

**State-Society Relations and Regional Role:
Comparing Egypt and South Africa**

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For much of its history, Egypt has been the hub of the Middle East. It was a forerunner in reconstructing domestic politics and redirecting external relations. It used its favorable geo-strategic location and long-established historical ties in Africa and the Arab world to pursue a leading regional role. Its central role also hinged on its cultural influence and contribution to Arab intellectual life. Due to its historical linkages, cultural influence and geo-strategic position Egypt achieved a political weight that reached its apex in the nineteen fifties and sixties. In these decades, Egypt's vision of Arab nationalism inspired a whole generation of Arabs. Its enthusiasm for African unity contributed to the struggles for independence and the post-independence wave of Pan-Africanism. Beyond the Arab world and Africa, Egypt stood for the principles of anti-imperialism and non-alignment as a founder of the Non-aligned Movement (NAM). Since the end of the 1970s, the country has become a strategic ally for the United States and later a key player in the Middle East peace process (Marr 1999,xiii-xiiv).

However, since the end of the 1990s there has been an increasing debate in academic and diplomatic circles about the decline of Egypt's regional role. Several developments have given rise to this debate. The country is no longer part of the axis leading the global south and representing its interests in international forums. Its role in conflict resolution has clearly been challenged by other actors (Libya in the African continent and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East). Even its long-established cultural influence has increasingly been contested. Based on these developments, it becomes hardly disputable that Egypt's hegemonic role, which manifested itself clearly in the 1950s and 1960s, has been in decline (Al-Ashaal, Al-Sayyid and Korany in EzzEldeen 2006,59-61). Although some signs of decline date back to the seventies, by the end of the nineties it appeared that Egypt was at a cross roads in terms of both its domestic politics and its regional role (Marr 2006).

The end of the nineties has also witnessed the rise of another regional power in the African continent. South Africa, the most industrialized economy and a significant military power in Sub-Saharan Africa, has been steadily reinforcing its leading regional role, a process which began after the post-Apartheid transformation. It has gradually moved from concern about domestic reconciliation to clear identification of its foreign policy goals and formulation of an ambitious vision for the region (Shraeder 2001). A

number of scholars and observers have described South Africa's foreign policy as lacking coherence and coordinated vision, or even as being schizophrenic. This was especially the case in the first few years of transition. However, they admit that the country has increasingly played a leading, if not a hegemonic, role in the African continent and even beyond. It has sought to take part in the resolution of a series of conflicts in the continent (Lesotho, the Democratic Republic of Congo, settlement of Libya's Lockerbie crisis). Its leadership presented a vision for an African renaissance and mobilized western support for it. Beyond the African continent, It has actively worked to defend the interests of the south in the Non- Aligned Movements (NAM), the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD), as well as the trade negotiations rounds of the World Trade Organization. It has also fostered its cooperation with like-minded powers of the South in the framework of the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Forum (Le pere & Alden 2003,60; Le pere and Van Nieukerk in Sidiropoulos 2004).

Thus although Egypt and South Africa are two pivotal states in their respective regions, their regional role have been developing in contrasting directions. This contrast raises questions about the factors that lie behind the rise or decline in the states' regional roles. Much of the international relations literature relates these factors to the change in the state's economic, military and human resource base, in the balance of power with other regional actors, or in the international system (Hurrell in Neumann 1992,20). But this does not answer *why, under the same structures of international and regional systems, some states are able to play a role beyond their relative base of resources while others fail? And why under these conditions, some states exhibit a strong capacity to maintain and sustain their external roles while others gradually lose their influence?*

The present study claims that part of the answer to these questions lies in an aspect that has long been underplayed by most international relations and foreign policy literature, namely state-society relations. This claim is consistent with some writings that underscore the importance of the link between state's relationship to society and its role abroad, without systematically examining the nature of this link. In his study on state capacity in the third world, Joel Migdal (1988, 20-21) points out that "the role and effectiveness of the state domestically are highly interdependent with its place in the world of states". He suggests that the capacity and strength of the state at home, especially its ability to mobilize masses around a set of institutions and values, improve the capabilities of the state in the international arena. Thus, the foundation of a state's

external power can largely be seen as one of the outcomes of its relationship with the society through which it mobilizes human and material resources.

Arguing along the same lines, Stephen Krasner (1977,164) maintains that a state's regional and international role is not only based on economic, political and military resources, but also on how the state can manage its relationship with other social groups. It is this relationship that enables the state to make the best use of its resources to fulfill its foreign policy goals. If certain groups were able to control these resources, one would expect the state's foreign policy to reflect the interests of these groups, and this may lead to the undermining of the state's regional leadership. Krasner's central claim is that a state's position in the regional and international arena does not only result from its position in the center or periphery, but also from its domestic capacity.

