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The incomplete restructuring of Egypt's African policy

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INTRODUCTION

The hypothesis supported in this paper is that Egypt's African policy is undergoing transformational dynamics. After several decades of distancing itself from Africa, the convergence of national and regional factors has led Egypt to restructure its policy. However, the revision of that policy is often limited by the tensions opposing, on one hand, a political desire for change motivated by the observation that the traditional policy has failed, and, on the other, resistance from Egypt and the continent. This paper thus starts with an analysis of the driving forces behind the restructuring of Egypt's African policy, and its obstacles. In our second part, we look beyond the change of discourse and examine the actions illustrating this incremental shift in two different areas: policies and institutions. Finally, we focus on the challenges involved in restructuring Egypt's African policy. In accordance with Egypt's diplomatic tradition, the geographical boundaries in this paper include Egypt's sub-Saharan zone. The country's action in the Arab countries of North Africa will be taken into account where relevant. This paper thus mainly covers the first mandate of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, sworn in on 8 June 2014.

I – The shift: driving forces and obstacles

Egypt's African policy has traditionally been shaped by several factors. After 2011, some of those factors became drivers for change. In that respect, the shift of Egypt's foreign policy has come as an inevitable reaction to a sequence of circumstances within and outside the country. However, other factors have acted as forces of resistance to change, reinforcing the dependence between the ongoing transformations and the decisions taken by President Sisi.

I.1 – *The driving forces for change*

I.1.1 – *Geopolitics of the Nile*

The issue of the Nile is the first to appear on the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' webpage dedicated to relations with Africa.¹ Egypt is completely dependent on the Nile for drinking water and irrigation. The issue has undeniably taken priority in Cairo's African policy since 2 April 2011, when Ethiopia, the primary source of 86% of the waters of the Egyptian Nile, decided to implement its project to build the Great Ethiopian Resistance Dam (GERD), Africa's largest hydroelectric plant.² Egypt's authorities posited that the dam would reduce Egypt's share of water by 55.5 billion m³. According to Cairo, the reduction of its share, which would already have been insufficient in a few years, will have adverse economic, environmental and social consequences.³

In May 2013, when Egypt was in the midst of a political crisis, Ethiopia initiated the deviation of the waters of the Blue Nile, the primary source of the Nile waters that reach Egypt. Since then, Egypt has faced a series of unilateral Ethiopian actions, despite ongoing bilateral and, with Sudan, trilateral negotiations initiated by Cairo. The latest of those actions, in mid-February 2018, was the adoption of a plan to fill the dam's reservoir. Ethiopia merely 'sent' a copy of the plan to Egypt and Sudan.⁴ Egypt had devoted considerable diplomatic efforts to avoiding such a unilateral decision. The

¹ "Egypt in Africa", Arab Republic of Egypt, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <https://www.mfa.gov.eg/English/ForeignPolicy/EgyptianAfricanRelations/Pages/default.aspx>, (consulted on 12 April 2018).

² "Agreement on the Nile River Basin Cooperative Framework", *International Water Law Project*, https://www.internationalwaterlaw.org/documents/regionaldocs/Nile_River_Basin_Cooperative_Framework_2010.pdf (consulted on 21 March 2018).

³ Tawfiq Nofal, "Challenges Facing Egypt's Foreign Policy in Africa", *African Perspectives*, n° 37, vol. 11, p. 16-18; Mohie El Edin Omar & Ahmed Moussa, "Water Management in Egypt for Facing Future Challenges", *Journal of Advanced Research*, n° 7, 2016, p. 403-412.

⁴ Ayah Aman, "Egypt unmoved on Ethiopia's plan to fill Renaissance Dam", *Al-Monitor*, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/03/ethiopia-briefs-egypt-about-plan-filling-renaissance-dam.print.html> (consulted on 21 March 2018).

succession of diplomatic failures continued until 3 April 2018, when the new negotiations format involving the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Irrigation, as well as the head of Egypt's intelligence services, also failed. Addis Ababa and Khartoum held Cairo responsible for the latest failure, which Cairo denied, although it invited representatives from the other governments to a new meeting in Cairo on 5 May 2018.⁵

2011 was also the year the Entebbe Agreement was signed, putting an end to the privilege that granted Egypt and Sudan 87.5% of the waters of the Nile for their own use. The agreement also stipulated that Egypt would no longer have the right to veto hydraulic projects on the river.⁶ Between 2010 and 2011, seven countries signed the agreement, establishing the Nile Basin Cooperative Framework Agreement. Other than Egypt, Sudan and Congo were the only countries that did not sign. Their position is difficult, as the agreement's enforcement by the specially established Nile Basin Commission, which will be tasked with the "equitable" distribution of the waters of the Nile, only requires six ratifications.⁷ Three countries, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Rwanda, have already ratified the Cooperative Framework Agreement.⁸ There is a constant threat Sudan will sign due to the frequent tensions that crop up in its relations with its northern neighbour.

The Nile issue has subsequently provided regional powers with leverage they can use on Egypt, and almost all have done so. Even Saudi Arabia, Egypt's main Arab ally, brought it up during bilateral tensions in December 2016.⁹ Turkey and Qatar, the main political enemies of Sisi's regime in the area, have since stepped up their official visits to Ethiopia and their investments in the country. These are directly and indirectly linked to the construction of the GERD, and compound the cooperation between Ethiopia and Israel, which is already a worry for Cairo.¹⁰

⁵ "Commenting on Media Reports About Statements Attributed to the Official Spokesperson of the Ethiopian Foreign Ministry", Arab Republic of Egypt, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <https://www.mfa.gov.eg/english/MediaCenter/News/Pages/Commenting-on-what-some-media-have-reported.aspx> (consulted on 13 April 2018).

⁶ Egypt and Sudan's share was of 55.5 and 18.5 billion m³ respectively, out of a total of 84 milliards m³. Christophe Ayad, *Géopolitique de l'Égypte* ("Geopolitics of Egypt"), Brussels, Éditions Complexe, 2002, p. 13. The six signatories are Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Burundi.

⁷ "Agreement on the Nile River Basin Cooperative Framework", *International Water Law Project*, https://www.internationalwaterlaw.org/documents/regionaldocs/Nile_River_Basin_Cooperative_Framework_2010.pdf, (consulted on 21 March 2018).

⁸ "Nile Basin Initiative", *Ethiopian New Agency*, <http://www.ena.gov.et/en/index.php/economy/item/3574-nile-basin-commission-will-be-established-upon-signing-of-cfa-by-three-countries-entro>, (consulted on 23 March 2018).

⁹ "Wafd so'oudi rafi' al-mostawa yazour ethiopia", *Al-Ahram*, <http://www.ahram.org.eg/News/202117/26/568997/بم-سعودى-وفد-عالمية-الأناضول-وعرب-يترابخأ/> <http://www.ahram.org.eg/News/202117/26/568997/بم-سعودى-وفد-عالمية-الأناضول-وعرب-يترابخأ/> (consulted on 27 March 2018).

