

**God's Word, His Chosen Mary
And
The Coptic Community's Strategic Mission
In
New Egypt's Charter of Hope**



By

Ahmed M El-Mokadem

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***“Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, and endures all things. Love never ends.”
(1 Corinthians 13:4-8)***

This Paper was prepared for an After-Dinner Talk for the UK Coptic Medical Society’s Annual Dinner on the 21st May 2011.

We have always been “Brothers and Sisters”

After completing an hour-long journey from her hometown of Sol in Helwan, Saniya Mustafa, a veiled Muslim, arrived in Cairo Wednesday (9th February) with blankets and food for her Coptic neighbours.

Her neighbours had been gathering in front of the Egyptian Radio and TV building to protest an attack on a church in Sol, located in the Atfih district in the Helwan governorate, south of Cairo.

Saniya told Al-Shorfa that her Coptic neighbours are ‘all my people and I know of no others’. They ‘stood beside me when my husband died and the day my daughter married and graduated from the university’.

She said “the teaching of Islam instruct her as a Muslim to defend against extremism and oppression at the cost of her own life.”

Saber El-Shafei, a 32-year old Egyptian Muslim, said, “I came to support the demands of my friends and my brothers, the Copts, because no one has the right to burn a mosque or a church. They are all houses of God that call for tolerance and coexistence. We are living at a time when ignorance and extremism no longer have any place.” (31)

(Al-Shorfa.com, 11/3/2011)

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I- Introduction: Pray with Faith

Over eight months ago, on the 2nd October 2010, I was honoured to be the “After-Dinner Speaker” to distinguished guests of your distinguished Society, The Coptic Medical Society UK.

This evening I am honoured to come back as your Speaker, once more. In so doing, the Coptic Medical Society never ceases to surprise me, in many ways:

- A Society, which has two distinctive descriptions, being Coptic and Medical-Doctors, invites as a speaker a man with two differing descriptions, being Muslim and a Non-Medical Doctor,
- Not only was he invited once, but, contrary to normal practice, he was invited a second time within a period of just over eight months,
- During this relatively short period some significant changes have taken place in Egypt, our beloved country, many of which will be addressed today. But, one important characteristic of these changes is the emergence of the “Youth” as the “Core” of what happened, and what is likely to happen. In defiance of this, the Coptic Medical Society has decided to invite a man who within exactly “two weeks” from today will reach the “Old-Age of Seventy”, and
- Not only that, but to ask this “Old man of Seventy” to talk about two critical aspects: one relating to “what the Youth achieved, and what is likely to happen in the future”, and the other, in particular, is to focus on the “contribution of the Coptic Community in Egypt now and in the future”.

In short, the Coptic Medical Society, has asked a “Muslim, Non-Medical, and relatively Old man” to talk twice within a period of just over eight months, to a “predominantly Coptic, Medical and Young” audience about what the “Youth Revolution” achieved and what the future holds, focusing on the role of the Coptic Community in the emerging “New Egypt”.

Thus, I will do my best to cover objectively and optimistically. But before I proceed to the heart of the subject matter, I wish to start, unusually, from the “Cover Page”. Observing a magnificent photo of our Blessed Virgin Mary you might wonder why I have chosen this cover.

Apart from her uniqueness, per se, beloved, blessed Virgin Mary: the Holy Spirit mother of our Saviour, Lord Jesus, born with no sins, lived with no sins and died with no sins. God’s chosen, purified woman of all nations, and apart from my loving obsession of her, and the photo shown taken by myself from the closest to my heart’s collection of her, blessed Mary has a specific historical relevance to the subject matter of this paper.

In 1967, Egypt suffered an unparalleled defeat, in history, which not only enabled Israel to occupy a major significant part of her land, but also shook the foundations

of Egyptian's confidence in them-selves. Surprisingly whoever was predominantly responsible for such a defeat remains without accountability!!!

The 1967 defeat not only caused a deep ideological and identity crisis, but more importantly, stunned Copts as well as Muslims and led both to a return to religion.

In this extremely gloomy atmosphere, the apparition of the Virgin Mary, in Zeiton in 1968, appeared at a critical moment, which encouraged both Copts and Muslims, who took it as a sign that "God had not forsaken them".

This view is elevated to the status of what Vivian Ibrahim called as a "Coptic tool", in her recent most inspiring book. This "tool", and I quote, proved "useful in helping to forge a united Egyptian demonstration of grief following the spectacularly poignant defeat of 1967". Then she proceeded to highlight the importance of the apparition of the Virgin Mary in the following year, which, as she added, "was heralded by Muslims and Copts alike as a demonstration of faith in the face of diversity." (20)

Now, not in the "face of any adversity", but to the contrary, with the success of the miraculous 18 days "Youth Revolution", one prays for another apparition soon. A sign that would confirm to the Egyptians that God will "heal them" and "will hear their prayers" (ISAIAH 19:22), and will bless them and say "I will bless you, Egypt my people". (ISAIAH 19:25).

In so doing, our beloved Mary will remind us that when we pray as an expression of gratitude, we should pray with faith:

***"Whatever you ask for in prayer, with faith, you will receive"
(Matthew 21:22)***

II- Subject Matter and Methodology: From "Faith-to-Faith".

Turning now to the subject matter of this talk, a few observations need to be made, as follows:

- This Talk is to be regarded, in part, as an update and extension of the talk I gave to your esteemed Society on the 2nd October 2010, with certain aspects being introduced from two additional Talks I gave since: one on the 14th October 2010, and the other on the 23rd February 2011.
- The update deals with how the previous Talk's framework can be adapted, retrospectively, to take into account and/or to explain the events, activities, decisions and developments, which occurred in Egypt since the 25th January 2011.

- The extension will involve introducing a “New Journey”, starting from what might be called “Different or Interim or Transitional or Hybrid Egypt”, and attempting to characterise what might be called “New Egypt.”
- Given the “Update and Extension”, attention is then focused on what I venture to call “The Coptic Community Strategic Mission” within the “Alliance of Hope”, and as based on the New Charter of Hope - signed in “Martyrs Blood”, and not in ink, and
- Last, but not least, I end by expressing my personal hopes and aspirations. In this, I rely on my usual methodology, which starts with “Faith”, and ends with “Faith”, with my “Brain and Heart” representing, so-to-speak, the “Bridge” from “Faith-to-Faith”.

III- Egypt’s Alliance of Hope Enlightenment Journey: A Hypothetical Journey

The 2nd October Talk was based on a Journey, which adopted the theme of “Unity”, and proceeded along a “Journey of Enlightenment”. The Journey followed a route, which has particular historical significance in so far as the unity between the Egyptian Copts and Muslims is concerned; namely the “1919 first grassroots Egyptian uprising”, during which the two sects were completely united. The Final destination was a symbolic address, called “Egypt’s House of Hope”.

An “Enlightenment Vehicle” was used to navigate through the “1919 Cross-Crescent Route”. The “Vehicle” was guided by a very special GPS. Its core software was based on the Bible and the Qur’an, advocating the peace, love and brotherhood of man. In addition, its rechargeable engine was initially charged with a special version of the 18th century Enlightenment ideas, and was further recharged by “Wisdom Tradition”. The Vehicle was “Co-Piloted” initially by a Copt and a Muslim. It has one passenger, to begin with, calling himself a “Coptic-Muslim” Egyptian.

The symbolic significance of this configuration was: to confirm unity of Copts and Muslims, being guided by both the Holy Books, and by human reason, science, wisdom tradition’s ethical and virtue requirements, and, in particular, by religious tolerance.

Starting with the Co-Pilots and the Coptic-Muslim passenger, as the Journey proceeded along the 1919 Cross-Crescent Route, they started spreading the above-mentioned ideas for the sake of Unity. The Vehicle became, in no time, full of passengers, adopting the same ideas and aiming for the same goal of Unity. They decided to regard themselves as “Volunteer Advocates”, with a challenging mission to accomplish.

To ensure the success of their mission and agree a “Program of Action”, they decided to select two items as the “Priority Agenda”:

- One item focused on “Egyptian Nationalism”, aiming to achieve a marked revival of Egyptian Nationalism and patriotism to “boiling point”.
- The other item of the highest priority emphasized the urgent need to preserve “Religious Harmony” between the Copts and the Muslims of Egypt, by addressing, head-on, the root causes of recent despicable and deplorable acts of violence and religious intolerance.

Based on the above priorities a Program of Action was outlined, and the Journey proceeded to its final destination; namely, “Egypt’s House of Hope”. The “Volunteer Advocates” were appropriately received by a wide spectrum of representatives of the Egyptian Community, including, among others, religious and nationalistic leaders.

A “Charter of Hope” was duly signed; a special prayer was performed, based on the Bible and the Qur’an. Holy representatives of Islam and the Coptic Christianity led it from the same platform.

After pleading for God’s blessings, the Coptic-Muslim Alliance of Hope began a “New Journey”, with a “New Mission”; namely:

“A Harmonious Society in a Happy Egyptian Future”.

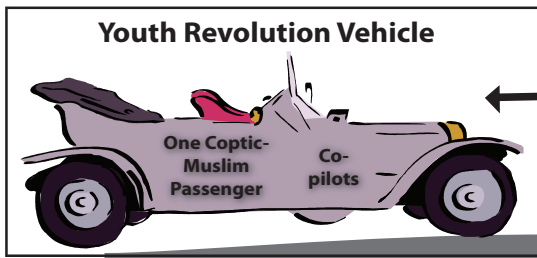
IV: The 18 Days Egypt’s Alliance of Hope Revolutionary Journey: A Real Journey.

In the October Talk, it was stated that the “enlightenment mission is long awaited in Egypt, has been building up over the years, and cannot be delayed any longer”. Nevertheless, nobody could have predicted that the “Hypothetical” Journey could become a “Reality” in such a short period of time. Not only that, a real journey started in less than four months from the October Talk, on the 25th January 2011, but, more surprisingly, it only took eighteen days, from the 25th January to 11th February 2011, to reach its final destination.

This poses the pertinent question of how this happened at such a remarkable speed?

Referring to (and/or comparing with) the Hypothetical Journey and the Real Journey and the attached Charts for both Journeys, it would be interesting to note the following:

Egypt's 18 Days Alliance of Hope Revolutionary Journey



Techno-populism (New GPS Software)

25th January 2011
Cross-Crescent Route

DEPARTURE DATE:
25th JANUARY 2011



Wisdom Traditions
Engine Recharge

The Army Endorses the Youth Revolution Demands

Tahrir Square

The Charter of Hope Signed in Martyrs Blood, not ink



A New Journey for a New Egypt begins



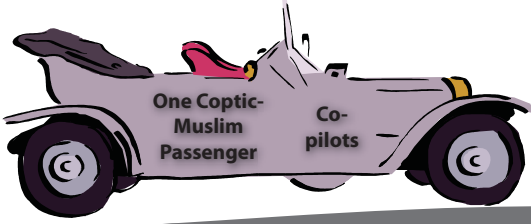
ARRIVAL DATE:
11th FEBRUARY 2011

The 11th February 2011 New Egypt Route

The Supreme Command of the Armed Forces oversee the transitional period

Egypt's Alliance of Hope Enlightenment Journey

Enlightenment Vehicle



1919 Cross-Crescent Route

DEPARTURE



The Journey

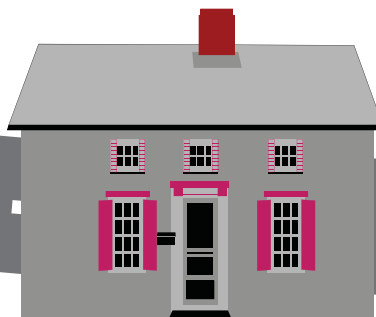
Wisdom Traditions

Engine Recharge

Egypt's House of Hope
Signature of The Charter of Hope



ARRIVAL
Final Destination



"Table" "Light"

**2nd October 2010
Alliance of Hope
Route....**

- While the former hypothetical journey adopted an “advocacy” mission, the latter “real” journey, which started as an opposition demonstration, became a “revolutionary” movement in every sense of the word.
- The advocacy mission adopted a limited goal of consolidating the Coptic-Muslim unity, via the formation of an alliance, the mission of the revolutionaries aimed for no less than removing the existing regime in its entirety.
- Thus, while the reference to the word “Hope” was left ambiguous in the former, apart from consolidating unity, the hopes of the revolutionaries became increasingly explicit, and as the days went by to become almost a detailed list of requirements in the Egypt they aspire to now.
- However, despite the ambiguity in the hopes of the former, it was implicit that the alliance was aiming for a New Egypt. This can be deduced from them starting a new Journey, after reaching their destination, signing the Charter of Hope in Egypt’s House of Hope. This, in addition to adopting the slogan for the New Journey of a “Harmonious Society for a Happy Future Egypt”, under the banner of “Egypt First, Egypt First, and Egypt Always”, could easily be interpreted in a similar revolutionary way.
- As to the Agenda of Priorities in the former Journey of: Egyptian Nationalism and Religious Harmony, events and activities over the 18 days journey, demonstrated, in a practical way and without any doubt, a very different reality. That is: both priorities are absolutely well in place, never lost, and are alive and kicking, so-to-speak, despite continuous dilution campaigns over the years of dictatorships.
- One difference between the hypothetical and the real journey relates to what was envisaged as the software for the GPS navigation system. On one hand, one would note the total absence of any religious aspects in the revolutionary movement. This was definitely deliberate, but fully understandable; by the revolutionaries; in order to prevent the possibility of any divisions amongst them, while facing a ruthless enemy. This does not mean that the Enlightenment or the Wisdom Traditions ideas were dropped. The behaviour of the revolutionaries, in general, adopted, implicitly, conformity with the said ideas.
- On the other hand, new software was intelligently and discretely used, which proved pivotal to the success of the revolution. The extensive use of the electronic social networks proved to be one of the most effective communication tools, particularly in the case where the secret security establishment invaded citizen’s privacy, as was the case in Egypt since the early 1950’s.
- Also resorting to such tools proved to be more than an effective way of communication. As I described in a recent Talk I gave to the European-Atlantic Group on the 23rd February 2011, and I quote: “As a result of the Tunisian-Egyptian Uprisings, a “New Marriage” is ready for teaching, one between Technologies and Populism. Techno-Populism should now be part of the Curriculum (of Political Theory)”.

- Another extremely significant difference, which could not have been anticipated in the hypothetical journey, relates to the role the Egyptian Army played as the revolutionary movement gathered momentum. At a critical moment, the Egyptian Army came out with a bombshell, not literally, surprise. It decided and publicly announced its full endorsement of the full demands of the revolutionaries. Words were not sufficient, for when the Army came out to the streets of Cairo, and contrary to all expectations, it proved to be the “critical protector” of the Revolution.
- Moreover, although it is debateable as to whether the Army was instrumental in Mubarak’s removal from power, what will be recorded in history for the Egyptian Army, amongst other things, is their true loyalty and wisdom during the critical 18 days and beyond. One “feather in their Cap” is that the Army did not fire a single bullet against their brother and sister Egyptians, to whom they owe absolute loyalty. The other is the very wise way in which they have been dealing with the critical complex post-Mubarak period when the “Supreme Command of the Armed Forces” assumed responsibility; despite the fact that some of their decisions were, controversial, but sincere.
- Further remarks, relating to the Charter of Hope, are worth mentioning. The core of the Charter does now focus on what “New Egypt” should add to its historical uniqueness, cultural heritage and beauty so that the hopes and aspirations of her, long suffering, people are realized. Although it does not ignore religious harmony, it is no longer confined to it. The appearance of the Cross-and the Crescent from day one of the Revolution put our hearts and minds at rest in that respect.
- The other remark refers to the fact that the signature of the Charter of Hope proved to be a process, taking place throughout the Journey, the revolutionary route, and in a sacred way. As Martyrs fell at the hands of the criminal regime, at that time, the terms and articles of the Charter were written, and were ultimately signed in Martyrs blood, and not in ink.
- Given the above, it became necessary to revisit the October Hypothetical Chart as follows:

a) It has now the title “The 18 days Egypt’s Alliance of Hope Revolutionary Journey”,

b) Departure date is the 25th January 2011, and Arrival date is the 11th February 2011,

c) The departure route is now renamed “25th January 2011 Cross-Crescent Route”,

d) Egypt’s House of Hope is now renamed “New Egypt’s House of Hope”, located in the prominent “Tahrir Square”, where most of the Revolutionary events took place. The route outward is renamed “11th February New Egypt Route,” where a new journey has already started,

e) The Enlightenment Vehicle is now renamed the “Youth Revolution Vehicle”, and the GPS has the uniquely Egyptian-developed software “The Techno-Populism Software”.

- The question that remained unanswered relates to the unbelievably short period of time from October 2010 to January 2011, but, more significantly, from 25th January 2011 to 11th February 2011, when Mubarak was, ultimately, forced to go.
- As to the first period, apart from the possible contagion of the Tunisian Revolution, I have to confess that I could provide no explanation; neither could I have predicted it, or anybody else for that matter. Perhaps, the answer is simply “God behaves in a mysterious way”, and that His blessed” my people, Egypt” never ceases to surprise the world.
- As to the second short period of 18 days, one can, possibly, attribute it, in addition to God’s blessings, to four important factors, separately and interactively.
- These are:
 - 1-The initiation of the Revolution, and the further feverish impetus, by the Egyptian Youth,
 - 2-The Unity of the Egyptian People behind them,
 - 3- The endorsement of the Egyptian Army of all the Revolutionary legitimate demands, and providing the protection umbrella, and
 - 4- Last, but not least, Religious Harmony, which made it impossible for any counter-revolutionary attempts, and/or foreign interference, to interrupt, sabotage, or even, destroy the revolution.

These factors, among others, could partly explain the relatively very short journey, but why 18 days? Back to God’s blessing, He “Behaves in a mysterious way”?

V: From a “Different/Interim/Transitional Or Hybrid Egypt” To “New Egypt”: A New Alliance of Hope Journey begins.

What happened during the 18 days journey, from the 25th January to 11th February 2011 is both spectacular and bewildering. Also, what has been happening, and the realities that have been created since are difficult to fit into any particular socio-political model.

Thus, given the spectacular, bewildering first stage, and the non-conformity of the realities since, trying to find a suitable scientifically known one name to describe it is almost impossible.

Adding to this the dynamics involved, there was no alternative but to resort to the use of many names describing a number of scenarios, hence the rather lengthy puzzling title of this section.

In addition, as we are focusing on Egypt, one faces additional difficulties. On one hand, countries with long history, heritage and diversified cultures are normally privileged and are deemed fortunate. On the other hand, such well established countries, with a deeply rooted and long history; culture and heritage can make achieving a significant a change a very challenging task.

Moreover, if we take into account at least the last 60 years of the immense sufferings and fear that Egypt and the Egyptians were subjected to since the early fifties; it is hard to envisage an easy and speedy departure and realization of fundamental changes. Wounds of such a magnitude and depth with the deliberately added viruses, that has been causing cumulative infections, which have been done to Egypt, these do not heal totally or quickly. Even when the injuries have been cured, they always leave marks.

True, on the 11th February 2011 Mubarak was forced to go. But this did not mean that the desired changes; namely a totally New Egypt; that the Youth Revolutionaries shed blood for, were ready to be implemented. Given the above-mentioned factors, and the complexity of the Egyptian society, change to reach the ultimate destination was bound to take time and to encounter numerous difficulties and obstacles.

The duration of the time required related, to a very great extent, to the nature of this complexity, accurately summarized by Tarek Osman (24) as resembling:

“A surrealist painting...difficult to decipher its components, challenging to comprehend its meaning. At the centre of the painting there are dark, abrasive lines; most onlookers would see them depicting anger, frustration and occasionally menace”.

Since the 11th February 2011, the journey heading towards the “New Egypt”, which the Revolution aspired to achieve, has been taking place through a number of ‘stops’ or phases. These can, simply, be described as follows:

Phase 1: “Different Egypt”

The first stop or phase may be described as a “Different Egypt”. The choice of this name is due to the difficulty in trying to be more precise, given the mixed features of this phase:

- 1) On the one hand, at the Governing level, having lost legitimacy, Mubarak was forced to give up presidential authority. Despite the fact that there was a Vice President and a Head of the Supreme Constitutional Court in place, responsibility for the running of the Country was passed on to the

Supreme Command of the Armed Forces. This represented a de facto implicit suspension of the Constitution, and Egypt became a country with no constitution or anything else in place.

- 2) Another strange feature was the continuity of responsibility in running the country in the hands of a Government, nominated by Mubarak, who by that time had lost all legitimacy. Moreover, it became a country without a Police Force or any other similar force to ensure safety of the population and Law enforcement.
- 3) On the other hand, at the population level, the millions of revolutionaries in the streets of Egypt regained their freedom, after a long time of suppression, and became, de facto, the main source of power and authority. In a sense, one can regard this development as some sort of democracy. However, such freedom and/or quasi-democracy were not institutionalized in any form or way-despite the formation of numerous committees- neither was there any obvious leadership. In this respect, one should mention that the de facto suspension of the Constitution meant that the two Houses of Parliament were in suspension, also.

For all these characteristics, among others, this phase can deservedly be described as a “Different Egypt”, being different from the one it was, while not fitting easily to any known socio-political model, in theory or in practice.

Phase 2: “Interim Egypt”

The second stop or phase may be described as “Interim Egypt”, or rather “Egypt in waiting”. During this phase some fundamental issues had to be addressed, and without delay. On one hand, the two issues of legitimacy and constitution had to be resolved, even in a temporary way. On the legitimacy, wisely, the Supreme Command decided to adopt a pragmatic approach. If they took the position that Mubarak lost legitimacy prior to his formal departure, this would have meant that virtually all-existing institutions, appointments, and other matters have all lost legitimacy, too. This would have been due to the overwhelming powers of the President in the Constitution. The opposite of legitimizing everything in place would have meant denial of the reality of the Revolution.

On the other hand, pressure was continuing and escalating from the Revolutionaries to change the system, and all that was related to it, without delay.

Under these circumstances, the Supreme Command adopted a pragmatic approach. Among other measures, of less significance, a Constitutional Committee was formed, by decree, with the mandate of recommending amendments to Nine Articles of the Constitution (the de facto suspended one), and to subject these recommendations to a referendum.

This was certainly an “Interim” action, together with beginning a legal process to put on trial some of the prominent figures of the Mubarak regime, and helped to calm down, slightly, the revolutionary boiling temperature.

Phase 3: “Transitional Egypt”

The Constitutional Committee made recommendations, relating not only to the nine articles but, also, involved other articles. They were put to a referendum. In a free and proper voting for the first time in their recent history, the amendments were approved with a large majority.

But, it soon became apparent that despite the approval of the amendments of certain “constitutional Articles”, there remained what might be called a “Constitutional Vacuum”, given the de facto suspension of the Constitution. To fill such vacuum, so-to-speak, the Supreme Command had to issue what was called a “Constitutional Degree” consisting of more than sixty articles. This, together with the approved amendments, put in place what might be called a “Constitutional Framework”, which could make it possible to move in the direction of some democratic reforms.

Although these steps were, in a way, welcome, it appeared rather an unusual way of trying to replace an old Constitution, which was a harmful joke, by a “patched-up replacement Constitution”. Many, including the author of this paper, argued in favour of a totally “New Constitution”, to replace the de facto suspended Mubarak’s, and his cronies, so-called Constitution. However, the alternative adopted approach was justified on grounds of saving time. Although many, including the author of this paper, with the benefit of hindsight, contested this justification it is preferable to have a “Constitutional Framework” better than a “Constitutional Vacuum”.

With this progress in place, another important step, in the right direction, followed. The Revolutionaries of Tahrir Square felt it objectionable to keep a Government appointed by Mubarak in charge of the day-to-day management (?) of the country. The strong demand for its dismissal was increasing by the day, particularly as the majority of its Ministers belonged, formally and in behaviour, to the old regime. With increasing violence, disorderly behaviour, and numerous strikes, the country became in the verge of anarchy.

The Supreme Command decided to meet the justifiable demands of the Revolutionaries, but in a unique and unprecedented way. They could easily have replaced the existing Government by a new Government, totally selected by their Council. Instead, they delegated this vital decision to the “People”, as represented by the Tahrir Square Revolutionaries. So they did, and the New Prime Minister, selected by them, declared that he received his mandate from them, and he would revert to them, should he fails to fulfil their aspirations.

With a “Constitutional Framework”, a “New Government”, selected and mandated by the people (not by a Pharaoh), and with significant steps taken to put on trial more of the Mubarak’s regime, Egypt began to witness a “Transition towards a New Egypt”.

Phase 4: “Hybrid Egypt”

The picture of Egypt has changed compared with what it was like on the 11th February, in a relatively significant way. The near future’s expected developments are likely to add some new features.

The Current Picture consists of:

- A new “Constitutional Framework”, which was partly voted for (the amendments of some articles), partly decreed, and with the latter exceeding the former.
- There is, also, a new Government, whose Prime Minister was chosen by the “people”, endorsed by the Supreme Command, but the rest of the Cabinet selected by the Prime Minister, with the approval, one presumes, by the Supreme Command.
- To these developments, one adds other features, such as a new law relating to the formation of “political parties”, abolition of the most hated “State Security Force”, a much more freer “State Media”, particularly the TV channels, and state newspapers, noticeable changes in Egypt’s international relationships, and other promising changes, on the one hand,
- On the other hand, the “Emergency Law” still remains in place, despite being very closely and intrinsically related to the Mubarak regime.
- The state of Law and order has become a very serious challenge, particularly with the spread of criminal acts by “thugs”, taking advantage of the atmosphere of freedom, and the absence or weak policing of the streets, in addition to the fact that numerous remnants of the old regime remain in charge of many facets of life of the ordinary people. Sadly, some serious ethnic religious incidents occurred; though both the Army and the people at large contained them, Muslims and Copts alike.
- Most seriously, the Economy has been, and remains, to a very great extent, in a very serious state. Many economic enterprises remain closed, and others are frequently interrupted by many strikes, seeking not only changes to their circumstances, but demanding changes in management, and, even changes in forms of ownership. Tourism has suffered the most, as it stopped completely for a period, and is now recovering, but at a very slow pace with relatively very small numbers. Exports, in general, virtually stopped; though the Suez Canal continued to function cautiously. Budget deficit and foreign debt have been increasing.

As to the Near Future, one notes the following:

- Based on the “Constitutional Framework”, an election is due to take place very soon: first of a new “Parliament”, and then a new “President”, with the Emergency Law having been cancelled, as promised.
- A Constitutional Committee will be formed, representing a wide selection of the Egyptian Society. Its main task will be to propose a new Constitution, which will be put for a vote in a referendum.
- A “Dialogue Committee”, headed by Ex-Prime Minister Dr Higazy, will be continuing their forum-type discussion, focusing on what future New Egypt should look like.
- Once the New Constitution is approved, a new election of a new Parliament will take place. As to whether a new President will have to be elected or not will depend on the New Constitution.
- During the period leading to approval of the New Constitution, both the in-place Government and Parliament, are to be regarded as temporary, since both would have to be replaced by another, following a new election(s).
- What is not clear relates to the position of the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces, and the Government in place, up to the point in time when a New Constitution is voted for. The Supreme Command expressed their desire to hand over entirely the running of the country to the newly elected Parliament and President. But, in this respect, one has to be cautious in assuming that the fulfilment of their desire will depend on circumstances at that time, particularly those related to Law and Order. It is realistic to assume that although the Army’s role would be reduced dramatically, however, it would continue to monitor closely the stability and security of the country, preferably in a discrete way. As to whether there will be a new Government or not, once a temporary Parliament and President have been elected, that remains to be seen.

From the above, it is clear that combining the current picture with expected changes in the near future produces a mixed picture, consisting of some semi-democratic features and some democratic features, and others in between. In a sense, this will produce what can be called “Hybrid Egypt”.

Phase 5: “New Egypt”

To start with, it is necessary to state that it is not possible, at this stage, to provide a detailed precise picture of what “New Egypt” is likely to be like. One reason is that Egypt is currently at phase 3, Transitional Egypt, while New Egypt is at phase 5, with phase 4, Hybrid Egypt, not yet even started.

Another reason is that any attempt to provide such a detailed picture will be not only speculative, but also will require a lengthy analysis, perhaps a subject for a separate paper.

However, this does not mean that we refrain from attempting to tackle the subject, in some general terms, with a focus on the general aims of New Egypt. In so doing,

attention will be centred on the consensus view, which allows room for further additions, amendments or modification.

Given the historical background, particularly the recent one, Egypt's capabilities, and her geopolitical status, New Egypt can aim to be a "Modern, Democratic, Civil, Pivotal and Prosperous" country, as follows:

"Modern"

By this, it is meant a country marked by the celebration of the powers of human reason, where man has essential autonomy, is responsible to himself, to his own rational interests, to his self-development, and, by inescapable extension to the welfare of his fellow man. Also, it would be marked by a keen interest in science, the promotion of religious harmony, and a desire to construct a government free of tyranny.

"Democratic"

Freedom should be regarded as indivisible, guaranteed for all individuals, irrespective of their gender, race or religion, but, also, with responsibility. At the heart of this freedom is the preservation of the freedom of expression, individuals and institution, and the exercise of political rights. Separation of powers is guaranteed and practiced, and appropriate democratic institutions are, also, well protected. Law and order must be enforced, and while there is no place for revenge, the lawful citizen must be protected against the criminal, not the criminal against society.

"Civil"

A modern, democratic Egypt must, also, be based on a secular and civil state. Egypt's population consists of not only Muslims, who are the majority, but also of a significant minority of Copts. The latter's Egyptian origin goes back much longer in history than the other.

This does not mean ignoring religion, or the fact that the Egyptian people, Muslims and Copts, are practicing religious communities. One, also, cannot deny the relationship between Religion, the State, Nationalism and Law. (9)

Religion and the State both deal with "life"; religion has a notion of "how to live this life", while the state is responsible for "policing that life".

Similarly, there is also a relationship between Religious and Nationalist, as distinct from Nationality. While there cannot be any formal relationship with Nationality, the relationship with Nationalism is more controversial.

Last, but not least, there is a relationship between Religion and Law. As mentioned before, religion has a notion about how to live this life, and law is concerned primarily with the order and regulation of life.

While confirming the notion of a civil secular state, there are many successful models, which allow for the relationship between religion and the state, nationalism and law. Many successful examples can be quoted. There are the examples of Great Britain, based on an unwritten Constitution, and of the United States, based on a written Constitution. In many cases, the relationship between religions, the state, nationalism and law have been working democratically, efficiently and compassionately.

Also, there are the recent examples of Brazil and Poland, where Liberal Theology became the main platform of the voice of the people. In addition, there is the case of Indonesia, with the world's largest Muslim and a religiously pluralistic population. This dualism led to the "pledge of allegiance" instituted in 1945, called "Pancasila". It is designed to be a unifying ideological umbrella, with five principles: Belief in one God, National Unity, Guided Democracy, Social Justice, and Humanitarianism". (9)

"Pivotal"

New Egypt must be based on an explicit recognition of Egypt's geopolitical "Pivotal" status. Given her Middle Eastern, African, Asian, and Mediterranean geopolitical location and her historical links, recognition is essential of the "Greater Egypt" strategy, in a non-colonial but cultural sense.

New Egypt must start to play its Pivotal role, and cease to act as, simply, the "automatic endorser", as used to be the case during the Mubarak era. The reconciliation between the various Palestinian factions is concrete proof of what pivotal Egypt can achieve.

"Prosperous"

Egypt is a country well endowed with resources. These include: vast agricultural resources, immense industrial capabilities, unmatched touristic attractions, rich mineral deposits, a central cross-continent's location, impressive human capital, and substantial capital accumulation by the Egyptians living overseas.

Given an environment of confidence, and modern skilled management, New Egypt's Economy has the potential of becoming one of the "ten" leading economies in the world. However growth and stability leading to prosperity is not sufficient. Equitable distribution of income and wealth is a "must". In this respect, what is needed is a system combining efficiency in resource allocation and management, with social and economic justice. This system I am proposing to call "Societalism" combines a free-market mechanism with a social conscience.

"A Challenging Task"

While being optimistic, one should not underestimate the challenging task of trying to achieve the above-described aims of New Egypt. No future is born in a vacuum, or is totally cut-off its present and past.

In a recent book by John R. Bradley (5), he quotes a description of the current state of Egypt by Dr Ahmed Okasha, the president of the Egyptian Psychiatric Association, as follows:

“We don’t see a lot of smiles when we walk in the streets, and there are many reasons for that. First of all, there is the poverty. Still more than 50 percent of Egyptians are poor-they live on less than two dollars a day. Then, there is overcrowding, which has tremendous effect on the personality of the individual. Cairo is the most overcrowded city in the world. Fifty-two thousand people live in every square kilometre. Nothing like this has happened anywhere. Then, there is the high unemployment, and the inability of young people to engage in free expression. Free expression gives you mental health and self-dignity. Democracy offer better mental health, but it has to be real democracy-which means transparency, accountability, and the ability to change the ruling authorities...Egyptians now find there is now transparency in anything in their lives and there is no accountability. None of the thieves who are ministers or other politicians are accountable to the poor people. We have had the same things since 1952”.

True this gloomy picture has, partly, changed since the success of the 25th January 2011 Revolution, but many of the above-quoted features remain in place, representing a monumental challenge. But, given the miracles achieved, there can be no doubt that the Egyptian people will ensure the birth of New Egypt.

“Young Egyptians will lead the way To New Egypt.”

Witnessing what was happening in Tahrir Square, and the surrounding area, after Mubarak was forced to go, some thought New Egypt was already born, if not already in place.

Take, as an example, what was described and said by Mr. Sharief El-Gabri, a University of Michigan Graduate and a teacher of English in Jordan. During a trip to Egypt 12 days after Mubarak’s fall, while walking toward the centre of Cairo, he noticed two individuals: one whose appearance suggested he came from a well-off background, while the other was wearing a brown Galabeya, suggesting a totally different poor background. They were walking in the same direction, picking up litter every few steps and preceded to place the garbage in newly situated bins. Mr El-Gabri (31) said:

“I was literally in awe. Cairo has the reputation of being incredibly polluted and far from litter conscious”.

Although this was a relatively insignificant event in its substance, Mr. El-Gabri gave it a much broader and substantial interpretation:

“This is the new Egypt, an Egypt where its citizens feel a sense of ownership and proudly carry out their national duties. Of course the road to democracy will be turbulent and economic disparity will continue, but what made me so proud was observing the spirit of communal participation and being able to join in it”.

He, also, noted that in the absence of a police force:

“Egyptians ‘now’ run checkpoints after the midnight curfew and stand guard to protect their homes from theft. Average Egyptians are the ones who direct the traffic”.

He then concludes by saying:

“This new spirit of national duty and a sense of communal responsibility can only serve as a positive attribute for Egypt’s future political trajectory.”

Although absolutely necessary, the emergence of this New Egypt’s spirit is not sufficient for it to become a reality. This raises the question of the “direction and trajectory”, which Egypt is heading towards.

On the one hand, recent events, and an unbiased interpretation of recent Egyptian history, confirm the total rejection of what is frequently referred to as the “apathetic psyche of the Egyptian people” (5). The Egyptian’s revolutions, uprisings, resistance to occupation, coup d’etat, food riots, stream of assassinations and mass demonstration from 1919 onwards, culminating in the recent revolution, speak of no apathy, but are more inspiring.

On the other hand, one should not, in any way, underestimate the challenges facing Egypt at present and the ones lying ahead. The widespread violence, the occasional eruption of Muslim-Copt incidents - some of which are gruesome in magnitude - the extreme poverty, the slow and monumental attempts at cleansing the system from the remainder of the old regime, the boiling regional environment, and the inevitable attempts of foreign interference, all this, to list but a few, makes the road to New Egypt not an easy one.

However, one should remain cautiously optimistic. Assuming continuity of unity, determination and the new Egypt’s spirit, the Egyptian people will surprise the world, once again. One important reason for such optimism relates, in particular, to the role young Egyptians (24) are likely to play. Apart from the fact they were the ones who toppled one of the most repressive regimes in history in only 18 days. The demography of the country gives an estimate of more than 45 million young Egyptians, who are under the age of thirty-five years of age, including the largest group of adolescents in the country’s history. They represent more than fifty percent of the population.

The conditions which many of these people live in are simply appalling: neighbourhoods of absolute poverty, highest levels of unemployment, unreliable services and shabby buildings with peeling facades, narrow alleys with uncollected garbage and open cesspools, to list, again, but a few. All this creates anger, resentment and determination to effect a change, at any price including endangering their own lives.

