

Ethiopia and Egypt - On a New Page

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GERD is an epoch making Project. Everything in Ethiopia, in Africa if you like, seems to assume different characteristics before and after the commencement of this colossal project. Consider in terms of the local politics; the project happens to be a showcase for an atypical consensus politics we ever saw in Ethiopian history. Thus, the GERD has served as a salient flagship project that helps Ethiopia to sow strong national consensus. Everyone tends to view any digression from the popular opinion as an act of infidelity on the national interest of Ethiopia. On the hand, internationally it has completely changed the stereotypic image of Ethiopia and has elevated its diplomatic stature.

GERD has heralded to the world that Ethiopians are capable of reclaiming their past grandeur. However, the news about the construction of this dam was shocking for the two lower riparian countries -Egypt and Sudan. Right from the outset Ethiopia had made it clear that the dam will have no significant harm on the lower-riparian countries and has repeatedly expressed its commitment for equitable utilization of Nile water resource.

On March 23, 2015, Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt have signed “declaration of principles” that would help the three countries to foster good relationship. In my view, El-Sisi has shown a real wisdom of a great statesmanship, when he decided to sign up the “Declaration of Principles.”

When we recall that Egypt had never been open for any negotiations over the use of the Nile River, we will definitely appreciate the bold move taken by El-Sisi’s government. Now Egypt seems to accept the principles of fair and equitable use over the Nile River. It also gave the impression that Egypt decided to recognize the needs and concerns of the upper riparian countries of the Nile basin. One may not be able to appreciate the remarkable metamorphosis that Egypt has undergone, without briefly looking the traditional position that Egypt had been advancing on matters related with the Nile water.

On the other hand, Ethiopia is not appeasing or making concession to Egypt or Sudan, as some individual commented. As far as Ethiopia is concerned, the signing of the “declaration of principles” is simply a political position born out of a strong commitment on the equitable utilization of a shared natural resource. Article 86 (5) of the FDRE stipulates that the government of Ethiopia “should forge and promote ever growing economic union and fraternal relations of peoples with Ethiopia’s neighbors and other African countries.” This national policy principle, as enshrined in the constitution, display exemplary sprit of *pan-africanism*.

Ethiopia’s commitment for this principle was evidenced by the seasoned diplomatic reaction it had shown when Egypt engaged herself with a flag-waving activities that could obstruct the diplomatic channel. Ethiopia rather sets a negotiation table and commits herself for a win-win solution. Had it not been for the admirable diplomatic and political composure of the Ethiopian government, the diplomatic channels between the two countries could have been thwarted.

On the contrary, Egypt’s argument was based on *a priori* argument that has no real justifications, but driven by fear. In fact, some commentators tend to see the overreaction of many Egyptian politicians who opt to manipulate the case and rush to set staged scene where obvious emotional patriotism was displayed as pardonable and understandable. Nonetheless, when El-Sisi came to power he chose to focus on things as they really are. If it had keep on thinking as how she used to think in the past, it would only grab the wrong end of the stick, and it will go for the shadow rather than the reality.

Until recently all the Nile basin countries but Egypt, show a categorical stance of contempt for the unjust colonial arrangement. They get away with the *a priori* position and argument of the Nile water utilization. They entirely divorced themselves from the colonial entrapments and set a new discourse, free from the taints of *a priori* argument. It is worth mentioning here that following the signing of the “Declaration of Principles” by Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt, the Tanzanian government has endorsed the CFA.

Following the occasion of the rerouting of Blue Nile River, being immersed in a state of confusion, Egyptian politicians were at sixes and sevens and had gone deep into the sea of fear. They were easily taken by the old “saber-rattling behavior.” Under that circumstance, a good

bet for Egyptian was to join wholeheartedly the group that vowed to work in cooperative spirit by accommodating every party's rightful interest based on the cooperative framework that would ensure the equitable utilization of the Nile water. This wise choice could not be proven wrong for eternity. By signing the Khartoum "Declaration of Principles" president El-Sisi had paved the way that would comfortably lead Egypt to the CFA club.

