

From Pan-Arabism to Pharaonism: Egypt's Gradual Change of National Identity during the Sisi Era

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ABSTRACT

Many scholars argue that globalization will replace local cultures with global cultures. This writing rejects the argument. On the contrary, the world is seeing the revival of indigenous cultures and efforts to redefine national identities in several countries, including Egypt. In the Arab world, this phenomenon was caused by the Arab Spring. Egypt has been Arabized for centuries, and the Egyptians tend to define themselves as Arabs. Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, who has been the president of Egypt after deposing Mohamed Morsi, is reviving Egypt's Pharaonic identity. This study uses a qualitative approach by collecting President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi or Egypt-related online news to be analyzed and used to prove the gradual change of Egyptian national identity. Domestic and foreign policies define the identity of a state. Sisi's decisions to ban the Pan-Islamist Muslim Brotherhood and improve relations with Israel indicate his effort to distinguish Egypt from Islamic and Arab identities. Egypt's transition from Arab identity to Pharaonic identity can be seen in its new capital's architectural designs and Egyptian government-initiated cultural events. All of these transitions are strengthened by the government's decision to introduce hieroglyphs into the Egyptian school curriculum.

Keywords: *Egypt, Pharaonism, identity, culture, globalization*

Banyak penstudi berpendapat bahwa globalisasi akan menggantikan budaya lokal dengan budaya global. Tulisan ini menolak pendapat tersebut. Sebaliknya, dunia sedang menyaksikan kebangkitan budaya-budaya pribumi dan upaya-upaya pendefinisian ulang identitas nasional di beberapa negara, termasuk Mesir. Dalam dunia Arab, fenomena ini disebabkan oleh Arab Spring. Mesir telah mengalami Arabisasi selama berabad-abad dan masyarakat Mesir cenderung mendefinisikan diri sebagai orang-orang Arab. Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, yang menjadi presiden Mesir setelah menggulingkan Mohamed Morsi, sedang membangkitkan identitas Faraonis Mesir. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan mengumpulkan berita-berita daring yang berkaitan dengan Mesir atau Presiden Abdel Fattah El-Sisi untuk dianalisis dan digunakan untuk membuktikan perubahan bertahap identitas nasional Mesir. Kebijakan dalam negeri dan luar negeri menunjukkan identitas dari sebuah negara. Keputusan Sisi untuk melarang Ikhwanul Muslimin yang Pan-Islamis serta memperbaiki hubungan dengan Israel mengindikasikan upayanya untuk memisahkan Mesir dari identitas Islam dan Arab. Transisi Mesir dari identitas Arab ke identitas Faraonis dapat dilihat pada desain arsitektur ibukota baru Mesir serta acara-acara kebudayaan yang diinisiasi oleh pemerintah Mesir. Semua ini diperkuat oleh keputusan pemerintah untuk memperkenalkan hieroglif dalam kurikulum pendidikan Mesir.

Kata-kata Kunci: *Mesir, Faraonisme, identitas, budaya, globalisasi*

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During the 2010s, the Egyptians and the world saw regime change in Egypt twice, the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak in 2011 and the overthrow of Mohamed Morsi in 2013. In 2014, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi became the president of Egypt after deposing Muslim Brotherhood-supported Mohamed Morsi through a military coup in the previous year. The new regime has also banned Muslim Brotherhood and sentenced its members to death. In 2016, the Egyptian government announced an ambitious national agenda called Egypt Vision 2030 which consists of eight main goals that must be met in 2030. To realize the vision, Sisi created several national projects, such as the New Suez Canal and the New Administrative Capital. In April 2021, Egypt held the spectacular Pharaohs' Golden Parade. The cultural event successfully caught the attention of people around the world.

Mohammed Soliman (2021) from the Middle East Institute wrote that in addition to cultural and touristic purposes, this event also represented a new ideological discourse and aimed to build a civilization state with distinct cultural, historical, and political narratives. In line with Soliman, Vijayta Mahendru (2021) from *The Hindu* wrote: "In its quest for a national identity now, Egypt has turned to its ancient past." According to Soliman and Mahendru, Egypt, under Sisi's administration, will revive its ancient culture and leave its Arab identity. Interestingly, in 2015 or six years before the event, Elie Podeh, a professor at Hebrew University, and Elad Giladi, a doctoral student in the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, published an article on *Haaretz* entitled; *With Sisi, Egypt Sees a Return of the Pharaohs*. The article was about the inauguration of the new Suez Canal by Sisi. However, what made it interesting was the part that talks about how numerous media reports discussed the political and economic aspects of this event but missed the element that was simultaneously most interesting and most surprising, which shows that Islamic and Arab identities are both out, while Pharaonic culture is returning in a big way.

We cannot conclude that Sisi is going to change Egyptian identity merely owing to a spectacular cultural event. However, the writer argues that there is a gradual transition of identity in Egypt during the presidency of Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. This writing aims to analyze how globalization drives de-Arabization in Egypt

and what are the indications that Egypt is replacing its Arab identity with the Pharaonic identity. The term 'Pharaonic' in this writing refers to objects related to Ancient Egyptian civilization. Through archaeological and information technology development, globalization raises awareness of cultural identities and ancient civilizations in many parts of the world. This changing national identity phenomenon is indicated by; (1) the ban of the Muslim Brotherhood, which embraces Pan-Islamism and supports the Arabization of Egypt; (2) the improvement of relations with Israel; (3) the celebrations of Pharaonic heritage; (4) the construction of the Grand Egyptian Museum and; (5) the plan to introduce hieroglyphs into the Egyptian school curriculum.

Culture is a broad and abstract concept, but it plays a major role in the making of national identity. Ying-yi Hong (2009) defined culture as 'networks of knowledge' that are shared among a group of interconnected individuals, embodied into symbols, artifacts, social constructions, and social institutions, used as a common ground among the members, inherited from the old members to the new, and continually transforming to adapt with the changing situation. Culture differentiates a group of people from other groups. Those groups evolved into what we know today as nations. Nation and state are not the same thing. In history, the term 'nation' has not changed significantly, from a Norman bishop in 1140 who described to the pope the word *natio* from Welsh as a group distinct in language, laws, habits, modes of judgment, and customs - to the first dictionary published by Académie Française in 1694 that described it as the inhabitants of a common country who live under the same laws and use the same language (Bell 2003). On the other hand, Colin Flint (2017) defined the 'state' as the primary political unit of the international system that possesses sovereignty over a territory and the people within.

Globalization is a worldwide phenomenon that is still ongoing to this day. Globalization is defined differently by many scholars. Anthony Giddens (1990) defined globalization as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. Historically, globalization has existed since the third millennium BC with the emergence of a trade route

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between the Sumer and Indus civilizations (Frank 1998). It began to accelerate in the 18th century due to the rapid development of transportation and communication technology. Rapid globalization enables people worldwide to migrate to and obtain information from other parts of the world more easily. It creates a new uniting culture that is called 'popular culture'. Sebastian Labes (2014) argued that globalization tends to erase differences and create similar life patterns: eating the same food, wearing the same clothes, and watching the same movies. Furthermore, Kenichi Ohmae (1995) suggested that globalization would make the nation-states no longer relevant and, thus, will be replaced by the region states.

The idea that globalization will remove nation-states and local cultures is unproven. In reality, there is also cultural resistance. Although most people nowadays are open to foreign cultures, they would object if such foreign cultures were forcefully imposed on them. A state is needed to protect the culture of a nation. If globalization were going to make the existence of states irrelevant, the number of states in the world would be reduced due to integration. Otherwise, the number of states increased from 50 states after World War II to 193 states up to this day. There are also separatist movements that seek new states for their respective nations, such as the Kurds from Turkey, the Biafrans from Nigeria, or the Quebecois from Canada. In addition to that, the development of archaeological and information technology drives many states around the world to discover their past and reconstruct their national identity. From an economic perspective, the discovered ancient sites will boost tourism. Aside from becoming the source of state revenue, ancient history also became the source of inspiration for nation-building.

