The Egyptian Historical Experience In Modern Times Under the East-West Relationship

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Egypt is unique for its, distinguished geographical position at the meeting point of the continents of the ancient world: Asia, Africa and Europe.

This position conferred cultural advantages and prosperity but it also brought misery. Egypt became the focus of cultural contacts between East and West and it has for ages contributed to the civilization of the Mediterranean. It has been the target of the ambitions of big powers.

This central position at the heart of Islamic world made it a medium in which the doctrines of the Sunnis and Shiis. A1 Azhar become the focal point for the basic Sunnah schools which be came freely active without any bigotry or extremism.

A1 Azhar expressed a mediacy which embraced many schools of Islamic law characterize by toleration and Leniciency. Egyptians favorited the school of Imam A1 Shafei because it represented a compromise between the trend of Hadith and the rational trend.

Egypt never knew Xenophobia or racism or ethinc bigotry. It never accepted religious wars or the inquisitions or the burning of heretics.

Gamal Hamdan the famous Egyptian author of "Egypt Character" defined the basic characteristics of the Egyptian psychology as moderation and tolerance. This qualities are found in all aspects of Egyptian existence from people to land and to culture. The Egyptian person is moderate and balanced just as Egypt is a moderate nation. Most

Egyptian look for the point of balance between extremes. In case of imbalance which results from an identity crisis some Egyptians tend to violence or imbalance. There were historical moments in which Egypt veered from the center to extremism and from harmony to dissent and chaos. This movements, long as short, in Egypt old or modem History witnessed acts of violence between the rulers and the opposition. But soon Egypt returns to moderation in the face of crisis. It never adopts a radical solution but

opts moderate and centrist solutions which means tranquilizers and temporary sedatives. The result is that problems aggravate more and more.

We will find the basic center in a cultural and industrial basis, between the rural and urban life and in politics in positive neutrality and non-alignment, and in the dualaty of Pharohism and Arabo-Islamigtn were moderation combines the two extremes without any contradictions. The world renowned novelist Nagib Mahfouz announced that he was the son of two cultures: Pharaohism and Islamism, he based the structures of balances in one of his novel "Sukaria" in the impartial drawings of the characters of two brother Ahmed and Abd El Monhem, both are Muslim, but one belongs to Muslim brothers and the other to the Marxists.

Egyptian constitutions since 1923 created a legal formula of political balance between the Revolutional forces of the 1919 and the enemies of the Revolution. This is because the question of political power, which is the main issue of any revolution, was not settled in favor of the nationalist forces.

The Egyptian Islamic figure Mohamed El Gazali proudly announced: "I'm Egyptian Arabized by Islam". Even the July 1952 Revolution was a white one, expressing political and social moderation. It was a national Liberation Revolution against Imperialism and not a class Revolution against other classes.

Egypt is always in harmony with its age, in the age of Liberalism, the regime was liberal, in the age of socialism, it was socialist, and in the age of neo-Liberalism, it became new Liberal are Globlized. Egypt never went against the trend that it has founded among third world nations. In this sense it is a pioneering nation in both progress and backwardness, in harmony and disharmony. It is at this points that the duality of continuous contradiction in History between ideas and visions on the one side, and actions, practices, and applications appears. Despite Egypt deep tolerance the worst forms violation and crimes were committed. Like other nation of the world Egypt know despotism and resistance to it, Democracy and good government and Dictatorship.

The Egyptian experience in political transformation can be described as non dictatorial and non democratic. It know a few decades of political liberalism and centuries of despotism at the hands of demostic and forign powers alike. It's neither a haven for democracy nor a society of despotism. It know socialism without socialists and

democracy without democrats.

The main features in the course of Egyptian society (Despotism and Liberalism) consisted of two parts:

The first is the middle station of the Egyptian, Condition, i.e.: Egypt never know purly formal Liberalism or Large scale Liberalism, it know a middle of road Liberalism which was limited in its scope by these factors: Forign occupation, the despotism of rulers, and the monopoly of the owner class.

These moderate position reflected the nature of the place, it reflects Egypt geo-political, central position. This applies on political despotism which was moderate compared to the blood bathes and massacres that other societies know in their history.

Even Egyptian culture under the Islamic system was always moderate and suitable to Egypt circumstances. There was an accomdation between continuity and change. We never saw changes triumphant except at the beginning of the 19th century and the start of rapid contacts with the west.