Despite the fact that they were forced to loose any interest, or to participate, in political life, young Egyptians' dynamism and activism has found other outlets: in culture, arts, a wave of innovations in Egypt's business and finance scene, philanthropy and social investment establishing a large number of NGOs working with Egypt's poor and needy.

In addition, one of the most important contribution of today's young Egyptians is not "cinema, literature, business, philanthropy or social work; it is in formulating their own definition of Egyptianism, their own definition of a twenty-first-century Egyptian project". This project will be dealt with in the next section.

However, focusing on the young Egyptians does not mean ignoring the significant responsibility of the remainder of the population. After all, they represent a large percentage of the population, have the same determined desire to change Egypt, have valuable experience and expertise, and ample talents. Neither, does one ignore the pivotal role that long-neglected ex-patriot Egyptians can, also, play. The 25th January experience represents an assuring example: sparked by the Youth, but, in no time, joined by the rest of the population, to become a "Population Revolution".

Uncertainties are not to be ruled out, ignored or underestimated. An interesting quote, from Tarek Osman's recent book, Egypt on the Brink, sums up the situation nicely, as follows:

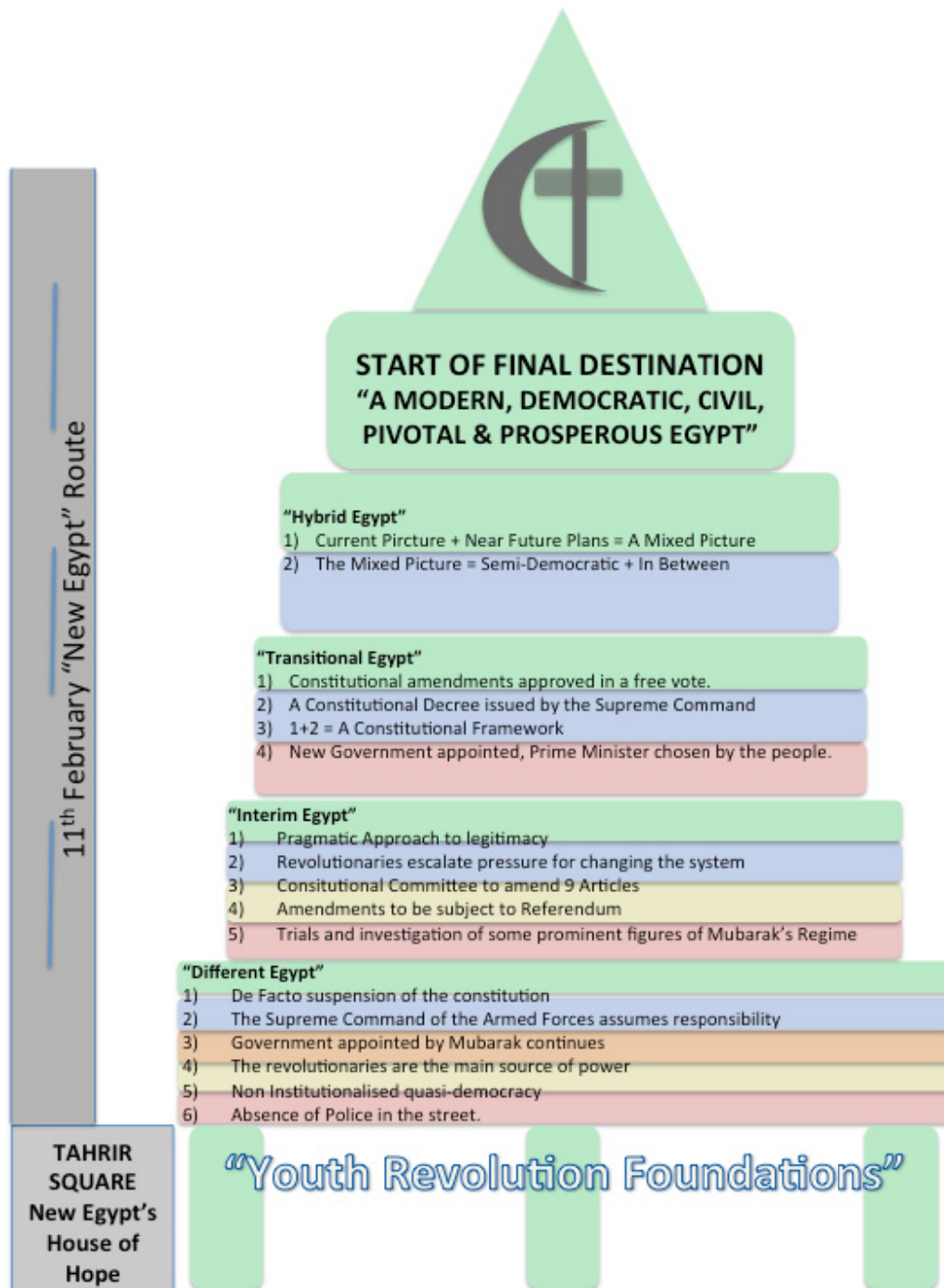
"Today, Egypt resembles the agonized Egyptian at the beginning of Naguib Mahfouz's novel 'Autumn Quail', seemingly 'standing in the middle of nowhere and everywhere'. The direction in which young Egyptians will drive their society is yet to emerge". (24)

On this, and before I turn to discuss the contribution of the Coptic community in New Egypt, I revert to faith, as always. I believe God will guide us all, and I quote from Exodus 15:13 NIV:

"In Your unfailing love You will lead the people You have redeemed. In Your strength You will guide them to Your holy dwelling".

The five phases leading to New Egypt are displayed in the attached Chart, entitled the "New Saqqara Step Pyramid". It summarises the journey from "Different Egypt to New Egypt".

A New Saqqara Step Pyramid: From “Different Egypt” To “New Egypt”.



VI: The Contribution of the Coptic Community In the Transition to New Egypt: A Strategic Mission.

The contribution of the Coptic Community in the transition to New Egypt should be in the form of a “Strategic Mission”: one that should not focus on sporadic specific events, or is inflexibly confined to the transitional period, but is intrinsically constructed to go beyond it.

This Mission should have certain additional characteristics:

- All of which have one focus and one focus only; namely a New Egypt that should be “Modern, Democratic, Civil, Pivotal and Prosperous”.
- It should form an integral part of the New Egypt’s Charter of Hope. In other words, it should represent specific aims and activities within an “Integrated Grand Strategic Mission” of both Muslims and Copts.
- It should not prevent either community from pursuing their own specifically related activities, provided they are not in conflict with the Grand Strategic Mission, either explicitly or implicitly.
- In this Strategic Mission, the aims adopted, by the Coptic community should be selected carefully and wisely, and should focus on those areas about which they have well-founded knowledge and experience, and
- Last, but not least, it should be compatible, in substance and in spirit, with the goals and aspirations of the 25th January 2011 Youth Revolution.

Given the above, three main topics are selected, to include: aims, responsibilities, activities and a plan of action. These are:

- Egyptianism: Identity, Co-Leadership and Zeal.
- Equality in Citizenship, and
- Spiritualism

These are outlined below:

Egyptianism: Identity, Co-Leadership and Zeal

Recently on 12th April 2011, a group of ex-patriot Egyptians met in London. The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss how they can contribute to the emerging New Egypt, after the 25th January 2011 Revolution. The participants came from a variety of backgrounds, professional and otherwise. All of them expressed their views and offered to help.

Amongst the participants was H.G. Bishop Angaelos, the General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church. When it was his turn to speak, he highlighted the great significance of addressing the question of Identity, as a starting point, and, in particular, to regard the rebuilding of the Egyptian identity as the highest priority. On this, I could not agree more as I have been attributing the decline of Egypt,

politically, economically and sociologically, to the dilution of Egyptian nationalistic fervour, on the one hand. On the other hand, there is almost a consensus that one of the main conditions of national unity is the resolution of the identity of the Egyptian political community.

In the twentieth century, there have been diverse answers to the question of the core identity of Egypt: Pharaonic-Egyptian nationalism; Western secular-liberal nationalism; pan-Arabism; Arab-socialist nationalism; Islamic-Arabism; pan-Islamism- each implies a certain attitude towards the place of the minority Copts. All Egyptian regimes have failed to deal with this problem of identity. The Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak regimes have not succeeded in creating a national agreement on a clear definition of the identity of the Egyptian community. Instead, they resorted to a deliberate manipulative ambiguity, or used it as a card to be played in the game of domestic power politics. (31, Angelfire)

Although, in principle, the Egyptian state should have been the institution most interested in developing and maintaining the communal national identity, their gross failure left a vacuum, and led to conflict. But, as mentioned before, this vacuum was soon filled by young Egyptians, whose main contribution became that of formulating their own definition of Egyptianism, as their twenty-first prime Egyptian project. As stated by Tarek Osman (24):

“...Some young people, depressed by the devastating decline of Egyptian culture values, attitudes and behaviour, leapt over the fifty years (seeing only troubles and failures), and embraced Egypt’s liberal experiment of the 1920’s, 1930’s and the 1940’s. The tolerance that had characterised that experiment; the refinement, the beauty, the sophistication, and the civility of the Egyptian society at the time, the cosmopolitanism of Cairo and Alexandria; and the overall joie de vivre of the period, intoxicated those searchers for a new identity, a new understanding of their cultural inheritance”.