¹⁰ Egypt Today Staff, "Amid Tension, Israel expands Investments in Africa", *Egypt Today*, <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/2/39410/Amid-tension-Israel-expends-investments-in-Africa>, (consulted on 27 March 2018); Bilal Derso, "Africa: Ethiopia Tops Turkish Investment Destinations of Africa – EIC", <http://allafrica.com/stories/201801310663.html> (consulted on 30 March 2018).

1.1.2 – Geostrategic stakes in Africa

Egypt is still Africa's largest military power.¹¹ However, Africa's regional powers, like international powers, have recently been pursuing the expansion of their economic and especially military presence, which has been viewed with scepticism in Cairo. In the last few years, Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have stepped up their military and strategic cooperation in Africa.¹² The threat has grown with the overspill of political conflicts in the Arab World into sub-Saharan Africa, which has been used to harm Egypt's interests. It has further increased with the concentration of foreign military bases in the Horn of Africa, around the Nile basin.

One of the latest geostrategic threats to have provoked a furious public reaction from Cairo was Turkey's interference on the continent – particularly, its lease of Suakin Island in the Red Sea from Sudan.¹³ The island, which is located within the Halayeb triangle disputed by Cairo and Khartoum, could potentially welcome a Turkish naval base on the commercial route that supplies Egypt's primary source of foreign currency revenues: the Suez Canal.¹⁴ This also means that Sudan is no longer alone in its frequent trials of strength with Egypt. Turkey's militarisation campaign is further reinforced by the installation of its largest foreign military base in Somalia and its development of military cooperation with Chad.¹⁵ This military presence is the most tangible part of Turkey's African policy. Turkey reaps more benefits from its economic relations with Africa than Egypt.¹⁶ Trade between Turkey and Africa amounts to 17.5 billion dollars, vs. only

¹¹ "African Powers Ranked by Military Strength", *Global Fire Power*, <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing-africa.asp> (consulted on 2 April 2018).

¹² Jon Gambrel, "Qatar crisis shakes East Africa, a Home to Gulf militaries", *Chicago Tribune*, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/sns-bc-ml-gatar-africa-impact-20170830-story.html> (consulted on 25 March 2018); Greg Roxburgh & Greg Kibangula, « Carte : tout savoir sur les bases militaires étrangères en Afrique » ("Map: Everything to know about foreign military bases in Africa"), *Jeune Afrique*, <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/437231/politique/carte-savoir-bases-militaires-etrangees-afrique/> (consulted on 10 April 2018); Tel Ibar, "Bases in Africa", *Israel Defense*, <http://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/content/bases-africa> (consulted on 31 March 2018).

¹³ AT Editor, "Afwerki speaks on Horn of Africa Affairs, Denies Egypt's Troop are in Eritrea", *Africa Times*, <http://africatimes.com/2018/01/15/afwerki-speaks-out-on-regional-affairs-denies-egyptian-troops-are-in-eritrea/> (consulted on 5 April 2018).

¹⁴ « L'île Suakin, autre source de tension entre le Soudan et l'Égypte » ("Suakin Island, another source of tension between Sudan and Egypt"), *RFI Afrique*.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*; Eddie Rabeyrin, "La Turquie de retour sur la mer Rouge" ("Turkey returns to the Red Sea", *Le Monde*, http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2018/01/17/la-turquie-de-retour-sur-la-mer-rouge_5243048_3212.html#OjeiKQ2ZR6xCBIUo.99 (consulted on 6 April 2018); "Turkish president signs trade deals on visit to Chad", *The New Arab*, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/12/27/turkish-president-signs-trade-deals-on-visit-to-chad> (consulted on 8 April 2018).

¹⁶ Saif Eddine Al-Amri, « Inquiétudes égyptiennes face à l'alliance entre le Turquie et le Soudan » ("Egypt's concerns regarding the alliance between Turkey and Sudan"), *Orient XXI*, <https://orientxxi.info/magazine/inquietudes-egyptiennes-face-a-l-alliance-entre-la-turquie-et-le-soudan,2242> (consulted on 6 April 2018).

4.9 billion dollars for Egypt.¹⁷ The most difficult for Cairo to endure is the discourse of an Islamic regional power that stands for a civilizational heritage directly rivalling Egypt's discourse.¹⁸

1.1.3 – *The consequences of internal political instability*

Africa would not have been such a priority for Egypt's foreign policy had it not been for the reaction of African countries following Egypt's political developments in 2011 and 2013. Nor is it a coincidence that the riparian countries, Ethiopia in particular, chose those moments of instability to implement significant measures regarding an issue that had lain dormant for ten years. Africa became a priority for Egyptian diplomacy not only because of the Nile situation, but also the African Union's decision to suspend Egypt in reaction to the military coup of 3 July 2013. It took a year for Egypt to be readmitted, on 17 June 2014, following the decision of the AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC).¹⁹ This suspension tarnished the international legitimacy of the new regime and jeopardised Egypt's image as a regional African power, particularly in the eyes of international organisations and powers. Despite its readmission, it turned out to be increasingly difficult for Sisi's Egypt to keep its internal political situation from the stage of the AU. African leaders, both democratic and authoritarian, are particularly attentive to military coups given the continent's political history.²⁰

1.1.4 – *The international attention paid to the fight against terrorism*

President Sisi has made the fight against Islamist terrorism the main cause of his regime and the main source of his legitimacy. This is another issue that has caused a certain shift in Egypt's African policy. Central and West Africa, with the Sahel and the Sahara, currently hold an important position in Cairo's anti-terrorist activism.²¹ Egypt considers

¹⁷ Egypt Today Staff, "Trade Between Egypt and African Countries Reaches \$4.8bn in 2016", *Egypt Today*, <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/3/16932/Trade-between-Egypt-and-African-countries-reach-4-8bn-in> (consulted on 8 April 2018).

¹⁸ « Inquiétudes égyptiennes face à l'alliance entre le Turquie et le Soudan » ("Egypt's concerns regarding the alliance between Turkey and Sudan"), *op. cit.*; Abdirahman Hussein & Coskun Orhan, "Turkey opens military base in Mogadishu to train Somali soldiers", *Reuters*, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-somalia-turkey-military/turkey-opens-military-base-in-mogadishu-to-train-somali-soldiers-idUSKCN1C50JH> (consulted on 5 April 2018).

¹⁹ « L'Égypte et la Guinée-Bissau réintègrent l'Union africaine, la Centrafrique reste suspendue » ("Egypt and Guinea-Bissau are readmitted to the African Union, the Central African Republic is still suspended"), *Jeune Afrique*, <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/52038/politique/l-gypte-et-la-guine-e-bissau-r-int-grent-l-union-africaine-la-centrafrique-reste-suspendue/> (consulted on 18 March 2018).