On a new page

Egypt has realized that betting up on the age-old machination of closing the doors of international financiers does not work anymore. The wrong gamesmanship that Egyptians leaders have so far been counted on does not avail. Egyptians have effectively employed this old art for centuries in gaining diplomatic and psychological advantage over Ethiopia. The tactics that have efficiently been working in winning games over Nile has now become obsolete and vanished. Therefore, the armor that has been protecting Egypt until a decade ago proved to be a shield that would not serve for perpetuity. The lesson is that Egypt will never benefit by creating hysteria that would greatly increase the probability of conflict.

On the contrary, Ethiopia had invited international panel of expert that would appraise the overall construction of the dam. Ethiopia had this unprecedented good faith gesture. The experts were given special privilege to visit the project site. It is logical to assume that this would create a chance for Egyptian experts to get significant knowledge about the Dam.

However, the Egyptian expert who was member of the international panel, after having publicly declared that the project is fine -give or take some advices- he came out to denounce the whole venture. Therefore, I would say, Egypt's action so far was driven by fear and Abdul-Fetah El-Sisi has cured Egypt from this pathological distrust and fear.

It is obvious that Ethiopia cannot grant Egypt with a kind of arrangement it had enjoyed during the construction of the *Owen Falls Dam* in Uganda. We know that during the construction of *Owen Falls Dam* in 1952, Britain was acting for Uganda and had provided Egypt with wide a mandate that had compromised the 'sovereignty' of Uganda.

By this heavily dishonorable agreement, Egypt and Uganda have agreed that "...during the period of construction the interests of Egypt will be represented at the site by the Egyptian

resident engineer of suitable rank and his staff stationed there by the Royal Egyptian Government to whom all facilities will be given for the accomplishment of their duties.” It furthermore stipulated, “the two governments have agreedthe latter will regulate the discharges to be passed through the dam on the instructions of the Egyptian Government....” Egypt cannot demand such an arrangement from any of the Nile basin countries.

Save that, it is legitimate for Egypt to raise concern about the reduction of the volume of water flowing to Egypt during the filling of the reservoir of dam. The signing of the “Declaration of Principles” will address the apprehension of Egypt in this regard. The decision of El-Sisi to sign “Declaration of Principles” had push aside the malicious opinions of bankrupted politician and proved the integrity of Ethiopia. These bankrupted politicians were even questioning Ethiopia’s self-initiative in allowing international panel of expert to review the design and construction of the dam. To our dismay, those who were engaged in polemics were Egyptian scholars that were enlisted as member of the international panels of experts and put their signature on the impact assessment report the panel had issued.

These scholars, being a back seat driver of the extremist groups in Egypt, were publishing article to misinform the public and obstruct the evolvement of cooperative spirit that could serve the rational interest of the Egyptian people. El-Sisi swam against such distractive currents of opinion.

Impudent as they were, those scholars who came out with misinformation were acting recklessly. But El-Sisi had courageously breaks the shell and came out to the open pushing aside the opinion of the “spoiled brats” in the academia. It should be recalled that they were advancing a standpoint that directly contradicts the report they themselves have cosigned and issued. Devoid of *amour proper*, they were engaged in attacking the same report they have coauthored.

Until El-Sisi has come to power, Egypt had chosen to blow the trumpet of the “historic and natural” right argument, and has abstained herself from any constructive engagement. Abdul Fetah El-Sisi has properly understood that singing the hymen of “historic and natural right” does not avail Egypt. The claim of the ninetieth century would be very anachronistic for the

modern man living in the twentieth century. It would also be an attribution of the colonial plight of the African people in the open.

We all know that the bilateral treaties concluded between the colonial masters and Egypt was signed when most of the countries in the Nile Basin were under the yoke of colonialism. Now, the question is, should these decolonized sovereign states be bound by these bilateral treaties as successor states of their colonial predecessors? Should they recognize treaties purportedly concluded on their behalf by their colonial predecessors? The answer is no. Understandably, these treaties can no longer reflect the strategic interests of the “new” independent states of the basin, including Egypt. Now, access to the Nile waters become a prerequisite for development and a sovereign right of sovereign Nile basin states. The independence of the new states was a fundamental change in circumstances that could make the continued validity of colonial-era treaties untenable.

To settle this contentious issue we must resort to practices and principles of international law that may apply to trans-boundary Rivers like the Nile. The recently signed “declaration of principles” on GERD is a document that reflects the fundamental principles of international fluvial law(law related with river).

In the past, many of the upper-riparian states used to challenge the position of Egypt claiming what the legal scholars referred to as “*Harmon doctrine*, which holds “that a state has the right to do whatever it chooses with the waters that flow through its boundaries, regardless of its effect on any other riparian state.” They used to invoke this principle when they try to contend the unyielding and stubborn position of Egypt. Indeed, some of the Nile basin countries, like Ethiopia, have declared that any such bilateral treaties do not bind them.

The contradiction observed in the arguments advanced by Egypt and all other Nile riparian countries was far from being an antinomy. Meaning, it is not a contradiction observed between two reasonable beliefs and conclusion. It is rather an argument and contradiction observed between just and unjust positions.

So far, Egypt’s position does unequivocally reflect an unfair, greedy stance, which is driven by fear and dictated by irrational self-interest. Finally, Egypt came to understand that the old song

could not be sung any longer. Therefore, it decided to write-off the old “historic and natural” right argument. Now, Egypt has dropped her old hackneyed argument based on the “historic and natural right” and has signed up to the Declaration of Principles.”

Far from being willing to recognize the concerns and interests of the upper-riparian states Egypt chose to continue singing the old song with a new lyric. On the contrary, even before the announcement of the construction of the GERD Ethiopia and other upper riparian states had disposed themselves for a win-win solution.

They did not simply condemn colonial treaties; rather they have engaged themselves in deliberation or consultation to produce cooperative framework agreement that would create condition for equitable utilization of their shared water resource -the Nile. So far, they manage to go a long way and following the recent signing ceremony in Khartoum, many hope that the lower riparian countries –Sudan and Egypt- will abandon the hackneyed old songs of the colonial era to join the **CFA** club.

When El-Sisi came to power Egypt seems determined not to sticks with her usual argument that had taken her cause nowhere. Now, Egypt is no more arguing that the Nile water treaties of the colonial era are binding in perpetuity - holding a freeze up principles of international fluvial law that has allowed the two lower riparian states have unfair share of the Nile water.

A New Era

Many believe that if the Nile riparian states do not properly address issues related with scarcity of water and national security, the competition over access to Nile waters would gradually escalate tension and took over into an open conflict. I think the signing up of the “Declaration of Principles” by the eastern Nile countries would dispel this anticipation.

We recall that Mohammed Mursi was blowing the trumpet of war, threatening, “Should any upper riparian state attempt to divert the waters of the Nile, war will be inevitable.” However, the upper riparian states are obliged and keen to satisfy the pressing need of their people by using their available water resource including Nile River. This necessitates devising a framework for the equitable distribution of Nile waters.

As some scholars are arguing, the status of the Nile as a shared water resource, and the emergence of new states on its basin, dictate that a legal regime to regulate access to its waters has to be negotiated in the 21st Century. Therefore, EL-Sisi's Egypt has appraised its historical and contemporary situations and has prepared itself for the future. Finally, it shows willingness to appreciate the fundamental interests of the other riparian states in the Nile basin and sign the "Declaration of Principles."

Ethiopia has contested its position on the utilization of the Nile water basing itself on international principles and practices that govern cross-border Rivers. Therefore, the disagreement with Egypt over the construction of the GERD has concluded with signing of the "declaration of principles" simply proving Ethiopia's stance to be correct and legitimate. Before El-Sisi Egypt seems to be cynical and it too often defend its causes badly that it end up defeating it.

To a certain degree, one may consider Egypt's cynical position to be natural, but it will be ruinous if it exceeds the natural limit and takes it to the point of condoning the unjust colonial treaties. That would be a bit much.

Before El-Sisi, Egypt's debate over the utilization of the Nile Water has not show much of a more radical policy approach in addressing the pressing problems of the people living in the basin. Regrettably, we have been witnessing opinions being given priority over fact. International forums organized to discuss on the Nile issues were not considered by Egypt as a platform where it seek a win-win solutions, rather it takeas an opportunity to effectively communicate its selfish position. Thus, as much we wish to see such a negotiation that will deliver a win-win solution, we are unlucky to have that. Those forums usually concluded without even addressing properly the issues brought to table.

Contrary to its current position, Egypt so far it had been defending its selfish interest by simplyreferring to the colonial period agreements of the 1929 and 1959 treaties, which entirely disregard the fair claims of all the riparian countries ofthe Nile basin.Reflection onthis historical perspective will help us to judicious appraisethe decision of Egypt to sign up the "Declaration of Principles."

In fact, the signing up of the “Declaration of Principles” is a watershed event that would change the longstanding beggaring attitude of the Nile basin countries and will give way to peaceful negotiations. Currently, the hope in the region is conflict resolution, and economic cooperation. Surely, the signing of the declaration of principles will not only help the three countries in cementing the ties, but it will also bolster regional integration. Definitely, it will bolster the trilateral relationship of eastern Nile basin countries and would build thrust amongst them. Moreover, it shows their keenness in promoting their ties and restructuring their relationship to coordinate and cooperate in the fight against terrorism.

The signing of the declaration of principles in fact is a clear symbol for the new era of hope that transform the eastern Nile region in particular and the African continent in general. It will serve as a locomotive for the regional integration Africa is envisaging.

His Visit

The other convincing evidence for the changed attitude on the part of Egypt is, president El-Sisi's visit to Ethiopia. El-Sisi is looking forward for a better tomorrow and vowed to work hard to keep the current momentum with a view to cement the historic ties of the two people.

The signing up of the “declaration of principles” on GERD was accompanied by the official visit of the Egyptian president Abdul-fetah El-Sisi to Ethiopia. As it is the first official visit in 30 years, it will display the fervent interest on the part of the two countries to mend their bad relationship that has been lingering for so many years. According to El-Sisi the signing up of the “Declaration of Principles” among the eastern Nile basin has opened up a new chapter in their relationship.

In an interview with **‘Meet EBC’**, president El-Sisi said, “I have brought an important message from the Egyptian people and they fully support the development effort of Ethiopia.” He further told to **‘Meet EBC’** that “for Egyptian farmer the issue of Nile is matter of life and death, and not a choice of livelihood.” Acknowledging fully Ethiopia’s right to utilize the Nile water, El-Sisi also told to **‘Meet EBC’** that the message he brought from Egyptian farmers to Ethiopian people is cooperation.

Surely, he will take the same message from Ethiopia to Egypt. He has also declared that the two people deserve a better relationship, emphasizing the need to work together to promote their mutual benefit. He said the world is witnessing the renaissance of Ethiopia declaring that Egypt will stand firmly for the cause of pan-Africanism and the development of Ethiopia. "The fervent and important discussion" he had with PM Hailemariam Desalegn and the vibrant air that has engulfed the Ethiopian parliament when El-Sisi was delivering his speech is a sure sign for the changed attitude in the two countries.

Asked about an article enshrined in the latest Egyptian constitution, which relates to the colonial period treaties, president El-Sisi responded saying "the people and leaders of the two countries are determined to not to harm each other." He also added that the two countries are keen to build trust, expressing his hope that they would successfully establish strong ties.

According to him, the signing of the "declaration of principles" on the GRED will serve as a foundation for multifaceted cooperation. It also represents the decision of the two people to swim together rather than sink together. Hence, we hope it will definitely help in creating a good environment to ensure the fair and equitable utilization of the Nile water.

Finally, as an effort to build trust amongst the people of Ethiopia and Egypt, I want to wrap-up the piece by taking a quick glance to the history, geographic features, social and political condition of Egypt.

The Gift of Nile

Egypt originates from an ancient civilization. Modern archaeological studies continually provide insights into Egypt's Old Kingdom as the findings eventually translate into museum exhibits and popular media presentations.

The Arab Republic Egypt is honestly a gift of Nile. It has 1,001,450 (sq km) area, with a population size of 77,505,756. The major language spoken is Arabic, with some French and English, reflecting the heritage of previous European colonialists. Majority of the Egyptians are the followers of Islamic religion (mostly Sunni), while it has a minority Coptic Christian. With 94% of its people Muslim adherents, it is understandable that Shariah or Islamic law influences

on its civil law. 57.7% of its population is literate with a life expectancy of 71 years and GDP per capita of \$4400.

Egyptian civilization has built the first great nation-state, flourishing for five and a half centuries before its collapse. It is a culture that produced hieroglyphics—one of the world's first written languages. It has also undertaken humanity's first macro projects—construction of monumental pyramids dating from 2630 to 2250 B.C.