Egyptianism was coming of age, once again, for many reasons. The young Egyptians were seeking a notion that would enable them to combine the liberal experiment of the past with their newly found energy, creativity and dynamism. Also, their return to the past was due to a combination of the historical and contextual vacuum from which the Egyptian society suffers, and the continuing process of repudiating the past and the discrediting of its leaders. Being left without any national heritage, the youths’ efforts were now focused on the internal situation, rather than being obsessed with the glamour of international matters, as used to be the case during the Nasser era. In addition, the country, and in particular the young, started to witness a revival of the role of civil society, which succeeded in regaining its lost ground. Many became assertive of Egyptianism (as opposed to Islamism or Christianity) in various social aspects and endeavours.

Before we turn to discuss the contribution of the Egyptian Copts to Egyptianism, as the emerging favourite of the Egyptian young, perhaps a brief reference should be

made to the relationship between national identity and religion, which are normally regarded by many as one of those natural twins' relationship.

There are two different views of national and religious identity, and, also, two different views about how they are to be studied and analysed academically. One-nineteenth century view sees the essence of a nation as consisting of its soil, history, geography and genetic make-up. The other far more popular view which regards the concept of a nation as much more **"...fluid and literary, as something invented or imagined, a nation as a product of the stories it tells about itself, an approach summed up by the title of Benedict Anderson's seminal work: Imagined Communities"**, on the one hand (31,Ford).

On the other hand, one can identify two differing ways of characterising religious identity: one is vertical, and the other is horizontal, so-to-speak. The former focuses on the roots of religious belief, tracing it back to its origin. As to the latter, it is concerned with how religions interact, **"...the role of popular religion as a whole, which transcends sectarian and denominational boundaries, and uses not just history, but sociology and anthropology to investigate the religious outlook of a particular period"**.

In the context of the contribution of the Coptic Community to the Egyptian national identity, we are inclined to opt for a neutral approach in dealing with Egyptianism in so far as the relationship between identity and religion is concerned. However, in so doing the religiosity of the Egyptian people is fully recognised. Thus, in our considered opinion, opting for what is known as "Perennial Philosophy", might present a suitable answer. As defined in Wikipedia (31), it is a philosophical concept, which **"...asserts that there is a single divine foundations of all religious knowledge, referred to as the universal truth. Each world religion, independent of its culture or historical context, is simply a different interpretation of this knowledge"**. All world religions, including Judaism, Christianity, Islam and many others, are "derived from the same universal truth", despite the diversity of their scriptures and rituals that **"fit the social, mental and spiritual needs of their respective epoch and cultures"**. In sum, perennial philosophy maintains, **"Each world religion has flourished from the foundation of the same universal truth, making these differences superficial and able to be cast aside to find religion's deeper spiritual meaning"**.

Recognising this "universal truth", one can justifiably advocate that Egyptian Copts should be the lead sponsor in furthering, enthusiastically, what the Egyptian young have opted for in recognising Egyptianism as Egypt's unique identity. Of course, in assuming this challenging task, they would be working within the New Egypt's Charter of hope, together with the Muslim community hand-in-hand. This justification can be attributed to many reasons: (24)

- First, and foremost, Christian Egyptians are genuine Egyptians, whose history and origin go back to Pharoanic Egypt.

- Christian Egyptians in recent Egyptian history were at the ***“forefront of the renaissance which propelled the country towards a cultural and economic resurgence”***.
- Their significant achievements, endeavours and enterprises contributed significantly to the formulation of Egypt’s identity and her historical role.
- Their presence was at the heart of ***“the evolution of Egyptianism into a rich fabric comprising different heritages, legacies and religions; a unique cultural blend that made Egypt more than just another province of any of the region’s Islamic empires”***.
- By and large, the existence of the two religions in the same land, living side by side in tranquillity helped to shape ***“...Egyptian society’s tolerant view of itself as a mixture of blood”***, a sanctuary of peacefulness and constancy, and a partnership between: ***“...one people worshipping the same God in two different ways”***, a phrase repeated by Patriarch Kyrillos VI.
- The role of the Christian Egyptians as a cultural bridge to Europe had ***“...spearheaded the drive towards modernity and progress”***.
- Moreover, some Egyptologists have gone as far as arguing that Christian theology ***“resembled many aspects of old Egyptian religions”***.

In lead-sponsoring Egyptianism, the Egyptian Christians must address the challenging issues relating to such sponsorship. The Violence, the dilution of economic power in the 1950’s and the 1960’s, and the euphoric move towards Arabism, all led to the withdrawal of Egyptian Christians from public life, and physically through mass emigration. This was made worse during the 1970’s, by the exclusive adoption of Islamic culture, rise of Islamism, and other discriminatory measures. The recent revolutionary change may lead to their return, inevitably. Signs of which were evident in their active participation in the 25th January 2011 revolution in all its facets, including, but is not limited to, its ad-hoc leadership.

In this lead-sponsorship of Egyptianism, they must aim to create dynamic enthusiastic popular movements, encompassing Egyptians of all ages, religions and aspects of life. This movement should appeal directly to the people in their inquisitive and patriotic instincts. In sum, they should build on the revolutionary environment by further injection to already revived nationalistic “zeal”, by raising the temperature, arousing new passions, and inspiring new idealism based on the return to Egypt’s golden ages, from Pharoanic to Christian to Islamic to the spirit of the 1920’s and the 1930’s.

While raising optimism and rosy future expectations, based on Egyptianism, realism should prevail, also. There should be an explicit admission that Egypt has been in decline since the early fifties, but at the same time to appreciate that Egypt is not bankrupt, because her greatest asset has been, and remains, her unique people. Sadly during the dictatorship years, this asset has been misused and grossly mistreated. However, any popular movement, based on unity, must nature, feed and protect that priceless asset, the people of Egypt, which have been mal-treated, strangled, corrupted and overshadowed by the one-man dictators and their puppet governments.

But, in so doing, the movement must guard against extremism, and, in particular, extreme nationalism. His Holiness the Dalai Lama, known for his nationalistic dedication to Tibet, suggests that one must distinguish between **“...a healthy nationalism and extreme nationalism”**. He warns, **“When nationalism becomes extreme, it can become a dangerous ideology, so powerful it can incite people to commit acts of aggression”**. Recalling what happened in the Balkans, he draws attention to an example of the effects of **“one’s national identity overriding other aspects of people’s identity that could otherwise provide a base for coming together”**. In this respect, a quote from Matthew 5:16 can be a guide: **“Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your father in heaven”**.

Another important issue needs clarifying. Focusing on Egyptianism should not be misinterpreted as advocating isolationism, or denial of the importance of the other important facets of Egypt’s heritage. As a pivotal state, the geopolitics of Egypt necessitates strong relationships with the wider Middle Eastern, African, Asian And European surroundings, neither does it advocate, or even imply in the slightest, denial of the significance of Arab, Christian and Islamic closeness to Egypt and Egyptians. In fact such considerations should form an integral part of the wider ramifications of Egyptianism, as the core of Egypt’s identity.

Then comes the critical question of leadership, in general, and co-leadership, in particular. History keeps reminding us that, ultimately, no popular movement can succeed in its endeavours without a convincing, sincere, wise, and charismatic leadership (attention is drawn to the word ultimately, given the exceptional feature of leaderless in the recent Egyptian Revolution). History, also, tells that Egyptian Christians provided outstanding leaderships (24) from the days of Mohamed Ali and his successors until the beginning of the 1950’s, jointly and lovingly with their Muslim brothers confirming the success of the co-leadership concept. An outstanding example is that of the Egyptian Christian, Makram Ebeid Pasha. As summarised by Tarek Osman, Makram Ebeid Pasha:

“...In his role, influence and social standing-and not least in his long and complicated relationship with Mustafa Al-Nahas Pasha(Al-Wafd’s leader from the 1930’s to the 1950’s), Makram Ebeid embodied the significance of the Christian presence at the heart both of Egypt and of Egyptianism, with its tolerant, relaxed, liberal and secular view of society and national identity”.

One hopes, and prays, that another Makram Ebeid will soon be emerging as co-leader of an active movement of Egyptianism. Who knows?

Equality in Citizenship

Equality lies at the heart of justice, and there can be no justice, of any form, without equality. In other words, there is no justice if there is discrimination on any grounds, be it based on race, religion, gender, economic or social status, or age, or for any other reason. Also, one can say, unequivocally, that full and meaningful citizenship' rights can only be based on justice, and one refuses to believe that "the bank of justice is bankrupt", as stated by Martin Luther King, Jr. (23) in his famous speech "I Have a Dream", on one hand. On the other hand, equality in a mature society can be regarded as based on one feature above all others; namely "a recognition of the oneness of humanity", as emphasized prominently in a recent open letter by Bahaa'is of Egypt.(31)

In the case of Egypt, one can unreservedly say that none better than the Egyptian Christians, the significant Coptic minority, can explain what inequality of citizenship can be like, and the immense suffering associated with it. Since the early 1950's, the Coptic Community in Egypt has been subjected to increasing discrimination on religious grounds, which degraded them, effectively, to the position of second-class citizens, in addition to being subjected to discrimination on other grounds, as will be referred to later on. Actually, as Tarek Heggy stated: ***"...not a single individual or entity in Egypt today, official or unofficial, can claim that the Copts have no problems or complaints"***.