²⁰ « Coups d'État en Afrique : la fin d'une époque ? » ("Military coups in Africa: the end of an era?"), *Jeune Afrique*.

²¹ Ibrahim Singab, "fi do' al-ta'awon li mokafahat al-irhabiyyin : taharok misri barez fi tagamo' al-sahel wa al-sahara", *Al-Ahram*, <http://www.ahram.org.eg/NewsPrint/475513.aspx> (consulted on 20 March 2018).

them “an extension of the Egyptian strategic depth to the South and the West”.²² As well as the security and strategic concerns emanating from the region, Cairo's Islamic influence through Al-Azhar has been challenged for years by Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey. The three countries, Saudi Arabia and Qatar in particular, have financed the construction of so many mosques in African countries that their involvement is easily detectable.²³ From Kenya to Senegal via other African sub-regions, more and more Imams go to Saudi Arabia for religious training and are financed by the country upon their return. Al-Azhar has lost credibility because of its politicisation.²⁴ Many African Imams thus prefer to pursue their studies in Medina rather than Cairo. There, too, the regional powers of the Middle East compete, including Iran. The fight against terrorism was thus the major issue endorsed by Egypt when it sat on the United Nations Security Council as a non-permanent member.²⁵

1.2 – **The obstacles to change**

1.2.1 – *The impasse of history*

“In the wake of the January 25 and June 30 Revolutions, Egypt sought to restore its role in Africa as being one of Egypt's national security spheres, especially in light of the historic ties and vital interests between Egypt and its African circle”.²⁶

This quote, which begins the “Egypt in Africa” section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' website, sums up the dilemma of Egypt's past relations with Africa. It conveys a desire to return to a history that no longer exists, instead of heading for new horizons. The natural tension between “Revolutions” and “historic ties” illustrates the unease experienced by the diplomatic and even cultural establishments in recognising the political, economic and social changes that have taken place on the continent – especially as that “history” is cited to impose conditions from a past in which the balance of power was radically different. The conflict over the division of the waters of the Nile is one illustration. Egypt's “historical rights” in that regard have been a constant, first used to refuse any

²²“Egypt in Africa”, Arab Republic of Egypt, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <https://www.mfa.gov.eg/English/ForeignPolicy/EgyptianAfricanRelations/Pages/default.aspx> (consulted on 1 April 2018).

²³ Laurence-Aïda Ammour, « Le wahhabisme saoudien en Afrique de l'Ouest » (“Saudi Wahhabism in West Africa”), *Huffington Post*, https://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/laurenceaada-ammour/le-wahhabisme-saoudien-en-afrique-de-louest_b_18753592.html (consulted on 1 April 2018).

²⁴ Conversation with Imams in Mombasa, Kenya, December 2016.

²⁵ “Egypt and The Security Council”, Arab Republic of Egypt, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <https://www.mfa.gov.eg/English/ForeignPolicy/Pages/Egypt-and-the-security-council.aspx> (consulted on 2 April 2018).

²⁶ “Egypt in Africa”, *op. cit.*

negotiation, and then to reinforce Egypt's position in its test of strength with Ethiopia.²⁷ School and university programmes perpetuate that narrative by limiting African history to the time of decolonisation in which Egypt played the role of older sibling. In Cairo, only one institute in Cairo University is dedicated to African studies, and it has a very limited State fund. Within the Faculty of Economics and Political Sciences, the main training centre for diplomats, researchers and statesmen, specialists in African studies have one professor emeritus, as well as one lecturer and assistant, who are both abroad. Out of all the research centres in the country, only one is dedicated to African studies. It suffers from a considerable lack of funds and its publications are exclusively produced in Arabic. The research centre of Al-Ahram, the oldest and most prestigious, offers one programme on Africa, which is in the same situation, despite its few English publications.²⁸

1.2.2 – *The obsession with security and the institutional deadlock*

The quote embodies another of the dilemmas of Egypt's African policy. The continent's perception of security comes across explicitly, as well as Egypt's appropriation of the security of African countries as its own "national" security. That perception has always left an opening for the critical role of Egypt's security apparatus in its cooperation with Africa, including for cultural, religious and even economic cooperation. The activities involving the African continent within and outside Egypt are thus subject to the approval of the intelligence services of Egypt's Ministries of Defense and Military Production and the Interior, as well as its National Security Agency (NSA). Egypt is one of the few developing countries to have permanent diplomatic missions in 36 African countries, supplemented by non-permanent representation.²⁹ However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not send its best diplomats abroad. Very rare are the Egyptian diplomats, or even researchers, who choose to specialise in African affairs or reside in other African countries. This situation explains not only the inability to understand and assimilate the transformations occurring on the continent, but also the priority given to the security establishment as a source of information and analysis on Africa. It is significant that the agents of the Ministry of Defense receive a higher financial incentive than their diplomatic counterparts working in the same African countries.

The distrust and rigid hierarchy between the different actors and institutions working on the African policy are yet two more obstacles. The priority given to security institutions is almost a given in crisis zones. Diplomatic, individual and institutional

²⁷ "Hoquouq misr al-tarikhiyah fi miyah al-nil", State Information Service, <http://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/136811?lang=ar> (consulted on 2 April 2014); Asmaa Nasr, "wazir al-kharegeyah: la tafrit fi hoquouq misr al-tarikhiyah bimiah nahr el-nil", *Al-youm al-sabe'*, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2015/12/10/لا-ال-خارج-يتوزر/2484917> (consulted on 12 April 2018).

²⁸ "Markaz al-bohouth al-arabiyah wa al-ifriqiyah", <http://www.aarcegypt.org> (consulted on 12 April 2018).

²⁹ "Contacts of Egypt's Embassies in Africa", Arab Republic of Egypt, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.aarcegypt.org> (consulted on 10 April 2018).

initiatives require the prior approval of authorities within the Ministry of the Interior for an activity in Egypt, and the Ministry of Defense for an activity abroad. Even within Egypt's diplomatic machine, conflicts of interest and opinion, the desire for visibility and generational and hierarchical conflicts continue to hinder the promotion of relations with the African continent.

