

**THE ROLE OF EGYPT IN THE U.S. - SOVIET SUPERPOWER RIVALRY,  
1945 - 1981.**

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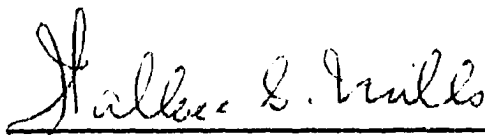
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## TRIBUTE

If fire tempers steel and temptation the just man, this endeavour is dedicated to all those who, in spite of the gravest of all odds, forge ahead, seeking for excellence; to whom nothing comes without a struggle. I salute you all.

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## ABSTRACT

The initial U.S. involvement in Egypt stemmed from the concern that the loss of Britain's power in the Middle East may lead to Soviet aggrandizement in the Middle East. In the policy of containment, Egypt featured prominently in the U.S. strategic calculations, even though Egyptian acquiescence was not gained in the early days of U.S. - Soviet rivalry. It was important to protect western principles and western, particularly American, interests in light of the Soviet Union's ideologically - inspired designs.

The Soviet Union was motivated by marxist ideology in the early days of its revolution and sought to accomplish the dictates of its doctrine by fomenting revolutions and in turn taking advantage of the prevailing conditions to seek for the establishment of Soviet-style governments. The Soviet Union, in the aftermath of W.W. II -- having failed to establish itself in the countries of the Northern Tier -- saw opportunity in the Middle East where British presence was opposed. This was evident in nationalism of the time. The Soviet Union provided support to the nationalist government of Egypt to act as the bulwark against U.S. and western plans which were designed to contain Soviet expansion. Egypt's active opposition to U.S. and western strategic calculations lasting until the first few years of the '70's helped at that time to neutralize anti-Soviet containment policy, designed by the U.S.

Notable is the fact that both the U.S. and the Soviet Union in the pre-W.W. II period were not ready to play broad international role typical of the superpowers. The war brought the two nations together. Disagreements on the nature of the post-war world led to rivalry in which both nations sought to control Egypt as a means of fulfilling their strategic calculations and as a means of satisfying policy and doctrinal objectives.

Symbolic as the rivalry may be in such regions as Sub-Saharan Africa, the importance of Egypt to the superpowers, relative to its geo-strategic location, provides cogent reasons for competition in that country. Egypt began to feature prominently in the geo-strategic calculations of the superpowers in the hey day of the cold war rivalry. Egypt was thus an active participant in the U.S. - Soviet rivalry.

The superpowers' involvement in Egypt revolved around the indispensability of oil (abundant where Egypt has a degree of control) economic and industrial growth and around strategic calculations, which Egypt dominates in the Arab/Mediterranean, North African/Middle East area. Both superpowers seem to have benefitted and paid dearly for their competition in Egypt.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the course of doing the research on this topic, I extensively used the library facilities at the Carleton, Dalhousie and Saint Mary's Universities. To the administrative staff of these universities, particularly, those of Saint Mary's, I would like to convey my sincere and heart-felt appreciation. I would also seize this opportunity to give thanks to all my professors, particularly those in the History Department at Saint Mary's whose high level of intellectual acumen inspired me to seek attaining greater heights in my quest for knowledge.

Of all acquaintances, friendships and associations I made, while studying at SMU, none made more lasting impression on me than the marvellous associations of Dr. Wallace G. Mills, my thesis supervisor, and the ex-President of Saint Mary's University -- Professor Owen D. Carrigan -- my advisor. (But for them, my interest in Egypt -- a mixture of curiosity and admiration dating back to my childhood prowess in Bible knowledge -- would have fizzled as a result of the demands for intense mental and physical exertion by my thesis.) Indeed their forbearance and guidance; their encouragement, support and wise counsel propelled me into the successful completion of this project. Borrowing the words of my father: "These are selfless men who have devoted their lives to the betterment of mankind and should deserve nothing but the best from their fellow men;" onto thou be peace.

The topic which I chose, has not been fully addressed by historians and writers; information relating to the subject had been fragmentary; consequently, the product of my endeavour was an effort to make a fresh and significant contribution to historical knowledge and which has proved challenging. I made effort to remain objective, recognizing the divergent opinions held by writers whose sources provided me with the fundamental information which shaped my thesis. I have a special place in my heart for a host of men and women who played various roles in the course of completing my studies. To them all I say, "thank you so much".



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## INTRODUCTION

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The U.S. - Soviet rivalry emerged out of the W.W. II alliance of the U.K., the United States, and France (western countries) with the Soviet Union, against Nazi Germany and the other axis powers.<sup>1</sup> This thesis examines the diplomatic and political aspects of the rivalry in the context of the Cold War. It attempts to examine (in historical perspective) Egypt's role in the post W.W. II relationship between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Notably, the superpower relationship has been dominated by conflict and rivalry.

Of historical significance is the examination of the role of Egypt in the superpower competition which was ideologically motivated, global in proportion, and which sought to establish who defined the post W.W. II world order. The study should, at least, provide one with the context in which the current superpower relations exists, particularly, in the realm of association or relations with middle powers, in this case, Egypt.

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The parameter for this study would include the examination of the origins and nature of U.S. - Soviet rivalry, and as well, Egypt's legacy, using specific and relevant events pertaining to the rivalry. Egypt's profile -- the importance of Egypt, relative to the superpower rivalry -- is covered in Chapter I. The chapter addresses the question of Egypt's history, nationalism, and that country's vital importance to prospective national interests of the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

How the struggle for pre-eminence between the two superpowers was shaped is dealt with in Chapter II. The chapter discusses the evolution of the U.S. and the Soviet policies in Egypt. Chapter III, The Nature of the Rivalry, attempts to deal with the prevailing environment after W.W. II, and the context in which the U.S. and the Soviet Union competed for the control of Egypt. It looks at when and how the rivalry was precipitated and the conduct of the rivalry leading to the involvement in Egypt.

A significant portion of the thesis is devoted to Egypt's active participation in the superpower rivalry. This involves an examination of the significant events, particularly in Egypt to the extent that Egypt's active participation in the rivalry is exposed. This is the subject of Chapter IV and Chapter V.

Instances, emanating from events examined, in Chapters I, II and III adduce to the view that Egypt's role in the superpower rivalry was inevitable. In view of Egypt's importance to the superpowers, the rivalry in Egypt could hardly be considered as symbolic. The trend negates the argument that the superpower rivalry in Egypt is symbolic.

Both superpowers, whose strategists exemplify the cream of the best minds, have consistently revised their policies in order to grapple with managing the projection of influence into Egypt. These strategists maintain the perception that Egypt is very important to the dynamism of a great or super power. This conclusion is drawn (after the exploration of Egypt's prominent role in the rivalry) from Chapter IV and from a section of Chapter V.

While Chapter IV concentrates on the events concerning Egypt's role up to the last days of the 1960's, Chapter V, the final chapter, follows up with the events in the early 1970's. These events concern the new Egyptian leadership of Sadat: the events following the death of his predecessor, Nasser, and the events leading to the eventual rapprochement between the U.S. and Egypt after the expulsion of a hoard of Soviets in Egypt by Sadat. The chapter winds up the thesis with the exploration of the cost and the benefit of the superpower

rivalry (to Egypt, the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.) in Egypt, and as well, draws an inference from this study, to the extent that the direction of the superpower rivalry is discerned.

Mention should be made that the historians' writings on the superpower rivalry have focused attention mostly on western Europe, the Near East, Middle East, the Mediterranean, and North Africa, with little emphasis on Egypt. Writers tended to place more emphasis on the regional than the national roles, with regard to the superpower rivalry. This endeavour may be one of the few exceptions.

The evolution of this topic derives from the major events which range from the Napoleonic invasion of 1798<sup>2</sup>, the construction of the Suez Canal, the British invasion of 1882, the nationalist resistance to the Anglo-French presence, W.W. I and W.W. II, to the Egyptian revolution of 1952. These events seemingly reinforced each other in a chain of attention, culminating in the ultimate attraction of Egypt to the United States and the Soviet Union. We shall be content with exploring the immediate post W.W. II events which established Egypt's role in the superpower rivalry.

This study is not exhaustive, nor could it be, given the time constraint and the limitations imposed on M.A. thesis relative

to its length, its scope and its time window. It does not attempt to cover all facets of Egyptian life or Egyptian history in the period under study. Neither does it cover all aspects of the U.S. - Soviet rivalry in Egypt. The wealth of Egypt's history and as well the superpower rivalry is so immense that it could hardly be exhausted through this medium. Nevertheless, the objective here is to establish the unique role played by Egypt, however minute the endeavour appears. The focus is on the forces at play in the U.S. and the Soviet Union's attempt to secure exclusive control over Egypt dating back to the period after W.W. II and extending to the period after the death of the Egyptian Head of State, Nasser, in 1970; notably, Sadat's era in Egypt would be covered.

The U.S. - Soviet conflict metamorphosed into a full-blown rivalry characterized by arms race, propaganda, alliance network, and by the quest for technological superiority. For the competing superpowers, it was incumbent on each to emerge predominant and thus be capable of establishing the socio-economic, political and ideological direction of the post W.W. II order. This could account for the emphasis placed on enunciating the most strategically efficient means of gaining pre-eminence. Each was zealous in safeguarding its national interest and each was enunciating and pursuing its separate policies in a competitive fashion. High stakes were placed on

the acquisition of allies, and on establishing friendly/client relations with otherwise hostile or neutral governments. It should be clearly noted that it was under this prevailing environment that Egypt was considered to be crucial to the strategic calculations of the superpowers.

For more than four decades, the superpowers were preoccupied with projecting influence in all the regions, from the Far East, the Near East, the Mediterranean/Arab/Middle East region, to the Southern, Horn and Sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific regions to Latin America. The superpower rivalry in the Middle East, which began with the onset of the dislocation of the once imperial powers in the late forties and early fifties, is captivating; the involvement in Egypt is an integral part of superpower struggle for predominance. Each superpower sought for the control of world affairs and the monopoly over the exploitation and the access to vital resources located here, as in the other contentious parts of the world.

Typical of jockeying for position, the superpower conduct was described in these terms: "they barge hither and yon in ploys directed primarily at outwitting or stalemating the other."<sup>3</sup> The whole U.S. - Soviet conduct has dominated the post W.W. II era.

By 1950, when the U.S. - Soviet rivalry had been established, both states had emerged as superpowers. At this time Europe was no longer the only source of contention. The disagreement in Europe was transformed into the quest for acquisition of tools, means, ways, and strategies of establishing and protecting the perceived ideological interests of the incumbent superpower. To the superpowers, the Afro-Asian world was appealing not only from a geo-strategic stand point but also from the view that their support would enhance the bargaining position of the favoured superpower.

In the era of "confrontation in which the conventional action-reaction syndrome dictates choices, [in the period when] Soviet and American policies were characterized in general, by assertion and containment,"<sup>4</sup> Egypt features prominently in the political, ideological and strategic calculations of the superpowers. Assuming the role of the defender of western interest, the U.S. extended its responsibility to Egypt, the entire Middle East, and wherever potential and deeply entrenched western interests may have been at the risk of exposure to communism. Egypt thus became one of the areas, outside of Europe, in which the U.S. became involved, early in the Post-W.W. II superpower rivalry.

Egypt's disposition, which affected the superpower rivalry, is evident in Egyptian/Nasserite/Arab nationalism, opposition to

western defense initiatives, the Czech-Egyptian Arms deal, Bandung Conference and the Non Aligned Movement, the Suez Canal Crisis, the whole anti-west activities of the Egyptian government in the 1960s (i.e. support to revolutionaries in the Arab/Middle East, etc.), the anti-U.S., anti-Israeli Arab coalition in the wake of the Arab-Israeli wars, and the change of Egyptian government leading to the shift of the Egyptian government towards the west. The above typify Egypt's active participation in the events pertaining to the superpower rivalry.

The Egyptian leadership gained immense national and international recognition and extracted enormous economic and military aid from the contending superpowers. The unpredictable conduct of Egypt's policy, masterminded by a seemingly proud and ambitious Egyptian leader, fostered western animosity towards the Egyptian government -- i.e. after avenues designed by the U.S. to grapple with the existing leadership met with disaster. The Egyptian disposition hindered western strategic plans in Egypt and by 1969 had given the Soviet Union virtual control of Egypt<sup>5</sup> from which the Soviet Union was projecting influence into the Middle East and the adjoining regions, threatening the overall superpower influence of the U.S.

It seemed the U.S. had lost in the first battle with the



Soviet Union to take control of Egypt:<sup>6</sup> Nationalism was rife and tended to promote intransigence and unbridled anti-western, anti-imperial feelings; Egypt, for a while, remained a bastion of Arab nationalism. The Soviet penetration of Egypt was short-lived. The Soviet influence over Egypt failed to adequately address the Arab - Israeli conflict which tended to dislocate Egypt's economy to the chagrin of Egypt's leadership. The Soviet policy failed to satisfy the aspiration of the Egyptian leadership who wanted to play major regional and international roles, devoid of external control.

Indeed, the Egyptian leadership recognized that the western presence had been partially eradicated, only to be replaced by that of the Soviet Union, which in the aftermath of the June (1967) War, proved irritating and costly to the Egyptians. This awareness could partly explain the shift of Egypt's policies, after the death of Nasser in 1970, towards the west.

The expulsion of the Soviet Union's personnel, numbering thousands, spelled failure to the 1950's Kremlin conception of pending transformation of the Egyptian society into a Marxist Leninist state; the Egyptian unilateral action heralded a reorientation of Egypt's policies towards the U.S. The inroads made in Egypt by the Soviet Union in the fifties and

sixties were overturned. The Soviet Union's superpower status, not only in Egypt but in the areas where Soviet influence derived from Egypt, suffered drastically.

Despite the shift by the Egyptians towards the west and in spite of the ultimate Egyptian rapprochement with the U.S., the Soviet loss was tempered with the optimism born out of the belief that there could be a turn-around on the part of the Egyptians, brought about by possible U.S. miscalculation, coupled with a new leadership which might appreciate Soviet intentions. Accordingly, the Soviet Union still attempts to reassert its influence in Egypt.

For both superpowers, Egypt features prominently in their calculations. This is because of the faltering British influence (brought about by the ravages of W.W. II and complicated by Egyptian nationalism) in the age of the ideologically motivated superpower rivalry. Thus both the U.S. and the Soviet Union saw Egypt as a prized area to be contested for in view of its geo-strategic, economic and diplomatic value.

## REFERENCES AND ENDNOTES FOR THE INTRODUCTION

1. It seems the circumstances surrounding that alliance with the Soviet Union is still a subject of controversy. Before W.W. II, both the U.S. and the Soviet Union pursued isolationist policies which, until now, kept them distant apart. See also, Wayne S. Cole. An Interpretive History of American Foreign Relations, Illinois, Dorsey Press, 1968, p. 505.
2. The July 1, 1798 Napoleonic invasion of Egypt was, indeed, a watershed in Egyptian history. The invasion afforded Egypt exposure to the western world and consequently, established the crucial strategic importance of Egypt. The recognition of interests in Egypt by the great powers set the stage for future and subsequent rivalry in that country.
3. Helen Kitchen. U.S. Interests in Africa, (Washington Papers No 98), New York, Praeger Publishers for the Centre For Strategic and International Studies, 1983, pp. 19-20.
4. Gregory Treverton, ed. Crisis Management and the Superpowers in the Middle East, Hampshire, England, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981, p. 44.
5. This is evident in the social and economic restructuring of the Egyptian society. Commercial properties under multi-national control were nationalized, land was redistributed, and the national domestic policy was partitioned into five-year phases, as practised in the Soviet Union. The presence of thousands of Soviet military and technical experts was felt.
6. In actual fact, Egypt's objectives reflected a complex need for national, regional, and international recognition devoid of interference from the outside.

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## CHAPTER I

### EGYPT'S PROFILE: LEGACY

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The legacy of Egypt is immense; its history is rich and legendary. It dates back to ancient and biblical times, to the reign of pharaohs, and beyond. Well noted is the fact that Egypt was one part of the cradle of modern civilization. This is attested to by the archaeological findings; the writings (hieroglyphics), the drawings and the paintings depicted Egypt as a political entity with strong identity, extending "back to the 4th. millennium B.C. -- when the ancient Egyptian civilization was established."<sup>1</sup> Then, as presently, Egypt captivated the attention of the people of its times. It is a focus of study for anthropologist and archaeologists; it is also the centre of rivalry.

Egypt is unique in view of its geographic location. It is bounded on the south by Sudan, on the north by the Mediterranean Sea, on the west by Libya, and by Israel on the east. Situated at the junction of Africa, Europe and Asia,<sup>2</sup> Egypt participates in African,<sup>3</sup> Arab and Mediterranean worlds.

It is, as well, part of the Middle East region.<sup>4</sup> It shares fraternal, linguistic and socio-cultural affinities with the peoples of the above listed areas.<sup>5</sup> As A. I. Dawisha put it:

Egypt occupies a unique position in the Arab world. It constitutes the north-eastern part of Africa and is linked to the Asian continent by the Sinai peninsula. Consequently, Egypt forms a natural bridge between the Western and Eastern Sectors of the Arab world. To the West and South of Egypt lie the African Arab states of Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Sudan. Across Sinai and the Red Sea, Egypt has easy access to the Asian Arab states of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the two Yemen republics and the Gulf states in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.<sup>6</sup>

Egypt symbolizes the main centre of human history, a bridge and a dividing line between the western and eastern civilization.<sup>7</sup> With a land area of approximately 1,002,258 square kilometres, Egypt's present population of more than 51 million, makes it the most populous Arab nation, and in the continent of Africa, the second to Nigeria. Egypt is a ready market for industrial products.

Drawing appeal from its long standing history, notably, its pharaonic and dynastic heritage, Egypt (at the height of its eminence) maintained influence as far as Egyptian Sudan, the biblical land of Kush<sup>8</sup>. Egypt's relationship with the Judeo-Christian faith is well documented. It has been established that, "modern Egyptians are a creative melange of Africans and Europeans, Arabs and Nubians, Muslims and Copts, religious and

devotees and secular pragmatists, peasants, and city dwellers"<sup>9</sup>. Although the major language spoken in Egypt is Arabic, and the major religion in practice, Islam, English and French are not uncommonly spoken.

Popular perceptions conclude that the Nile river is a vital Egyptian resource. Journeying from the Sudan to the Mediterranean sea, the River Nile breathes life into Egypt:

There is almost no rainfall except along the coast, and the country's two-season climate, a relatively cool winter and an extremely hot summer, is marked by dramatic day-to-night variations in temperature, a reminder of the surrounding desert.<sup>10</sup>

Egypt could hardly support a fraction of its population but for the Nile; its temperature ranging from forty-five to one hundred and twenty degrees fahrenheit. Without the Nile, there probably would have been a different Egypt. Its principal agricultural products include cotton, cereals, sugar and sheep. In the manufacturing sector, Egypt boasts textiles and fertilizers. Egypt also has fishing, and mining resources, i.e. petroleum, phosphate, manganese, salt and iron ore. The construction of the Suez Canal provided a new and important sea lane not only to merchants who traded between Europe, Asia, and Africa, but also to merchants whose focus and interest was the Americas. As R. Michael Burrel and Abbass R. Kelidar conceded:

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 gave the country an international strategic importance that other parts of the Arab world did not share until the relatively new discovery of, and growing demand for, their petroleum resources ... the Canal was so internationally important -- and indeed continues to be so important -- that France and Great Britain felt it necessary to invade Egypt on account of the Canal [in 1882 and in 1956 with Israel].<sup>13</sup>

Mention should be made that technology has made the country more arable and more habitable; single-unit and central air conditioning, although not totally affordable to the general populace, provides a new lease on life while modern irrigation has increased agricultural productivity.

Until very recently, writers have painted pictures of the Egyptians as being vulnerable to exploitation, as a result of their good-natured, hospitable, and generous attributes. They were recorded as being incapable of fending off intrusion by foreign elements. The outward manifestation of centuries of dominance, the argument postulated, is the docile Egyptian so capable of violent outburst that collectively they violently rejected self rule, preferring to show they were unsuited to rule themselves.<sup>14</sup> The writers' characterization of the Egyptian personality was a reflection of the realities of the masses domiciled in a conquered territory; derogatory description of the country and its people was the norm rather than the exceptional.

Most of the writings reflected distorted and negative images formulated to perpetuate myths, and in turn, justify crusades, adventures, and exploitation. In an atmosphere of Egyptian intransigence and hostility towards the west (in the heyday of nationalism), it is not inconceivable that such writings would be exploited by Egypt's detractors for propaganda purpose just as Egypt exploited Britain's colonial legacy at the height of Egyptian nationalism.

The true picture is that Egypt was once a powerful and influential political entity.<sup>15</sup> In the period before the birth of Christ, the Egyptian Empire embraced Sudan and the Euphrates region, Nubia, Syria and Palestine.<sup>16</sup> The Pharoos reigned supreme then as in the period after the death of Christ. Subsequently, Egypt lost its dynamism and consequently, fell into the orbit of stronger and more dynamic polities. Egypt fell into Nubian, Libyan, and Persian hands. Ultimately Egypt was conquered by the Romans about 30 B.C. and for many centuries thereafter, remained a vassal state as in the time of the Ottoman Empire.

Egypt, between 1517 and 1798 was part of the Ottoman Empire. At this time, administration of the country was under the aegis of governors (the Memelouks) appointed by the Ottoman Turks from Istanbul. Following the Napoleonic invasion, Egypt



fell into the hands of the French, then quickly into the hands of Great Britain. Egypt remained a province within the Ottoman Empire until about 1811 when Muhammed Ali ousted the French and finalized the elimination of the governors appointed from Istanbul. Even Muhammed (Mehmet) Ali, who in 1805 gained recognition from the Ottoman Sultan as the Pasha of Egypt until his successors (Khedives) confronted direct British intervention, was an Albanian officer.<sup>17</sup> Ali was able to transform Egypt into a viable, dynamic, and autonomous entity, possessing its own standing army.

Nevertheless, France maintained a dominant commercial interest in Egypt (thanks to the initial contact established through Napoleon's conquest) until late in the 19th century. After all, the Suez Canal construction was started in 1858 and completed in 1869 under French auspices. As Ali's dynasty remained, the governance of Egypt passed into the hands of successive Khedives whose legitimacy was lost, close to the end of the 19th. century, as a result of corruption, ineptitude and financial mismanagement of Egypt's wealth.<sup>18</sup>

The disgruntled elites, particularly those of the standing army whose mobility could no longer be guaranteed due to the financial woes that had bedeviled the Khedives, rebelled in 1879. Led by Ahmed Orabi, the elites in the military also

bemoaned a perceived lack of national free will in the exercise of governance.<sup>19</sup> Their revolt, anti-foreign in orientation, was the first recorded nationalist uprising in modern Egyptian history. It ultimately gave way to the intervention of Britain whose troops had by 1882 occupied Egypt in order to restore law and order. Henceforth the administration of Egypt was carried out by Britain's representatives who sought to maintain Britain's commercial interests, particularly, in the Suez Canal Company. Between 1882 when Egypt was occupied and 1922 when it gained independence, Egypt was virtually under Britain's control. At this time, Egypt seemed to yearn for national assertion.

After protection was extended to Egypt in 1914, Britain was able to recognise Sultan Huessein as the Egyptian ruler after Khedive Abbas Hilmi was deposed.<sup>20</sup> Huessein's successor, King Faud I, enjoyed Britain's confidence after being installed in 1917. He gradually lost the confidence of a tangible number of Egyptians; he was materialistic, pleasure-seeking and considered incapable of alleviating the problems that W.W. I brought to Egypt, such as scarcity of food. A large number of Britain's troops seemed to have descended on Egypt during the war; their continued presence after the end of the war, a seemingly baffling experience, was a source of disenchantment among most Egyptians possessing nationalist

orientation.

The country seemed on the march toward recapturing its dynamism. The Egyptians who benefitted from the educational programs of the British Empire were afforded education in all spheres including in the art of national defense and warfare. The emerging generation, representative of the new Egyptian personality, seemed well placed to demand exclusive leadership and administration of Egypt; they seemed to place Egypt towards the path of international recognition and the reassertion of seemingly, lost dynamism and lost national glory.

Following the granting of partial independence to Egypt in 1922, the country was jointly controlled by Britain and an indigenous monarchy which ceased to exist after 1952 following the intervention of the Egyptian military officers. Britain was to finally relinquish control over Egypt in the wake of the revolution in Egypt.

The embodiment of resentment against foreign involvement in Egypt, the military officers who toppled the ruling monarch were revolutionaries led by General Neguib. It was also this group of Egyptians who were the pioneers of modern Egyptian nationalism. Egypt's dynamism was resurrected by this group

of Egyptians who carved out Egypt's role in the age of the superpower rivalry.

It is thus discernable that Egypt's history is reflective of not just domination by intruders. Egypt was once a dynamic political entity and since the beginning of this century, has made an attempt to reassert its national will, evident in the activities of its nationalist movement.

\* \* \*

#### EGYPTIAN NATIONALISM AND ARAB NATIONALISM

It is important to discuss Egyptian and Arab nationalism. Their origins predate the nationalism of the 1950's; the phenomena were the harbingers to the nationalism of Nasser's era. Owing to the nationalism of Egypt, which was a reflection of Arab or pan-Arab nationalism, Britain and France -- the erstwhile dominant powers in the Arab/Middle East -- were forced to withdraw completely from the region. The resulting vacuum which opened gave impetus to the superpower competition for influence in Egypt, the subject of this thesis.

The Egyptian and Arab nationalism have, then as now, influenced the superpower rivalry in Egypt. Hence the significance of nationalism can not be underestimated. The Egyptian nationalism was an offshoot of Arab nationalism which originated from the area now called Syria. This assertion could be given credence by the fact that one of the earliest known active nationalists fled from Syria to Egypt to escape prosecution in late 19th century. Egypt later became a haven for other nationalists; this group of exiled Arab nationalists could have spread the passions of nationalism among Egyptians.

Pan-Arabism, a rather sluggish movement at the onset -- in the early 19th century -- had been in existence before Nasser's brand of nationalism. Arab nationalism is traced to the Wahhabi movement for the restoration of pure Islam of 'the Rightly -Guided Caliphs'.<sup>21</sup> By middle of the 19th century, the membership of the movement, which began to thrive in the Arabian peninsula, had developed some of the themes of the Islamic modernism. They began to perceive threats and enemies of a revitalised Islam as emanating from Europe. They increasingly promoted a movement against Europe's corruption of Islam and thus provided the roots for the evolution of Arab nationalist movement.<sup>22</sup>

In Syria, opposition against the rulership of the Ottomans by

the fledgling movement was in line with the concern for Arab culture and language.<sup>23</sup> In the face of the threat of the Syrian rulership to the movement, a top leader of the movement, Abd al-Rahman al Kawakibi from Aleppo in Syria, took refuge in Egypt to escape the attention of Syria's secret police.<sup>24</sup> The movement continued to grow in the late 19th century. The adherents to the movement, which aspired for renewed and corrupt-free Islam in Syria and in Istanbul, resented the subjugation of the existing rulership and emerged as the Young Turks. Consisting mostly of Arabs and operating from Syria, the Young Turks founded the Committee of Union of Progress in 1887 and helped in the growth of the Arab nationalist movement.<sup>25</sup> They espoused non-interference and independence, but maintained military orientation. They were quick to use force (or mob action) to make their feelings known.

By the turn of the century the Arab nationalist movement was no longer provincial; its leadership consisted of Syrians, Egyptians and Iraqis. In the immediate period before the outbreak of W.W. I, the separation of Arab provinces from the Ottoman Empire (as a means of fulfilling the cultural and political aspirations of the Arabs) became one of the concerns of the Arab movement.

The Arab movement remained fragmentary until the end of Ottoman rule (after W.W. I) when Arabism began to have political effect on the Arab people.<sup>26</sup> The movement gained mass appeal as Arabs regularly congregated after W.W. I to express disappointment over the refusal by Britain and France to grant independent status to Arab provinces as stipulated by Hussein - McMahon papers. The congregations increased and so did their animosity.

By 1920, the victory of the Allied powers had conditioned their military presence in Syria, Egypt, Palestine and the entire Arab peninsula. In Egypt, as in other Middle East areas, the Arabs were deeply concerned about the future of their lands. In Syria King Faisal (one of the major actors in the Arab revolt against Ottoman rule in 1916) was considered impotent due to his unfruitful negotiations with the European powers.<sup>27</sup> Nationalist feeling was high and although the uprising against the presence of French military forces in Syria gave way to French intervention and subsequent control of Syria after July 1920,<sup>28</sup> the Arab national movement continued to wax strong throughout the Arab world.

The Arab peoples in the different provinces of the defunct Ottoman empire and in Egypt sought for exclusive and autonomous rule. Notably, Egyptian nationalists were among

the Arab nationalists whose land experienced independence first. Nevertheless, the Arab nationalist movement could not come to terms with the initial disappointment suffered in the immediate post W.W. I period.

The movement increasingly schemed for the creation of an all-embracing, all-unifying Arab State. This scheme hardly took off since it did not gain Britain's blessing. Also the movement's achievement was hampered by the rivalry for leadership among the Egyptian and Iraqi nationalists. Under Britain's auspices, the Arab League, a Pan-Arab Union, was born in 1945 embracing Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Transjordan and Yemen.<sup>29</sup>

After W.W. II, Arab nationalists' disenchantment was compounded by the creation of the state of Israel. Pan-Arab nationalism had since revolved around the quest for the elimination of western influence, the creation of a state for the Palestinian people and the restoration of orthodox Islamic law, tenets and culture. In a bid to fulfil these aspirations, the movement had been confronted with different strains of radicalism, liberalism and, conservatism. This is true because the movement is made up of masses of different persuasions and ideological orientations and state origins. Bringing them together was the common objective of eliminating



all forms of shackles seemingly debarring them from freedom of nationalist/Arabist assertion. The faltering influence of the colonial powers created a vacuum for superpower control, and as well a vacuum for leadership within.

Because the aspirations of the movement had tended to dislocate Western interests, Pan-Arabism had been a dilemma partly because the attempt to squelch the movement had proved abortive. The Egyptian experience supported the fact that Arab nationalism could not be squelched; rather the movement quickened the pace for the declaration of independence not only in Egypt but also in the rest of the formerly Ottoman provinces. Significantly, Arab nationalism is bedeviled with internecine conflict for leadership and fanaticism. It is also riddled with different shades of idealism, shared by members, which makes attaining a consensus and achieving objectives difficult. Consequently, matters seem to be addressed through violence rather than dialogue and negotiation. Speaking to me about Egyptian and Arab nationalism, an Arab law student (of Egyptian parenthood) in a Canadian University did not hesitate to stipulate that in light of the subjugation and domination of his land by the colonial powers, "we" can be accommodating for a while, but there is a limit to which "we" can be mistreated. We can take it no more.

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Egyptian nationalism, synonymous with Arab nationalism, was at its early stage when the rebellion of 1879 caused the despatch of British troops to assert Britain's interest in 1882. The Egyptian nationalism was growing side by side with Pan-Arabism. The rebellion by the Egyptian nationalists of the time was restricted to few Egyptians whose interests centred on privileged political status. Notably it was the first nationalist uprising in modern time. Organised by Ahmad Orabi, the rebellion was carried out by army officers who opposed restraints imposed on their upward mobility. The rebellion not only unseated the ruling Khedive but also crystallized into a movement with the potential for a broad national appeal. The movement's activities increased tension and caused a deep concern to Britain; the latter sent in troops to put down the rebellion and assumed effective control of Egypt to maintain Britain's interests (in spite of Ottoman rule in the Arab region).<sup>30</sup>

Egyptian nationalism gained membership and momentum at the turn of the century as wide-spread poverty and agitation for Arab, including Egypt's, national or self rule, became the order of the day. The Egyptian people emulated their Arab brethren in the Arab peninsula and increasingly clamoured for self-rule. Like their Arab kin in the Pan-Arab movement, the Egyptians drew inspiration from the Islamic religion. Divided

between loyalty for the Ottoman Turks and Britain, the Egyptians favoured neither and instead sought for autonomy from both but, first, the Ottoman Turks. When the Arabs rebelled against the Ottoman Turks and favoured Britain in W. W. I, Britain in turn conferred protection over its domain, including Egypt. Henceforth, Egyptian nationalism assumed a new dimension. With Britain's support, the Arab rebellion against the Ottoman Turks helped to transform the Egyptian nationalist movement into a broad mass movement.

W.W. I not only lifted Egypt's geo-strategic importance but also the spirit of the Egyptians who believed that Egypt's independence would come with the end of the war. Because Egypt failed to receive independence from Britain immediately after the war, Egyptian nationalism after 1918 expressed itself through anti-foreign acts of violence and thuggery.

Wilson's Fourteen Points reinforced the Egyptian quest for independence. Egyptians approved the proposal to dispatch an Egyptian delegation to Paris Peace Conference as envisioned by a rising political figure and the founder of Wafd party, Lawyer Sa'd Zaghlul. Not only did Britain refuse the proposal but also exiled the proponent of Egyptian participation in the conference to Malta. Widespread anti-British riots which are blamed on Egyptian nationalism resulted in that year, 1919.<sup>31</sup>

With a large contingent of British troops stationed in Egypt, incidence of nationalist agitation against Britain's control remained high. Increasingly, the Egyptian nationalists clamoured for independence. Relations between Britain's representatives and the Egyptian nationalists were strained. In view of the post-W.W. I domestic policy of the British Government, which was conciliatory in nature, the nationalism of Egypt was granted a hearing and thus was able to gain for Egypt a partial independence in 1922.

The activities of the nationalists did not die with this event but were carried to their limits in the years that followed. The consciousness of the Egyptian people was raised through the dominant (Wafd) political party, whose majority status in the Egyptian parliament was established in the first Egyptian federal election of 1923. Notably, the majority of the members of the parliament were nationalist-oriented. Through the Egyptian media, the activities of nationalists were publicised and these in turn aroused anti-foreign passions of the masses. Foreign-owned enterprises, particularly those of the British, the French and the Americans in Cairo and Alexandria, were targets of nationalist expression.

Due to the fact that western control over Egypt remained strong in spite of the independence granted to Egypt in 1922,

the nationalists became submerged in the agitation for the total elimination of foreign control over Egypt. Indeed, the Suez Canal zone was in Britain's hands and a sizable number of troops (consisting of mostly British and a few American and French soldiers) were maintained in the Canal zone. In addition, defence and protection matters were in Britain's hands while a disproportionate amount of wealth generated in Egypt was in the hands of non-Egyptian people. What was left of the control of the economy was held by a few land, shop and farm-owning Egyptians. The majority of the Egyptians were not only powerless but also wallowed in poverty. A disproportionate number of Egyptians who earned a living were on fixed income; shortage of food was not uncommon.

Resentment against the status quo rose with the increasing activism of the nationalists; this transformed the Egyptian masses into a block of Arabs opposed to foreign control of Egypt. King Faud I had curbed the powers of the nationalist-dominated Wafd party in 1930. Yet, due to nationalist agitation, the Anglo-Egyptian treaty was reached six years later, in August 1936. The agreement gave recognition to Egypt's aspirations, the withdrawal of British troops from Egypt, in exchange for maintenance of Britain's control over the Suez Canal. The Suez Canal zone was not affected by that agreement. Nationalist activities continued.

Until the beginning of W.W. II, Egyptian nationalism was motivated by the zeal to rid Egypt of the vestiges of colonialism. Mostly targeted was the Canal zone and the treaties which ensured Britain a presence in the area, the Anglo-Egyptian treaty. The activities of Wafd party were temporarily curbed with the dissolution of the parliament followed by an election that eliminated them as the dominant party in the parliament. After the war, nationalist extremism and anti-foreign nationalism intensified as a result of economic and social dislocation. The presence of over half a million troops in Egypt was a burning issue.

After the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, Egyptian nationalism assumed a new dimension. Henceforth, the focus was not just on the unity of Egyptian masses to attack and wrestle control of Egypt from the hands of the British but also on the subject of independence of all other Arab lands. Palestine was the central focus of Arab agitation which crystallized Egyptian nationalism with the other Arab-speaking peoples into a block of opposition against Britain's interests. The majority of prominent Egyptian political and business figures were behind the nationalist movement. The military and the professionals in Egypt, students, teachers, and worker's unions, rallied behind the Egyptian nationalist movement.

No doubt the mass support which the movement enjoyed was a crucible in the drive to eliminate foreign presence in Egypt. Negatively affected was Britain's desire to remain an influential power in the Arab region. This was a time that disagreements between the Western allies and the Soviet Union called for a strong and active British presence in Egypt and the entire Arab Middle East region.

Nationalist opposition to Britain's interests was intensified. Through the policies made by the Wafd-dominated Egyptian parliament -- the bastion of Egyptian nationalism -- Britain's influence was systematically eroded. Nationalists hardly saw benefits accruing from co-operation with Britain or its friends. The Egyptian nationalists were able to acquire the support of the Egyptian masses which participated in strikes, riots and violence against foreign interests to the extent that the security of westerners could hardly be safeguarded.

A series of attempts made by Britain to maintain a presence in Egypt, with the support of the United States, failed due to Egyptian nationalism. So intense was the agitation for the complete elimination of Britain's influence that the government was destabilized. The Egyptian military (possessing a great number of nationalists), the seemingly thriving base for law and order, seized political power. The

1952 coup d'etat ended the rule of the Egyptian King, Farouk, the son of King Faud I. Henceforth, the ability of Britain to maintain influence in Egypt was increasingly questioned and finally undermined in the years that followed. The Free Officers who masterminded the revolution began to pursue a nationalist policy following the assumption of the Egyptian leadership by Colonel Addel Nasser in 1953.

Nasser was quick to consolidate his position in the military; his popularity in Egypt soared through his vociferous opposition against Britain's presence in Egypt. Aware of the enormous support which nationalism commanded, Nasser sought to exploit this force by extending his realm of anti-British sentiments to include all Arab lands. Here, Arab and Egyptian nationalism are enmeshed.

It was 1954; the superpower rivalry had been established as will be seen in Chapters II and III. Britain's hold on Egypt and the entire region had been destabilized which set the pace for the U.S. and the Soviet Union to compete in Egypt. As Britain's exit loomed,<sup>32</sup> both superpowers hardened their respective resolve to transform Egypt and the entire region into a unified bloc against the rival and opposing superpower.

The U.S. post-W.W. II role had called for a strong British



presence in the Arab/Middle East region in light of the perils of Soviet communism. The U.S. perceived possible Soviet exploitation of the situation. In the U.S. view, it was necessary to fill the potential void created by the imbalance arising from the weakness of Great Britain. Concerned about the diminishing British influence in Egypt, the U.S. sought to apply containment policies in the region as a means of capping the expansion of communism into Arab/Middle East region.

Accordingly, the U.S. sought the co-operation of Egypt in an alliance system which would defend western interests in the area. However Egyptian nationalism and Pan-Arabism, as will be seen in Chapter IV, precluded the U.S. from executing the containment policy effectively. Egypt's brand of nationalism espoused total elimination of western presence from the Arab world, called for the autonomy of Arab people and assumed neutralist stance in the U.S. - Soviet rivalry.

The U.S. was, in the nationalists' view, an accomplice to Britain's colonial legacy since the U.S. closely participated in the negotiations for the retention of Britain's presence in Egypt and since the U.S. was active in the creation of the State of Israel. Thus, Egyptian acquiescence to western plans was virtually made impossible due to the nationalist feelings.

Arab nationalism, which embraces Egyptian nationalism, was initially a puzzle to the western world. It was later understood as the rallying cry for most disenchanted peoples of the Arab world whose religion seemed to have provided a source of inspiration for their nationalist agitations. It dealt a serious blow to western interests at the onset of U.S.-Soviet rivalry in the Arab/Middle East. Their activism, in light of the legacy of Muslim warriors of the Jihad era, seemed to inflame a passionate zealotry as they clamoured for the restoration of Arab autonomy. Supposedly, the Islamic religion, the Arab culture and the peoples' lost glory would be restored at the exit of the British and the French from their land. Egypt's leaders strongly believed that leadership of the Arab world should lie in its hands. Consequently, Arab nationalism remained at the forefront of Egyptian nationalism.

Havoc wreaked by nationalism on Britain's interests was two sided. First it undermined the ability of Britain to re-new existing treaties -- the basis of Britain's primacy in Egypt. It forestalled the ability of Britain's representatives to negotiate new treaties in Egypt. Thus, when the old treaties lapsed, there was no new understanding -- as will be seen in Chapter IV -- to legitimize and rationalise Britain's presence in Egypt under international law of conduct and in a civilized world. Secondly, nationalism created a situation of

instability, anarchy and jingoism which made democratic practice virtually impossible. Thus the ability of Britain to exercise influence in the traditional and in the British manner of diplomatic, political and cultural conduct was handicapped. Unlike the nationalism of late 1870's which brought limited structural changes in Egypt and the nationalism of the 1900's and 1920's which brought limited independence in Egypt, the nationalism of the post-W.W. II was pivotal to the erosion of Britain's power in Egypt.

It is Nasser's brand of nationalism which brought a complete independence to Egypt. This is not just because of the support which Egyptian nationalism enjoyed from the Egyptian masses but also because the Egyptian government was able to exploit the rivalry between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. As will be seen in Chapter V, Nasser received support from both superpowers through his nationalist ploy of neutralism which tended to favour the superpower that offered the most assistance at any given time.

The fact that nationalism was a serious factor affecting the U.S.-Soviet rivalry in Egypt is discernible in the discussions in the succeeding chapters. The post W.W. II value of Egypt (in the age of superpower rivalry) and the increasing onslaught of nationalist resistance to Britain's imperial

holdings, particularly in the Arab/Middle East region, had given direction to the strategic calculations of the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The two superpowers recognised that a willingness to make concessions to Egypt was the gateway to the control of Egypt. Both would attempt to make a better concession and both would realize the limits of such concessions to a geo-strategically important nation, possessing nationalist orientation.

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#### CULTURAL, ECONOMIC, DIPLOMATIC AND GEO-STRATEGIC VALUES.

In modern, as in ancient times, Egypt has been a source of rivalry for dynamic hegemonic entities, and for aspiring imperial, great, and super powers. This is in view of its special peculiarities such as its geo-strategic qualities and its diplomatic value in a highly volatile region.

In spite of the aftermath of the Suez Canal crisis and the Arab-Israeli wars -- which tended to dislocate the smooth-running and the revenue-generating capacity of the canal<sup>33</sup> -- both superpowers continued to strive and aspire for the control of Egypt. Egypt is also located in the region where

the lucrative arms trade thrives and is in proximity to the oil-producing states in the Arab/Middle East region. Oil is vital for the operation of industrial machines. Besides, "Egypt's manpower constitutes a disproportionate share of the skilled labour base and of the educationally and technically sophisticated manpower reservoir of the Arab world."<sup>34</sup>

Both superpowers have strong reasons for being preoccupied with the rivalry in Egypt. There exists a complex set of superpower, regional, and national relationships in Egypt.<sup>35</sup> Beside its natural resources such as the Nile, Egypt possesses the greatest economic, diplomatic and technical power concentration (in spite of that country's present population of more than fifty-one million) in the Arab/Middle East region.

The superpower competition in Egypt seems to have been boosted by the fact that the Middle East (where Egypt is located) historically has been the core of great power possessions. This is partly in view of its sea resources, and its trading routes to highly prized, domestic and international produce markets within and outside the region.

The control of Egypt does not only portend prestige and respect for the controlling superpower, but preponderance

there also signifies a foothold in the heart of the Middle East, the possession of which offers the reward of expansion into a highly prized region.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, "Egypt has been courted by both the U.S. and the Soviet Union, each in pursuit of its own interest in the region and in the broader international community."<sup>37</sup>

Because the geo-strategic importance of Egypt was enhanced in W.W. II, retention of the Base in Egypt in the post war era became a preoccupation for the British. After the loss of British India in 1947 and of Palestine in 1948 to the demands of nationalism, the largest British garrison outside Great Britain could only be found in the Suez Canal zone.<sup>38</sup> The perceptions of the superpowers were dominated by vital and prominent Egyptian participation in their strategic and ideological calculations.

Egypt's strategic importance proved its mettle in the troubled times of the British Empire. In both world wars, Egypt was the military centre for Britain's position in the Middle East.<sup>39</sup> As the largest British base outside the homelands, its airfields, railways and other communication facilities, its supply depots and other valuable facilities, provided the crucial theatre manoeuvrability for victory in W.W. I and in W.W. II.<sup>40</sup> That region -- alluded to being the "focal point

of world political and military strategy"<sup>41</sup> -- became the principal supply route to the Soviet Union when the German army penetrated deeply into Soviet territory, after the 1939 German-Soviet Non Aggression pact had become invalid.<sup>42</sup>

Egypt seemed indispensable in the event of a major conflagration. As the principal military base in the North African front, Egypt served as the bastion of allied military power in W.W. II, providing a unique position for the protection of the eastern sea lanes, and serving as a communications control point with the Far East and a supply depot for the entire North African front. Of North Africa -- which Egypt is part of -- General Monsabart, in the Foreign Affairs journal of 1953, observed: "its central position [is] at the spot where the Mediterranean and African facades of Africa and European continent meet. Without North Africa Europe cannot breath and cannot act unless it be to retreat."<sup>43</sup>

For Mayall, so long as "strategic thinking was based on the assumption that any future war would present essentially the same logistic problems to the European powers as they had faced in World War II, the retention of North Africa as a springboard was likely to be deemed a strategic necessity."<sup>44</sup> The hub of such a North African formulation as Mayall's, Egypt

becomes indispensable to military strategists. In Washington, U.S. officials, preoccupied with a possible superpower confrontation in the early years of the cold war, envisioned using Britain's airfields in Egypt as landing and take-off points for U.S. war planes for the attack of petroleum and industrial targets in the heart of the Soviet Union.<sup>45</sup> The pre and immediate post-war strategic values of Egypt were dominant in the early calculations of the superpowers.

Writing in February 1955 about Egypt, Sir Brian Horrocks had it that, "Today this area with its front door on the Mediterranean at Port Said and its back door on the Red Sea at Suez has become one of the largest military installations in the world."<sup>46</sup>

In the changing world of advanced technology and of military doctrines, the strategic values derived from Egypt in W.W. I and W.W. II may have been rendered obsolete. Nevertheless, the country is placed highly on the pedestal of superpower strategic calculations. Egypt's canal -- with its direct and quick sea access to Asia and Europe, an excellent alternative to the South African sea lane, and its proximity to the Mediterranean and its ports and bases -- still comes to mind in the event of a war which affects the U.S. interests, face to face with Soviet interests. Egypt is located in the southern flank of NATO's nerve centres and is situated closely



to the Soviet border.<sup>47</sup>

In the context of the intense rivalry between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, Egypt's logistical facilities were perceived by the U.S. policy makers as fit for acquisition. For the U.S. strategists, the facilities would benefit the U.S. defense strategy of relying on surface fleet of warships and on air-power in a Middle East war.<sup>48</sup> Notably, the Egyptian strategic resources were monopolized by the Soviets who deprived the U.S. access to Egyptian facilities during Nasser's era in Egypt. The fact that the U.S. was willing to expend fabulous amount of dollars in Egypt could help to demonstrate the strategic value of Egypt to the U.S. Egypt's geo-strategic importance is relevant to NATO's readiness for land, air and sea battle.<sup>49</sup> Popular view recognizes a likely Egyptian role for NATO in the event of a major war. As Joel J. Sokolsky put it,

the Mediterranean has long been viewed as a crucial sea, for it is NATO's southern flank and, in Moscow's perspective, an avenue of attack against the Soviet Union. Accordingly, both sides have deployed nuclear and conventional maritime forces there to support their overall military postures. Even if the Arab-Israeli dispute were to be settled, superpower maritime rivalry would continue in the Mediterranean.<sup>50</sup>

Egypt could provide the necessary facilities for projecting influence into the oil-producing areas. In the Middle East

and in North Africa, as in the Persian Gulf, the U.S. interest has been established because oil is the live wire of industrial capitalism. Reportedly, the industrialized countries of Western Europe as well as Japan have found the oil supplies from that area indispensable.<sup>51</sup> The financial dislocation and economic hardship which western nations experienced in the early 1970's due to the oil embargo imposed by the oil producing nations from this area demonstrates the vulnerability of western economy to the lack of access to the oil from this area.

Having established a legacy of producing a leader who championed the Arab cause, Egypt maintains a prominent position in the Arab world. Although entanglements dominate the pattern of relations amongst the Arab/Middle East nations, they tend to yield to the Arab state which is representative and protective of Arab interests. This legacy was provided by Egypt's Nasser and though seemingly undermined by the Sadat-instigated Egypt-Israel peace process, was restored in the Mubarak era.

The Eastern Mediterranean is at the forefront of world attention and is the focal point of activity in a region possessing high conflict levels, and the potential "for superpower confrontation resulting from the outbreak of

hostilities."<sup>52</sup> Egypt, the talking head of its Arab and Middle Eastern brethren, is seemingly the access-way to the peoples of the area. It is the link between the countries of Arab/Middle East, moderates and radicals alike, and exerts a measure of influence in the affairs of the area. Consequently, it has the potential for swaying the majority of Arab countries. Implicitly, control of Egypt, to a large extent, determines who predominates in the region and in turn, has a bearing on its economic and industrial growth.

In its early bid to assume the leadership of the Arab/Middle East region, Egypt provided a decisive and strong voice for Arab causes and for the vital issues of the time which were relevant to the interests of the Arab and Afro-Asian peoples. It thus gained recognition and approval from the emerging and existing nations whose resentment and disenchantment with colonialism and neocolonialism were openly displayed. It also provided a bold and direct challenge to Israel and became associated with the defense of Arabs against Israeli onslaught. Egypt "is the primary state for the establishment of peace or the waging of war in the Arab-Israeli conflict."<sup>53</sup>

In Aaron Klieman's view, competition between the two superpowers is attractive in Egypt, in view of their quest -- at present concealed<sup>54</sup> -- for exclusive security and in order

to negotiate from a position of strength.<sup>55</sup> Noteworthy is the fact that the superpower objective is to seek influence in Egypt as a gateway to maintaining influence in the entire Arab/Middle East region. A leading state "in the African, Islamic, Arab, and non-aligned Third-world nations,"<sup>56</sup> and a prominent member of the Organization of African Unity, Egypt is an integral part of "a group united by their race and descent, and possessing homogeneity, representing an important bloc in the United Nations ... that both superpowers could court to boost their diplomatic strength." <sup>57</sup>

Despite the diminishing value of Egypt in later years (since the Suez Canal had been in disuse between June 6, 1967, and June 5, 1975, while the other equally important Middle Eastern nations, such as Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, became as prominent in superpower calculations), both superpowers ascribed great importance to Egypt and continued to compete for influence in Egypt. This is because the general political outlook favoured a convergence of the balance of power in Egypt: (Cairo seems to be the hub of the region's diplomatic activities; its proximity to the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf, and the Mediterranean is strategic, in military parlance); the superpowers have immense financial commitment at stake<sup>58</sup>; the psychology of the ideological rivalry dictated that the rivalry was on a win-lose basis.

Consequently, presence or preponderance in Egypt is interpreted as a victory, and for the rival superpower, defeat. For instance, the growing co-operation and the increasing commonality of interest between the Soviet Union and the Egyptians, in 1950's, "caused uncommon alarm in the west because of the facilities won by Moscow at Alexandria; the eviction of Russians by Sadat in 1972 was treated in the same quarters as a major victory."<sup>59</sup>

It seems that with the passage of time, the depreciation of specific politic-geo-strategic values, pertaining to Egypt, are compensated for, by events around the region. For instance, the increasing importance of the politics of oil made up for the strategic value of the Suez Canal; in the face of religious fundamentalism in the Middle East (evident in Ayatollah Komeini's rise to and the Shah's fall from power), Egypt has proved to be the moderate and stabilizing force in the area. This is seemingly played out in the Gulf War and perhaps, in the Sadam Hussein's Iraq - Kuwait war (August 1990 - February 1991).<sup>60</sup>

In retrospect, at the height of the Iranian aggression towards Kuwait, as the Iran - Iraq war (September 1980 - August 1988)<sup>61</sup> raged, the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak was invited to meet with the Gulf Co-operation Council of Saudi

Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain and United Arab Emirate. While remaining moderate in the Arab/Middle East politics, Egypt's solidarity with these countries became absolute, henceforth.<sup>62</sup>

In spite of its significance in the strategic calculations of the superpowers, Egypt's peculiar domestic problems translate into socio-economic, political and military, needs. Egypt's domestic problems include urban squalor, unemployment and limited income, mounting inflation, and scarcity of essential commodities. The Egyptian discomfort is compounded by its ever-growing population. Egypt's economy could hardly support its present population of over fifty-one million, growing faster than the country's agricultural, industrial and mineral output.<sup>63</sup> Facing high unemployment, a substantial proportion of its labour force works in neighbouring states, such as Saudi-Arabia and Kuwait.

In any given year, Egypt's Gross National Product -- the total goods and services produced in one year -- is far below the average, relative to that of the U.S., the Soviet Union, and the Arab/Middle East oil producing states. Egypt can hardly generate enough foreign exchange needed for arms purchases and for construction projects to fit the lofty ideals of Egypt's aspirations. Egypt, in this regard, is prone to a reliance on the generosity of its Arab/Middle Eastern brethren, and on the superpowers.

Thus it had been impossible for the country to pursue an independent domestic and foreign policy while relying on foreign aid. The fact that the country has to rely on external help complicates the already existing domestic problems; Egyptian leaders do not have a free hand in identifying areas of need and in the disbursement of the needed funds.

In the light of nationalist agitation for autonomy and for militarily strong Egypt -- which is capable of withstanding its foes -- the superpowers have been taken aback by the Egyptian personality which reflects an attempt to balance the satisfaction of these needs with its obligations to providers of external assistance.

Indeed, both the U.S. and the Soviet Union have had a share of confrontation with Egypt with regard to solving the indigenous domestic problems, while reaping the reward of preponderance (vis a vis leaving Egypt's autonomy intact). Apparently, Egypt's leadership's aspirations (which specifically are: to solve Egypt's socio-economic problems and to further Egypt's political interests) ran counter to the objectives of the superpowers. For the Egyptians, the maintenance of their identity and national integrity despite pressures of obligations (possibly translated into loyalty) was at stake.

Neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union, at the onset of the rivalry in Egypt, was aware of the dimensions of the Egyptian aspirations. Consequently, the policies which each superpower enunciated to establish their respective objectives were hindered or facilitated by the extent to which the superpowers recognized and responded to the Egyptian aspirations. It seems that the rivalry in Egypt between the U.S. and the Soviet Union was characterized by the pursuit of objectives which established and enhanced the interests of all parties: Egypt, and the two rival superpowers.

In actual fact, the superpowers have suffered losses in Egypt. Once, the U.S. diplomatic mission was closed in Egypt, in 1967 (about the same time, Israel ended diplomatic relations with USSR). Nasser seemingly could no longer elicit resources from the U.S. for the pursuit of Egypt's objectives, in the face of his government's intransigence towards the west. Once, thousands of Soviet personnel were expelled from Egypt; Sadat seemed to have exhausted avenues for furthering Egypt's needs with Soviet resources, and without compromising the independence and autonomy of Egypt.

Egypt's leadership have been able to advance Egypt's interest despite the rivalry. With the encouragement from the Egyptian leadership, both superpowers lavished their resources on Egypt



in a bid to emerge preponderant. In the process, Egypt benefitted from the rivalry. Indeed the post 1952 revolutionary government of Egypt has consistently enhanced the political and diplomatic image of the country. It has been able to establish a reasonable respectability and leadership for Egypt amongst the Arab/Middle East, and Third world nations.

Indeed, Egypt's historic legacy gave impetus to the U.S. - Soviet competition in that country:

Egypt had long been the centre of Britain's position in the Middle East and the Nile Valley, and its growing importance after the revolution of 1952 which overthrew the monarchy (particularly its socio-cultural and geo-political affinities with oil producing countries in the area), made attaining influence there the greatest single prize for the superpower rivalry. There was also the strategic importance of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean through which flowed so much important international trade, giving significance to all the neighbouring states.<sup>64</sup>

In recent times, in spite of the Arab - Israeli conflict, Egypt has managed to steer clear of direct involvement in major confrontations within the Arab/Middle Eastern region. In spite of the peculiar Egyptian needs, the country has managed to stay on course with a less volatile relationship with the superpowers, than in the hey days of the rivalry.

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#### REFERENCES AND ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER I

1. See the Academic American Encyclopedia -- Egypt.
2. Derek Hopwood. Egypt: Politics and Society, 1955 - 1984. Massachusetts, Allen & Unwin, 1985, p. 1.
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4. Disagreement still exists with regard to which countries should be listed in the region. Middle East embodies the society and the civilization found in the region and the adjacent localities such as Morocco, Algeria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tunisia and Libya. Notably, the combination of the land masses of Egypt, Iran, and Turkey, Arabia (the central land mass of the Middle East), the southern shore facing the Indian Ocean, with the area northward from Arabia to the Turkish frontier is equivalent to the land mass of the United States. See also, Sydney Nettleton Fisher. The Middle East, A History, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1959, p. 3.
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47. Indeed, the southern borders of the Soviet Union lie very close to the Mediterranean and may be prone to the naval operations from the NATO Mediterranean fleet. The control of the Middle East, or at least some countries which possess similar geo-strategic centrality as Egypt (in actual fact, the strategic value of these hypothetical countries are marginal, relative to Egypt's) is for the Soviet Union, a pre-condition to neutralizing NATO manoeuvres in the Mediterranean, Persian Gulf and the surrounding areas in the Middle East. In McLaurin's words, "without bases in the Mediterranean and overflight rights in adjacent countries, military and naval operations inimical to Soviet interests and Soviet security would be made significantly more difficult." See R. D. McLaurin. p. 16.
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53. David E. Long and Bernard Reich. p. 324. For some Middle East observers, Egypt holds the key to a successful war against Israel and Syria, the key to peace. See Michael Kramer, "Watch the Hidden Hand," U.S. News & World Report, March 1988, p. 14.

54. Both superpowers refuse to admit that negotiations are settled on the basis of positions of strength or weakness; they postulate a desire for peace and mutual but different national interest.
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## CHAPTER II

### ORIGINS OF THE U.S. - SOVIET RIVALRY

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As the areas of contention broadened into the Arab/Middle East, Egypt became the central focus of the superpowers. Once touched by the rivalry, Egypt proved to be one area where the confrontation between the superpowers had been longest. Egypt proved to be an area of direct confrontation between the superpowers, not only because of its strategic importance or because of the nature of the rivalry, but also because it was falling off the orbit of the existing imperial power, Britain. This was the effect of W.W. II. Consequently, the U.S. and the Soviet Union, in light of the superpower rivalry, vied for direct participation in Egypt and the entire Middle East.

The object of this chapter is to discuss the evolution of the superpower rivalry in Egypt. It focuses on the political aspects of the U.S. - Soviet involvement in Egypt as a product of the cold war. Throughout the late 1940's, the cold war centred in Europe. In the 1950's, the cold war assumed a new

dimension as the superpowers increasingly became concerned about the nature of the post-W.W. II world. As Walter LaFeber put it, "each superpower believed that the future vitality of its ideological, economic, and strategic systems depended upon winning the Third World."<sup>1</sup>

The Soviet Union was motivated by the dictates of its doctrine which advocated the ultimate supremacy of communism; the U.S. was driven in part by a desire to instill stability to democratic capitalism to prevent the interest of the free world from being relegated to the background -- to the demise of the ideals of democracy. The rivalry in Egypt was therefore a conscious effort on the part of the competing powers to protect their respective interests; it turned out to be a struggle to achieve preponderance.

Before the second world war, neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union was ready to exert power on a global scale.<sup>2</sup> This is partly because their separate policies focused on domestic affairs, and partly because there were other active participants in the arena of global politics, the European imperial powers, notably, France and Great Britain.

The above implies that the U.S. and the Soviet participation in Egypt and in the entire Middle East were marginal if not



non-existent in the period before W.W. II. But Stalin's ambitions, buttressed by the Marxist-Leninist ideology and the western perception of Soviet conduct, brought the U.S. and the Soviet Union into active and reactive participation and into the eventual rivalry in Egypt and in the entire Middle East region.

U.S. participation in Egypt was gradual. Prior to W.W. II, the U.S. maintained a lack-lustre policy in Egypt. Indeed, U.S. policy makers were particularly indifferent about exercising influence here because the region was dominated by the Europeans. Egypt then was within the British and the French imperial fold (administration of Egypt's vital resource, the Suez Canal, was jointly controlled by Anglo-French interests). The U.S. was reluctant to meddle in European affairs. At that time, the U.S. was isolationist oriented because it seemed to detest entangling alliances. But in view of the lessons derived from the two world wars -- that trouble afar could affect U.S. interest at home -- and in view of the post W.W II rivalry, the U.S. responsibility transcended the mere liquidation of affairs of the vanquished nations to the active defense of western interests against the onslaught of communism, whose supreme exponent was the Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup>

From the 1920's until the late 1930's, the interest of the State Department in Egypt and the entire Middle Eastern region was of secondary nature, evident in the slowly increasing, albeit miniature, trade relations between the U.S. and Egypt; the passivity of the State Department was due to the acceptance, until the late 1930's, of the fact that Egypt was within the domain of the British Empire.<sup>4</sup> Reportedly the U.S. government's disposition in Egypt's and in the region's affairs reflected "a desultory and almost haphazard interest, occasioned by problems of American citizens in the area, by spill-over of European concerns, and generally by the interest of Americans in Palestine as the cradle of christianity."<sup>5</sup>

By 1937, the U.S. had begun to assert its political and diplomatic interests in Egypt; increasingly independent of and competitive with Britain, the State Department "initiated direct relations with Cairo, and somewhat in the tradition of emissaries to the American Indians, did the most to propagate the image of Americans as the great white friend across the sea who wished only to trade and be a good friend."<sup>6</sup>

In a sense, the U.S. Department of State sought to assert the U.S. interest in Egypt without challenging Britain's primacy of interest in Egypt. The Department sought equality, not in the context of having equal privileges with the imperial

powers, but in accordance with an open door policy in which all privileges held by Britain should be abrogated, and supposedly, to the benefit of all the western participants. The U.S. sincerely held the view that the wholesale and region-wide abolition of imperialist privileges would benefit all western interests. This attitude seems to have promoted the formulation of the Atlantic Charter.

Although the product of the war effort designed to solidify Anglo-American relations and to establish the basic tenet for the post-war world, the Atlantic Charter gave impetus to nationalist agitations and nationalist assertion. The charter was jointly produced by President F. D. Roosevelt, and Prime Minister Winston Churchill in August 14, 1941. It was based on democratic principles and condemned the use of force. It promoted the rights of groups of people to self-determination and to equal access to world resources and it called for freedom for all oppressed peoples. Nationalists in these areas harboured the belief that there was "a commitment to the withdrawal of imperial power after the war."<sup>6</sup> Their aspirations seem to have unleashed the urge for the repeal of imperial holdings and set the tone for the nationalist agitation which Egyptian nationalism spread, and which became a source of concern for Britain and the U.S.

Henceforth, Middle Eastern states were inspired to seek redress with regard to the different forms of relationships maintained with Britain; by 1942, it seemed that while Britain consented to cancelling its diplomatic precedence over any other state in Egypt, the U.S. government sought the right conditions for putting an assertive policy into place.<sup>7</sup> This came in late 1942 with the major role played in the anti-Axis coalition in the North African front; the U.S. was encouraged to commit huge military and economic build-up in Egypt, involving Sherman tanks and the U.S. Air Force. Increasingly, the U.S. began to perceive positive prospects for the U.S. in the Middle East; nevertheless, the U.S. maintained a low-profile relation with Egypt in order to maintain 'the uneasy equilibrium between British hegemony and Egyptian sovereignty,' as dictated by political and military policy, while at the same time it sought to carve out an exclusive policy which was not tied to Britain's.<sup>8</sup>

In 1943, the U.S. approved extension of its cultural relations program in Egypt, perhaps, to develop a broader U.S. policy in that country,<sup>9</sup> in the face of shortage of oil required in running the war. "Middle Eastern oil became an obsession of the U.S. Navy because of fear for the exhaustion of American and Western hemisphere sources."<sup>10</sup> Out of this concern would emerge a special interest in the region which, until the

threat of communism, was not unveiled. As Philip J. Baram put it,

up to early 1944, there was hardly any formally articulated [U.S.] Departmental policy addressed to the issue of influence, real or potential, of either the communist ideology or the Soviet government in the Middle East. American diplomatic papers on the topic are largely blank because influence was neither serious nor discernible.<sup>11</sup>

Thereafter, signs of Soviet interest in the Middle East prompted the U.S. policy makers to "articulate an overall policy position, with Russia clearly in mind."<sup>12</sup> The Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs was created to facilitate dissemination of information and to administer the U.S. policy position which centred on the promotion and the protection of equal opportunity for Americans in Egypt and in the entire Middle East.<sup>13</sup> "Reaffirmation of the Atlantic Charter with the customary emphasis on the economic open door and political self determination for native majorities,"<sup>14</sup> and preservation of peace were the hallmarks of the U.S. policy goal in Egypt and the entire Middle East by April 1945.

After the war, both the U.S. and the Soviet Union emerged as the two most dominant states with the potential to direct the political and economic resources of the post-war world because the war had destroyed lives, wealth and property, undermined empires and great powers.<sup>15</sup> Although both nations played a part in promoting a yearning for independence, yet both sought for the predominant position everywhere.

In the face of the disagreements arising out of the Yalta and Potsdam conferences between the rest of the Grand Alliance and the Soviet Union, the U.S. policy makers began to take concrete measures to safeguard western interests. This was especially after the Soviets made attempts to spread communism in Iran, Greece and Turkey, between 1946 and 1947,<sup>16</sup> and in light of the experiences of Afghanistan and Pakistan,<sup>17</sup> coupled with the fate of the countries of Eastern Europe. Such policy as the Truman Doctrine of 12 March 1947 was among the cardinal policies enunciated by the U.S. Government, in recognition of the perceived Soviet threat and the attendant need to safeguard U.S. interests. This is covered in the next chapter.

The creation of Israel in 1948, heightened nationalist sentiments which were directed at France's and Britain's presence in the Arab world. The emotions of the time gave impetus to the perception of possible Soviet aggrandizement in the area. There were indications that the U.S. government was apprehensive of communism, not only in western Europe but throughout the uncommitted world. This was manifested in Truman's Point Four Program of January 1949, which promised technical assistance to the underdeveloped nations.<sup>18</sup> In the Middle East, the U.S. extended teaching aid and technical assistance to Egypt and provided demonstration houses with

proto-types of sun-baked bricks.<sup>19</sup> This marked the onset of the U.S. active participation in Egypt. Following the adoption of the Containment Doctrine, the Eisenhower administration activated the policy in the Middle East. This was in the form of countervailing alliance, and Egypt was made the focal point of the U.S. calculations in the region, in the face of the demise of Britain's power.<sup>20</sup> This is also covered in detail in the next chapter.

The Soviet intransigence seemingly did not end in Eastern and Central Europe, and the Near East; the Soviet Union's revolutionary zeal had spurred it into propagating marxism in the non-European regions such as South East Asia, Middle East, and the Horn of Africa, to mention but a few. The Soviet propaganda was directed against the west, accused of being the bastion of imperialism.

Describing the evolution of U.S. participation in the Middle East where Egypt is situated, R. B. Kuniholm mentioned (in 1987):

The primary concern of the United States in the Middle East throughout the last 40 years has been the potential Soviet threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its southern neighbours, and hence to Western interests in the region. This threat, made possible by the Soviet Union's rise to world power during W.W. II, and made more likely by Britain's gradual departure from the Middle East in the aftermath of the war, has been underscored in post war era by a series of presidential pronouncements -- [which] have underscored periodic attempts to replace a decreasing British presence against threats -- both real and perceived from the Soviet Union.

These commitments, to contain Soviet influence and various attempts to make them operational [was the hallmark of U.S. policy] towards the region in the post war.<sup>21</sup>

The above underscores the fact that the Soviet Union, in retrospect, attempted to exercise a measure of influence in the Middle East in opposition to the U.S. aspirations.

The Soviet Unions's objectives, reflective of marxist ideology (and which is different from Czarist Russia's aspirations),<sup>22</sup> dictated world-wide revolution. The Kremlin nonetheless was at odds about how to make the concepts of the ideology possible. Hence the Soviet Union initially established the Comintern<sup>23</sup> with the mandate to foment revolutions and to establish environments suitable for the establishment of the Soviet system.

It is apparent that given the domestic needs of the Soviet Union, the government of the time, not properly placed to dabble in world political scene, delegated the propagation of its ideology to one of its organs. At that time, the Soviet Union's policy position, advanced by Stalin, maintained that revolutionary movements could be used as tools -- transitional devices -- for establishing Soviet forms of government; the target was Egypt and the Arab/Middle East lands, among others. The financial burden imposed on the Soviet Union's government as a result of the nature of its



domestic activities did not provide leeway for the direct governmental application of this position (especially since there were no imminent revolutions and since the British and the French were firmly in control of their territories) and so, the policy position remained a subject of debate in the Kremlin until the eve of W.W. II.

The Soviet Union failed to achieve more territorial gains than the territorial agreements made with the existing German government offered -- the Molotov- Ribbentrop pact of August and the secret agreement of September 1939. By 1940, half of Poland (east and west Poland) and the three Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia had been ceded to the Soviet system.<sup>24</sup> The Soviet Union's strange bedfellow's alliance with the west was made, in western understanding, to defeat a common enemy but the arrangement ended up as a crucible for the advancement of Soviet Union's objectives.<sup>25</sup>

After W.W. II the Soviets refused the request from the members of the Grand Alliance to withdraw Soviet troops from the occupied areas. While in the Grand Alliance, the Soviet Government, seeking to better its post-war opportunities at establishing influence, like the U.S., promoted the emancipation of colonial peoples, and quite unlike the U.S., conducted its policy outside the bounds of British acceptance. The Soviet Union used its propaganda machinery to denigrate

the imperialism of the day with a view to promoting a revolutionary environment. By associating the British power with evil and colonialism as the embodiment of exploitation and by ruthlessly condemning imperialism, the Soviet Union tended to encourage revolutionary uprising against the status quo. It tended to foster anti-Western sentiments and to establish a rapport with the colonial peoples to the extent that they became disenchanted with the west. These Soviet tendencies undermined the imperial holding of Britain, particularly in the Arab/Middle East/Mediterranean area.

Until close to the end of W.W. II, when signs of British weakness began to surface in the face of intensified political agitation for colonial emancipation, the Soviet Union's leadership did not find its doctrine tenable in Egypt. But, with the end of the war, the Soviet Union intensified its propaganda campaign with the objective of creating a revolutionary and unstable environment suitable for the expansion of the Soviet Union's style of government -- socialist or marxist dictatorships. In that regards, the Soviet Union's post-W.W. II policy in the Arab/Middle East was opportunistic.

By the late 1940's, the Soviet Union was clearly on the march towards expanding its domain in the area south of its border.

The Soviet behaviour was in line with its global and regional objectives.<sup>26</sup> It hoped to incite target areas into rebellion which it hoped to exploit to fulfil its objectives.

Having failed to establish itself in the countries of the Northern Tier in the late 1940's, the Soviets saw opportunity in the Middle East. Here, British subjects vigorously opposed the former's presence, evident in nationalism. As the Soviet policy began to directly focus further down its border, such countries as Egypt, Indonesia, and later, on Iraq and the rest of the Arab/Middle East countries became targets of Soviet machinations. The Soviet Union consequently provided support to Egypt's leadership as an incentive to continued opposition to U.S. and western plans which were designed to contain Soviet expansion.

In the Kremlin, the presumption that non-European entities facing turmoil could be directed into the Soviet system was being explored. The Soviet ideologically motivated master-plan contained elements of U.S. strategic thinking (i.e., the use of economic and financial incentives to gain the support of political entities whose loyalty to the superpowers were still undetermined).<sup>27</sup> The Soviet plan was still being weighed in the Kremlin when Stalin died.

Shortly before Stalin's death in March 1953, the U.S. Foreign Relations Committee was precautionarily informed that "a new and more formidable Soviet approach to the underdeveloped nations was in the making."<sup>28</sup> The new approach, as a doctrine, perceived the potential benefits accruing from exploiting the political agitation in the colonial lands. Controversial in Kremlin until Stalin's death, the doctrine of national liberation struggle strongly considered the viability of Egypt as a revolutionary force, capable of evolving into a Soviet-style socialist state.

Until early 1953, the application of the doctrine was marred by contradictions and division within the Soviet leadership. The incoherence centred on how best to "exploit every possible opportunity of gaining local allies."<sup>29</sup> There was no revolutionary environment in Egypt and in the entire Middle East to act as an incentive for Soviet pursuit of its ideological objectives (except the rising tide of nationalist agitations).

In the face of nationalism in Egypt, the Soviets conceived that the exit of the British in Egypt would provide opportunity for penetration. The Soviets thus sought to take advantage of the prevailing circumstance to hasten Britain's exit. The Soviet Union promoted revolutionary tendencies in

Egypt and in the entire Arab/Middle East region especially after the death of Stalin.

The initial Soviet reaction to the Egyptian revolution of 1952 reflected a mixture of scepticism and enthusiasm. After the death of Stalin, ambivalence gave way to cautious and insightful diplomacy supported by ideology.<sup>30</sup> Having overcome the initial contradiction inherent in its policy, the Soviet Union's foreign policy emphasised the pursuit of developing a Soviet-style government in Egypt, though it warned against excessive dependence on economic aid as the ultimate means of reaching the Soviet objectives.<sup>31</sup> Henceforth, economic, military, technical, and financial support were increasingly offered to Egypt as a means towards building a Soviet-style government in that country.

By March 1954, the Soviet Union was concluding trade treaties with Egypt; it was beginning to "woo Egypt very persistently, both in words and in deeds;"<sup>32</sup> it was encouraging Cairo to resist Britain's schemes over the Suez Canal Zone (in the period of intense nationalist agitations which affected Israel), and it vetoed U.S. resolutions which could have forced Cairo to open the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping.<sup>33</sup>

After 1954, the Soviet Union, having come to terms with its

initial annoyance with the 1954 Egyptian agreement with Britain on the Suez Canal Zone, resumed its expansionist policy. On April 17, 1955, a Soviet newspaper, "Izvestiya" published a Soviet Foreign Ministry statement which declared that the Soviet Union would, 'in the interest of peace', do everything to develop closer relations with the countries of the Middle East."<sup>34</sup> The Soviet Union, in effect, "has combined the struggle for peace, national liberation, and socialism, seeking to achieve support for its foreign policy-oriented legal objectives by using the general appeal of those formulations as an attractive cover."<sup>35</sup>

At this time, the Soviet Union sought for positive response from the Egyptian government and its approval of the supply of a class of weapons to Egypt indicated that a special relationship was developing between Egypt and the Soviet Union.<sup>36</sup> In the face of Egypt's opposition to western strategic calculations, the Soviet Union "gave its backing to the supply of arms by Czechoslovakia to Egypt."<sup>37</sup>

The Soviet Union exploited the disagreements between the Egyptian leadership and the west over maintaining the status quo in Egypt and in the entire Middle East; the September 1955 arms sales, by a Soviet-bloc country to Egypt, became the source of the growth of Soviet ties and as well the watershed

in the Egyptian relationship with the west. Egypt's persistent denunciations of western presence served as a bulwark against anti-Soviet strategic plans and reinforced the Soviet Union's perception of the strategic value of Egypt as possessing the capacity to undermine industrial capitalism.<sup>38</sup> This could explain the Soviet zeal for participation in Egypt.

It was in the spirit of Containment that Egypt featured prominently in the U.S. strategic calculations, even though Egyptian acquiescence was not gained in the early days of the U.S. - Soviet rivalry. Early U.S. containment strategy in the Middle East, Mediterranean, and Arab North Africa dictated a strong British presence in Egypt, necessary in safeguarding U.S. and western interests or alternately, a replacement of Great Britain's preponderance with the U.S. presence, in the age of diminishing British influence vis-à-vis the increasing nationalism, particularly since the creation of the State of Israel.

The State Department had, by October 1947, maintained that the Mediterranean/Middle region was vital to the security of the U. S. and depended on Britain's "strong strategic, political, and economic position, [in the region, particularly] its enormous military base in the Suez zone."<sup>39</sup> The argument at the time stipulated that should the Soviet Union gain a

foothold in the Middle East/Mediterranean region, the inevitable Soviet penetration into Asia and Africa would produce devastating psychological effects in Europe.<sup>40</sup>

Containment called for a collective military and political alliance, along the NATO model, to deter the expansion of the Soviet influence in the Arab/Middle East region.<sup>41</sup> Paramount was safeguarding the democratic capitalist process through enlisting the support of the states in the region; the threat of Soviet ideology at the time implied the possible destruction of capitalism if the Soviet adventurism was not checked.

The new development pertaining to U.S. - Soviet relations was in western perception, an unstable situation and a source of opportunity for the Soviet Union to penetrate the region. The ravages of nationalism on western interests did not help the situation. Apparent to the west was the Soviet Union's ideological belief that,

the ultimate collapse of world imperialism would be brought about not so much by direct action from without as by the internal weaknesses and contradictions of the imperialist nations ... the ever broadening struggle for independence in the colonies and semi-colonial countries could be relied upon ... to weaken the capitalist world to a point where its ability to resist the on-march of victorious 'socialism' would be fatally impaired.<sup>42</sup>

The U.S. was the only powerful and dynamic political entity



capable of challenging and of opposing the Soviet designs. Protecting western principles and western, particularly American, interests remained at the forefront of U.S. policies, hence its involvement in Egypt. Playing an active peace-time role in guaranteeing the stability of Egypt and the entire Arab/Middle East became an important U.S. policy.<sup>43</sup> As Professor Alan R. Taylor put it,

an important but not always clearly recognized American interest in the Middle East is the preservation of U.S. credibility. The U.S. sees itself as a bastion of democracy and justice, and regards its role in the world as one of defending its own political principles and protecting the rights of others to freedom and self determination.<sup>44</sup>

Before W.W. II, and quite like the U.S., the Soviet Union's presence in Egypt and in the entire Arab/Middle East region was minimal. Although both the U.S. and the Soviet Union were, at that time, indisposed to playing broad international roles typical of the superpowers, the war brought the two nations together. At the end of the war, disagreements on the nature of the post-war world led to a rivalry in which both superpowers sought the control of Egypt as a means of fulfilling their respective strategic calculations and of satisfying policy and doctrinal objectives.

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8. Ibid. pp. 192, 298.
9. Nathan Godfried. "Economic Development and Regionalism: United States Foreign Relations in the East," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 23, No. 3, July 1987, p. 483.
10. Robert H. Ferrel. p. 167.
11. Philip J. Baram. p. 110.
12. Ibid. p. 112.
13. Nathan Godfried. p. 482.
14. Arthur L. Gavshon. Crisis in Africa: Battle Ground For East and West, 2nd ed., Colorado, Westview Press, 1984, pp. 146 - 9.
15. Arthur Marwick. War and Social Change in the Twentieth Century, A Comparative Study of Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States, 2nd ed, London, England,

MacMillan, 1985, pp. 2, 86. See also, Keith Eubank, Ed. World War II: Roots and Causes, Massachusetts, D.C. Heath and Company, 1975, p. vii.

16. Bruce R. Kuniholm. "Retrospect and Prospects: Forty Years of U.S. Middle East Policy," The Middle East Journal, Washington D.C., Vol. 41, No. 1, Winter 1987, p. 15.
17. The Soviet Union had subjected Turkey, Iran and Pakistan to aggressive treatment; it made claims on Turkey's territory, demanded a share of the Bosphorous and the Dardanells, and was even forced to withdraw from the Persian province of Azerbaijan. It supported the communist Tuder Party in Iran and instigated Afghanistan to lay claims on Pakistani territory with the aspiration to create a Pakthusnistan state. See also, Guy Hardley. CENTO, The Forgotten Alliance, (Sussex), ISIO Monograph, 1971, p. 3.
18. James T. Patterson. America in the Twentieth Century, A History, 2nd ed., New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1983, p. 317.
19. Langston Hughes. Africa, New York, Franklin Watt Inc., 1960, p. 68.
20. Bruce R. Kuniholm. The Middle East Journal, 1987, p. 15.
21. Loc. cit.
22. Imperial Russia had desires for warm water ports. It is not a paradox that in the 19th century the British and Russian Empires were, reportedly, in conflict over "an area that stretched from the Balkans to British India. The competition for influence in the buffer states between their empires was subsumed under various geographical foci: the 'Balkan Problems', the 'Eastern Question', the 'Persian Problem', and the 'Great Game'." See Bruce R. Kuniholm. The Middle East Journal, 1987, p. 10.
23. Established in March 1919 as the Third Communist International, it was abolished in May 1943 and reconstituted as the Communist Information Bureau -- Cominform -- in October 1947 and again abolished in April 1956. The May 1943 and April 1956 events seemed to have been prompted by Soviet conceptions of better relations with the West, in the spirit of what could have been described as co-existence. It is this spirit of good relations that paved the way for the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact.
24. New York Times Magazine, February 15, 1987, p. 74.

25. Perhaps there would have been a third world war had (hypothetically) both the German government and the Soviet Union's government patched up that initial disagreement in 1939/1940 and won the war against the rest of Europe; the Soviet Union's expansionism may not have been contained and Germany's disfavour (disfavour is personified) would have resorted to the use of military power as a recourse.
26. Dina Rome Spechler. Domestic Influences on Soviet Foreign Policy, Washington, University Press of America Inc., 1978, p. 1.
27. The Soviet Union, like the U.S., established its own defense alliance system under the umbrella of the Warsaw pact; it successfully manufactured and exploded its first atom bomb in 1949, embarked on space exploration and began to use its military, financial, and economic resources to forge an understanding with the undeveloped, colonial and semi-colonial areas.
28. Chester Bowles. Africa's Challenge to America, California, University Press, 1956, foreword page viii.
29. Uri Ra'anan. The USSR Arms the Third World: Case Study in Soviet Foreign Policy, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1969, pp. 41, 105.
30. Charles B. McLane. Soviet Middle East Relations, London, Central Asian Research Centre, 1973, p. 30.
31. Uri Ra'anan. p. 108.
32. Ibid. p. 40.
33. Charles B. McLane. p. 30.
34. David L. Morison. The USSR and Africa, 1945 - 1963, London, Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 7.
35. Bernard A. Ramundo. Peaceful Coexistence, International Law in the Building of Communism, Baltimore, Maryland, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967, p. 15.
36. The Egyptian opposition to British presence since the end of the war, stepped up after the revolutionary government of Nasser assumed the Egyptian leadership and coupled with the Egyptian government's refusal to acquiesce to the West's anti-Soviet alliance network, were strong signals for the Kremlin to intensify its efforts to establish the Soviet Union's influence in Egypt.
37. David L. Morison. p. 7.

38. David Ree's. Soviet Strategic Penetration of Africa, Conflict Studies, No. 77, London, November 1976, pp. 1 - 2.
39. Peter L. Hahn. "Containment and Egyptian Nationalism: The Unsuccessful Effort to Establish the Middle East Command, 1950 - 1953," Diplomatic History, Winter, 1987, p. 24.
40. Charles M. Dollar, ed. America, Changing Times, New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1982, p. 867.
41. Janice Gross Stein and David Dewitt, eds. The Middle East at the Crossroads, Regional Forces and External Powers, Oakville, Ontario, Mosaic Press, 1983, p. 129.
42. Richard P. Stebbins et al., eds. U.S. in World Affairs: 1952, New York, Harper and Bros, 1953, p. 233.
43. Peter L. Hahn. p. 23.
44. Tareq Y. Ismael. International Relations of the Contemporary Middle East, A Study in World Politics, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1986, p. 138.

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## CHAPTER III

### THE NATURE OF U.S. - SOVIET RIVALRY

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In the glow and glitter of the Soviet Union's Perestroika and Glasnost, in the new era of common understanding between the U.S. and the Soviet Union (fostered partly by the willingness of the Soviet leader, Gorbachev, to retreat from the traditional antagonistic, aggressive and uncompromising ideological position usually adopted by his predecessors in the Kremlin, and in part by Gorbachev-led reforms which allowed Soviet-bloc East European nations leeway to make political decisions free of Soviet intervention),<sup>1</sup> it is not inconceivable that the new generation -- growing out of the new world-order of superpower cooperation on global issues and out of superpower association in international forums -- could lose sight of the past era, and could forget the nature of U.S. - Soviet relations before the new world-order. Without an understanding of this relationship which lasted for more than four decades -- between 1945 - 1987 -- the role of Egypt in U.S. - Soviet rivalry would only have a surface value.

This period (1945-1987) is crucial to a good understanding of the U.S. - Soviet rivalry; it shaped the fundamental political, economic and military pattern of the present milieu. In the context of the cold war, both nations emerged as superpowers. Each superpower posed a threat to the other; their potential for entering into direct military confrontation posed a threat to world peace. Indeed, the superpower rivalry in Egypt is, echoing the words of Shahram Chubin, just one area of a generalized competition for influence; its discussion should therefore be placed in the context of the preceding series of events.<sup>2</sup> The events are pivotal to the understanding of the rivalry in Egypt.

The object of this chapter is to reveal those 'preceding events', the prevailing situations and circumstances leading to the U.S. - Soviet rivalry in Egypt. To establish the nature of the superpower rivalry is to provide a background to the rivalry in Egypt. Thus the reader would be able to relate Egypt's role to the historical context in which the superpower competition occurred. The superpower rivalry in Egypt was a product of the whole competition between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

No sooner had W.W. II ended than another brand of war erupted. The years, 1945 - 1987 witnessed intense aggressive actions

and reactions mutually exhibited by the superpowers and motivated by ideology. The period also witnessed episodes of peaceful, albeit, competitive co-existence as in the Khrushchev era (late 1950's), Nixon's presidency (detente of the 1970's), and the last days of the Reagan's presidency (strategic arms reduction agreement).

The objective in the period of intense rivalry between the U.S. and the Soviet Union was to establish, enhance and safeguard their respective interests. The safeguard of one superpower's security interest tended to compromise that of the other. Consequently, every attempt made by each superpower to establish its respective objective was met with stiff opposition from the rival superpower. Once allies, the superpowers -- after W.W. II -- could hardly resolve the matters arising from the defeat of the Axis powers and the issues affecting the major victorious powers in the post-war process. Presently, they seek to safeguard their interests, though not in the fashion which characterized the past era.

Following the outcome of W.W. II, a polarization took place. It revolved around two ideological blocs -- Democratic Capitalism on the one side, and on the other, Marxist Leninism -- defended and extolled by the U.S. and the Soviet Union respectively. Being at the centre of the political process



which was unravelling at the end of the W.W. II, the U.S. and the Soviet Union were highly placed to establish the nature of post war world. Both nations emerged from the war as the dominant, powerful and dynamic nations, and positioned to direct, or conduct, world affairs.

"The United States emerged from the second world war as the richest and, militarily, the strongest country in the world, with the main challenge to its leadership in international affairs coming from the Soviet Union."<sup>3</sup> The war enabled the Soviet Union to build up a military and economic force second perhaps, only to the U.S. The Soviet Union, close to the end of W.W. II, had built up a remarkable striking force that could have, single-handedly, won the war. Its geographical size and position, combined with its military and economic potential, afforded the Soviet Union a status, second to none but the U.S. Indeed, enormous was "the gravitational pull exerted by the concentration of economic and military power in two such different systems as the U.S. and Soviet Union."<sup>4</sup> Consequently, when they disagreed, it captured world attention.

As the two states attempted to establish peace and to resolve the other post war-related issues, their interpretations of the ideals of the settlements were influenced by their

opposing political and ideological dispositions. The deadlock and the ensuing conflict between the U.S. and the Soviet Union was made possible by their "incompatible conceptions of the post-war world," in view of "their identification with incompatible, ideological positions and aspirations."<sup>5</sup> The rivalry involving the U.S. (democratic capitalism) and the Soviet Union (socialism or communism) portrayed many of the features of a war. This is evident in embellished rhetoric, national self-righteousness, mindless patriotism, military build up, and anxiety which was fed especially by the destructive power of the atomic weapons.<sup>6</sup> The rivalry was conducted in a hostile atmosphere short of open warfare.

The initial disagreements which arose centred on whether or not countries in Eastern Europe -- liberated from Nazi Germany -- should hold free elections. Attention was drawn to the agreements reached at Yalta as the basis for any possible consensus attainable with the Soviet Union in Europe. The U.S. viewed Stalin's refusal to give up the Red Army-occupied Eastern Europe as a violation of the Yalta agreement, a breach of trust and an act of hostility towards the Grand Alliance.<sup>7</sup>

It seemed the Soviets justified their actions by arguing that such Soviet conduct was a means of achieving a desired Soviet goal of protecting the Soviet frontier. For many analysts,

however, the Soviet government's actions in the immediate post-W.W. II period reflected no more than what the aspirations and desires of Tsarist Russia demanded. The disagreements and the eventual conflict bred tension, mutual animosity, suspicion and hatred, between the western countries -- whose mantle of leadership fell on the U.S. -- and the Soviet Union. It seemed the Soviet Union was intent on establishing a sphere of influence, while the U.S. was opposed.

The Soviet Union accused the U.S. of non co-operation; it remained adamant to the request by the U.S. and the rest of the allies that the Soviet Union honour the agreement reached at the Yalta Conference. The Soviet Union seemingly interpreted free elections as connoting the slide of these Soviet-controlled Eastern European countries into the western orbit. For the U.S., the absence of elections implied that the Eastern European nations would, under the umbrella of communist-controlled totalitarian dictatorship, be dominated by the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union denounced the neutrality and non-aggression treaty with Turkey, and demanded to control the straits with Turkey; in Iran and Greece, it sought to promote instability with a view to increasing the chances of communist insurgents

to foist communism on those states.<sup>8</sup> The Soviet Union encouraged revolutions in this area and stood in opposition to the settlement of the German question along western principles.

The U.S. was concerned about the ideological and the global implications of the Soviet conduct. Threatened by the missionary ideology of the Soviet Union (which maintained the belief in the destruction of democratic capitalism), the U.S. sought to establish alliances that would prevent the expansion of communism. After its conduct in Europe had been checked,<sup>9</sup> the Soviet Union in the 1950's sought to extend Soviet style of government in the Middle East where the Soviet doctrine perceived possible revolution against the status quo, particularly, in Egypt<sup>10</sup>.

The U.S. government did not want the countries in this region to be annexed into the domain of the Soviet Union, in view of the Soviet Union's ideological stand against democratic governments and in view of the nature of the Soviet government, i.e., authoritarian and totalitarian. The climate of distrust and insecurity which was created in the late 1940's by the fear of Soviet conduct, corresponding with the perceived-Soviet designs, influenced the U.S. policy.

In the bid to protect such countries as Greece and Turkey, the U.S. government enunciated the Truman Doctrine. Out of the same defensive impulse did the U.S. become a participant in the Middle East and Egypt, assuming the central position. As President Truman perceived it, world communism was on the March and had to be contained.<sup>11</sup>

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The Soviet Union sought to advance its interests at the onset of W.W. II; in the process of assisting in prosecuting the war with the Grand Alliance, it was placed in a position where it could take advantage of the areas vulnerable to the Axis powers. At the end of the war, it not only refused to relinquish military control of the Red Army-occupied Eastern Europe but also sought to Sovietize the region; elsewhere, the Soviet Union moved further to seek for the expansion of communism. The pending future of defeated Germany and the other matters relating to the Axis powers, specifically, the welfare of Red Army-occupied Eastern Europe, were sources of conflict. Here they are explored further.

The onslaught against Hitler's Germany, initiated by the Red Army (with Stalin's directive, as agreed upon at the Teheran

conference), began in the summer of 1944. The Red Army's progress was so overwhelming that its success alarmed and bewildered the leadership of the U.S. and Great Britain. In the offensive directed against Germany, the Red Army had taken Vilna by July 1944 and initiated the liberation of Poland, the Balkans, and the rest of Eastern Europe.<sup>12</sup> In a sweep, the Red Army re-occupied the territory which was seized forcibly from Poland in 1939 and then, occupied the pre-war eastern Poland.<sup>13</sup> About the same time, the newly-formed provisional government of Poland<sup>14</sup> issued the July Manifesto fixing the Curzon and Oder-Neisse line as Poland's boundaries with the Soviet Union and East Germany respectively.<sup>15</sup>

For a while, after the war, the Polish-Soviet and the Polish-German borders were contentious issues. By August 1, 1944, the Warsaw uprising had begun failed in October. This was due to the strength of Nazi forces and to the lack of support from the Red Army; the underground army was as a result decimated,<sup>16</sup> and so was the strongest Polish opposition to the Soviet-backed Lublin Committee.<sup>17</sup> When Poland was finally retaken after January 1945 by the Soviet Red Army, control of the country fell into the Soviet hands.

Despite objections from the U.S., the Soviet Union was to offer recognition to the pro-Soviet government in Poland on January 4, 1945. By the end of the Autumn of 1944, the Red

Army had overrun Rumania (disbanding her army), surged through Hungary, and imposed a capitulation on Finland.<sup>18</sup> On September 5, 1944, Stalin's government declared war against Bulgaria and, to ensure the success of a communist-instigated revolution which broke out, the Red Army was sent into the country. In the course of its advance towards Germany, the Red Army was able to penetrate the Balkan Peninsula. Austria and Czechoslovakia also fell into Soviet hands.

Having taken Rumania and Bulgaria, the Red Army unleashed a tremendous advance towards Germany, in the direction of Yugoslavia, successfully liberating the Balkans. The grip of Nazi Germany on Nazi Germany's satellite dependencies was thus destroyed by the Soviet Red Army. Having ousted Hitler's quislings in this region, the Soviet Army was very much ready for the final onslaught against Nazi Germany. Stalin wished to see the Red Army advance to Germany well ahead of Allied soldiers.

The success of the Soviet Union's military offensive and the implications thereof alarmed Prime Minister Winston Churchill; he was apprehensive of the possible political effects of Soviet Russia's success on Britain's Mediterranean and Near Eastern Policy. The U.S. President F.D. Roosevelt, reportedly taken aback by the overwhelming success of the Red Army, hoped

the outcome of the Soviet offensive would not be detrimental to the western world.

Prime Minister Churchill and President Roosevelt sought to arrange a meeting with Stalin, to reduce tension and to settle contentious issues. But Stalin's delayed response to the overture proved to be a means for delaying any meeting until the Soviet Union's foothold in Eastern Europe was certain.<sup>19</sup> By the time the conference was convened, the Soviet Union was able to consolidate its hold on all the Red-Army occupied areas in Eastern Europe; thus the Soviet Union was able to make a claim to that region.<sup>20</sup>

The conference of the 'Big Three' was scheduled to take place on February 2, 1945 at Yalta.<sup>21</sup> The Americans and the Britons hoped to resolve the Polish question and to address the problems and disputes surrounding liberated Europe with the Soviet Union at the conference, especially, the future of the countries under the occupation of the Soviet Union's Red Army.

At the Yalta conference, Churchill and Roosevelt could not budge the Soviet leader, Stalin, on the Polish question. The three leaders agreed to resolve the outstanding dispute in future peace negotiations. Reportedly, Churchill and Roosevelt brought the issue of liberated Europe to the table and Stalin was said to have:



agreed to a joint issuance of a declaration on liberated Europe, which reaffirmed 'the right of all people to chose the form of government under which they will live,' and called for interim governmental authorities broadly representative of all democratic elements in the population and ... the earliest possible establishment through free elections of governments responsive to the will of the people.<sup>22</sup>

Subsequent conferences ultimately proved acrimonious and unproductive. The western allies suffered a big disappointment; Stalin did not keep his promise to allow the establishment, through free elections, of governments responsive to the will of the people in the Nazi-liberated areas. In Poland, as elsewhere under occupation by the Red Army, the Yalta Conference was confronted with a fait accompli. The fact that the whole of Eastern Europe had been occupied by the Red Army before the Yalta Conference made it impossible for Roosevelt, Churchill, or both, to influence Stalin on the future political process in those countries. Enforcement of the agreements reached at Yalta would mean outright and direct confrontation with the Soviet Union.

The disappointment of governments in the U.S. and in Britain over Soviet conduct was notable. Franklin D. Roosevelt, the U.S president, made a peaceful effort to discourage Stalin from foisting Soviet-style government on these countries, particularly, Poland. He reportedly cabled Prime Minister

Winston Churchill on March 1, 1945 saying: "Neither the government nor the people of this country will support participation in fraud or mere white wash of the Lublin Government."<sup>23</sup>

In Rumania and Bulgaria, the governments, which comprised a mixture of communist, peasants' parties and socialist parties, were left more or less intact until the defeat of Germany, three months after Yalta; "Then with strong Soviet support, the communists set about purging them and replacing the dismissed officers and officials with their own nominees."<sup>24</sup> By the middle of 1945, it had become clear that the two former allies, the United States and the Soviet Union, not only had axes to grind but also disagreed on about everything.<sup>25</sup>

In Yugoslavia, the Stalinist Tito became communist leader and promptly joined it to the system while the Soviet Army remained in Hungary.<sup>26</sup> The U.S. and the rest of the western allies were displeased by the Soviet conduct. Roosevelt's consternation and concern were echoed in Churchill's words:

Stalin was now pursuing the opposite course in the two Black-Sea Balkan countries, and one which was absolutely contrary to all democratic ideas. He had subscribed on paper to the principles of Yalta, and now they were being trampled down in Rumania ... the forceful installation of a communist minority government ... conflicted with the Declaration on Liberated Europe which had been agreed [upon] at Yalta Conference.<sup>27</sup>

Any agreements between the western allies and the Soviet Union at Yalta meant nothing for the Soviet Union given the reality of the Red Army's presence in the area in contention, Eastern Europe. Viewing the Yalta conference six weeks later, the Russian perspective, as presented by Vojtech maintained,

Within six weeks of Yalta, its substance was weighed and found wanting. In retrospect, this seems an obvious result of the basic conflict of interest that made disintegration of the (Grand) alliance almost certain once Germany's imminent defeat began to weaken its member's common military exigencies.<sup>28</sup>

For Lewis Gaddis, "Soviet actions in Eastern Europe during the latter part of February showed that Moscow's interpretation to the 'democratic' guarantees written into the Yalta agreements differed drastically from the meaning assigned them by Western observers."<sup>29</sup> In truth, evidence showed that within the anti-Axis coalition, the Soviet Union

pursued the same basic policy of protecting themselves against allies, as well as enemies. Throughout the war the Soviet policy was directed not only toward a military victory, but also toward emerging from the conflict [W.W. II] in as strong a position as possible in relation to both allies and current enemies.<sup>30</sup>

The Soviet leader's decision to join the existing western alliance to defeat Nazi Germany turned out to be an advantage for the ideological disposition of the Soviet system. This is in light of the aftermath of the Yalta conference of 1945.

Certainly, there were ulterior, opportunistic objectives rampant in Soviet policy. Notable is the assertion that, while within the Grand Alliance, the Soviet Union persistently pressed Great Britain for a sphere of influence agreement, dividing Europe, and while Great Britain may have appeared agreeable, the U.S. was persistently opposed to the Soviet gambit.<sup>31</sup> Apparently, the Soviet Union considered its occupation of Eastern Europe as gains which needed to be consolidated.

At the Potsdam Conference, the Soviet Union was known to "have been [more] interested in specific gains than in any comprehensive agreements."<sup>32</sup> The Soviet Union was committed to its expansion and to the acquisition of as much territory as it could, as a precondition to the fulfilment of the messianic strain rampant in the Soviet marxist ideology, hence its conduct in Eastern Europe. Roosevelt's successor, President Truman, was more assiduous in seeking for a solution to the perceived Soviet aggrandizement. By 1946, the Soviet military might and Stalin's process of making satellites out of these East-European countries was complete,<sup>33</sup> and any attempt to reverse the hegemony of the Soviet Union in this region could not have been made without posing a drastic challenge to the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union fixed a line from Stettin in Germany due South, through Austria to Trieste on the Adriatic, as the boundary of its domain; the only exception, Berlin, was however, surrounded by Soviet occupation forces. "On the eastern side of the armistice line augmented by Czechoslovakia -- the line of the Iron Curtain -- the Soviet Union indulged no nonsense whatsoever about cooperation with her erstwhile allies."<sup>34</sup>

Having gained the control of all the territories which the Red Army had occupied in the course of the war, the Soviet Union set out to incorporate them into its system and it refused to negotiate on the political future of these countries with the United States. These issues and the other events taking place immediately after W.W. II were catalysts in the evolving rivalry.

In the face of the Soviet installation of communist-backed governments in Eastern Europe, the Kremlin's obsession for territorial acquisition apparently exploited the deteriorating economic and socio-political environments brought about by W.W. II, to seek further expansion of the Soviet Union. The U.S., the only fit and capable power to challenge the Soviet Union's conduct, was vehemently opposed, and while grappling with disappointing and appalling events in Eastern Europe,

sought to prevent the new Soviet threat from spreading. According to Bloomfield, the Americans were "profoundly shocked to discover after W.W. II that instead of resuming its uninvolved national life in the new world of law and order under the United Nations Charter, it confronted chaos, collapse, and the age-long spectre of a big power on the move to exploit weakness in order to expand its influence and reach as well as gain security."<sup>35</sup>

Even though he exploited the existing opportunities and created new ones, Stalin's insatiable quest for the Soviet Union's expansion, "plunged his country into a confrontation with the west that he neither desired nor thought inevitable."<sup>36</sup> In the perception of Soviet leaders, what belonged to whom was uncertain and would have to be determined by a confrontation at each point around the world.<sup>37</sup>

It required some time for the Americans to respond to the Soviet intransigence because time was needed to define the military and political threat posed by the Soviet Union. It took time to discern the implications of Soviet aspirations, and to ultimately formulate, adopt, and enunciate the appropriate policies for addressing the situation. Evidently, the government of the Soviet Union, recognizably an authoritarian and totalitarian state, was devoted to the goal

of world revolution and the eventual destruction of democratic capitalism.<sup>38</sup>

Barely a week after George F. Kennan, the then charge de affairs, sent a cable from Moscow on February 22, 1946 which informed President Truman that "we have here a political force [the Soviet Union] committed fanatically to the belief that with the United States there can be no permanent modus vivendi,"<sup>39</sup> the Soviet Union brought the Mongolian Peoples Republic into its sphere of control and supported the installation of communist governments in Manchuria and inner Mongolia.<sup>40</sup> That cable -- in the face of Soviet actions -- strengthened by the 'Iron Curtain' speech, set the stage for the countervailing policy enunciated by the U.S. government in response to the perceived Soviet threat to the interest of the free world.

The 'Iron Curtain' speech, made by Churchill at Fulton, Missouri on March 5, 1946, recognized the pattern of the Soviet conduct. Declaring that an iron curtain had descended across the European continent, from Stetting in the Baltic, to Trieste in the Adriatic, he called for a union or an alliance of England and America with all English-speaking people to lift the curtain and liberate all parts of Europe under Soviet control and to stop any further Soviet aggrandizement. The

speech recognized the threat posed by the Soviet Union to the West and it reinforced the emerging U.S. resolve to stem the tide of communist expansionism.<sup>41</sup> Truman believed that the Russians were intent on chiselling

by bluff, pressure, and other unscrupulous methods to get what they wish, [and stressed that] while we cannot go to war with Russia we must do everything we can to maintain our position as strong as possible in Eastern Europe. Russia is building a tier of friendly states there and our task is to make it difficult for her to do so since to build one tier of states implies the possibility of further tiers, layer on layer.<sup>42</sup>

Truman postulated that the challenge posed by the Soviet Union -- a country that understood force and strength -- should be met similarly. It implied defeating the Soviet challenge with "the relentless application of economic and political force backed plainly by military might,"<sup>43</sup> and thus restrain the abuse of Soviet military power.<sup>44</sup>

The emerging U.S. policy was reinforced by the "Mr. X" article, published in the Foreign Affairs journal in 1947, and titled, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct".<sup>45</sup> The author,

George F. Kennan, a U.S. career diplomat serving in Russia, had cabled the President in the previous year on the subject of U.S. - Soviet relations.



The "X" article exposed the political threat posed by the Soviet power and stipulated that the threat should be met with unalterable counter-force at every juncture in order to protect the vital interest of the U.S.<sup>46</sup> George Kennan revealed the Soviet Union's belief in an inexorable struggle between capitalism and communism, leading to eventual destruction of the former by the later and ultimately leading to the dictatorship of the proletariat -- the working class. The goal of the Soviet Union, the article asserted, was to fill "'every nook and cranny available to it in the basin of world power' ... This was 'basic to the internal nature of Soviet power,' and would be so 'until the internal nature of Soviet power is changed.'"<sup>47</sup> Kennan maintained that,

unless the free nations put up powerful walls to contain this expansionism, Russian power would ooze out over Western Europe, Asia, and before long America and its allies would be faced with a threat as great as that from Nazi Germany.<sup>48</sup>

George F. Kennan urged that "long-term, patient but firm containment of Russian expansive tendencies, 'managed without' threats or blustering, ... [would promote the] breakup or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power."<sup>49</sup> The exposé was so powerful that it became the hallmark of U.S. policy and indeed, guided its involvement in Egypt, to contain the Soviet Union.

The idea of containment, the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, became the embodiment of Truman's policy adopted to meet the ever-increasing challenge from the Soviet Union. In a joint session of the U.S. Congress, President Truman in March 1947, unveiled the Greek-Turkish aid program, declaring that "it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples, who are resisting subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressure."<sup>50</sup> Maintaining that the U.S. would only be secure in a world where freedom flourished, he concluded: "Totalitarian regimes imposed on free peoples, by direct or indirect aggression, undermined the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States."<sup>51</sup>

Fearing that Soviet-directed communist subversion in Europe might threaten the security of the U.S., the Congress and a great number of Americans rallied behind Truman's policies which were designed to forestall the perceived threat posed by communism. The Marshall Plan, which established the European recovery program under the auspices of ECA (Economic Cooperation Administration), provided reconstruction assistance to all European nations, in recognition of the danger of communism to democratic-capitalism.<sup>52</sup>

The Marshall Plan, indeed, successfully 'stiffened' Italy and

France to resist communist revolutions in their respective territories.<sup>53</sup> The U.S. Congress, in July 1947, passed the National Security Act which streamlined the military establishment, created the Defense Department, the National Security Council (N.S.C.) to advise the President, and the Central Intelligence Agency to detect potential subversion from internal or external sources.<sup>54</sup>

The Soviet Union was quick to perceive U.S. hostility from the policies and forced Czechoslovakia and Poland to withdraw their participation in the European Recovery Program, fearing "participation by the Eastern European nations would marry their economies to the United States."<sup>55</sup> That period -- when Rumania went communist -- marked the beginning of the use 'in earnest' of local communist parties by Moscow to spread the Soviet Union's influence.<sup>56</sup>

The Berlin airlift is demonstrative of the U.S. anti-communist policies and as well the emerging superpower rivalry, in a bipolar world. After the new currency introduced into the French, British and American zones in occupied Germany was implemented in the western zone inside Berlin, the Soviet Union in opposition imposed a blockade on June 24, 1948, against all road traffic to emphasize their control of Berlin. