

The effect of Iran-Egypt Relations on Middle East Developments

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ABSTRACT

The strategic, geopolitical and sensitive position of Iran and Egypt in Middle East has boosted the importance of establishing relations between these two important and influential countries in regional and global equations. It's noteworthy that the damages from the lack of such a relation, especially in the last decades undergone by the government and people of the two countries has been resulted in an appropriate situation that opponents of progress and development of the region were seeking to expand and dominate their authority. In this study we examine the establishment of Iran-Egypt relations and its influence on Middle East developments based on theoretical approach.

KEY WORDS: political relations, Middle East development, Iran and Egypt countries.

INTRODUCTION

Iran and Egypt have had bilateral relations from long ago. Historically this relation could be classified in three eras. The first era is related to the ancient time. The first communication dates back to Achaemenian era. [4] [7] registered inscriptions have clearly shown this relation. The second era is before Islamic revolution in Iran. This era officially began in Qajar period with establishing Iranian Consulate in Egypt. The third era is after Islamic Revolution in Iran.[5] during this period there was no relation between the two countries and relations halted due to Egypt's relation with Israel government. But since 1990 relations improved and again the two countries declared willingness to have bilateral cooperation. [9]

The study of international events on Iran-Egypt relations

In the last decades political events have happened in the world and especially in Middle East region. Those events were not ineffective in Iran-Egypt relations. The most important events are as follow.

1. Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani presidential period (1989-1997)

New economic policy of the incumbent president was based on avoiding state ownership of major industries, setting the prices, extravagant subsidy and ...Of Iranian markets to foreign products and investments. In a way that during three years of increase in GDP, Iran experienced a relative improvements, but major problems such as galloping inflation, cumbersome regulations, currency exchange chaos, consecutive downgrade of Iranian currency, and American sanctions have deprived Iran from attaining some of the most modern technologies. [10].

2. Acceptance of Resolution 598 and the end of Iran-Iraq war

With the acceptance of Resolution 598 by Iran and the afterwards actions for releasing war prisoners of both parties, Iran, to create good will in Islamic countries toward itself, released Egyptian war prisoners who have served Saddam during the eight-year war, in partnership with an Egyptian clergy called Sheikh Mohammad Ghazali. This led to positive intellectual background toward establishing political relations with Iran. [16] [17]

3. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait

Iran's support of Kuwaiti Sovereignty despite of great history of hostility against Iran and significant cooperation and assistance of Iraq during eight years of war, resulted in satisfaction of Arab states, especially the Arab Republic of Egypt and created a positive attitude toward Iran. Iran supported Arab States' position to repel aggression of Iraq against Kuwait by adopting logical and realistic positions. [16] [18]

4. The collapse of Soviet Union

Iran recognized the independence of 15 disintegrated republics after the Soviet collapse and announced its readiness for reconstruction of those countries. Relation with Iran was discussed as the best foundation and background for the investment of Muslim countries, especially Egypt.

This was a major factor in improvement and development of relations between Islamic republic of Iran and Arabs. [12] [6]

5. The improvement of Iran-European Union relations

Iran's foreign policy considered establishing relations with European Union, which was becoming a new axis, a replacement for the power vacuum of Russia. Iran managed to significantly lessen the pressures coming from US Economic Blockade. Iran's tendency to boost relations with European countries also created a ground for the convergence of Iran-Egypt foreign relations more than ever. [8]

Iran and Egypt positions in Middle East Peace

The theory of Dialogue of Civilizations was first proposed in the Islamic Summit Conference in Tehran (1997) and then in The UN General Assembly (1998). Iran asked the international community to call the year 2001 as the Year of Dialogue of Civilizations. Following that United Nations Organization passed a resolution and proclaimed the year 2001 as the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. In 1999 the quadripartite conference comprising Iran, Egypt, Italy and Greece under the title of "the Heritage of Ancient Civilization for the new world" was held in Tehran. Egyptian envoys took part in this conference which was an important step toward improvements in relations of the two countries. [19]

Middle East events on mutual relations of Iran and Egypt

Regional cooperation is the best position to enter international openspace and provide national interest. Inclination to regional contracts and cooperation is a new phenomenon which is the best way of providing security and national security of states. We're examining the main effects of Iran-Egypt relations on Middle East region. In general, implementing comprehensive regional plans in Middle East is not feasible due to the obstacles ahead of the region. But there's a possibility for development of Iran-Egypt relations within the frameworks of functional and bilateral groups in different areas.