This argument can be supported by empirical examples. On the African continent, some analysts point out how decades of domination of the state by the military in Nigeria has affected state's capacity to play a leading regional role (wright and Okolo 1998, 118-132). In Latin America, one can not understand Brazilian foreign policy in the region, and its rapprochement with like-minded states in the south since 2003, without referring to the changes in the state's domestic policies (De Lima and Hirst 2006, 21-40).

Thus, although it is evident that a state's external role is deeply connected to its relationship with its society, very few writings have been interested in looking at case studies of third world regional powers that could verify, illustrate and develop the theoretical discussion about this relationship. This is a lacuna that the current research hopes to address.

In addressing this link, this research project positions itself between comparative politics and foreign policy analysis. This position rests on a realization that taken on their own each sub-field does not offer a satisfactory answer to the central question of this study. Comparative politics literature offers interesting accounts for state-society relations. However, it does not go beyond the generic observation that a state's capacity at home and its role abroad are linked. Literature that examines domestic bases for foreign policy tends to concentrate either on statist or societal actors, thus telling just part of the story. Writings on regional powers do not go beyond listing the physical power capabilities on which a state's regional role rests. Bridging comparative politics and foreign policy, this research project explores how the study of state-society interactions can offer a better

understanding for state's regional role. In other words, it links state capacity to maintain and sustain its role abroad and its capacity to manage its relationship with societal forces at home. In so doing, it hopes to present a more inclusive and dynamic analysis of the domestic bases for a state's regional role.

I- Research questions and Hypotheses:

This study seeks to contribute to the literature on foreign policy of regional powers and to understand the domestic state-society relations that lie behind the rise or decline of such powers. My central research question is: **How, and to what extent, does the state-society relationship affect a state's regional role?**

Answering this question requires an examination of several further questions: what is the nature of the relationship between the state and influential domestic social forces? To what extent is the state able to maintain autonomy while relating with these forces? How do these affect the state's ability to mobilize domestic and external actors around a common vision for its region? To what extent is the state able to shape, affect, and benefit from, the external actions of its domestic non-state actors which have a bearing on its regional role and image abroad? To what extent is there a divergence or convergence between the state's vision on the one hand, and societal interests in the region on the other? Why is the state able to intervene in certain regional problems while remains reluctant in other cases and what kind of social forces back state's decision in both cases? Does democratization provide a favorable or detrimental environment to state capacity to sustain a leading regional role? How does the rise or decline in state's legitimacy affect that role?

Thus this research explores aspects of state-society relations that are believed to leave their impact on the state's regional role. The first of these is the state's relationship with major and influential societal groups and interests. The question here is how the state manages its relationship with these groups and how this affects its autonomy in pursuing its domestic and foreign policy, and more specifically the efficiency and credibility of its role abroad. *The hypothesis here is that where and when the state exhibits a high capacity in managing its relationship with domestic societal forces, it pursues active foreign policies that increase its assets and credibility in regional leadership.* This can be because state's high capacity enables it to design a vision for the region that is acceptable both domestically and externally and mobilize public and private resources for the implementation of that vision. It is also possible that the state's coordination with

domestic forces decreases the chances of the latter's external actions and links being detrimental to state's image and role abroad.

Related to this aspect is the extent to which the interests of the state and the domestic societal forces in relation to foreign policy in the region diverge or converge. No doubt a state's ability to mobilize resources for its regional external role depends on the extent to which its vision coincides with the interests of the most influential forces in society.

Another element is how democratic or autocratic the state is. The concern here is not with the democratic peace theorem but with the opportunities and risks that democratization provides the state for sustaining its regional position (Nincic 1994, 3-24). *My hypothesis is that democratization has contradictory implications for foreign policy and thus on the state's regional role. On one hand it provides the state with an opportunity to present itself as a model for other states in its regional setting. On the other, it complicates the process of decision-making by increasing actors and voices, at times making it more difficult to design coherent policies.* It is thus a challenge for the state to manage the democratization process in order to seize its opportunities and deal with its constraints.

It is worth mentioning that democracy is defined here not in procedural terms. It rather refers to the set of institutional rules that determine the level of diffusion and inclusiveness of political power. At the heart of this definition is thus the issue of the representativeness of the political system. The delineation of the interests represented in, and those excluded from, that system of representation is thus critical to the understanding of foreign policy and regional role orientations.