The law of mutual influence is still dominent in the course of civilization. It as Ibn Khaldon noticed that the defeted are always fond of imitating the victorious.

Civilization interact in the course of historical development and the results are always in favor of the stronger civilization, as capitalism emerged and the world market was formed with the globalization of the means of production, consumer goods, transportation, and the integration of the demostic market, the European ideas and knowledge as well as system of ideas infiltrated the Eastern Societies.

The East started assimaliting the culture of the west and the bourgeoisie flocked to the city at the start of 19th century, and under Western influence there was a split between the advocates of tradional Islamic culture and those of the western modem culture.

Egypt swang between the two and became as the Egyptian famous historian Garbal put it at Midpassge. It chose conflict to remove the abstacles to civilizional development and it chose compromise to return once again to the middle condition under mixture of old and new, between conflict and compromise, between the obsticles)and the helping factors.

In its movement the Egyptian society never know any inevitable fixed systems, despit its many models in modem history: State capitalism, Socialism, Liberalism, these were no more than possibility without definitely imposing any one system strictly.

Egypt soon returns to a point of balance which does not means stasis or rigidity or eclecticism, it means a just position between two false ones. This middle position is different from the one known in the language of politic, it means justice and balance, this position includes in its vision all aspects of the situation which reject any one sided view. This position starts from .what some people believe to be irreconcilable position. It is the main stream, beside which subculture, marginal currents appears, that may go far from the mainstream to the point of contradictions.

Clearly the Egypt of the East is not a monalith bloc that of thinks and acts in the same way, it has many fundamentalists religious trends, but there are moderate trends which represent the majority, this majority is usually more open to the views and arguments of the other and tries to reach the troth, and if there are extremist views they do not necessary express the views of every body.

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Egypt in the 19th cent:

Throughout the nineteenth century the Egyptian intellectual elite confronted a set of serious, essential questions:. "Who are we?" and "From where should we start?" "How to proceed and what should our goal be?" This intellectual elite was divided into two camps. On the .one hand there were the conservatives who raised the slogan "Nothing new under the sun", and "The ancients left nothing untouched", and "It is better to follow than to innovate". When it came to questions of the relationship between religious and secular sciences, those conservatives rejected the West and defended their own heritage considering it as the focal point of their own identity and the source of its essential ingredients. On the other hand there were those who were mesmerized by the West and its knowledge. Those argued that we should start from where the west has left off that different world civilization, ultimately, boil down to one global civilization; that the goal is to catch up; and

that Egypt is part of Europe. Accordingly, they asked for reconciliation between East and West.

Over the course of the century those different camps intermingled and the arguments among them overflew into the fields of politics and the economy. At the same time, the hostility between those who called for more contacts with the west and those who were asking for cultural authenticity intensified. As a result of this confrontation between these two camps a rupture appeared within Egyptian society dividing those who stuck to strict adherence to tradition and those who were calling for more interaction with Western culture and civilization. Consequently, those aspects that were borrowed from the west remained on the surface of society while the old, the good and bad of it, remained untouched by those imported ideas and practices.

As mentioned above, throughout the nineteenth century the Egyptian socio-cultural system was not serious in 'engaging with modernization. It is true that some kind of centralized state appeared, but that state was not a nation-state. We also find that some facets of a strong state were borrowed from those Western states that had completed the process of nation-building without,

however, this process of borrowing being based on a clear understanding of the complexities of the process of modernization and what it entails. There was also a clear lack of any real desire to undertake true social reforms, reforms that would keep the society intact. Under the reign of Khedive Ismail (r. 1863-1879), the process of reform entailed nothing more than a simple coating of the old façade with modem colors.

Phase One was one of the cultural awe and psychological collapse Where reactions were made under a severe inferiority complex Which led some to lavish in distinctive copying and imitation. Loud cries were heard for "Europeanization" and running Egypt into a province of Europe. The expression "The foreigners complex" began to be heard. Waves of Plagiarism, imitation, electicism, and Europeanization prevailed. Foreign communities increased in numbers exerting even bigger roles whether positive or negative, in Egyptian society. Calles were made for replacing the Arabic alphabet with Latin one, common people took to using and adapting foreign words in their daily lives.

Phase two, was characterized by an adverse reaction represented in over confidence, exposition of the Arabs cultural gifts to the west, extremist past leaning tendencies, and

fundamentalist movements. There were also extreme appreciation of the national glory (Egypt the mother of the world), (Egypt above all), and a megalomaniac attitude that was almost an inferiority complex in reverse.