RESULTS

1. Creating new security order in Middle East

Middle East lacks security arrangements, in other words it lacks a comprehensive regional security organization. Following September 11 events, the Group 4 comprising Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Iran was proposed. This group believes that Iran has good relations with Syria and Tehran relations with Saudi Arabia and Egypt is developing. These four countries have common political and security interests and could face any regional or cross-regional threat. This way, for the first time, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iran got united and several dialogues about the US invasion of Iraq were held among them. [11]

2. The plan of Elimination of Weapons of Mass Destruction

Iran and Egypt share the same viewpoint in the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in Middle East. Even the first plans in this field were proposed by Iran and Egypt in 1974. The two countries offered a plan to the UN General Assembly called "Non-nuclear Middle East" which was approved. The common plan included some important points such as: ban on production and imports of any kind of mass destruction weapons and any kind of experiment or study which leads to arming countries with these weapons.

3. Iran-Egypt relations developments in Group D-8

The D-8, comprising Iran, Egypt, Turkey, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Pakistan and Malaysia, was founded in 1996. Objectives of the D-8 are economical-social development, strengthening developing countries in the world economy, creating diverse and new opportunities in commercial relations, strengthening the presence in decision making at international level and promoting level of living. [19]

4. Expanding Iran-Egypt relations within framework of Islamic Conference

The Organization of Islamic Conference was founded in 1969. Currently 55 Islamic countries are its members. In 1956 Iran suggested to establish the Organization but rejected. But when Saudi Arabia made such a proposal in 1969, Iran was the first to welcome this proposal. [14] Objectives of the Organization according to its charter.

- a. Promoting solidarity between member countries
- b. To support cooperation among member countries in economical, social, cultural and scientific fields and other basic issues
- c. Effort to eliminate discrimination in all its forms
- d. To support international peace and security based on justice

- e. Harmonious effort to protect sacred places and liberation of Qods.
- f. To back all Islamic Nations' struggle and protecting their national rights
- g. Promoting cooperation and understanding between Islamic countries and other countries

5. The expansion of Iran-Egypt Relations in Group 15

The Group 15 was established at the Ninth Non-Aligned Movement summit in Belgrade, in September 1989. The first meeting of leaders of this group with the participation of 15 developing countries was held in Malaysia, in 1990. The current number of its members is more than 15, but still holds G-15 as its name. Iran was accepted as a member during the tenth meeting of G-15 leaders in Cairo, in 2000. Egypt supported Iran's membership in this group. Thus Iran's position in regional and international decision makings and in World economy has been stronger.

possibility for development of Iran-Egypt relations	
1	Creating new security order in Middle East
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5	The expansion of Iran-Egypt Relations in Group 15

Table1: possibility for development of Iran-Egypt relations

Today, into attention a comparison of what led to the two revolutions, the nature of the two dominant regimes in Iran and Egypt before the revolutions and their resources for the revolutions. The fourth generation of the revolutionary theories is the theoretical framework of the article, i.e., the theory of revolutionary process and also the theory of political opportunity within the framework of the sociology of social movements. Based on these theories, the researchers can investigate what are the similarities and differences in the political structures of Iran and Egypt that have helped provide the appropriate opportunity for the victory of these revolutionary movements? And, how the resulted political opportunities from the Iranian revolution affected that of the Egyptians? The application of these theories through comparing the two revolutions shows that the Iranian revolution provided the adequate political opportunity for the Egyptians in such a way that it resulted in victory over a shorter period of time with a much less cost (20).

Conclusion

According to the surveys accomplished, it can be said clearly that in constructive interaction between countries, the role of culture in the expansion of political relations is not considered ineffective. Strengthening Iran-Egypt relations depends on existing religious and cultural commonalities and factors and grounds to boost those relations. There's an appropriate foundation for establishing peaceful relations between Iran and Egypt in the current situations. It is noteworthy that bilateral relations of the mentioned countries will have great influence on Middle East developments.

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