State legitimacy is also a critical variable that leaves obvious influences on a state's regional status and creditability. Different competing hypotheses are raised in this regard. One is that a state lacking legitimacy at home may tend to be less active abroad. Hudson, Sims and Thomas argue that as a state becomes ever more preoccupied with internal dissent and struggles for domination and control, overall levels of its external activity may decrease (Hudson, Sims and Thomas in Skidmore and Hudson 1992, 75-77). I have also noted that a state feeling the decline of its legitimacy at home may offer concessions to external parties to enjoy an external source of legitimacy, even if these clash with its regional role. Alternatively, it can seek to foster its regional role to sustain its legitimacy at home. This means that legitimacy may have a positive or negative impact on state's

external role. *The decline of state's legitimacy may limit its active and autonomous role abroad or urge the state to foster that role to sustain its legitimacy at home.*

To sum up, the impact of state-society relations on a state's external role seems to be complex and multi-dimensional, and invites further study. Each aspect of state-society relations may have contradictory impacts on that role. Further, the connections between the different aspects of these relations is problematic. How democracy affects a state's capacity and autonomy is a debatable issue. Legitimacy may not coincide with democracy. It may be based on a source of legitimation other than the democratic practice of the system. It is only through in-depth analysis of cases that the relationship between different aspects of state-society relations and the competing hypotheses about their impact on state's regional role can be tested and explored.

II- State-Society Relations and Regional Role: Review of Literature

A review of international relations and foreign policy literature reveals that the link between a state's role abroad and its relationship with society has not been adequately explored. This fact has been clearly spelled out in a number of research appraisals. By the end of the 1980s, Katzenstein(1976, 1-45), Kugler and Domke (1986, 39-69) noted that schools or paradigms of international relations do not examine systematically the impact of domestic factors in general (which are often treated as residual category) and the strength or weakness of the state in particular on state's external role and position. Some writings, especially those belonging to the realist paradigm, dealt with the state as a unitary actor undivided by social tensions, group conflict, or bureaucratic competition and thus presumed able to pursue its goals rationally. In other words, states' domestic attributes were often taken for granted rather than treated as variables (Moravcsik in Evans 1993, 5). This is also true to some extent in dependency theory analysis which gives precedence to the position of the state in the international capitalist system. For these approaches, the systemic (related to the international system and dynamic) has been regarded as more important than the domestic.

Trying to open the state's black box, some scholars search for the domestic bases of foreign policy. For some of these researchers, the role of a state's bureaucratic institutions or the personality of its leadership stand as explanatory variables. For others, an examination of the input of societal forces, namely interest groups, public opinion and mass media, serves to understand a state's foreign policy. Thus investigations of the state's relationship to society and the social roots of the state are largely overlooked. It is

therefore unsurprising that at the end of the 1980s one of the main challenges of the field was integrating these questions into foreign policy analysis (Rosenau in Hermann 1987, 3).

Taking up this challenge, since the end of the eighties a growing literature has explored the impact of domestic politics on a state's foreign policy (Fearon 1998, 289). At the top of the research agenda of this literature has been questions of the effect of regime type (democratic or autocratic) on the state's external conflict behavior, the domestic bases of economic interdependence, or the domestic interests behind the state's negotiating policy (Putnam 1988, 427-460). Generally, I claim that the debate on the domestic- foreign policy nexus has been hijacked by the controversy over the democratic peace theory and the concern about how state failure endangers regional and international security.

Finally, there are a few writings that try to present a sophisticated discussion of the impact of state-society relationships on a state's external role. However, they predominantly look at how this link is played out in developed industrialized countries (Katzenstein 1978). Thus, when referring to third world countries, they generally apply simplistic generalizations. That can be clearly seen, for example, in Krasner's reference to third world states as generally weak(Krasner in Knorr 1977, 160-181). Other writings in this category employ narrow definitions of state-society relations and/or its external role. Kugler and Domke (1986), for example, concentrate on the impact of a state's capacity to mobilize societal resources on its ability to win interstate conflicts.

These scholarly treatments of the link between state-society relations and its role abroad have influenced studies of regional powers. Writings on regional powers often resort to an ad hoc listing of international and domestic determinants of a state's leading role in the region. In defining domestic bases, they refer to the state's economic, geographical, demographic and political sources of power (Neumann 1992, Dessouki and Korany 1991) However, as I argued earlier, power capabilities do not stand as a sufficient interpretation of the state's regional role.

III- The Importance of the study and its Policy Relevance:

In the light of this general review, the present study aims to contribute to the literature that integrates the dynamics of state-society relations in the analysis of foreign policy and a state's regional role in the third world. This integration will offer useful insights that transcend concerns with regime type to examine the impact of a state's relationship with

social actors, its capacity vis-à-vis these actors, and its relative autonomy in relation to them, on state's regional role.