1.2.3 – The exteriorisation of national policies

The crux of the exteriorisation of Egypt's national policies lies in the political fight between the regime of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on one hand, and political Islam on the other. The projection of that opposition outside the country prevents it from changing its African policy, in two matters in particular: the fight against terrorism and the bilateral relations with African Muslim-majority countries. The fight against terrorism is thus one of the issues in which the conflict between the drivers for change and the drivers for the stagnation of Egypt's African policy can be seen most clearly. For instance, despite Egypt's desire to profit from the international attention paid to the issue, its government refused to use the internationally adopted concept of "violent extremism", preferring instead that of "terrorism" due to its ill-defined boundaries. The official discourse is that extremism must be fought in all its forms, whether or not they are violent. That argument is compatible with the national discourse of the Egyptian regime, which associates Islamism with extremism. Thus, despite the positive changes that we list in the second part of this paper, Egypt's activism in the fight against extremism is sometimes limited because of the importance of Islam and even Islamism within Africa's Muslim communities. Some Islamist tales and authors, particularly Salafi, officially banned in Egypt, are considered references for these communities.³⁰

The exteriorisation of the regime's internal policies can also be seen in its bilateral relations with some African countries, particularly the Arab countries of North Africa and Sudan. Libya in particular draws Egypt's attention, due to its geographical proximity and the fact that the bankrupt Libyan State grants passage to arms dealers, human traffickers and terrorist networks, who can thus travel from the Near East to the heart of Africa. Libya is thus a major reason for Egypt's growing interest in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel and the Central African Republic, and the stabilisation of the Libyan State. As for Sudan, the topic of political Islam has always represented a major issue in the relations between both countries. Since 2013, the presumed presence of several figures of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood in Sudan and its support of Libyan Islamist groups have added to the traditional sources of tension between both countries.³¹ The rising tension reached critical levels at the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018 with

³⁰ Informal interviews conducted by the author with Nigerian and Kenyan local Muslim leaders in Cairo and Mombasa during summer 2017.

³¹ Saif Eddine Al-Amri, « Inquiétudes égyptiennes face à l'alliance entre le Turquie et le Soudan » ("Egypt's concerns regarding the alliance between Turkey and Sudan"), *op. cit.*

measures including the withdrawal of ambassadors, the need for visas and the closure of borders.³²

2 – Signs of change

The changes in Egypt's African policy are particularly visible in two areas: policies and institutions. By institutions, we especially refer to Egypt's activism within and through local, regional and international institutions.

2.1 – Policies

2.1.1 – *The president's growing role in the African question*

President Sisi's personal involvement in the restructuring of Egypt's African policy is a remarkable aspect of its transformation. At the end of his first hundred days as head of the State, three of his five visits abroad took place in Algeria, Equatorial Guinea for the AU summit and Sudan.³³ That presidential trend continued during the following years. In August 2017, the State Information Service (SIS) published a report boasting of "five African Summits in one week!" between Sisi and the heads of State of Somalia, Gabon, Tanzania, Chad and Rwanda. When Sisi visited Gabon, it was the first time the country had ever received an Egyptian president.³⁴ At that time, and according to the same report, 30% of the President's foreign visits had been to African countries. Moreover, President Sisi dedicated 112 of his 5,543 meetings and summits with foreign leaders to his African counterparts.³⁵ It should also be noted that President Sisi participated in all the summits gathering African heads of State in different regional contexts. The latest was in January 2018 at the AU Summit in Addis Ababa, when he presided the meeting of the Peace and Security Council (PSC).³⁶ Sisi's presence on those occasions was most often supplemented by bilateral meetings held outside the main summits. The importance of that presidential omnipresence in Africa is its *avant-garde* function, followed by visits and meetings between the highest-ranking Egyptian leaders and their

³² Simon Allison, "Do Egypt and Sudan have anything in common anymore?", *ISS Africa*, <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/do-egypt-and-sudan-have-anything-in-common-anymore> (consulted on 20 March 2018).

³³ Nevine Al-Ayadi, "siyasat al-sisi al-kharegeyah fi 100 yome", *Almasry Alyoum*, <http://www.almasyalyoum.com/news/details/523510> (consulted on 20 March 2018).

³⁴ "Letter from Cairo, Special Edition: 5 African Summits in one Week", State Information Service, <http://www.sis.gov.eg/UP/publications/english29smoll.pdf> (consulted on 5 April 2018).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ "Terrorist organizations exploit civil conflicts, says Sisi at AU's Peace and Security Council Session", *Ahram Online*, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/288914/Egypt/Politics-/Terrorist-organisations-exploit-civil-conflicts,-s.aspx> (consulted on 21 March 2018).

African counterparts.³⁷ The agreements and diplomatic achievements that we mention in the rest of this paper mainly ensue from this brand of presidential diplomacy.

His visit to Chad stands out among recent visits, because it represents both Sisi's presidential involvement and Egypt's prioritisation of African issues. The visit highlighted Egypt's activism in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel and the Central African Republic, the stabilisation of Libya, the pressure on Sudan and Egypt's strategic position in sub-Saharan Africa. Egypt and Chad also share an official position favouring moderate, or even Sufic, Islam, as opposed to the more conservative interpretations of Islam such as Wahhabi Islam.³⁸ However, that did not prevent Chad from sending soldiers to participate in the war in Yemen, to foster the strategic development of its relations with the Gulf countries.³⁹ Such dynamics are what provoked such a significant reaction from the President, which has caused Sisi to be compared to Nasser in Egyptian media.

2.1.2 – *The fragile appeasement of the Nile situation*

Abdel Fattah al-Sisi is most likely trying to turn the page on Egypt's belligerence and domination of Africa. Sisi's Egypt has thus multiplied its efforts to appease relations with the countries of the Nile basin in general, and Ethiopia in particular. From its initial position of completely rejecting the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Project (GERDP), Egypt has been brought to vainly trying to negotiate two points: (i) the timeframe and dates of the filling phase and (ii) the implementation of an "objective" study on the dam's economic, social and environmental consequences.⁴⁰ As well as what the Egyptian government considers successive concessions made to Ethiopia, Cairo has decided upon an extensive revival of its economic, political, religious and cultural cooperation with all the riparian countries, including Ethiopia.⁴¹ The political choice of appeasement is also due to the lack of active support for Egypt's position on the continent. That lack is all the more burdensome as it is shared by the only other country upstream of the Nile, Sudan.⁴²

³⁷ Mohsen Semeika, "Al-sisi yasel addis ababa lelmosharakah fi al-qemmah al-afriqeyah", *Almasry Alyoum*, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/1250843> (consulted on 30 March 2018).

³⁸ "Chad: Between Ambition and Fragility", *International Crisis Group*.

³⁹ « Quels sont les pays africains engagés dans la guerre au Yémen ? » ("Which are the African countries involved in the war in Yemen?"), *RFI Afrique*.

⁴⁰ Ayah Aman, "Egypt unmoved on Ethiopia's plan to fill Renaissance Dam reservoir", *Al-monitor*, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/03/ethiopia-briefs-egypt-about-plan-filling-renaissance-dam.print.html> (consulted on 21 March 2018).

⁴¹ "Looking up the Nile- Egypt and Africa", *The Economist*.

⁴² Michele Dunne & Katherine Polloc, « Un barrage de la discorde sur le Nil » ("A dam of discord on the Nile"), *Orient XXI*, https://orientxxi.info/magazine/un-barrage-de-la-discorde-sur-le-nil_2108 (consulted on 26 March 2018).

However, Egypt's appeasement policy coexists with the maintenance of its official discourse on the "inviolability of Egypt's water share" and "its rights in this regard".⁴³ On 30 March 2018, President Sisi even declared that "The waters of Egypt is not a subject for talk, and I assure you, no one can touch Egypt's water" [sic].⁴⁴ Such statements are typically addressed to the Egyptian public and are certainly more hostile than those made during discussions with Ethiopia. They can be explained by Ethiopia's systematic refusal of any and all compromise. The new flexibility of Egypt's position went as far as to approve an arbitration by the World Bank. However, Egypt continues to insist that the Agreement on the Declaration of Principles signed by Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia in 2015 be respected.⁴⁵ For now, that agreement is Egypt's one diplomatic victory in the affair.

However, the Nile issue is also subject to the traditional tensions between State institutions. The lack of coordination and, often, the distrust between the different actors have exacerbated the absence of a clear crisis management strategy. Some experts even fear that the unavoidable weakening of Egypt's position will lead to a military confrontation in the area.⁴⁶ That would be disastrous, not only because of the military rapport between the two rivals, Egypt and Ethiopia, but also because of the involvement of a number of regional and international actors. President Sisi has, for now, avoided making direct military threats in his speeches and statements. However, the news of Egypt's military presence in Eritrea is alarming in that regard.⁴⁷ Not only is Egypt present in Eritrea in a bilateral context, but 3,200 Egyptian soldiers and agents are present in six United Nations African peacekeeping missions.⁴⁸ This has already provoked violent reactions from Sudan and, naturally, Ethiopia, who saw it as a direct threat. It also came at the same time as an Egyptian military mobilisation in the Halayeb and Shalatin triangle, where the sovereignty of the Egyptian State is contested by Sudan.⁴⁹ The improvement of relations between Cairo and Juba is to be analysed in this very context. Egypt designs and manages countless training programmes for the civilians and soldiers of South Sudan. Sisi has openly supported Salva Kiir in his civil war against the

⁴³ « Egypt in Africa », Arab Republic of Egypt, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *op. cit.*

⁴⁴ Mohsen Smeika et al., "No one can touch Egypt's share of Nile waters: Sisi", <http://www.egyptindependent.com/no-one-can-touch-egypts-share-of-nile-waters-sisi/> (consulted on 30 March 2018).

⁴⁵ Samah Hassan, "kalamat al-sissi fi mo'tamar Ethiopia", *Al-Watan*.

⁴⁶ "Egypt's Battle Over the Renaissance Dam", *Mada Masr*; Steven Cook, "Is War About to Break Out in the Horn of Africa?", <https://www.salon.com/2018/01/16/is-war-about-to-break-out-in-the-horn-of-africa-will-the-west-even-notice/> Council on Foreign Relations, (consulted on 21 March 2018).

⁴⁷ "Afwerki Speaks on Horn Affairs, Denies Egypt's Troops are in Eritrea", *Africa Times*, <http://africatimes.com/2018/01/15/afwerki-speaks-out-on-regional-affairs-denies-egyptian-troops-are-in-eritrea/> (consulted on 6 April 2018).

⁴⁸ JOHNSON Keith, "Egypt- Sudan Spat Muddies Prospects for Deal on Big Nile Dam", *Foreign Policy*, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/01/11/egypt-sudan-spat-muddies-prospects-for-deal-on-big-nile-dam-renaissance-gerd-ethiopia-sisi-turkey/> (consulted on 29 March 2018).

⁴⁹ Saif Eddine Al-Amri, « Inquiétudes égyptiennes face à l'alliance entre le Turquie et le Soudan » ("Egypt's concerns regarding the alliance between Turkey and Sudan"), *Orient XXI*, *op. cit.*

rebels challenging his authority and in South Sudan's application for membership of the Arab League. The visits of Egyptian military delegations to Juba and the training they offer South Sudanese soldiers continue to provoke Ethiopia and Sudan, who consider them a prelude to an attack against the GERD. Khartoum also accuses Cairo of sheltering political opponents of Omar al-Bashir.⁵⁰

2.1.3 – Geostrategic presence

Egypt's recent military mobilisation in Eritrea can be considered part of the abovementioned militarisation of political conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa. It is linked to the conflict over the GERD opposing Egypt and Ethiopia, the Middle East's military penetration in sub-Saharan Africa and Egypt's tensions with Sudan.⁵¹ In 2017, Egypt used its geographical privilege to open the largest military base in Africa and the Middle East.⁵² As well as the geostrategic privilege it gives Egypt, the base could be a new source of revenue due to its use by foreign military powers, which are increasingly involved in the military fight against the terrorist networks in Africa. It should be noted, moreover, that the United Arab Emirates, Libya and Saudi Arabia were represented at the inauguration.⁵³ As well as the accusations made by Sudan and Ethiopia, Egypt is accused by the United Nations of transferring weapons to South Sudan and Libya. Cairo is certainly taking action on every diplomatic front to lift the arms embargo imposed on Libya, where its security agents are active.⁵⁴ Egypt also took the unilateral decision of launching air strikes on Libya following the assassination of 21 Egyptians by the Islamic State in May 2017.⁵⁵ That decision earned Egypt a hostile reaction from the United States and African powers, which did not prevent it from participating in more strikes on Libya, although that is still unconfirmed.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ "South Sudan Slams Khartoum's accusation of Egyptian Military Aid", *The New Arab*, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/2/27/south-sudan-slams-khartoums-accusations-of-egyptian-military-aid> (consulted on 29 March 2018).

⁵¹ Saif Eddine Al-Amri, « Inquiétudes égyptiennes face à l'alliance entre le Turquie et le Soudan » ("Egypt's concerns regarding the alliance between Turkey and Sudan"), *Orient XXI, op. cit.*

⁵² Fatimata Sissoko, « L'Égypte inaugure la plus grande base militaire d'Afrique » ("Egypt inaugurates the largest military base in Africa"), *La Revue de l'Afrique*, <https://revue-afrique.com/Égypte-inaugure-base-militaire-plus-grande-afrique/> (consulted on 27 March 2018).

⁵³ "Qa'edat mohamed naguib al-'askareyah", *Aljazeera*.

⁵⁴ Oscar, "UN Panel Says Uganda, Ukraine and Egypt Violating South Sudan Arms Embargo", *Defence Web*, http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=47711 (consulted on 29 March 2018).

⁵⁵ Malek Bachir, « L'Algérie demande à l'Égypte d'arrêter ses frappes en Libye » ("Algeria asks Egypt to stop its strikes in Libya"), *Middle East Eye*, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/fr/reportages/exclusif-l-alg-rie-demande-l-gypte-d-arr-ter-ses-frappes-sur-la-libye-2058668884> (consulted on 12 April 2018).

⁵⁶ David Kirkpatrick & Eric Schmitt, "Arab Nations Strike in Libya, Surprising U.S.", *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/26/world/africa/egypt-and-united-arab-emirates-said-to-have-secretly-carried-out-libya-airstrikes.html> (consulted on 15 April 2018).

At the same time, Egypt is strengthening its presence within Africa's multilateral defence initiatives. It currently chairs the North African Regional Capability (NARC), based in Cairo, and has contributed to making the African Standby Force (ASF) operational since its establishment in 2005. Cairo has also made commitments to the Rapid Deployment Capability of the ASF (ASF-RDC) and the African Capacity for the Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC) since its establishment in 2013.⁵⁷ Egypt's military institution provides training to soldiers and police officers in 45 African countries.⁵⁸ Egypt is also involved in training and arming G5 Sahel in its fight against terrorism, through the procurement and maintenance of 150 armoured vehicles and the provision of aerial logistics support.⁵⁹

2.1.4 – Economic activism

The negotiations that have enabled Egypt to return to Africa's economic and commercial stage started in 2014. Although the result of many of these negotiations is still unclear, Egypt's commitment is a testament to Cairo's desire for influence and integration. These negotiations are thus perfectly in line with the policy shift addressed in this research paper. In 2015, Egypt hosted the signature of the Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement between Africa's three major economic blocs, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC) and the South African Development Community (SADC). The agreement, which was signed by 26 countries, was welcomed by President Sisi as illustrating Egypt's commitment to promoting inter-African investment and trade.⁶⁰

Two years later, in 2017, President Sisi personally inaugurated the Africa 2017 Forum. The high-level conference was also attended by seven African heads of State, as well as the heads of governments and international organisations, including the AU.⁶¹ It was a diplomatic victory that confirmed that Egypt had turned the page on its policy of African ostracism. The conference provided Egypt with another opportunity for cooperation, and strengthened its ties with COMESA through the bloc's Regional Investment Agency, based in Cairo and with a mainly Egyptian staff.⁶² In January 2018, the Export Development Bank of Egypt (EBE) signed an agreement with the African Export Import Bank (Afreximbank) to finance Egypt's Export Credit Support Scheme (ECSS), providing an

⁵⁷ Ashraf Swelam et al., "Egypt as a Peacekeeper: Contributions and Policies", *CCCCPA Research Paper* 1, August 2016, p. 5.

⁵⁸ "Egypt: a leader in Africa", Embassy of Egypt in Washington DC, http://www.Egyptembassy.net/media/Egypt_AfricaFactSheet_060815b.pdf (consulted on 21 March 2018).

⁵⁹ Badr Hassan Shafei, "misr wa tagamo' al-sahel wa al-sahara': takamol am haymanah" *Egyptian Center for Studies*, <https://eipss-eg.org/هيمنة-أم-ت-كامل-وال-صحراء-ال-ساحل-وت-جمع-مصر/> (consulted on 7 April 2018).

⁶⁰ "H.E Abdel Fattah Al Sisi. Welcome Message", Africa 2017 Forum.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² "Team", Regional Investment Agency, <http://www.comesaria.org/site/en/team.58.html> (consulted on 4 April 2018).

amount of 500 million dollars. It is the second contribution of the same amount to strengthen trade between Egypt and Africa. This agreement represents a new phase in the expansion of Egypt's trade with Africa, as the importers of Egyptian products must be African.⁶³

On 21 March 2018, Egypt went a step further by joining the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTFA). According to the rating agency Moody's, Egypt is one of the countries most likely to benefit from its integration into the AfCTFA, which gathers 44 African countries from the Cape to Cairo.⁶⁴ Egypt's central role in the negotiations that led to the signature of the agreement is thus unsurprising. The GDP of the new bloc represents 65.1% of Africa's GDP, and Egypt's share is as much as 18.9%.⁶⁵ The website of the Ministry of Commercial and Industry added that Egypt is currently in negotiation to sign new commercial agreements with the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, Nigeria and Tanzania.⁶⁶

The private sector plays a major role in Egypt's economic activism in Africa. The Egyptian State intervenes in economy and trade not only domestically, but also abroad. That is why the State's official position is both a source of influence and a mediator between the private sector and the regime. The private sector is responsible for Egypt's considerable exports of chemical, agricultural and food products to the rest of the continent, despite its trade deficit.⁶⁷ Egypt's investments in Africa's infrastructure, telecommunications and finance sectors are also of note.⁶⁸ A total of 62 Egyptian enterprises invest in sub-Saharan Africa for a total amount of 9 billion dollars, 7.9 billion

⁶³ « Égypte : l'Afreximbank débloque 500 millions de dollars pour les exportations vers l'Afrique », ("Egypt: Afreximbank disburses 500 million dollars for exports to Africa") *La Tribune Afrique*, <https://afrique.latribune.fr/finances/banques-assurances/2018-01-03/Égypte-l-afreximbank-debloque-500-millions-de-dollars-pour-les-exportations-vers-l-afrique-763333.html> (consulted on 4 April 2018).

⁶⁴ Global Credit Research, "Moody's: African free trade deal could improve region's credit profiles, but obstacles will limit benefits", Moody's, https://www.moodys.com/research/Moodys-African-free-trade-deal-could-improve-regions-credit-profiles--PR_381153 (consulted on 4 April 2018).

⁶⁵ "10th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union on AFCFTA held in Kigali", Trade Law Center, <https://www.tralac.org/news/article/12865-10th-extraordinary-session-of-the-assembly-of-the-african-union-on-afcfta-held-in-kigali.html> (consulted on 4 April 2018).

⁶⁶ "Subsaharan African", Arab Republic of Egypt, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

⁶⁷ "New Egyptian trade deal could boost regional economies", *Oxford Business Group*, <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/analysis/reaching-out-new-trade-deal-could-boost-economies-across-region> (consulted on 4 April 2018).

⁶⁸ Mahmoud Kassem, "Exclusive: EFG Hermes to enter second sub-Saharan African country in 2018", *The National*, <https://www.thenational.ae/business/exclusive-efg-hermes-to-enter-second-sub-saharan-african-country-in-2018-1.710369> (consulted on 4 April 2018); Paromita Dey, "Arab Contractors to Deliver Africa Project in 2017", *Construction Week Online*, <http://www.constructionweekonline.com/article-35014-arab-contractors-to-deliver-africa-project-in-2017/> (consulted on 4 April 2018); "Arab Contractors Company to Inaugurate a Road Project in Ethiopia", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ethiopia, http://mfa.gov.et/press-and-media/-/asset_publisher/qFJg8JBGFDEb/content/arab-contractors-company-to-inaugurate-a-road-project-in-ethiopia (consulted on 4 April 2018).

of which are invested in COMESA.⁶⁹ In 2017, trade between Egypt and the African countries amounted to 4.8 billion dollars – an increase, however slight, compared to the two previous years. Since Sisi came to power, the value of Egypt's exports to Africa has increased to 3.4 billion dollars compared to imports worth 3.1 billion dollars.⁷⁰ Cairo's invitation of the richest businessmen and businesswomen in the continent and the welcome it extends is another chapter in the new phase of trade expansion.⁷¹ This economic activism was essential for Egypt's return to the AU in 2014.

