 'negotiating team' against the tough positions of the upstream countries during the CFA talks.

In summary, Egypt's policy towards the Nile Waters issue is symptomatic of Egypt's Africa policies deficiencies. In light of prominent scholar Gamal Hamdan's belief that foreign policy is a demonstration of the internal situation of the state, this paper has dealt with key domestic element responsible for Egypt's foreign policy towards Africa and the Nile Waters issue, the role of the bureaucracy in the decision-making process. It concludes that the performance of the Egyptian institutions dealing with the Nile Waters issue left a lot to be desired. Such assessment includes the principal decision-maker (President Mubarak) and the bureaucracies. On a more general level, the question can be raised: how did Africa rate among Egypt's national interests? The discussions indicate that Africa was at the bottom of the pile of Egypt's foreign policy agenda under Mubarak and that the Egyptian bureaucracy can be held responsible for the setbacks of the policy.

Accordingly, further analysis on the change in the decision-making process of Egypt's Africa policies, post-Mubarak era, has to be conducted. Undoubtedly Egypt's Africa relations witness an unmistakable improvement since President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi held power in 2014. This is attributed to the extended use of presidential diplomacy, the tool that has been absent in Egypt's Africa policies since 1995 until the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak. Sisi started his duties in June 2014 with Egypt's resuming its participation in the African Union's activities which was suspended after the overthrow of President Mohamed Morsi in 2013. President Sisi's active engagement in Africa resulted into similar behaviour from the Egyptian bureaucracy which suddenly became interested to conduct various activities in the continent. Such behaviour confirms the analysis that in the states characterized by central regimes, the political leader monopolizes the decision-making process to the extent that other state actors remain subordinate to him. In Egypt, there will always be a correlation between active Africa policies and the degree of which the presi-

dent is interested in these policies. To illustrate, there is a positive relation between Egypt's active engagement in Africa and the President's foreign policy inclination. The more the Egyptian president shows interest towards Africa, the more engaged the Egyptian institutions are in the continent's issues. As for the bureaucracy, it is more likely that the balance of power will remain in favour of the presidency, the security agencies and the defence ministry with regard to the foreign policy decision-making process in Egypt. For this situation to change, dramatic changes of the characteristics and the behaviour of the political regime have to take place, which is unlikely to happen in the time being.

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Бюрократический аппарат и внешняя политика Египта на Африканском континенте при Мубараке. Часть два

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Принятие решений в Египте во время правления президента Хосни Мубарака осуществлялось преимущественно им самим и небольшой ключевой группой советников, которую он назначал и распускал. Ближе к концу своего правления президент Мубарак уже не был способен достаточно эффективно выполнять свои обязанности. Тем не менее, часть вопросов была отдана на откуп профильным министерствам. Бюрократический аппарат получил возможность существенно влиять на внешнюю политику, особенно в тех областях, которые не представляли особого интереса для правящей элиты. В этом контексте, проблема нильского водопользования — наиболее яркое воплощение процесса принятия решений в египетской внешней политике при президенте Мубараке. Цель статьи — исследовать роль институтов в проблеме водопользования. Исследование стремится показать, что главную роль в переговорах по рамочному договору о совместном водопользовании играло министерство водных ресурсов, а не министерство иностранных дел. Также в исследовании говорится о «бюрократическом противостоянии», происходившем в то время. Из-за него египетской стороне пришлось столкнуться со значительными трудностями во время переговоров. Таким образом, продолжаются споры о том, что бюрократический аппарат, несмотря на свое подчиненное положение, является частично ответственным за неудачные результаты внешней политики Египта во время правления президента Мубарака.

Ключевые слова: процесс принятия решений, бюрократическая политика, политика в Африке, политика Египта в Африке, министерство иностранных дел Египта, президент Мубарак, проблема нильского водопользования.

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