One of the aims of this study is to go beyond the generalizations about third world states made in some international relations literature. This literature has the merit of pointing to the different nature of the state in the third world compared to the state in the developed north. This has formed the basis for arguing that international relations theories developed in reference to the latter are irrelevant for the former. However, what is particular to third world state in this literature is that it is artificial, weak, and imposed (Neumann 1998, Clapham 1996). This reductionist account blurs interesting differences between the third world states on one hand, and overlooks the dynamics of state-society relations in each case, on the other.

The study of regional powers is not only academically important but also relevant practically. Regional powers, by definition, have a significant influence in their regions. This influence has often been referred to in security terms (i.e: how the regional leaders help to sustain peace and security in their respective regions) (Buzan 2003). However, one should also think of their role in other political, economic and developmental terms. Viable and strong regional powers push for economically prosperous and internationally influential regions. Conversely, the absence or a decline in the role of a regional leader is often accompanied by the retreat of a region's coherence and international influence.

On the international level, since the world has increasingly been organized into regional blocs, the study of the role of regional power has gained more currency. In order to maintain national security and foster cooperation with key regions in the south, American policy makers and intellectuals have focused more and more on "pivotal states" in each region.(Chase, Hill and Kennedy 1996, 33-51) Other rising international powers seeking cooperation with developing countries follow the same strategy.

IV- The Theoretical and conceptual Framework

A- Definitions of Concepts

A clear definition of concepts is one of the bases of good research in the social sciences. This research, like any other research in the social science, employs concepts that have contested meanings. In this regard, the theoretical framework and the goal of the research

determine the selection of certain definitions of the concepts used. A brief explanation of the research's core concepts, state capacity¹ and state role, is presented below.

The definition of state capacity here is not based on the traditional conception that exclusively concentrates on the degree to which the state can gain autonomy from other social groups in determining and implementing its own preferences and policies (Migdal 1988, 24-31; Nordlinger in Weiner and Huntington 1987, 353-370). It rather depends on how the state is able to work with and through other centers of power in society to ensure the legitimation of its policies and accommodate resistance without necessarily giving up its autonomy to apply what it sees as relevant policies. In other words, a state can not be in complete autonomy from the society but at the same time its degree of relative autonomy is reflected in the extent to which it can apply technically correct policies that do not reflect particularistic interests (Migdal in Weiner and Huntington 1987, 14-15 and Ayubi 1995, 449-450)

It is, however, worth mentioning that state capacity is context- based. So, although a general definition and indicators can be set for judging the state capacity in terms of autonomy and societal linkages, one can expect different states to follow different paths to achieve these indicators.

The study also makes use of the concept of role as employed by foreign policy literature. Two specific notions are important in this literature and relevant to the present study. The first is "role conception" which refers to the attitudes, orientations and definitions of the functions that the state should perform in the international and regional system. The second is "role performance" which refers to the decisions, actions and policies followed by the state in its external, regional or international, engagements. The definition of both concepts in the literature is state-oriented, thus referring only to top state officials' conceptions and state's external policies and actions (Holsti 1970, Walker 1987). But one should take into consideration that some societal forces also have well-defined attitudes and interests in that state's regional and international role. Furthermore, states are no

¹ Some scholars use State capacity and State strength interchangeably. See for example: Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak State*. Other scholars prefer to distinguish between the two concepts. For Linda Weiss, for instance, state strength refers just to the coercive capacity of the state. See: Linda Weiss, *The Myth of the Powerless State: Governing the Economy in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp.25-8. To avoid this coercive connotation, this study prefers to use the concept of state capacity, referring to it in terms of relative autonomy and societal linkages.

longer the only player as domestic non-state actors increasingly extend their relations and actions to the regional and international arena.

B- Theoretical Framework:

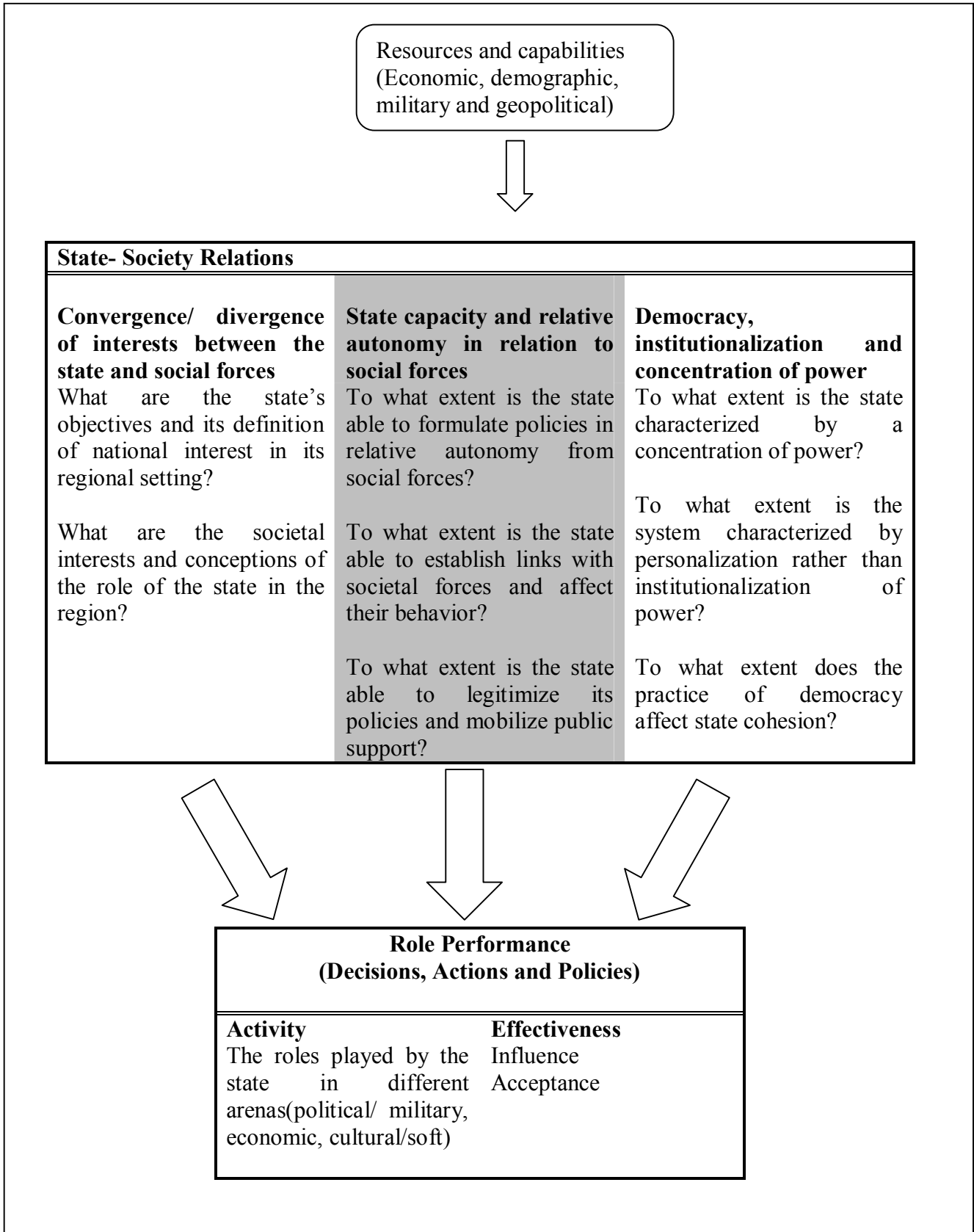
The theoretical framework of this study relies on literature of more than one sub-field of politics. This is consistent with the position of the study between comparative politics and foreign policy. Accordingly, the study engages with literature on state-society relations in comparative politics and political economy. Taking inspirations from foreign policy literature, this study makes use of the theoretical writings on the link between domestic and foreign policy (linkage politics studies), especially those connecting a state's domestic and external capacity. It also reviews the literature on role theory in foreign policy to explore the concept of 'role'.

In the absence of a general theory that establishes a clear link between state-society relations on the one hand and the state's regional role on the other, the alternative is to depend on the propositions found in the literature of state capacity, writings adopting a state-society approach to foreign policy, and role theory to build a model that links the two variables. The model is built on a deconstruction of the two variables and the delineation of possible linkages and causal mechanisms that can interpret the study's dependent variable.

The model is based on the belief that for foreign policy analysts to examine domestic determinants of foreign policy, they must draw on the developments in state-society literature in the fields of comparative politics and political economy. The state-society approach to foreign policy largely defines state capacity as the ability to achieve autonomy in relation to societal influences. Further, the use of role theory in foreign policy analysis has emphasized the state's conception as an influential determinant in role performance. But it has become increasingly clear that the state cannot, and does not need to, be fully autonomous from societal forces (Evans 1995, Weiss 1998). Further, the state is not a lone player. Some societal forces have an interest and influence in the state's regional policies. Accordingly, a model that defines state capacity in terms of complete insulation, or only takes into consideration state officials' conceptions is inadequate.

Using the state-society approach to evaluate the performance of a state's role can be summarized in the following model:

Figure 1: State-society Relations and Regional Role Model



Following the state-society approach to foreign policy analysis (Krasner 1977, 1978; Katzenstein 1978) the model suggests that the ability of the state to mobilize its resources for its regional role depends on its domestic capacity. This suggests an explanation of why some states are able to play a role beyond their relative base of resources while others fail to transform their available domestic resources into an active, influential and acceptable regional role.

Role performance is broadly defined in the role theory literature as the “general foreign policy behavior of governments”. This includes “patterns of attitudes, decisions, responses, functions and commitments towards other states” (Holsti 1970, 245-6). It is, however, important to underscore that the concept of role as presented by foreign policy literature needs to be further developed to include the question of effectiveness. The activity of the role is not the only indicator against which it should be evaluated. One can say that it just meets one criteria of role, that is the state’s claim to a certain role in its regional setting. Although there is no agreement on specific indicators for role effectiveness, writings on regional powers can provide an intersubjective set of indicators.

Consequently, role performance can be evaluated according to two sets of criteria:

The first relates to the activity of the role characterized by the state claiming a regional role and using its resources to act in its region. This is sometimes referred to as “power over resources”. It can be measured by the extent of linkages with the region, or what is referred to in this literature as its “regional embeddedness”. In this regard, the variety of roles played can be political ones (mediator of conflicts, protector of peace), economic ones (contributor to development, regional integrator), or cultural-soft power ones (defender of a value system, a cultural center).

The second set of criteria relates to evaluating the same decisions, policies and actions but not against their activity and variety, but against their effectiveness. Literature on regional powers agree on two criteria for assessing effectiveness. First, a regional power should be able to secure the recognition and acceptance of its role both by other actors in the region and by international actors. This acceptance also includes the extent to which the state is regarded as representative of its region in the international arena. Second, a state’s external role should be evaluated against its degree of influence (power over outcomes). Influence can be assessed by the impact of a regional power on decisions and arrangements in different policy areas in the region (Nolte 2007, 12-5).

The model suggests that the two aspects, role activity and role effectiveness, rest on domestic bases of state-society relations. State action/ non-action or following a certain policy on a certain regional issues is based on its ability to mobilize support and resources for action or its management of pressures for non-action or for following the selected diplomacy. This reflects the three defining aspects of state-society relations, namely the extent of convergence or divergence of interests, a degree of state capacity and autonomy and an institutional framework for power distribution and practice.

Although more hard to establish, there are also links by which the three aspects of state-society relations affect the effectiveness of the role. One can question to what extent the democratization of the state and its legitimacy affects accepting its role by other states in the regional and international system. Another question is to what extent the influence of a state in its region rests on the degree of autonomy and capacity it enjoys in relation to social forces at home.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the actors and interactions affecting foreign policy and thus regional role vary according to policy area. The rise or decline of regional role, therefore, ranges according to policy issues. However, it is possible to conclude the analysis of a state's role in the economic, political and cultural spheres with a general account of the relative rise or decline in its overall regional role in relation to other states in the region.

V- Methodology: Case Selection and Data Sources

A- Method and Cases: Why Egypt and South Africa?

This research uses a comparative methodology in an attempt to transcend the particularities of a single case study to analyze across and within cases over time. The primary challenge in this regard is dealing with cases that have different histories and "identities" (Ragin 1987, 9-10). However, as pointed out by comparative foreign policy literature, there is no minimum set of criteria that must be met in a comparative inquiry. The aims and variables of the study are the factors that determine the selection of cases (Rosenau 1974, 15).

Following that rule, I selected Egypt as a relevant case study for my research for a number of reasons. Firstly, as noted before, Egypt is a hub of the Arab world and a

strategic ally for international players in the region. Thus, it is an important example among regional powers and the transformations of its domestic politics and regional role has been carefully watched and analyzed in academic and diplomatic circles inside and outside the region.

Secondly, although still referred to as one of the main actors in the region, Egypt has moved from the core of the Arab world politically and culturally to a position as, at best, a contested player. This represents a source of rising frustration among the Egyptian intelligentsia and middle class, who have long taken their country's centrality in the Arab world for granted. The established belief that Egypt was "bound to lead" by its geographical and historical realities has seriously been shaken.

Not only has the Egyptian decline been frustrating to domestic constituencies, but it has also been disappointing to the Arab intelligentsia. This is not surprising since the country is considered as a mirror for the Arab system (Ajami 1992, 91-3). This decline is sometimes a reason for dissatisfaction of international players that had recently began to resort to coordination with other actors in the resolution of the region's crises.

For these practical reasons, Egypt's regional decline begs an explanation that can be teased out by contrasting it with another case of relative success in sustaining a regional role. South Africa appeared to be a good candidate for such a comparison for a number of reasons. Firstly, South Africa has been able to manage the transformation of its foreign policy with a considerable degree of success in a short period of time. By the end of the Apartheid period, an attractive option for the new regime would have been to follow an isolationist policy to avoid being accused of replicating the apartheid policy of domination in the region. However, the post-apartheid South African state opted for a policy for positive engagement in Africa and beyond.

Secondly, since the end the 1990s, around the same time that Egypt seems to be declining, South Africa has consolidated its regional leadership. Despite disagreeing with major international players in crucial crises on the continent, South Africa's claim for regional leadership, especially in the Southern African sub-region, has been largely accepted by these players.

Thirdly, like the Egyptian role in the Middle East, the South African role in Africa in general and Southern Africa in particular is seen as essential for the region's stability.

There are high expectations from segments of the domestic constituency and regional and international actors on the impact of South Africa's role and positions in the key issues of the region.

Thus, although the two countries, differ in a number of respects, their differences do not discredit the possibility of comparison. They are different in terms of demographic composition and nature of historical ties to their regions, but they generally enjoy some of the domestic bases of regional leadership. However, the two states vary in their relative capacity to maintain their regional role. This opens the space for analysis that offers mutually beneficial lessons for the two countries.

In analyzing the change in the regional roles of both states, literature on the two countries paid little attention to how state- society relations have shaped their capacity to occupy a certain regional role which has been changing over time. This research tries to address that link between a state's regional role and its relationship with society in the two countries. Without ignoring the impact of both international and regional factors in affecting a state's regional role, the study argues that the change in that role cannot be understood without accounting for a state's relationship to its society. Accordingly, the question here is how has the role of the two countries developed in terms of activity and effectiveness in their regions and to what extent can state-society relations account for this change.

My preliminary hypothesis, based on tentative investigations, is that the relatively high capacity of the South African state has contributed to its ability to sustain its regional role. The South African state has vibrant institutions and a considerable ability to insulate these institutions from political pressures. This means it can design and implement policies that have been clearly unpopular even to partners in the governmental alliance. At the same time, it has been able to establish and maintain institutional links with societal forces through its consultative mechanisms without being accommodated by all the needs and interest of these forces.² On the other hand, it may be suggested that the

² For more information about the State in South Africa see: Omano Edigheji, *The Emerging South African Democratic Developmental State and the People's Contract*, paper presented to the project on The Democratic Developmental State in Africa, The Centre for Policy Studies and Partners in Development, March 2006; John M. Luiz, "South African State Capacity and Post-Apartheid Economic Reconstruction", *International Journal of Social Economics*, vol.29, no7&8, 2002, pp.594-614.

weak and low capacity of the state in Egypt keeps it internally pre-occupied, which comes at the expense of an active and effective role in its external sphere. The personalization of power, dominance of patronage relationships with businessmen, exclusionary nature of politics, especially towards Islamists, and the escalating use of violence are often cited as indicators for such weakness.³

However, it is noteworthy that the impact of state-society relations on the state's external role is neither simple nor static. This fact necessitates within-case as well as between cases comparisons. In other words, the comparison needs not just to be between the two states, but along time and areas of foreign policy in both countries. An examination of the relationship between the two variables in the two cases along time can lead to insightful findings about the nature of this relationship.

B- Data Sources and methodological tools:

I will use four major data sources to analyze what kind of state and societal interests lie behind the different roles played by the two states in their regions. The first source is each state's leader and top officials' speeches and foreign policy documents. These speeches and documents delineate the state's self-perception of its role in the region, which may be different from how this role is perceived in academic literature. In analyzing the official discourse, special attention will be given to:

1- Whether the discourse clearly identifies a certain regional role(s) for the state and the domestic attributes on which this role(s) rest. This actually includes two lines of inquiry; whether there is a clear specific regional role(s) that can be identified in the state discourse, and if yes, what is this role and if no, what does that indicate. This requires examining statements, speeches and documents of a general nature. Accordingly, in addition to general foreign policy plans and documents, speeches on the state of the nation, freedom or national day celebrations, and regional summits will be examined.

2- The extent to which the discourse aims at mobilizing mass opinions around a common vision or a set of values for the region. This also means investigating how the discourse

³ For more information about the state in Egypt see Nazih N. Ayubi, *Overstating the Arab States*; Ninette Fahmy, *The Politics of Egypt: State-Society Relations* (London: Routledge Crazon, 2002); Basma Kodmani, the Dangers of Political Exclusion: Egypt's Islamic Problem, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Carnegie papers, no.,63, Oct. 2005.

sells and rationalizes state foreign policy and what actors and interests this discourse addresses.

The second source of data is the reports and statistics published by the state and the societal groups about the level of engagement in the economic, political and cultural affairs in the region and their stances on crucial issues of the region. Thus whereas the first data source covers the state's vision, the second reflects state and society's stance and performance. These, stances and performance, will be evaluated against the state's coordination with societal forces to achieve its vision.

Each of the different societal actors should not be seen as a single player representing coherent set of interests and positions. Divisions and differences occur inside each group. For example, reference is often made to the difference between big corporations and small business in the two countries in terms of interests and level of consultation and coordination with the state. The same observation can be made in reference to the labor of different industries or different intellectual trends.

The question that follows is how the state, through its foreign policy in the region, manages the difference, and sometimes conflict, of interests among the influential societal forces. That is believed to reflect and mirror state's domestic capacity in relationship with these forces.

As a third source of data, I will be conducting is semi-structured interviews with state bureaucrats, businessmen, representatives of key civil society groups, intellectuals and academics. These interviews are intended to complement the analyses of the state's vision and societal interests about the country's regional role on one hand and cover the local debates about state-society relations and its impact on the state's regional role on the other. It is particularly important to discover how segments of society see the state's role in its regional setting and how they react to the rise or decline of that role.

The conduct of the fieldwork will be in accordance with the rules of the department of politics at the University of Oxford for overseas fieldwork.

Lastly, data sources will be supplemented by scholarly writings about state-society relations, and each state's foreign policy and regional role. Some of these are included in the bibliography listed at the end of this research design. I intend to make use of the

resources available in the libraries of Oxford University and the libraries of Cairo university. Some recent publications of Egyptian research institutions not available in the two universities' libraries will be purchased.

Thesis Structure

The proposed outline of the study is as follows:

Chapter One: State-Society Relations and Regional Role: Theoretical Framework

Chapter Two: Regional policy orientation: Statist visions and Societal interests

This chapter examines the foreign policy orientations of the two countries in their regions. These refer to the general attitudes and commitment, or lack of commitment, towards the region, the level of activism and tendency for leadership, versus preference for limited and selective engagement, in the region. They also include the prioritization of sectoral and sub-regional engagements. The state's self-perception and different societal forces' orientations will both be presented.

Section one: Egypt's Regional Policy orientation: The state's vision and societal interests

Section two: South Africa's Regional Policy Orientation: The state's vision and societal interests

Section three: Comparison and Conclusions

Chapter three: State – society Relations and the State's Regional Economic Role

Section One: Egypt's Regional Economic Role

- State's vision and priorities
- State and Society economic engagement in the region: Business Linkages and Migration flows
- Evaluation: How state-society relations explain the performance
- Case Study: The Qualified Industrial Zones with Israel

Section Two: South Africa's Regional Economic Role

- State's vision and priorities
- State and Society economic engagement in the region: size and distribution of trade and investments
- Evaluation: How state-society relations explain the performance
- Case study: The case of South African telecommunication companies in Nigeria

Section Three: Comparisons and Conclusions

Chapter Four: State- Society Relations and the State's Role in Conflict Resolution

Section One: Egypt's Role in Conflict Resolution

- State's vision and priorities
- Egypt's Role in conflict resolution: the level of engagement and rising competing players
- Evaluation: How state-society relations explain role performance
- Case Study: the role of Egypt in the Palestinian- Israeli Conflict

Section two: South Africa's Role in Conflict Resolution

- State's vision and priorities
- South Africa's Role in Conflict Resolution: political and military Engagement
- Evaluation: How state-society relations explain role performance
- Case Study: The role of South Africa in the Zimbabwean political conflict

Section three: Comparison and Conclusions

Chapter Five: State-Society Relations and the State's Soft Power in their regions

Section one: Egypt's Soft power in the Arab world

- State's vision of its cultural and ideational role
- Egypt's cultural influence in the region: what has changed?
- Evaluation: How state-society relations have affected role performance
- Case Study: Is Egypt still the centre of moderate Islam?

Section Two: South Africa's Soft Power

- State's vision of its cultural and ideational role
- South Africa's soft power in the region: How is the "rainbow nation" presented?
- Evaluation: How state-society relations have affected the role performance
- Case study: South Africa model of democracy

Section three: Comparison and Conclusions

Chapter Six: Conclusions: State-society Relations and Regional Role: Evidences from Egypt and South Africa

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