2.2 – Institutions

Whether within United Nations or the World Trade Organization (WTO)⁷², Egypt sees and presents its election to represent the African continent as a testament of its regional leadership. Even within African organisations, Egyptian diplomacy is characterised by an obsession to preside different bodies and host summits and meetings. Moreover, the efforts Egyptian diplomacy have made in that regard have not yet paid off, as shown by Egypt's failure to collect African votes in the election of the Director-General of UNESCO in 2017.

For Egyptian diplomacy, institutions provide a privileged way to take action on the continent. As well as its Ministries, Egypt has two institutional instruments: the Egyptian Agency of Partnership for Development (EAPD) and the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCPA). President Sisi announced the Agency's establishment in July 2014 at the 23rd Summit of the AU, which saw Egypt return to the Union.⁷³ The agency is not only dedicated to Africa, as it also covers central Asia and Afghanistan. However, it is important to highlight the CCCPA's activities, as they touch directly upon Egypt's political and strategic priorities in Africa. Moreover, they still focus on sub-Saharan Africa.

⁶⁹ Tamer Hafez, "The Investment Prospects in Sub-Saharan Africa", American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt, <https://www.amcham.org.eg/publications/business-Monthly/issues/268/april-2018/3711/the-investment-prospects-of-sub-saharan-africa> (consulted on 4 April 2018).

⁷⁰ "Trade between Egypt and African countries reach \$ 4.8bn in 2016", *Egypt Today*, <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/3/16932/Trade-between-Egypt-and-African-countries-reach-4-8bn-in> (consulted on 5 April 2018).

⁷¹ Nsehe Mfonobong, "African Billionaires, Presidents Gather in Egypt for Landmark Business Forum", *Forbes*, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/mfonobongnsehe/2017/12/08/african-billionaires-presidents-gather-in-egypt-for-landmark-business-forum/#41a3eaac22d0> (consulted on 5 April 2018).

⁷² "Egypt re-elected liaison for WTO African group", *Ahramonline*, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/3/12/294925/Business/Economy/Egypt-reelected-liaison-for-WTO-African-group.aspx> (consulted on 6 April 2018).

⁷³ "About us", Egyptian Agency of Partnership for Development, <http://eapd.gov.eg/en-us/AboutUs.aspx> (consulted on 10 April 2018).

2.2.1 – The CCCPA: peacekeeping and the fight against terrorism

Egypt's contribution to peacekeeping missions is a central pillar of its importance within United Nations. The last figure published dates back to 2015, when Egypt announced that it had contributed more than 30,000 employees since 1960.⁷⁴ It currently ranks seventh among the countries contributing to these missions.⁷⁵ Egypt's greatest contribution is to the mission in the Central African Republic, followed by that in Darfur.⁷⁶ Here, too, Egypt's presence is overshadowed by Ethiopia's, and then Rwanda's.⁷⁷

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs established the CCCPA in 1994 to guide peacekeeping leadership. To date, 1,093 Africans, including North Africans, have benefited from the training and conferences organised by the Center.⁷⁸ During the last four years, the Egyptian authorities have authorised it to extend its areas of activity. As well as peacekeeping, the CCCPA currently houses research, training and awareness programmes on the themes of human and migrant trafficking; gender, peace and security; peacebuilding; light and small-calibre arms trafficking and the prevention of the radicalisation and extremism leading to terrorism.⁷⁹

After 2016, the CCCPA became the first civilian institution in Egypt to offer local African leaders training in the prevention of extremism and radicalisation. The fact that a civilian institution had taken charge of the fight against terrorism was a paradigm shift for Egypt. Not only is the programme developed and taught by civilians, it also contains a religious programme that is free from the control of Al-Azhar, criticised for its archaic approach to Islam. To date, the CCCPA has trained 68 Somali leaders and 62 Nigerian leaders. As well as these training courses, the Center is negotiating the geographic extension of its activities, particularly towards the region of Sahel and Kenya. The extension towards the Sahel is to supplement the pre-existing security and military cooperation with a new civilian and religious approach rooted in the study of conflict situations.⁸⁰ Regarding Kenya, which is already one of Egypt's first commercial partners, the plan is to enable Cairo to enter into competition with Israel, whose strategic,

⁷⁴ Ashraf Swelam *et al.*, "Egypt as a Peacekeeper: Contributions and Policies", *op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁷⁵ "Egypt", United Nations Peacekeeping, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/service-and-sacrifice> (consulted on 6 April 2018).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Data obtained from the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding, 11 April 2018.

⁷⁹ Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding, <http://www.cairopeacekeeping.org/> (consulted on 11 April 2018).

⁸⁰ "Sixth Training on Preventing Radicalization and Extremism Leading to Terrorism – Somalia", CCCPA, <http://www.cairopeacekeeping.org/en/news/details/363>; <http://www.ahram.org.eg/NewsPrint/475513.aspx> (consulted on 8 April 2018).

security and economic relations with Kenya and its neighbourhood are already well developed.

In September 2017, the Center made it possible for Egypt to chair the International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres (IAPTC) and co-chair the working group on Capacity-building in the East Africa Region established by the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF).⁸¹ Through the CCCPA, Egypt also co-chairs the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Training Group (IDDRTG). Moreover, the CCCPA ensures Egypt's representation within the partnership of training and education centres of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).⁸²

2.2.2 – *Egypt in the United Nations Security Council (2016-2017)*

Egypt's election within the United Nations Security Council was both a goal and a constant instrument for Egyptian diplomacy in Africa. Between 2016 and 2017, it clearly served the development of Egypt's relations with the rest of the continent. A reading of Egypt's activities in the Council attested to the coordination and unification of members' positions with those of the other members representing Africa: Ethiopia, Angola and Senegal. The Egyptian delegation also conducted regional consultations on the continent, which required the head of the delegation to travel. Those travels sometimes involved the other members of the Council.⁸³ Egypt also carefully considered the positions of the African States subject to Security Council resolutions. This earned it criticism from the permanent members, which Egypt considers its friends, and from some United Nations commissions. The Egyptian delegation also made a point of using that criticism to stress both the independence of the Egyptian policy and its alignment with African States.⁸⁴ A good example is the position adopted by Egyptian diplomacy on the resolutions pertaining to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Eritrea, South Sudan, Burundi and international sanctions.⁸⁵

Egypt also paved the way for the Security Council presidential statement on cooperation between the United Nations and the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) in May 2016.

⁸¹ "CCCPA Assumes Presidency of the IAPTC", CCCPA, <http://www.cairopeacekeeping.org/en/news/details/320>; <https://www.thegctf.org/Working-Groups/Horn-of-Africa-Capacity-Building> (consulted on 8 April 2018).

⁸² Data obtained from the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding, 11 April 2018.

⁸³ "Great Lakes Region Resolution Adopted", *What's In Blue*, <http://www.whatsinblue.org/2017/12/great-lakes-region-resolution-adoption.php>; (consulted on 10 April 2018); "Eshamat Misr Khilal 'odwiyatoha fi magless al'amn fi al-qadayah al-iqlimiyah", *Al-Siyassa Al Dawleya*, n.212, vol. 53, April 2018, p.18

⁸⁴ "Burundi", Security Council Report, http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2017-07/burundi_15.php (consulted on 5 April 2018).

⁸⁵ Dulcie Leimbach, "Russia Blocks Egypt From Pushing for More Oversight of UN Sanctions", <http://www.passblue.com/2017/07/31/egypt-wants-to-see-more-oversight-on-un-sanctions-but-russia-balks/> (consulted on 5 April 2018).

Egypt, which then presided the United Nations Security Council, urged the United Nations to make tangible commitments to the AU's African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development (AU-PCRD).⁸⁶ Cairo wished to play a major role in both arenas, as explained below in the section on the AU. In September 2017, Egypt thus cooperated with Senegal, Angola and Ethiopia to hold a meeting on the Secretary-General's report on a "joint process" between the AU and United Nations regarding peace operations in Africa.⁸⁷ Cairo defends a critical position on the marginalisation of troop-contributing countries in decision-making to the benefit of donors. The Egyptian delegation also presented the unanimous adoption of Resolution 2389 (2017), initially limited to the situation in Congo, as an Egyptian diplomatic victory for Africa's regional appropriation of crisis resolution in the continent.⁸⁸

However, it must be stressed that Egypt's support of the principle of "African solutions for African problems" during its time on the Council is compatible with the country's traditionally rigid interpretation of the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention in States' internal affairs. Its positions on the Council were also perfectly in line with the security imperatives of Marshall Sisi's authoritarian regime. Sisi was in the same situation as his African counterparts on 15 August 2013. On that day, Egypt was, for the first time, placed on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council following the deadly confrontations between the army, the police and Islamist demonstrators. It was a blow for Egyptian diplomacy. Not only was the request submitted by France and the United Kingdom, two of Egypt's allies, but not one member of the Council objected to its inclusion in the agenda.⁸⁹

2.2.3 – Egypt in the African Union

Egypt's return to the AU in June 2014 was only the prelude to a recovery-based diplomacy. That very year, Egypt chaired the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN), enabling it to assert its leader status within the organisation that had rejected it one year earlier. The important profile of the committee, at the key moment in which France was presiding COP 21, undeniably consolidated Egypt's status. Another step in the recovery-based diplomacy was President Sisi's coordination of the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC)

⁸⁶ "Es-hamat Misr Khilal 'odwiyatoha fi magless al-amn fi al-qadayah al-iqlimiyah", *Al-Siyassa Al Dawleya*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁸⁷ « Coopération ONU-Union africaine : le Conseil de sécurité examine la proposition de « processus conjoint » pour les opérations de paix de l'Union africaine » ("UN-UA cooperation: the Security Council examines the proposal of a 'joint process' for peace operations in the African Union"), United Nations.

⁸⁸ "Taqqim 'am li 'odweyat misr gheir al-da'emah fi magless al-amn", *Al Siyassa Al Dawleya*, n° 212, vol. 53, April 2018, p. 6.

⁸⁹ "Briefing on the Situation in Egypt", *What's In Blue*, <http://www.whatsinblue.org/2013/08/briefing-and-consultations-on-egypt.php> (consulted on 10 April 2018).

from 2015 to 2016. Between 2013 and 2017, he was elected Vice-President of the Steering Committee of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) for the second time. The website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that Egypt signed 21 agreements within the AU, ratifying 18. Cairo makes 12% of Africa's contributions to the AU, making Egypt one of its five major contributors.⁹⁰ Moreover, Egypt played the card of freezing that contribution to pressure the AU into accepting its readmission. Its readmission was also due to the pressure exerted by Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates on their African economic partners, as well as construction projects undertaken by Egypt's private sector at reduced prices.

In 2016, thanks to intense diplomatic activism, Egypt was thus once again able to host a high-level annual meeting, for African peace mediators. That same year, Egypt was elected as a member of the AU PSC for three years, and as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.⁹¹ Egypt profited from the election to again take up its African Union Centre for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (AUC-PCRD) project. The visits carried out by the President fulfilled their main purpose when Egypt was elected to chair the AU Assembly in 2019.⁹² That position is essential in serving three Egyptian priorities. The first is the mobilisation of African capacities in the fight against terrorism. The news that agents of the Islamic State have once again settled in the Central African Republic and the Sahel is particularly worrying for Egypt, which forms a passage between the Levant and the new African terrorist centres. The second priority is the reinforcement of its economic integration, while maintaining its current privileged economic position. The third is the reform of the AU, particularly regarding the allocation of resources, peacekeeping and partnerships with international organisations and powers.⁹³

⁹⁰ "African Organizations and Communities", Arab Republic of Egypt, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <https://www.mfa.gov.eg/English/ForeignPolicy/Pages/african-organizations-and-gatherings.aspx> (consulted on 12 April 2018).

⁹¹ "Egypt heads the African Union Peace and Security Council for the month of January", Arab Republic of Egypt, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <https://www.mfa.gov.eg/English/MediaCenter/News/Pages/Egyptheadspeaceandsecuritycouncilduringjanuary91.aspx> (consulted on 12 April 2018).

⁹² Noha El Tawil, "Egypt elected to chair AU Assembly in 2019", *Egypt Today*, <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/41269/Egypt-elected-to-chair-AU-Assembly-in-2019-sources> (consulted on 12 April 2018).

⁹³ Interview with an Egyptian leader in charge of the issue, April 2018.

CONCLUSION

Egypt's African policy is undeniably in the midst of a complete overhaul, while coming up against three kinds of obstacles. Its overhaul is due first to a strong desire from the highest sphere of the State, not always understood by lower spheres as to its facts and consequences at their level. Not a single effort has yet been made to redesign the institutions tasked with implementing the African policy, still too dependent on individuals in the absence of adequate institutions. Next, Egypt's African policy is not guided by an overall vision, despite efforts to make it coherent. Egypt still has no fundamental vision of its role in Africa. Its efforts are thus deployed for immediate gains, linked to immediate threats and interests. In some cases, Egypt acts merely to counter its rivals. Finally, the Egyptian government is not investing in its image in Africa. Although efforts have been made to foster popular diplomacy since 2011, the State has neither supported them, nor capitalised on them. Cairo needs to cultivate its image for an official and unofficial public struggling to believe that the country has turned the page on arrogance and distrust. A charm-based diplomacy would perhaps enable it to compensate for its lack of material resources as it competes with other continental powers.