The Third Phase, was one of moderation, balance and a state of harmony. There were calls for compromise or reconciliation between old and new, east and west, an attitude of rational and intelligent adoption. This was a phase of assimilation not of immersion; it was one of balance between the well rooted and noble origin and the foreign one. Conventions and imitation. It was one also of an increased trend towards the west that has never ceased since, a trend that varied in strength according to varying intensity of contacts with the west and the different ambitions of dominant classes in Egyptian society. The influence took these shapes:

o Reconciliation between various models.

o A union between the local and incoming culture leading to an overflow of the foreign at the expense of the domestic.

One thing at least remained fixed since the movement of "Europeanization", "Modernization" or "Westernization" started at the beginning of the

19th Century, i.e., the conflict within Egyptian culture was represented in a process of assimilation. This means that elements of the foreign cultures where taken in while the essentional elements of the original cultures were retained. Europe's influence covered many aspect of Egyptian social life. In the context of the development a complex phenomenon emerged as a result of the interaction between East and West. The elements taken from the west were always used as status symbols for social distinction by the classes desirous of this distinction and capable of achieving it, Hence, the classes that mostly fell under the movement of westernization were the dominant, high-income sections. The roles show carefully sensing the demands of their age tried to adapt with the course of evolution towards the bourgeoisie by introducing reforms from above. That class tried to enhance its political, military and social positions found itself forced to enlist the achievements of western science and technology and the expertise of European specialists. These classes were by virtue of their deep and frequent contacts with the West, the most capable of adopting the element of western life, whether these were behavior models, beliefs, or thinking models. On the other hand, the middle classes swung between the old and the new. The classes at the lower end of the social scale remained relatively isolated from direct contacts with the west. At the same time many were deprived from imitating it even if they so desire under a social mobility that characterized Egypt through its modem History.

These pages try to describe the Egyptian reaction towards the west during 19th Century, concentrated on the part played by the intelligentsia in searching for achieving the dream of harmony and coordination.

Egypt has faced, in its modem history, several crises which threatened with the eruption of a clash of civilizations. Every now and then, thinkers and politicians have produced writings and idea attacking the prevalent lifestyle in the societies of the East. At the same time, the European colonization movement was accompanied by orientalist writings raising interpretations and laden with biased explanations, which have not stopped till the present day., and most of which have focused on Political Islam and the extremism of certain groups, thus touching on the religious rites and beliefs of Muslims. On the other hand, there are those who address the West by means of attack and offense. In this case, the issue of the East-West relationship has been raised, and

questions have been posed about whether these ideas and thoughts represent their holders, or whether they express a certain position of a certain group, and hence we face the hostility and clash between the self and the other?

In the 198 century, and in the light of what has been known as the Oriental Question, some saw it as an extension of the Crusades. The issue reached the extent that a Frenchman called for transferring the corpse of Prophet Muhammad to the Louvre Museum in Paris. Some devoted their time and thought to spreading the motto "East is East and West is West, and never the Twain shall meet" along the lines of the English poet and writer Kipling. History carries multiple meanings, in the sense that the interpretation of historical events could assert or deny any question, especially since history is selective of a concrete period and particular events considered most significant to the scholar; therefore we find that history includes elements that could prove a certain issue or its opposite at the same time. Thus, the historical memory of both parties of the "East" and "West" dialogue is replete with bitter and painful events that neither of the two parties can forget. Many Muslims and Arabs do not forget the Crusades and modem Colonization.; and many Westerners, in turn,

have not forgotten the Muslim expansions in Europe. Some see that there exists ah equation in the historical operation between East and West, as the East has invaded the West and the West has invaded the East. Yet in fact the feelings of injustice and abuse experienced by the people of the East exceed those experienced by the West itself. This is due to the face that the injustice of the West is more recent, and while old injuries might heal with the passage of time, a recent injury hurts easily at one touch. And according to Marx who stated in mid-19th century (1857) that colonial intervention is like innumerable crimes of creating damage and destruction, raising ethnic conflict, as well as provoking religious sentiments; following the famous Roman rule of "divide et impera". Colonialism thus became an unconscious device in the process of history, leading to the emergence of the phenomenon of nationalist oppression represented in the following:

1- The military occupation of vast regions.

2- The integration of local economy within the hegemonic economy.

3- The cultural subordination of the local powers through the enforcement of the language and lifestyle of the prevalent nationalist power (the Frenchisation of

culture- Anglicisation of administration).

Thus, the colonial West played the provocative role in bringing forth a hostile reaction, as it gave rise within the oppressed people to the sense of protest and resistance. This in turn created an atmosphere for nationalist-liberational oppositional movements which have continued throughout the 19m and 20m centuries. The call for independence, liberation, and the construction of the nation-state became the peak of the Nationalist Question, which clearly appeared in' Egypt during the revolutions of 1882, 1919, and 1952.

Even though the Egyptian society continued preserving its balance within the protective framework of relative seclusion under the Ottoman rule, it suddenly became subjected, according to Abu-Lughod, to dynamic operations and processes due to the "rediscovery of Egypt". The Egyptian society experienced the expansion of its relationships with the West in the 19m century through commercial exchange and institutional 'Europeanisation, particularly of the military and educations institutions. The influence of the West extended to several aspects of life with the adoption of scientific and technical achievements as well as the contributions of European specialists and the organization of

the army according to the European model. This gave rise to the need for secular legislations and the adoption of Western legal and human right norms, particularly in relation to the system of capitulations. Capitulations developed and soon revealed their disadvantages and contradictions to the principles of equality and sovereignty regarding the people of the East.

The process of Europeanisation does not mean the automatic transference of all European norms, systems and ideologies but implies that all the organic transformations that took place went hand in hand with the developments taking place in Europe. Modemisation was the material basis for the establishment of a Western society in the East, in 19th century Egypt; being a period replete with major modem transformations. Moreover, the means of transportation and communication enabled a closer familiarity with the Western civilization. The Egyptian experience became aware of the benefits and results of modernity, as well as its intellectual and technical achievements without playing an active role in the construction of modernity. The Egyptian experience, thus, gained awareness of modernity as an idea, and of modernism as a practice. Yet, it is noticeable that the process of modernization was associated with the higher social ranks,

whereas on the level of the lowest ranks represented by the workers and peasants, there was a marked absence of a local awareness of the effectiveness of these transformations.

In fact, science and production reached their highest stage of modernization at the time of Mohamed Ali and his successors, but the social and communal project was absent then, particularly because the Mohamed Ali experience was a heavy burden carried by the people: taxes, unpaid labour, corve, enforced military service, etc. The people of Egypt therefore did not benefit from the adoption of Western systems at the time. Yet this adoption was also the basis for the mobility which gained influenced at a later stage of the 19th century with the emergence of new strata of intellectuals, that witnessed growth and increase despite being limited and small at the beginning> The view vis-à-vis the Western civilization as a friendly experience varied, but this section of the society was itself divided into several groups.

The mechanisms of modernity emanated from the top and not from the base of society. Take, for example, the reforms in the educational and military fields. These two fields a witnessed significant reforms in the nineteenth century. However, theses reforms never really percolated down to touch lower

classes in society. Those who undertook the reforms were limited to members of the middle classes who were champions of following the West, so much so that they could be considered dependents on the West. Their motto was that we can borrow from the West those aspects that constitute its strength (i.e. the west's material culture) while leaving its drawbacks (customs, habits, norms, i.e. its spiritual culture), arguing that it is possible to differentiate between these two aspects of western culture. In doing so, those people overlooked the fact that it is both impossible practically and scientifically implausible to make this distinction. In insisting on their view they were deepening their contradiction between their dream and reality. Specifically, they forgot that technology, for example, is a mere heap of iron and steal; rather, it is the product of the scientific tradition of the Western and humanity at large.

This oversight had serious repercussions as the infatuation with importation led to the domination of western capitalism and increased dependency on the West.

More than a century later and in spite of the achievements that it has accomplished in the nineteenth century, Egyptian society is still faced with these same questions, questions that. had been posed by the

pioneers of modernization and enlightenment. We still hear the same dualities being posed: modernity and tradition; the old and the new; a return to the religious state or building a modern civil one? Authenticity or modernity? A religious unity or a national one? Islamic shura or democracy? Transmitting from the ancients or innovating critically? Women putting on the veil or lifting it? Should women go out to work or should they stay in the 'harems? Should we give a pledge to the imam or should the leader be democratically elected?

In this manner, the Egyptian experience stands midway between cultural harmony and cultural disharmony, just as the Egyptian political system had always been stranded between democracy and dictatorship. This in-between state is what leads to the sense of alienation and estrangement felt by many elite members and the sense of indifference felt by the majority of the people especially when they realize the huge gap separating their vision/dream built on hopes from the clear picture based on a clear assessment of reality. This indifference is also the result of the realization of the gap that separates Egypt from other comparable cultured nations.

Significantly, this sense of "balance" or "cultural harmony" is taken in Egypt to be one of the criteria by which development is measured. For one senses that just as Egyptians can sometimes feel pride in the ancient glories of the past, they have anxieties about their future. There is a feeling that the present situation in Egypt and the steady deterioration that is witnessed in various aspects of life will make the glories of the past a mere historical memory, relegating Egypt to becoming a simple tourist destination where people come to witness the ruins of a lost civilization.

The battle to achieve cultural harmony has been a long, arduous battle throughout modern Egyptian history. It has been an example of Toynbee's famous argument of "challenge and response". The celebrated Egyptian historian, Shafiq Ghorbal, was influenced by this argument and in his The *Formation of Egypt* (1958) he adopted Toynbee's hypothesis and argued that the Egyptians' response to their various challenge~ is what made Egyptian history. Accordingly, he transformed Herodotus's famous dictum "Egypt is the gift of the Nile" to read: "Egypt is the girl of the Egyptians".

I cannot help the feeling, however, that in spite of the significant achievements that Egyptians have managed to accomplish in modernizing their society, the dreams of

the Egyptian nationalist movement have been gradually receding. There has been significant setbacks from what has already been achieved in the long period o~ modernization and reform. For example, calls to return women to the harem have been heard. So have calls for a return from a civil state to a religious one. Some secularists, moreover, have been called heretics while death sentences have been passed on others.

Two specific examples may illustrate the way there has been a regression from the cultural achievements that have been accomplished in the nineteenth century. Starting form the reign of Khedive Ismail (r: 1863-1879) Cairo witnessed significant urban reforms. Street streets were carved out of the ancient, "medieval" city; new building codes were passed that gave some neighborhoods a western look; public squares were created where traffic, goods, people, and also ideas met. In these public squares large statues were erected, mostly of statesmen of the Khedival state (e.g. lbrahim Pasha, Soliman Pasha, Mohammed Lazoghli)

A generation later and as part of the rising anti-colonial movement, calls were heard to erect statues of nationalist leaders. The Wafd Party, the bastion of Egyptian liberalism supported ambitious campaigns to commission and construct these statues with public subscription. Thousands of poor Egyptians from Cairo and from the provinces contributed with their own meager savings in these unprecedented campaigns. Eventually, the public enthusiasm for the erection of public statues paid off and one after another of these pieces of art were unveiled in public squares in Cairo and Alexandria.

Yet, nearly a century later we hear calls that declare statues of all kinds to be contrary to the teachings of Islam For example, the *mufti* of Egypt, Dr. Ali Gom'a, has recently issued a *fatwa* (i.e. religious opinion) prohibiting decorating private homes with any kind of statues. Increasingly more and more people are buying into the idea that statues are a kind of idolatry and that it is contrary to religious precepts to exhibit them in public squares. Some have even gone as far as to argue, contrary to concrete historical evidence, that Egyptians have always felt an antipathy against statues; that statues, and all graphic arts, are a debased way of artistic expression inferior to poetry and music; and

that the tradition of erecting statues is a western one imposed on Egypt by the West and that normal Egyptians feel intimidated when passing in front of them. This is but one of many examples of the regression

experienced by Egyptian society than this one.

To sum up, Egypt has always been the center of the Islamic word and the gate of the East in its relation to the West, a relation that is complicated enough where a mono-dimensional analysis cannot explain it.

At the outset of the 19th Century, Egypt engaged in a period of rapid transformations that revolutionized the entire economic, social, and political structures within a short time. Egypt was, then, the first Arab and Muslim country that adopted institutions, a characteristic of modernity.

In Modem times Europe had overtaken the East in both the cultural and economic fields. European traders were supported by hefty sums of capital and had much greater experience in commerce. The way they handled their trade and the transport of products was much more professional. In a word, they had a better trade culture.

Similar to Asia, the enlightened in Egypt aimed at throwing off the political and military domination of Europe. Paradoxically, they believed in the supremacy of European civilization. For them, prosperity was to be realized through the establishment of a national community, the separation of religion from politics, a

democratic governmental system, respect of human rights with an emphasis on the right to the freedom of expression, the organization of modem industry and the scientific spirit.

Shaikh Hassan A1 Attar (1766-1835) was deeply impressed by the progress of Europe as revealed in the minds and actions of the French ….."our countries must change and we must take from Europe all the sciences which do not exist here". During that time the distinction between East and West became valid. The problem of 'Westernization' became central as the modem changes were imposed from above. The first Egyptian intelligentsia increased and gave birth to socio-political thinkers. In this context, the famous question was formulated: "to what extent can the Muslim peoples become part of the Modem world while remaining Muslims.'?" This question as well as the reply, posed by the intellectuals, is still valid today:

The Egyptian historical experience of the relation between Egypt "East" and Europe "West" oscillated between harmony and disharmony, balance and imbalance. Some realized that the people won't listen to the cry for prayer from outside but from inside. The negative side of the political discourse that is

replete with socio-economic pains has always come to the front pushing aside everything else. This is because the East never found in its relation to the West except injustice and politico-economic exploitation. The discourse of Modernity developed to formulate racist ideologies, stemming from the White Man's vision that justified the oppression of the Eastern peoples. Euro-centrism was reproduced as a discourse that emphasized the West as the source of correct values, and adopted the theory of the inferiority of earlier civilizations. All this contributed to fueling the hostility between East and West in general and between Islam and the West in particular.

The Egyptian historical experience confirms the fact that conformity of religions through dialogue is one of the best ways to achieve harmony. It also shows that the clash happens when a religion or a belief is misunderstood to be misused politically. Difference or conflict might stem from the contradiction between the teachings of religions. In Egypt,

Muslims and Copts merged to the extent that it was impossible to differentiate between both as Lord Cromer mentioned in his book Modem Egypt (1908), all emerging conflicts were the exception whereas the framework of the national community was the rule.

The experience also emphasizes the fact that conflict of interest was the crux of the matter, and that most often that not religion was employed to shift the attention away from the real reasons of the conflict, as in the case of missionaries that were used to serve colonization: The experience of China in the 19th Century is a unique example.

Since the September 11 events the American government has worked on the propaganda that the war in Islamic countries (Afghanistan, Iraq, and Lebanon) is a total Crusade war against Islamic terrorism or Islamic fascism. In the West a campaign was launched to ban all religious symbols (e.g. the veil in England and France), in addition to the humiliation of Islamic beliefs (e.g., the caricaturist drawings in Denmark, the speech of the Pope Benedict XVI, the demands of British academics to delete some verses from Koran as they oppose the contemporary civilization and prevent the Islamic world from assimilating globalization).

All this happenings are supported by the background of Western attempts at military, economic and cultural hegemony, and marketing the concepts of globalization, democracy, the New World order, the end of

history and other concepts that impose the Western model without respecting the specificity of other civilizations.

The Egyptian experience proves that in such an atmosphere where the conflict of civilization rules efforts are needed to change the clash into dialogue through change of consciousness and overcoming the possibilities of clash, and most important overcoming the unjust historical heritage of the relations between East and West through the rational dialogue which helps to avoid two risks:

First: the tendency towards generalization and the falling limo ready made judgments. The East is not a monolithic construct as well as the West: Those who see in the East only violence and fundamentalism tend to forget its other side; i.e. its tolerant and peaceful nature. On the other side, those who blame the West for its darkness ignore the fact that it contributed to the modem civilization the values of progress and human rights.

Second: the surrender to the phenomenon of mutual accusations between the Islamic and the Western civilization. This indeed deepens the doubts and hostility. The speech of the Pope about the violence of Islam triggered the talk about a similar Christian violence and a history full of wrong-doings.

Harmony of civilizations as proved by the Egyptian experience requires from each party to have a vision that acknowledges the Other and rejects the hegemony of any party on the other. We are partners in this civilization where we have interests that might conform to or oppose the others' interests. In other words, differences are likely to take place, but clashes are not acceptable in an atmosphere that has allowed the religious dimension to step in the politico-economic conflict.

This experience proves the continuity of history not its end, and the necessity of formulating a new discourse in the light of self-knowledge and knowledge of the Other's vision and understanding. This discourse should defend the common values and ethics amongst the peoples and refuse the interpretations of cultures against the background of clash of civilizations, as explained by Samuel Huntington.

In its relation to the East, the West is required to stay away from cultural and military hegemony; it also has to redress the lack of justice, double-standards, and the practices that lead to marginalization, disappointment and anger, feelings that feed terrorism that has nothing to do with either religion or identity.