Discrimination against the Coptic community in Egypt varies in nature and ramification, but in all cases represents one form or another of injustice. Some of which is implicit, but the majority of which is explicit. As listing them all will take time and space, some examples (31, Heggy) are in order. In the absence of one law for the construction and restoration of all houses of worship, one of the Copts major complaints relates to the severe legislative and bureaucratic constraints imposed on the construction of new churches, or even in some cases minor restoration. Although there have been some easing of some restrictions, the situation remains unsatisfactory. This form of discrimination can be regarded as an abridgement of basic human rights.

Another example, over the last sixty years, is the dwindling of their participation in public life, such as allocation of some non-sovereign ministerial positions only to the Copts. This deepens the feeling of marginalization amongst them. In addition there is the de facto implicit exclusion of the Copts from occupying certain key positions, whether in the public or the private sector.

Added to this, the recent frequent recurrence of violence against the Coptic community and their houses of worship. Moreover, in some cases some officials and extremist entities and/or individuals went as far as regarding the Coptic community as agents of foreign powers, reinforcing a false image of unpatriotic collaborators with Egypt's enemies. Sadat, no less, took this view in playing the card of Islamic-Egyptian identity against his political Nasserite enemies. Against all that, and many

more, there prevailed for a long time a state of playing down the gravity of the situation. The official line of denial has been based, wrongly, on the false idea that admission of the problem would be detrimental to Egypt's reputation. Although, discrimination against the Coptic community on religious grounds represents the most significant one, there is, also, discrimination on religious grounds against other minorities in Egypt. The discrimination against the Baha'is in Egypt went as far as making it impossible for them to obtain their rightful Identity Cards. This was due to disallowing them to enter Baha'is into the religious space in the Identity Card Application Form.

Discrimination has, also, been in place against a very significant section of Egyptians; namely the 8 million or so ex-patriot Egyptians living overseas. They have been denied exercising their political rights of participating in any election, even though these elections were in all cases fraudulent. This denial was totally unjustifiable, given their significant contribution, amongst others, to the Egyptian Economy, which could perceive them as taxpayers. True, there have been some positive developments in this respect since the 25th January 2011 Revolution in changing this situation and acknowledging their political rights. However, from what has been made public there appears to be some discriminatory aspects remaining, such as those relating to dual nationality and marriage to non-Egyptians. It is to be noted that a significant percentage of ex-patriot Egyptians are from the Coptic Community, who were forced to migrate as the position of the Coptic community continued to deteriorate, as mentioned before. Thus, they became victims of discrimination on many grounds, not just on religion grounds.

Another form of discrimination (31 Baha'is) is the one based on gender, between men and women. As stated in the Baha'is open letter that nothing can retard progress in Egypt more efficiently than the exclusion of women from participation in the affairs of the nation. They go even further by stating that: ***"Redressing this balance (or rather imbalance) will by itself bring about improvement in every aspect of Egyptian life: religion, cultural, social, economic, and political. Like the bird that cannot fly if one wing is weaker than the other, so humanity's ability to scale the heights of real attainments is severely impeded so long as women are denied the opportunities afforded to men"***.

As a conclusion, they predict: ***"Once the same prerogatives are accorded both sexes, they will both flourish, to the benefit of all. But beyond the matter of civil rights, the principle of gender equality brings with it an attitude that must be extended to the home, to the workplace, to every social space, to the political sphere-ultimately, even to international relations"***. Again, it is to be noted that amongst the women discriminated against in Egypt are Coptic women, who represent a significant percentage of women in Egypt, in excess of their percentage of the Egyptian population. Thus they are subject to discrimination on grounds of religion and gender, at least, and also more if they are living overseas.

Last, but not least, comes equality of opportunities in the economic sphere. Egypt's distribution of income and wealth has been deteriorating in a significant way since Sadat's so-called "Infetah" policy. It became traumatically worse during Mubarak's

rule, particularly in the last ten years of his regime, as a result of adopting a policy, which I called Cap-Corruptionism, combining some form of quasi-Capitalism with an unprecedented level of corruption and nepotism. This resulted in more than half of the Egyptian population becoming extremely poor, on one hand, and an elite, nouveau riche, minority who accumulated huge wealth. On the other hand, what added to the problem has been the continuing deterioration in government education, available to the general public, in theory, and the emergence of superior private education, available exclusively to the elite nouveau riche's children. With nepotism, favoritism and corruption, this meant a total denial of equal opportunities to the non-elite majority of the population. This caused not only severe resentment, but also created one of the worst two-class systems in the world; the very poor and the unimaginably rich with the virtual disappearance of a middle class. A new "value" paradigm was emerging, based on greed, materialism and selfishness. Once again, the Coptic community witnessed a similar pattern emerging: a very high percentage became amongst the very poor exceeding their percentage of the Egyptian population, and a very few of the Coptic community joined the elite nouveau riche in wealth and, sadly, in the wrong new "value" system.

Thus, taking into account the above, as the Coptic community suffers more inequalities on religion, gender, geography and economic grounds than the rest of the Egyptian population, and as they feel the suffering more than anybody else, it is only logical and fair that they become the lead sponsor of "Equality in Citizenship". This is, also, consistent with their lead-sponsorship of Egyptianism, as equality in citizenship forms an integral part of the Egyptian identity.

Spiritualism

Co-lead sponsorship of Egyptianism and equality of citizenship, and in particular Egyptianism, implies preference of a secular constitutional state, in which religion does not figure out formally or explicitly. This guarantees a modern state, in which all citizens have equal rights before the law, irrespective of their religions.

However, this does not mean ignoring the common values, which are generally advocated by religions. This is particularly important in cases, such as that of Egypt, where religions play a very important role in social behaviour, and where the population is known for their respect, adherence, and, to a very great extent, practice in their normal day-to day life. Hence, the need for the Coptic community in Egypt to be lead- sponsors in an integrated value system. This should aim to provide a value system as the foundation to Egyptianism and Equality of Citizenship; the latter are both primarily political and material in essence.

His Holiness The Dalai Lama, in his book "My Spiritual Autobiography"(4), calls for a "***Spiritual Revolution***". He starts by distinguishing between religion and spirituality. In his view, religion implies a system of beliefs, consisting, primarily, of doctrines and rituals, on one hand. On the other hand spirituality: "***...corresponds to the development of human qualities such as love, compassion, patience, tolerance,***

forgiveness, or a sense of responsibility". These inner qualities are a source of happiness for oneself, and for others, and are: *"...independent of any religion"*. He even goes as far as stating that *"...one can do without religion, but not without spirituality"*, regarding *"...an altruistic motivation"* as the unifying elements of the qualities which he defines as spiritual. Getting the mind used to thinking in an altruistic way means that ethics forms the basis for a secular spirituality for everyone, one that is not *"...limited to a group of believers in one religion or another"*.

Accordingly the Spiritual revolution advocated by His Holiness is not a *"...religious revolution. It corresponds to an ethical reorientation of our attitude, since it is a question of learning to take the aspirations of others into account as much as our own"*.

While agreeing, in principle, with the distinction between religion and spirituality, I am inclined to take the view that religions represent a major source from which a spirituality value system can be derived. While this applies virtually to all main religions, given a time and space limitation, one can find many examples from the Holy Bible. One example is in Luke 6:27-29 advocating the totality of *"Love"*, and I quote: *"But I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly"*. Another example on the rejection of materialism is in Matthew 6:24: *"...no one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money"*. There are numerous examples from the Holy Bible and the Holy Qur'an.

By accepting Spirituality, in a recent article Tahir Nakip (31) went as far as advocating the adoption in Egypt of what he called *"Spiritual Democracy"*, as a substitute to a secular constitutional state, claiming that this Spiritual Democracy can solve the tension between state and religion. Instead of excluding religious groups, and/or selective religion, Spiritual Democracy will allow the: *"...full participation of all religious groups in the public sphere"*, and *"...would change the 'political culture' in Egyptian society after the Revolution"*. In his view, this form of democracy, which is based on Structural pluralism, *"...is compatible with the Islamic pluralist understanding, encourages the performance of religious acts in all social structures"*. He, then, concludes by declaring, *"Egyptian Society with a 'Spiritual Democracy' can be a role model in the issue of secularism in world policy"*.

In principle, I agree with the importance of spirituality in its all-inclusive ethical basis. However, I feel unable to accept the Spiritual Democracy concept, for at least two reasons. One reason is that it might lead to some confusion between religion and spirituality. The other is that advocating the involvement of 'all' religions in the political process might result in increasing conflicts, and even more violence.

VII: The Strategic Mission of The Coptic Community: The Way Forward.

It has been argued that the Strategic Mission of the Coptic Community during the transition to New Egypt should be focused in the co-lead sponsoring of the creation of an organized efficient and popular movement. This movement should have the prime aim of promoting, energizing and sustaining the depth of the Egyptian identity; i.e. Egyptianism; in a society based on the just equality in citizenship, and have a spiritual underpinnings represented in a set of appropriate ethical and moral values.

This is easily said, and optimistically hoped for. But, to put it into practice is a challenging task, particularly during a transitional post-revolution and hybrid period. Nevertheless, it is not an impossible task, for the people who managed to achieve a miracle in 18 days, and are more than capable to initiate such a popular movement, with sustained determination, wisdom and zeal.

Thus, for the Coptic community to achieve their objectives in co-lead sponsoring the creation of this popular movement, a carefully thought out implementable plan or a program of action must be drawn out first.

