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**TREND OF ITALIAN STUDIES IN THE ARAB WORLD**

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I tried to follow Italian studies in the Arab quarterlies and to explore what was their concentration about over twenty five years. It was a surprise to find very few studies. Among the Arab quarterlies I found one quarterly which published studies about the Italian affairs in the Arab world, The Egyptian quarterly Al Siyassa Al Dawliyya (AA), published by the Political and Strategic Studies Center Al Ahram in Cairo, Egypt. The first issue appeared in 1965. It is the most famous periodical in the Middle East according to the level of its writers, who belong to the elites of intellectuals of the Arab World. They are mainly from Cairo University. Over thirty years there were twenty four studies about Italian issues. The writers concentrated on internal Italian affairs such as elections and political crises. We can follow the studies about Italy as follows. Before 1970 there were no studies about Italy. During the period 1970-1975 five studies appeared and concentrated on Italian affairs. Two studies concentrated on the war between Italy and Ethiopia during the years 1935-1936. One of the studies revealed that Egyptian public opinion was against Italy. The studies concentrated a lot on the relationship between the two churches in Egypt and Ethiopia. Moreover the Egyptians were worried because the Italian forces’ occupation may have affected the attributes of the Nile River. 90% of the Nile attributes come from the basin in Ethiopia.

**The Egyptian support**

The studies revealed that Egypt was ready to fight against the Italians in Ethiopia. Public opinion was against Italian occupation for several reasons-the water and the historical roots of relations between Ethiopia and Islam when the prophet Mohammad sent seventy Moslems to Naghashi, the ruler of Ethiopia, at the dawn of Islam. He welcomed and protected them. The concentration on this subject in the press increased the hatred against Italians. The press itself participated in escalating the hatred against Italy. Publishing certain events was a great factor in increasing the hatred, for example, when an Italian jet fighter fired on the Egyptian hospital in Ethiopia there were riots in the streets and some of the Italians in Egypt were exposed to the reaction of the demonstrators. The Egyptian government watched and controlled the activities of the Italian minorities in Egypt. Something attracted my attention in this study—that the Egyptian citizens whose mothers are from Ethiopia became popular personalities. The people sympathized with them. The second study concentrated on the crisis in the Italian government. It concentrated on the structure of the government in Italy. The third study concentrated on the
presidential elections. The fourth study was about Italian foreign policy in the Middle East. It concentrated on Italian interest in the Arab World which was taken into consideration by the Italian foreign minister, Amintore Fanfani. In May 1967 when the crisis started the press published in detail the discussion in Italian government and Parliament about the situation in the Middle East.

Italy and peace in the Middle East

On July 6th 1967 Italy supported the peace plan which was suggested by the Latin American States because it connected the withdrawal from the territories occupied by Israel in the 1967 war and the termination of the war in the Middle East. Italy was the sole state in the Mediterranean that supported the USA and sided with it in the UN. The Communist Party criticized the government for not being able to have a clear position. An excuse may be found for Italy’s concentrating on a resolution inside the UN because this resolution would assist Italy to keep its interest in the Middle East. Any resolution outside the UN may have caused the Italian interest in the Middle East to be ignored. In short, the Italian position between June 1967 and December 1968 sided with the USA and Israel on both levels-- the government and the people.

New developments

By 1968 three developments took place. First, the four superpower in UN started to hold negotiations outside the UN--the thing that Italy wanted to avoid. Second, the Italian companies especially the ENE started to recognize the loss that resulted from the suspension of the Suez Canal. Third, the escalation of the war of attrition between the Arabs and the Israelis.

