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#### STUDY ON SINAI DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY DISCUSSED

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[Article by 'Abd al-Tawwab 'Abd al-Hayy: "Sinai Development: Goal and Strategy"]

[Text] Sinai has been and will continue to be.

Invaders pass through it like easterly tornadoes trying to storm the valley but always leave behind the prints of their invading feet so that they may guide their eastward withdrawing remnants, either by war or by peace. This is the rule without exception, beginning with the invasion of the Hexus and ending with the Israeli invasion.

Sinai has been and will continue to be. But it has suffered from isolation and negligence throughout the ages. All have treated it like an appendix with no function and no importance and the Suez Canal became one day Egypt's subjective borders which nobody could cross without a passport-like permit, with customs offices set up on the canal's eastern bank in al-Qantarah and Port Tawfiq.

Then recently, the Sinai entered the sphere of study and interest. The first encyclopedic work putting the unknown Sinai triangle in the sphere of the known was the encyclopedia of the Higher Council for Sciences. This week, a second work was published by the Development Research and Technological Planning Center. The work is an encyclopedia consisting of three volumes entitled: Structural Planning For The Sinai Peninsula. The work is the outcome of the efforts of 28 researchers led by the "number one researcher," Dr Muhammad Subhi 'Abd al-Hakim. The 645-page work includes 15 chapters and studies everything in the unknown Sinai triangle: People, environment, water, soil, flora, social structure and development strategy until it reaches the structural plan for the development of Sinai--a plan which is the "practical outcome" of this encyclopedic efforts.

How do we develop the Sinai? What is the goal and what is the strategy?

The goal: To realize a complete civilizational process by raising the production capability to enhance the national wealth, raise the individual income and create an economic surplus for constant investment expansion. It is a complete process that includes an economic development which raises the

Individual income and create an economic surplus for constant investment expansion. It is a complete process that includes an economic development which raises the individual income and exploits the capabilities and the resources, a social development which improves the quality of life--the human element is the means of development and its end--and a construction development which realizes integration between the economic development and social development on the one hand and between the Sinai province and the Suez Canal province on the other hand.

The strategy: To develop the Sinai province production, to raise the individual income, to rely on the province's intrinsic economic capabilities and resources, to solve the population and housing problems, to increase the general income and insure its fair distribution and to secure the investments necessary for the development plans.

But what is the ideal solution for developing the Sinai in a manner that responds to the needs of the national plan for all of Egypt, that ends Sinai's isolation and facilitates its contact with the valley and that implants in the Sinai a population density that forms a productive and defensive force simultaneously?

The main idea for the solution, as proposed by the study, is based on the maximum exploitation of the available resources: Mining, petroleum, tourism, fishing, agriculture, livestock and services, in addition to bolstering the regional and international communications and to transforming the Sinai into a population attraction center.

But there are alternatives to this main idea.

The first alternative is to develop Sinai gradually: Services, basic utilities, bedouin resettlement, land reclamation, and enhancing fish production and other steps, provided that all this is tied to the development plan for the Suez Canal province and provided that this province is also relied upon for the basic services and utilities.

But this alternative is flawed by the fact that it ties the Sinai province to the Suez Canal province and that it denies the Sinai the absolute priority in development.

The second alternative is to develop the Sinai within the framework of a policy that coordinates and cooperates with the countries adjacent to the province--Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Israel. Such an alternative meets the needs of the location but is tied to these countries' political and economic inclinations, which are changeable and without guarantee.

The third alternative is to consider the Sinai an independent region with a single and integrated identity and to develop it accordingly. This independent development avoids the problems of the other provinces and the subsequent intricate and obstructive (functional expenditures). This is why the study favors this third alternative.

Within the framework of an independent development of the Sinai, the study formulates two parallel visualizations:

First visualization is to make the development activities compatible with the available resources of the Sinai Peninsula: Mining and petroleum on the Gulf of Suez, tourist activity on the coast of the Gulf of 'Aqabah and in the southern heights area and livestock breeding in the central area, on the northern coast and near B'ir al-Jafjafah. As for agricultural activity, it is to be concentrated around Wadi al-'Arish, Sahl (al-Tinah), east of the Bitter Lakes, on the Suez Gulf coast, which is also a fishing area, and on the northern coast.

The population density (will center) around al-'Arish, the capital of North Sinai which extends its services to the central part of the peninsula, and around the town of al-Tur in the south which covers with its services South and West Sinai.

According to this visualization, it becomes necessary to develop the existing road and communication network, to build a railroad line from al-Qantarah in the north to al-Tur in the south and a similar line from the Suez to Taba on the Gulf of 'Aqabah and to restore the old railroad line between al-Qantarah and al-'Arish to revive the economies of the population centers located along this line. This is in addition to devoting attention to marine and air transportation and to building a network of regional and international airports.

The second visualization is a modest solution that is based on a limited development strategy that abides by the currently available resources and depends on developing the already existing population centers and on supplying them with minimum services and infrastructures within the framework of a modest financial investment plan. Insofar as transportation is concerned, it is confined to developing the coastal highway, restoring the old Port Tawfiq-al-Qantarah-Rafah railroad and transforming the already existing airports into regional and international airports.

