

# Egypt's President El-Sisi Vows To Build 'New Egypt' of Development

by Nancy Spannaus and Dean Andromidas

Sept. 30—"Our aim is to build a 'New Egypt,'" declared Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in his Sept. 25 UN address. "...A state that respects the rights and freedoms, honors its duties, and ensures the co-existence of its citizens without exclusion or discrimination. A state that respects and enforces the rule of law, guarantees freedom of opinion for all and ensures freedom of belief and worship to its people. A state that is determined to achieve growth, prosperity, and a promising future that meets the aspirations of its people...."

"To attain that, Egypt began implementing an ambitious comprehensive program to spur development until 2030.... The 'New Suez Canal Project,' the gift of Egyptians to the world, is a proof of the seriousness of our intent, and of the resolve of the 'New Egypt' to forge a better tomorrow for its children and youth. This is why I invite you to participate in the economic conference that will be held in Egypt next February, to achieve development and build the future, not only for Egypt, but for the whole region."

El-Sisi concluded with his grand vision: "Egypt, with its Arab identity and African roots, is the cradle of Mediterranean civilization, and the beacon of moderate Islam; an Egypt that aspires to resolve regional disputes, and uphold the principles of justice and humanity in today's world. I am confident that the capacity of Egyptians to give is infinite.... We have inherited this gift from our



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ancestors; it shall remain ever generous, God willing. Long live Egypt.... Long live the peace-loving peoples of the world.... Long live the principles of humanity and the values of tolerance and coexistence.... Peace be upon you and God's mercy and blessings."

## Turning the Country Around

El-Sisi's statement of intent for developing his nation, in cooperation with the nations of the region and such collaborators as Russia, China, and Argentina, cannot be fully appreciated without understanding the struggle required for Egypt to reach its current situation. As the President emphasized in the UN speech and in interviews, the great people of Egypt had to make *two* revolutions over the past few years, in order to put

themselves in a position to make the leap into the future that they are attempting today. He put it this way:

"I stand before you today as one of the sons of Egypt, the cradle of human civilization. From this podium, I first salute the great people of Egypt, which made history twice over the past few years. First, when they revolted against corruption and despotism, and claimed their right to freedom, dignity, and social justice. Then when they held on to their identity, and enthused by patriotism, they rose up against exclusion, refusing to succumb to the tyranny of a faction who, in the name of religion, put its narrow interests before the interests of the people."

This, of course, is a reference to the revolution against the friends of President Barack Obama and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth: the Muslim Brotherhood, which he later describes as “the forces of extremism and darkness, which once in power, undermined the foundations of the democratic process and national institutions, and sought to impose a state of polarization to break the unity of the people”; who “have transformed the values of justice, compassion and mercy treasured by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, into grim sectarianism and destructive civil and regional wars which continue to claim the lives of innocent people of different religions.”

### **A Country in Motion**

Within two months after his election, at the end of May 2014, former General el-Sisi began a process which has mobilized his nation behind this development perspective. He hosted the Chinese Foreign Minister in early August, where the discussion centered on Egypt’s participation in China’s plans for the Maritime Silk Road, as well as other investment projects around the Suez Canal zone. He visited Russia in mid-August, his first foreign trip, and made agreements ranging from agricultural trade to cooperation on nuclear energy.

On Aug. 5, el-Sisi launched a national mobilization for Egypt’s New Suez Canal, calling on Egyptians to finance it themselves, and opening up job opportunities to rebuild the country (See *EIR*, Sept. 12). This effort has been enormously successful, raising the necessary \$8.4 billion within approximately a month. Many citizens pulled money out from under their mattresses and sold their own treasures in order to be a part of the national enterprise.

A major component of el-Sisi’s development plans is to provide a future for Egypt’s youth, as he said in a speech at Cairo University on Sept. 29. He confessed that, up until now, Egypt wasn’t “able to provide real channels of communication with its youth... I want Egypt’s youth to be by my side. I love Egypt’s youth and consider them my children.” He added that Egyptian universities represent a “home for national experience that leads our society to resurgence and advancement.”

The President said he is creating special councils that will have an active role in the Presidency, ministries, and governorates, and that 50% these councils should be comprised of youth, reported *Al-Ahram*. He urged young Egyptians to take part in national projects such as the New Suez Canal. While warning students

against participating in “malicious” activities and urging them to view universities as a place solely for education, he promised to double the number of students granted scholarships abroad.

According to the State Information Service, el-Sisi asserted the necessity of state interest to develop universities, to enable them play their role in science, enhancing citizens’ awareness, and effective participation of university students in all domains of life.

The President emphasized the importance of providing equal opportunities in education and labor, hailing the role of science in achieving political, economic, and social development, in which youth should take part through their contributions to big national projects topped by the Suez Canal Corridor Development Project, agricultural projects, housing projects, and road-building.

### **Shift Toward Science**

In his June 8 inauguration speech, President el-Sisi had vowed that the Dabaa nuclear power plan project would be revived during his term. “We will work on two axes: establishing Suez Canal Development project and building Dabaa nuclear plant; besides a project of solar energy,” he said.

In 1992, Egypt acquired a 22-MW multi-purpose research reactor, the ETRR-2, from Argentina, and in 2006, Cairo announced that it would revive its civilian nuclear power program, and within 10 years build a 1,000-MW nuclear power station at el-Dabaa. It was estimated to cost \$1.5 billion, and it would be constructed with the participation of foreign investors. In March 2008, Egypt signed an agreement with Russia on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

However, the plan went nowhere, and as of 2012, the site was shut down.

Followup discussions have occurred with a number of nations, including Russia and Argentina. According to the nuclear affairs advisor of the Egyptian Nuclear Power Plants Authority, Ibrahim el-Osery, in an interview with the *Cairo Post*, the Power Plants Authority is also ready to offer an international tender. Osery, also a former chief inspector with the International Atomic Energy Agency, said the tender terms would include providing training for the staff, and that foreign financing would constitute 85% of the project cost, which could be as much as \$4 billion. The project may take two years to build.

On Sept. 6, President el-Sisi issued a decree forming



*The Zewail City of Science and Technology has been designated a “National Project of Scientific Renaissance.” It includes a university and seven research centers, including a nanotechnology facility.*

an advisory council of scientists and experts to consult on large development projects. The council will give advice on national development projects and improving education to upgrade the labor force and scientific and technology research and development.

Nobel Laureate Ahmed Zewail, who chairs the new Scientific Presidential Advisory Council, at his inaugural press conference on Sept. 9, declared that the Egyptian Army will participate in expanding Zewail City for Science and Technology (it’s named after him). The city will cover 200 acres, with the participation of the Armed Forces in its building, Zewail said.

Zewail City is a non-profit scientific enterprise and was proposed in 1999, but a Cabinet decree on May 11, 2011, labeled the project a “National Project of Scientific Renaissance.” A presidential decree allows students to enroll in the city’s university. “There are seven research centers in the city with international standards, and a center of basic science research has been established to serve Egyptian and Arab citizens,” Zewail said. In addition, the Talaat Harb Institute for Economic and Global Affairs will be established there to study the Egyptian economy and execute projects.

The city will form a City Youth Council from students at the university and youth supporters. A nanotechnology facility is scheduled to be inaugurated within a month. “This center will be a breakthrough in the industries of nanotechnology,” Zewail said.

Zewail also noted that “The Scientific Presidential Advisory Council is just a nucleus of the future, as new experts in the fields of Egypt are wanted. It is the first time that an Egyptian President has hired scientific experts for decision-making.”

### **Space Technology**

Egypt is also looking to expand its capabilities in space. The key agency involved is the National Authority of Remote Sensing and Space Science. NARSS is the pioneering Egyptian institu-

tion in the field of satellite remote sensing, an outgrowth of a Remote Sensing Center established in 1971 as an American-Egyptian joint project, which was affiliated to the Egyptian Academy of Scientific Research and Technology. In 1994, the Authority was established as an organization under the State Ministry of Scientific Research, to promote the use of state-of-the-art space technology and introduction of high-tech capabilities in regional planning and other applications.

Remote sensing has been particularly important for Egypt in identifying water resources under the desert, which covers most of the country. Dr. Farouk el-Baz, an Egyptian-American space geologist who teaches at Boston University and was involved with the Apollo project, has done considerable work identifying potential water sources for Egypt, as well as other nations. He is now a member of el-Sisi’s Scientific Advisory Council.

Egypt launched its first remote-sensing satellite in 2007, but it failed in 2010. The second satellite was launched April 14 of this year with the aid of the Russians, from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakstan, with the specific aim of carrying out studies to aid in the Suez Canal project, the development of southeastern Egypt, and monitoring the effects of the construction of the Renaissance Dam in Ethiopia.

With the aid of the Chinese, who are working with students at Cairo University, the government intends to launch another satellite in early 2016.