In this respect, you might be surprised, or even shocked, in what I am going to propose; namely to take a leaf, so-to-speak, out the book of Hassan Al-Banna, the founder and spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood movement. He outlined a strategy of patience which (5) “**...had three stages for taking power: the propaganda stage (preparation), the organization stage (aimed at educating the people), and finally the action stage (where power is seized)**”. The purpose of recalling the Al-Banna strategy, in the context with paper, is twofold. On one hand one should be in a position to understand how the Muslim Brotherhood has evolved over time to become virtually the only and most organized political movement in Egypt, despite the fact that it has been subjected to suppression by successive regimes since its inception. On the other hand, for the Coptic community to learn lessons in trying to co-lead sponsoring what would become an influential popular movement which would serve their three objectives of Egyptianism, Equality of Citizenship and Spiritualism. However, one should emphasize the significance between Al-Banna’s plan to “cease power”, and the Coptic community plan, which is far from aiming to seize any power, in the political sense.

Nevertheless, adopting a plan is one thing, but the key to success depends on how it is to be implemented, and more significantly on the attitude and spirit of such an implementation. While this aspect is very important, in general, it is particularly critical in the current atmosphere of religious violence, the lack of sufficient security, and deliberate attempts to sabotage the revolution by the ex-regime (some even talk of counter-revolution), in what is called “Hybrid Egypt”, with very dangerous fragility.

Taking this factor into consideration suggests a very sensitive approach, which helps religious harmony, security, and foils any attempt to sabotage the revolution. Compassion stands out as the umbrella and the main tool in implementing such a plan. Also, as emphasised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama (13), in his recent book "How to BE Compassionate," his Holiness regards: **"...Compassion as the Root of Relationship, the Road to Relief, is based on Equality, and the Basis of Human Rights"**. In addition, the Charter of Compassion (3), which was drafted in Switzerland 2009 by six traditions, asserted, **"The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious ethical, and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat others as we wish to be treated ourselves"**. Based on this Karen Armstrong (3), in her recent book "Twelve Steps to Compassionate life", called upon all men and women:

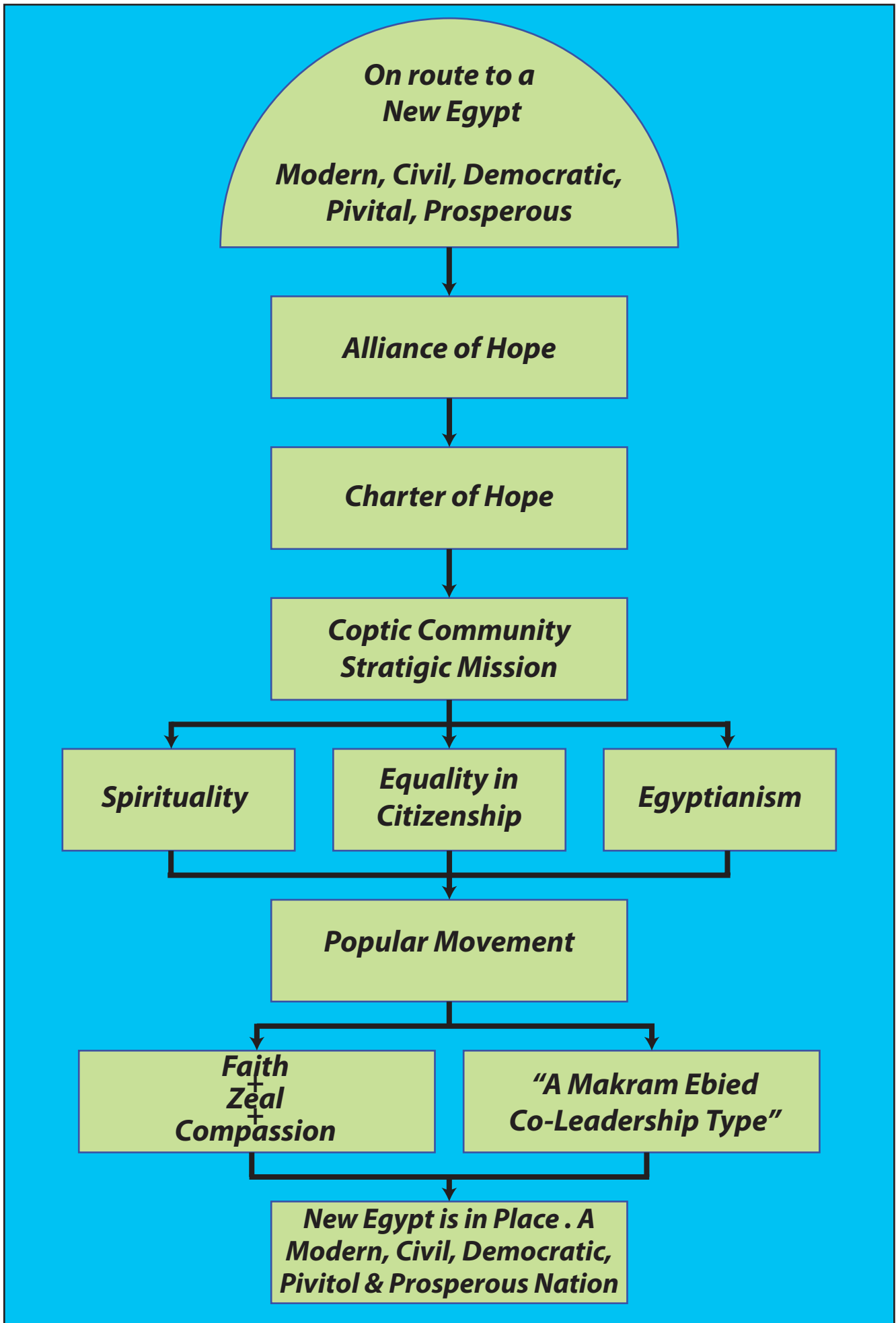
- ***"To restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion.***
- ***To return to the ancient principle that any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate.***
- ***To ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful information about other traditions, religions and cultures.***
- ***To encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity, and***
- ***To cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings-even those regarded as enemies"***.

Attached is a chart that summarises the Strategic Mission of the Coptic Community in the Transition to a New Egypt.

Last, but not least, remember what the Holy Bible said:

"When two or three come together in my name, there am I in the middle of them" (Matthew 18:20)

***The Strategic Mission of the Coptic Community
in the Transition to New Egypt***



VIII: Back to God's Word and His Chosen Mary

The Coptic community have always been true, genuine, sincere, admirable and, above all, patriotic Egyptians. Throughout many centuries, their contribution to Egypt has been immeasurable, and will even be far more in the future New Egypt.

The Coptic community of beloved Egypt have had many legitimate rights, which they were illegitimately denied, and they still are. These rights have to be met, and, God willing, they will be met peacefully.

Also, the Coptic community have responsibilities towards their beloved Egypt. They will fulfil them to the letter, so-to-speak, as they have always done.

Praying for their success in their Mission, we return to God's Word:

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; to him who knocks, the door will be opened”.
(Matthew 7:7-8)

Also as we started with the Virgin Mary, I wish to close with His Chosen Mary. For this prayer, this time I have chosen a sixteen century Arabic manuscript, which contains a Muslim prayer to Mary with a remarkable Christian tone: (25)

***“In the name of God the Compassionate and the Merciful
O God, my Lord, we believe in the truth of your Word
By which You sent our lord Jesus Your spirit
And the truth of the sublime Gospel
Revealed in the Holy Mountain
Written by the hand of our Lady Mary (Maryame)
One of the Scriptures written about the Magnificence
And that You have caused to descend on her and which
You have ordered her to send on to earth
We invoke You for Your powerful name
And for Your majesty and beauty and power
And for Your blessing and grandeur and compassion
Which You have caused Your servants to enjoy
Strengthen through her and him Your favour for those of Your
religion
Who follow the right path
And consolidate through her and him the community of pious
believers
And grant salvation to the great community and allow Your servants
The believers to enter under Your shield, Your compassion
And disperse through her and him the infidelity of the ignorant, of
Unbelievers and of renegades,
Because, You, you are the Merciful who is omnipotent”. Amen.***

Last, but not least, I, as a proud Egyptian first, a practicing Muslim, and a believer in the “People of Book”, place my hand on my heart, pray and dream of:

“A peaceful, harmonious, and prosperous future Egypt with happy Coptic brothers and sisters in their homeland.”

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Ahmed M. El-Mokadem

Born in Egypt in 1941 and moved to the UK in 1963, dual nationality, Egyptian/British for 40 years. Educated in Egypt (BA Econ., Cairo 1961), and UK (PhD Econ, Manchester University, 1968). More than 40 years academic, consultancy & business Career worldwide. Held academic positions at Manchester, Stirling, Lancaster & Surrey Universities retiring from full time academia in 1988, when he became & remains a Visiting Reader. Published / supervised many books, articles & research projects in economics, econometrics, management, politics & system engineering. Contributed to the early economic thinking of Margaret Thatcher. One of the founders of the British - Egyptian Society, and had been its Vice-Chairman from inception until December 2008 and became its patron and founder member since then. A member of many professional and charitable societies; retired in 2004 to focus on writing, lecturing, public service & Social & charitable work. A keen collector of antiquarian books on Egypt.

amelmok@hotmail.com