A new trend in Italian foreign policy appeared. This trend reflected an independent Italian position away from the USA position. On July 9th 1969 for the first time the Italian foreign minister, who belonged to the socialist party and who was noted for sympathizing with Israel, changed his attitude and demanded a balanced situation in the Middle East. The Italian government criticized the four superpowers--USA, UK, France, and USSR--who started to discuss Middle East issues outside the UN. The Italian government suggested forming a committee from the four superpowers and six states--three from the eastern bloc and three from the western bloc. Italy was looking for a role, taking into consideration that she is the most important and the closest to the Arab world of the Mediterranean European states. The Arab capitals received Italian delegations offering suggestions and showing eagerness to reach a settlement reflecting neutrality in the Middle East dispute. In May 1970, the Italian foreign minister headed a delegation to Egypt. There he assured the Italian interest to have a peaceful and just settlement. A few days later he expressed his worries about the security in the Mediterranean Sea and
the threat which resulted from the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories. In the first six months of 1971, the deputy of the Italian foreign minister visited Beirut, Damascus, and Baghdad where he concentrated on the idea that peace in the Middle East is a priority to all the Mediterranean states and not the four superpowers only. The Italian leaders clarified that the Italian role is not the role of mediator but to help clarify the different points of view of the two sides in the conflict in the Middle East. The Italian position changed between June 1967 and the early seventies. The Italian position in 1967 concentrated on the humanitarian side of the conflict but in the early seventies several Italian parties started to talk about the refugee’s rights.

Suez Canal opening

The opening of the Suez Canal was a priority for the Italians. Italy felt that the Mediterranean became a lake like it was in the 19th century, and Italy felt the Americans were not interested in opening the canal. In June 1969 the Italian Prime Minister Mariano Roomer sought Turkish support to open the canal. When the peace initiative of the American Secretary of the State Mr. Rogers appeared in 1970 Italy supported it. In April 1973 the Italian prime minister discussed with American President Nixon and the Secretary General of the UN the opening of the Suez Canal. Italy offered economic assistance to the Arab States, especially Egypt. Italy offered Egypt assistance to widen the canal. In short Italy started to have an independent point of view toward the conflict in the Middle East away from the American point of view. Facing the pressure of the political parties inside Italy to continue in an independent policy from the Americans, Italy mobilized its efforts inside the EEC.

The trend of the other studies

The trend of the other studies in the periodical mentioned above concentrated mainly on the internal affairs in Italy as following:
1-Between 1976 and 1979 six studies concentrated on the elections, stability and internal issues.
2-Between 1981 and 1985 five studies appeared and concentrated on political developments, violence and the future of Euro communism in Italy.
3-Between 1987 and 1992 two studies concentrated on the Italian elections.
4- Between 1993 and 1999 six studies concentrated on political crises in Italy.

In summary there were few concentrations on Italian studies in the Arabic periodicals. The studies that were mentioned above did not reflect the level of relationship between Italy and the Arabs. One of the studies was about the colonial era of Italy, which reflected negative memories in Egypt, not the Arab world, and the rest were about the peace process in the Middle East. Most of
the studies concentrated on Italian political affairs like the internal crisis and the elections. The scope of these studies is very limited in the political and academic fields. In quantity the number is small. The average is a study every thirteen months. Half of the studies were in the seventies. This may reflect the interest in the Italian affairs in that period. Later the USA’s influence after Camp David became greater in Egypt. Egypt’s priorities changed

Notes

1 A.Awdeh, (The Egyptian public opinion and the Ethiopian Italian war) in AA NO. 19 Jan 1970 pp 40-58.
-N.Ahmad, (Political troubles and elections in Italy.) NO.28 April 1972 pp 138-148.
-B. Asfahani (Italian attitude towards the Middle East) in AA NO. 33 July 1973 pp 156-163.
-N.Afandi (The settlement of Italian political dilemma) in AA NO. 42 Oct 1975 pp 106-116
-H. Saudi (Italy and political future) in AA NO. 52 April 1978 pp 160-166.
-T. Macci (Italy between order and disorder) in AA NO. 56 April 1979 pp 172-175.
3 N.I. Mahmoud (Violence and political crisis in Italy) in AA NO 63 Jan 1981 pp 187-190.
There is another study about the development of the terrorism and kidnapping by H.A. Bakir in AA No.68 April 1982 pp 165-169
4 A.Salman (Italy and elections) in AA NO. 90 Oct 1987 pp 227-231.
5 N. Afandi (Italian political crisis! To where) in AA NO. 113 July 1993 pp 182-193.
-N.Afandi (Italy between stability and crisis) in AA NO. 131 April 1998 pp
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280-283.
-S. Hussein (Italy from reverse to reverse) in AA NO. 125 July 1996 pp 163-167.
-R. M. Kamil (Italy and the new crisis for the leftist Govt) in AA NO. 135 Jan 1999 pp 238-233.

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