These tombs of pre-dynastic kings or later Pharaohs are magnificent structures that reveal a culture whose leaders and builders were dedicated with preparing for the afterlife. The mineral-rich eastern desert of Upper Egypt, the hub was Thebes with its awesome funerary temples and rock-cut tombs. The building of pyramids and tombs became a central force for the organization and mobilization of townspeople, a means for creating a national state, and a magnet for early Middle Eastern trade. Then, as now, the Nile River with its network of hand-dug canals, ties the country together geographically. By 2,200 B.C climatic crises arose when Nile flooding became undependable and drought seized the land.

In fact, most of Egypt is high dry plains, rugged hills, and mountains, stretching along the Red Sea Coast to the valley of the Nile. Historians claim that the population of the Old Kingdom was less than 2 million, while today Egypt has more than 77 million inhabitants. Egypt, the most populous of Arab states, has one of the highest population densities in the world. Cairo, for instance, has approximately 11 million people. However, Cairo is a city originally designed for 3 million.

Its citizens are mostly a Hamitic people practicing the Sunni form of the Muslim religion. Northern Egypt has a mixture of peoples from the Mediterranean and other Arab countries, whereas the south consists mainly of black African Nubians. In addition to thousands of the latter, this region also includes two other minorities—a few millions Coptic Christians and more than 50,000 nomadic Bedouins. In addition, immigrants from all over the Middle East live and work in Egypt.

Although upward of 44 million Egyptians are literate (68% male and 47% female), 32 million are illiterate. Despite the government provision of free education through university, only some 6

million benefit from this learning opportunity at some level. Egypt's educated people are sought by other Arab nations as professors and teachers, scientists and technicians, managers and engineers, and specialists and artisans.

Geographic Features and Cities

Egypt has 10 major cities, which besides the capital Cairo, are Alexandria, Giza, Shoubra, El-Kheima, El-Mahalla, El-Koubra, Tanta, Port Said, and El-Mansoura. There are new projects to develop new urban areas, such as Sadat City on the road between Cairo and Alexandria, and Nasser City in the desert near the International Airport. To better disperse the population now concentrated in 5% of its territory, Egypt has undertaken a massive opening and reclamation of new lands along its Mediterranean coast and in the Sinai.

With the assistance of UN and U.S. aid, a master plan to reconstruct the Suez Canal area within the inner/outer regions is under way. The capital, Cairo, is Africa's and the Middle East's most populous city, blending the cultures of both ancient and modern, East and West, Islam and Christianity. Its origins can be traced to nearby El-Fustai, founded by Arabs in 641 A.D.

Although Egypt is a Middle Eastern nation, it is located on the African continent at a crossroads for the Mediterranean Basin, Africa, and Asia. Less than 5% of the country is cultivated; with the climate, permitting several crops a year, but the potential exists for increased agricultural production. Beside its great north-south Nile River, the following are other notable geographic features:

The Suez Canal linking the Mediterranean Sea on the north with the Gulf of Suez and Red Sea on the southeast divides the Eastern or Arabian Desert from the Western or Libyan Desert (the Great Sand Sea). The northeastern Sinai Peninsula is a desert area that abuts Israel and the Gulf of Aqaba. We have the Aswan High Dam in the southeast, with its Lake Nasser extending down into the Nubian Desert and the southern border with Sudan.

Political and Social Conditions

The foundations of governance were laid by 20 dynasties when pharaohs and kings reigned from 3000 to 715 B.C, extending their rule as far as Lower Nubia, Palestine, and Syria. Invasions

in that period brought in temporary rulers and settlers from Asian Hyksos, Libya, Persia, and Nubia.

Since 333 B.C, Egypt's heritage has reflected the presence of a series of conquerors—from Alexander the Great and the Roman Empire to Arabs and the Turkish Ottoman Empire, to the establishment of a British presence (1882–1952) during which a monarchy was formed in 1922 under King Fouad I.

Because of dire economic and social conditions, military officers staged a coup d'état on July 23, 1952 under the leadership of Lieutenant. Colonel Gamel Abdel Nasser—that date is now celebrated in Egypt as National Day. On June 18, 1953, this junta declared Egypt a republic.

This became a turning point for modern Egyptians, who then felt more independent, spearheading a resurgence of Arab nationalism throughout the Middle East. In 1971, a new constitution was adopted for the Arab Republic of Egypt that guarantees the individual rights of its citizens. Subsequently, four more presidents have led the country—former General Anwar Sadat who was assassinated, General Hosni Mubarak, Mohammed Mursi, and, currently, president El-Sisi recently elected to that post.

During the closing four decades of the twentieth century, Egypt struggled internally to restructure its socioeconomic system, including reapportioning wealth and some land reform. Moving away from earlier experiments with socialism, contemporary Egypt is trying to espouse democracy and a market economy, providing incentives for both domestic and foreign investment. It has experienced the Arab spring revolution that has left Egypt broken, and following the aftermath of the Arab Spring, it is now struggling to be on foot and recoup its shape. In Egypt, still there is political conflict among various political forces. Muslim extremists in Egypt oppose the established governments, as in Algeria and Saudi Arabia. Local extremist groups in Egypt got outside assistance. The new Egyptian constitution provides for a strong president, vice president, prime minister and cabinet.

Egypt's Economy is plagued by uncontrolled population growth, poverty, and insufficient food. Economic degradation among the masses is believed to be fueling Islamic militants who seek to

establish a Muslim government, often leading to terrorist acts against both the leadership and foreigners.

Egypt used its limited resources on military expansion and regional conflicts. Many external factors explain why, since the late President Sadat signed and put into effect a peace treaty with Israel (March 25, 1979), Egypt for many years was both the target of Arab economic reprisals and the recipient of significant foreign aid from the United States.

Unlike its relation with the Nile basin countries, reconciliation and synergy has been increasingly its goals with its immediate neighbors. For instance, Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organization have also signed agreements with Israel, and Syria/Lebanon considers the prospects. To curb attacks of Islamic militants in the area, President Mubarak hosted a summit in Cairo at the beginning of Ramadan in 1995. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel, PLO leader Yasser Arafat, and the King Hussein of Jordan joined him in the elusive pursuit of peace and prosperity for the Middle East. Egyptians are intensely nationalistic and Arab sensitive.

In a collective communiqué, “the four parties condemned all outbreaks of bloodshed, terror, and violence in the region and reaffirmed their intentions to stand staunchly against and put an end to all such acts.” Ironically, a Jewish fundamentalist assassinated Rabin in 1995. Nevertheless, Egypt continues to cooperate as a peace broker in a region where nations have more to gain by peaceful cooperation than from continuing conflict. In recent times, the governance and political system have undergone some shaky course and currently it is beginning to assume a good shape. Though especially with reference to international business, Egypt is a secular state and somewhat Westernized, traditional Arab patterns are also present.

The Economy and Business

The change and diversification underway in Egypt are evident in its exports—a shift from the traditional cultivation of cotton and rice to the rising production of petroleum, cotton textiles, and metal products, as well as increasing tourism, construction, and mining. Europe, followed by the United States, is a growing importer of Egypt’s exports.

With the gradual stability and dismantling of bureaucratic regulations, foreign investment increases, as do reclamation projects. Egypt has made various amendments on its law to liberalize foreign investment, providing incentives, particularly with reference to new technologies, and exemptions (from nationalization, custom duties, some regulations and taxes, etc.), plus guarantees for repatriation of capital.

For potential traders and investors, the most significant developments have been in the banking system that now allows joint ventures with foreign banks and improvements in transportation, hotels, and resorts.

Since 1974 there has been significant changes in the business environment, encouraging the private sector in an economy still dominated by the public sector. The 10 million plus people that comprises the available workforce are well trained. Egyptian skilled labor and entrepreneurial talent is sought by other nations in the area. Basic Labor Law protects workers' rights and sets work policy. However, foreign firms may be exempt from some of these regulations.

Social Life

This is oriented toward extended families and public gatherings, with a close sense of distance. Prepare for a slower way of life, including decision making, and a lack of punctuality in keeping appointments. People follow the Islamic calendar with a 28-day lunar month or 354 days a year. Five national holiday dates are fixed, whereas Ramadan and Islamic New Year are approximate depending on lunar observations. As in all Muslim societies, the hajj is an important annual event.

The workweek is from Saturday through Wednesday, with no business conducted on Thursday and Friday (Muslim Holy Day). Business hours vary, but typically in summer are 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.; in winter, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 5 to 7 p.m. Paperwork includes two dates—Gregorian or Western and Hijrah or Arabic (Coptic Christians have a different calendar).