Brief Cultural History of Egypt

Egypt is well-known for the Great Pyramid and the Sphinx from ancient times. A Greek historian, Herodotus, called it 'the gift of the Nile' because Egyptian civilization would not exist without the river. About 3,000 years ago, the Egyptians spoke a distinct language and wrote particular scripts. The Ancient Egyptians used

four writing systems to write in their language: 1) hieroglyphic, which was mainly used for monumental and decoration purposes; 2) hieratic, which was the handwriting version of the hieroglyphic script and primarily used for religious purposes; 3) demotic, which was mainly used for administrative purposes, and 4) Coptic, which was based on the Greek alphabet (Dodson 2001). The Ancient Egyptian people used to be ruled by the pharaohs. The word 'pharaoh' originally comes from *per-aa*, which means 'great house', and the word used to refer to the palace. In the late New Kingdom era, it became a royal title of the Egyptian rulers. Despite being a great civilization, Egypt has been under foreign rule throughout history. Before the Arab conquest, several foreign dynasties had ruled over Egypt. The 15th, 16th, and 17th dynasties were Hyksos, while the last was Greek. The last Ancient Egyptian dynasty, the Ptolemaic dynasty, ended with the suicide of Cleopatra and the annexation by Rome.

Egypt experienced Hellenization and Christianization during the Byzantine era. The last temple of Egyptian religion in Philae was closed in 537 AD under the order of Emperor Justinian I. Due to the Hellenization of Egypt during the Byzantine era, the Egyptians lost the hieroglyphic knowledge, and other knowledge about Ancient Egypt had been buried for more than 1,000 years. In the seventh century, the Arabs or Muslims under Amr ibn al-As conquered Egypt from the Byzantines. The Arab rulers impose Arabic as the official language in Egypt, and it developed into a lingua franca in Egypt. After the Arab conquest, it was Arabized and Islamized until the Republican era. Today, most Egyptians speak Arabic, write Arabic scripts, and identify as Arabs. However, the Coptic language, derived from Ancient Egyptian, survived as a daily language in the Egyptian countryside for the next few centuries. Today it still survives as the liturgical language of the Coptic Orthodox Church and Coptic Catholic Church. There are approximately 15 million Coptic Christians in Egypt. They claim themselves as indigenous Egyptians and the guardians of the language that used to be spoken by the pharaohs (Gornall 2022).

Egypt has also experienced occupation by the European powers. Egypt was under French rule from 1798 to 1801 and British from 1882 to 1922. The discovery of the Rosetta Stone in 1798 brought

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to light this thousand-year-old mystery. The inscription consists of three writing systems: hieroglyphic, demotic, and Greek. On September 27, 1822, Champollion presented his findings in a lecture on Egyptian hieroglyphs at l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres in Paris (Parkinson et al. 1999). Champollion spent 23 years deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphs. Due to globalization, the works of Champollion, Young, and other Egyptologists in revealing Ancient Egyptian civilization are accessible to people from different parts of the world. The decipherment of hieroglyphs by Champollion led to the spread of Egyptomania, the interest in Ancient Egyptian culture, across Europe during the 19th century. The emergence of Egyptology inspired some Egyptian nationalists to use Ancient Egyptian civilization as a source for Egyptian nation-building. This new ideology is later known as Pharaonism.

In 1922, the British government issued the Unilateral Declaration of Egyptian Independence. Pharaonism gained popularity among Egyptians from the 1920s to the 1930s. Lutfi al-Sayyid, the general secretary of the Umma Party, regarded Pharaonic culture as a vital component of Egyptian national identity (Reid 2015). Another advocate of Pharaonism was Taha Hussein. In opposition to the Pan-Arabists, he claimed that most Egyptians did not possess Arab blood as they were descendants of the Ancient Egyptians, and Arabic as a daily language in Egypt should not determine the fate of a nation (Al-Feqi 2019). In the 1940s, Pharaonism was declining and replaced by Pan-Arabism. In 1945, King Farouk initiated the establishment of the League of Arab States or well-known as the Arab League. The establishment pointed out that Egypt was part of the Arab world. Gamal Abdel Nasser also embraced Pan-Arabism and sought to unify the Arab nation into a single state. In 1958, Egypt and Syria agreed to unite and establish the United Arab Republic under Nasser's leadership. Despite the dissolution in 1961, Egypt retained the 'United Arab Republic' as its name. In 1971, Anwar Sadat changed the official name to the 'Arab Republic of Egypt'.

Arab Spring and De-Arabization of the Arab World

The world is seeing efforts to reverse Arabization in some Arab states. In addition to Pharaonism in Egypt, we also see the rise of Phoenicianism in Lebanon, Berberism in North Africa, Assyrian nationalism in Syria, and Kurdish nationalism in Syria and Iraq. These ideologies challenge Pan-Arabism and look after indigenous heritage as their identity. The establishment of Israel and South Sudan in 1948 and 2011 are forms of de-Arabization. Arabization in both countries has been replaced with Judaization and Africanization. Arabic is no longer the most spoken language within the territories that have been Israel and South Sudan. Some sociologists, such as Bertrand Bardie and François Thual, argued that the rise of local identities in the last decades resulted from changing geopolitical situations (Tartaglia and Rossi 2015). In the 2010s, the Arab Spring spread to most Arab states. It started from the anti-government protest in Tunisia that called for President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to step down. Inspired by the success of the Tunisian people in overthrowing Ben Ali, the demonstration to call for democratization was followed by the people in other Arab countries. In Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, who had ruled since 1981, stepped down after 18 days of nationwide demonstrations. In Morocco, democratization took place without overthrowing the king. In Libya and Syria, they turned into civil wars. The 40-year-old Gaddafi regime fell after nine months of civil war, but the Assad regime remains in power.

The Arab Spring has driven the revival of indigenous cultures in several Arab states. Before the Arab conquest, Libya had already been inhabited by the Amazigh people or used to be widely known by outsiders as Berbers. When Muammar Gaddafi was in power, he banned the expression of Amazigh culture in Libya. According to Hume (2012), regarding the suppression of Amazigh culture during the Gaddafi era, Mazigh Buzakhar, a Tripoli-based Amazigh activist, stated that: “You couldn’t teach it in schools, you didn’t have university departments for Amazigh research or have Amazigh TV stations or radio. Even for children’s names, there existed a law that banned any names that were not Arabic or Islamic. They (the Gaddafi regime) forced you to change your child’s name.” After the war, the Amazigh culture started to flourish in Libya.

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The revival of indigenous culture does not always happen after the fall of a regime. Although Assad is still in power, the civil war became a momentum for the Kurds and Assyrians to establish an autonomous region in northeastern Syria. In contrast to Libya, the Amazigh cultural revival in Morocco happened without a regime change and a civil war. In addition to limiting the king's power, the Amazigh protesters also demanded Tamazight be declared another co-official language in Morocco alongside Arabic and approved by the government.

The process of the Pharaonic cultural revival in Egypt is also different from the Amazigh one in Libya. The Amazigh cultural revival in Libya took place after the fall of Gaddafi, while the Pharaonic cultural revival started after the fall of Morsi instead of Mubarak. The Amazigh cultural revival does not get support from the current Libyan government, while the Pharaonic cultural revival does. After Mubarak stepped down, Mohamed Morsi got elected as the next president and was supported by the Muslim Brotherhood. Two years after, the Egyptian military deposed Morsi. In December of the same year, Sisi declared the Muslim Brotherhood, a terrorist organization, ordered the mass arrest of its members, and shut down almost 500 non-governmental organizations that had connections with the group (Cook 2016). Hassan Al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, embraced Pan-Islamism and had ever condemned Egyptian nationalism based on Pharaonic identity as a contradiction with the unity of the Islamic *umma*. In 1937, Al-Banna described Pharaonism as 'the revival of pagan *jahili* customs which have been swept away and the resurrection of extinct manners' that aimed to 'annihilate the characteristic traits of Islam and Arabism' (Wood 1998). Because of their hostility to Pharaonic culture, his decision to ban and designate the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization could be considered a cornerstone to transform the national identity.

Pan-Arabic Elements in Egypt's Foreign Policies

Foreign policies reflect the identity of a state. States with the same ideology, culture, or history tend to cooperate closer than states without similarities. Some international organizations were formed

to accommodate countries that share the same identity or culture as others. Most members of the Commonwealth of Nations used to be part of the British Empire. The Latin Union was founded to unite countries that use Romance languages (Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, Romanian, and Catalan) and promote their common Romance cultural heritage. The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) was established to accommodate cooperation between Melanesian states in the Southwestern Pacific. In this context, Egypt did not only become a member of the League of Arab States or well-known as the Arab League but also the initiator of the Arab League itself. For more than three decades, Cairo has been the 'heart' of the Arab world.

Another foreign policy that reflects Pan-Arabism is the hostility toward Israel. As part of Arab solidarity, Egypt has been involved in four wars against Israel: The Arab-Israeli War (1948), the Suez Crisis (1956), the Six-Day War (1967), and the Yom Kippur War (1973). However, Egypt became the first Arab state to recognize Israel. In 1978, Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin met at Camp David to create peace between Egypt and Israel. Because of the peace agreement, Egypt was suspended from the Arab League until 1989. Hosni Mubarak maintained peace with Israel, but the bilateral relations were limited. Ofir Winter, an expert on Israeli-Egyptian relations, stated that Mubarak preserved the basic elements of the peace treaty, but he kept his distance from Israel. Yitzhak Levanon, Israeli ambassador to Egypt from 2009 to 2011, argued that Mubarak tried to restore Egypt's position in the Arab world (Rasgon 2020). When Morsi became the president of Egypt, the relations with Israel worsened. Hamas, the Palestinian faction occupying the Gaza Strip, is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood that supported Mohamed Morsi.

The relations between Egypt and Israel significantly improved after Sisi took power. Sisi's decision to establish good relations with Israel indicates that Egypt will distance itself from the 'Arab problem'. Palestine has been an issue that unites the Arab world and even the Islamic world for a long time. No Arab states established diplomatic relations with Israel before 1978. Outside the Palestinian issue, the Arab states tend to conflict with each other. Despite the close ties between Egypt and Israel, it does not

mean Egypt has severed relations with Palestine. In 2022, Sisi invited the president of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, to participate in the 4th Egypt's World Youth Forum (WYF) in Sharm El-Sheikh. In a bilateral meeting, Sisi affirmed to Abbas that he would support all efforts to revive the peace process between Palestine and Israel (Egypt Today 2022). However, Sisi did not show his support for Palestine as part of Arab or Islamic solidarity. He put these notions aside. Sisi only wants Egypt to play a bigger role in the peace process in the Middle East.

Despite the good relations with Israel, Egypt remains part of the Arab League under the Sisi presidency. Egypt still needs the league to play its role in the peace process and exercise its influence in the region. Egypt borders Libya in the west, Sudan in the south, Palestine, and indirectly, Saudi Arabia in the east. All of them are still members of the Arab League. During Arab Summit 1996 in Cairo, 14 Arab countries agreed to form the Greater Free Trade Area (GAFTA). Since 1st January 2005, zero-percent tariffs have been implemented in the area. Nicolas Peridy and Javad Abedini (2014) found that GAFTA has created more trade and still has great internal trade potential. Withdrawing from the league means leaving the free trade arrangement while the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia are two of Egypt's major trading partners. By the end of March 2022, Saudi Arabia ranked third with a trade exchange volume of \$6.696 billion, while the UAE ranked fourth with a trade volume of \$6.570 billion (Mounir 2022). The withdrawal from the organization will bring negative impacts on Egypt. The Arab League is not just a cultural organization but also an economic and regional organization still relevant to Egypt's interests.

The Appreciation of Pharaonic Heritage

Despite its official name as an Arab republic and membership in the Arab League, the rise of Pharaonism in the Sisi era can be seen in the appreciation of the past by the regime. This phenomenon can be seen in Egypt's architecture, education, and cultural events. Through the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Egypt held two cultural events in 2021. The Egyptian government held the

Pharaohs' Golden Parade on April 3rd and the Grand Opening of Sphinx Avenue on November 25th. Both events were attended by Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and his wife.

In 2015, the Egyptian government decided to build a new capital to replace the overpopulated Cairo. The new capital will comprise 663 hospitals and clinics, 1,250 mosques and churches, a theme park four times the size of Disneyland, and 1,1 million houses and apartments for housing at least 5 million inhabitants (Kingsley 2015). Several skyscrapers will also be constructed, and the Oblisco Capitale is the most interesting to be discussed. Its construction in the downtown area is supposed to be completed in 2030, and it will be the tallest building in the world, surpassing the Burj Khalifa. Sisi stated that the architectural designs of all main buildings in the new capital must reflect the richness and greatness of Egypt's history (Egypt Today 2021). The architectural style of the Oblisco Capitale is inspired by the Ancient Egyptian obelisk. Obelisks were erected throughout Ancient Egyptian history. The obelisks played a vital role in the Egyptian religion as they were the symbol of Ra, the sun god, and it is going to be built in the new 'heart' of Egypt.

The Pharaohs' Golden Parade is supposed to be merely a transfer of 22 mummies (18 kings and 4 queens) from the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities in Tahrir Square to the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization in Fustat. However, the government made it into a parade and could be seen from the audience bench or on television. Outside the parade route, the United Philharmonic Orchestra played Ancient Egyptian hymns during the event. One of them was 'A Reverence of Isis'. The lyrics can be found on the walls of the Deir El-Shelwit Temple in Luxor (Limos 2021). Amro Ali, an Egyptian writer, wrote on Twitter: "Egypt will condemn the cruelty of the pharaohs from the pulpit of the mosques and churches, then rush out to the streets to celebrate the greatness of the pharaohs. Contemporary Egypt in its quest for identity, modernity, and nation building has yet to reconcile the contradictions of employing pharaoh on both the religious and nationalist spectrum." (Mahendru 2021).

On November 25th, 2021, the Egyptian government held the grand opening of the 3,000-year-old ancient road that connects the Temple of Luxor and the Temple of Karnak. It used to be called by the

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Ancient Egyptians *Wat Nathr* or 'Path of God' (State Information Service 2021). The sacred road had been buried under the sand for centuries until it was discovered by Zakaria Ghineim in 1949 (Gubash and Cahill 2021). It needed seven decades for restoration. More than 400 performers dressed in Pharaonic costumes paraded with three golden boats to reenact the Opet festival that used to be held annually during the New Kingdom era to celebrate the flooding season. In the past, the boats used to contain the statues of the supreme god, Amun-Ra, his wife, Mut, and his son, Khons (Escolano-Poveda 2019). The parade was followed by an orchestra playing the 'Hymn of Amun-Ra' that used to be chanted by Ancient Egyptian priests during the procession. On December 7th, 2021, the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities announced that the Opet festival would be held annually at the same place (Cairo Scene 2021).

In addition to the spectacular cultural events, Egypt also built the Grand Egyptian Museum, which will be the largest museum in the world. Donald Reid (2015) stated that museums and archaeology played critical roles in constructing a nation's distinctive heritage and identity. However, they also played roles in defining, legitimating, and projecting imperial claims in the past. In the 1920s, the discovery of Tutankhamun became a critical moment for the Egyptians to reclaim their ancient heritage. The dispute over Tutankhamun's tomb was nationalized by the Egyptian government. It insisted that Tutankhamun's coffin and other treasures must be displayed in Egypt. The Egyptian government also seeks the return of the Rosetta Stone, which is still being kept by the British Museum. The Rosetta Stone has played a major role in decoding ancient Egyptian texts. Both Tutankhamun and the Rosetta Stone have become icons of Egyptian history. A demand to return an artifact is not something uncommon. Several countries in the world have demanded the European Powers return their artifacts.

The most obvious of de-Arabization and de-Islamization phenomenon happens in Egyptian education. The Ministry of Education has removed Salah al-Din, Uqba ibn Nafi, and other historical Islamic figures from Egyptian school textbooks, causing anger among Egyptian Salafists (Dettmer 2015). Salah al-Din,

popularly known as Saladin by Westerners, who fought the Crusaders, is seen as an iconic hero in the Arab world. In 2021, the government once again caused controversy by ordering the removal of Quranic verses and hadiths from Egyptian textbooks. The opponents regarded it as an attack on Egypt's Islamic identity or an act of secularization. Sheikh Salama Abdel Qawi, the former undersecretary of the Ministry of Religious Endowments, stated: "There is a plan to alter Egypt's Islamic identity. Since he took office, (Sisi) has been calling for updating the religious discourse and has used all his media outlets to attack Al-Azhar, its grand sheikh, and Islam" (Al-Monitor 2021). On the other hand, Gehad Auda, a professor of political science at Helwan University, supported the idea. He argued that religious texts fit better in books on religion, not in textbooks about the Arabic language or history (Middle East Eye 2021).

Two days after the Pharaohs' Golden Parade, the Ministry of Education announced that hieroglyphs would be introduced into the Egyptian school curriculum in 2022 (Egypt Today 2021). Bringing a dead language back to life is not something impossible. Hebrew is the most successful story of bringing back a dead language. For about 2,000 years, Hebrew was only spoken in synagogues as the Jewish liturgical language. In the late 19th century, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, a prominent Zionist, created a Hebrew dictionary intending to make Hebrew a modern language. Today Hebrew is the official language of Israel and is spoken by the majority of people in Israel. Tartaglia and Rossi (2015) concluded that language is the 'key identification criterion'. Their study on Occitan identity showed that language and place are the most used dimensions to define someone's identity. From this study, it is understood why most Egyptians identify themselves as Arabs because they speak Arabic in daily life. It is not something impossible that the Ancient Egyptian language will be the official language of Egypt in the future.

Conclusion

Since 2016, the Egyptian government has been working to create a modern and developed Egypt through Egypt Vision 2030. The

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program will be useless if Egypt becomes a developed country with no unique national identity. Egypt's national identity is gradually changing. It celebrates its Pharaonic heritage but still retains the 'Arab Republic' as its official name and Arabic as its official language. In the international community, Sisi retains Egypt's position in the Arab League because it is still relevant to Egypt's interests, and the exit from the league will negatively impact its people. The Muslim Brotherhood is a strong proponent of Islamization and Arabization, and the banning can be considered the first step in reversing Egypt's Arab identity. If the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups had not yet been terminated, they would have been a threat to Egypt's cultural heritage and ancient sites. The Egyptian government held cultural events to boost tourism and raise a sense of pride in their glorious past at the same time. The last and most significant indicator is the plan to teach hieroglyphs to Egyptian students. Once the Egyptians speak Egyptian daily and write hieroglyphs in public spaces, they will no longer identify themselves as Arabs.

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