But the study then proposes a solution to deal with the problem of population imbalance in central Sinai and with the lack of services in this area. The solution recommends resettlement of the bedouins in the area. It also assumes that the Sinai population will reach 1 million people who should be distributed in a manner that guarantees a fair distribution of the services over the Sinai Peninsula map: A major city that serves a number of subsidiary towns, with the towns serving in turn a number of villages whose economic activities vary according to the natural resources in the area, provided that the village is considered the "first nucleus" in forming the population centers.

According to the proposed solution, al-'Arish will represent the top level insofar as city size is concerned and will be the capital of Sinai, serving the entire province. Al-Tur will be a lesser city and will serve the southern and western area. Next in line will be the towns of Rafah, al-Qantarah and Sharm al-Shaykh.

The population gatherings--the most important of which are al-Shaykh Zuqayd, Abu 'Ujaylah, B'ir al-'Abd, Nakhl, Sadr, Abu Zunaymah and Taba, in addition to some other gatherings with smaller populations which are considered a potential development location--take third place.

The study estimates the manpower percentage at 30 percent of the population and distributes this manpower over the economic activities as follows: 38 percent in agriculture, livestock breeding and fishing, 18 percent in industry and mining, 7 percent in tourism and 30 percent in services.

The study defines the land traffic routes in the peninsula. The road network includes main highways which link the Sinai with the neighboring countries, such as al-Qantarah-Rafah highway in the north, the Deversoir-Abu 'Ujaylah highway in the center and the old pilgrimage highway which links Port Tawfiq with Taba, passing through Nakhl, Tamad and Ra's al-Naqab. There is also the highway parallel to the Suez Canal and the Suez Gulf from al-Qantarah to al-Tur, Ra's Muhammad and Sharm al-Shaykh and then to the Gulf of 'Aqabah and Taba. This network of main roads is complemented by a network of subsidiary roads that link together the vital parts of Sinai, such as the Taba-Rafah road which links North Sinai with South Sinai, al-'Arish-Nakhl road which links Central Sinai with the northern area and B'ir al-'Abd-Sadr road which passes through B'ir al-Jafjafah and B'ir al-Tamadah to link North Sinai with the central and western areas.

Regarding the railroad, the study proposes the construction of three axes: Al-Qantarah-Rafah axis, with an extension to al-Magharah area which is rich in coal, a second line from Port Tawfiq to al-Tur to serve the mining areas and the population concentrations in South Sinai and a third line from Port Tawfiq to Taba across the old pilgrimage route to link Egypt with Saudi Arabia and to serve the pilgrimage and trade traffic.

The study also proposes exploiting al-Tur Port on the Suez Gulf in transporting raw materials and tourists, developing al-'Arish Port and building a port in Taba to link Sinai with the Asian Arab countries.

To serve tourism and internal transportation between the various parts of Sinai, the study proposes strengthening the internal airlines and fully equipping the ports existing in Ra's al-Naqab, Sharm al-Shaykh, Saint Catherine, al-Tur, Baluzah and al-'Arish.

How is Sinai to be developed and at what rate?

The study proposes that the development proceed in gradual stages.

In the first stage, the already existing services are to be developed and the infra-structure projects, the railroad, the roads, the ports and the airports are to be improved. The stress is also to be laid on the regional projects: land reclamation, development of the fish production, agro-industry and environmental industries. Also during the first stage, special attention is to be given to international projects: Developing the tourist projects, implementing new tourist projects, providing modern means of communication and

transportation and opening the doors of Sinai to investment projects with quick yields in order to attract capital to the area and to mining projects and projects to exploit the raw materials. In the second phase, the emphasis is to be laid on the services and the major investment projects, such as completing the agricultural expansion plan, developing the fishing, canning and dehydration projects, strengthening the axes of Sinai's contact with the valley through a number of tunnels under the Suez Canal, linking East Sinai with West Sinai by restoring the old pilgrimage route between Taba and Port Tawfiq, building a railroad line parallel to this route, providing social, educational and health services at a higher standard than in the previous stage in order to enhance the process of population attraction to the province and then channelling a large part of the investments toward building and construction.

In the third stage, the fruits of the previous investments will be reaped, thus making it possible to offer more services and providing a balance for the development costs.

The study concludes with some recommendations, including:

The need to draw up a national development plan for Egypt, with the Sinai development plan constituting a part within its framework.

There is contradiction and conflict between the studies available so far on the Sinai and these studies must be reviewed and purified. There is also multiplicity of jurisdiction among the various departments and agencies operating in Sinai. All this needs to be unified in the form of a single organization that manages the Sinai planning and data gathering and classification activity.

Speeding up the economic feasibility studies on the project to supply Nile water to the Sinai and also the feasibility studies on the construction of railroad lines.

This is a quick review of the study prepared by Dr Subhi 'Abd al-Hakim and a number of researchers. There are observations that discuss and modify some of the ideas in this study. These observations will be the subject of an interview with the encyclopedia author in a special symposium which AL-MUSAWWAR will publish in its next edition.

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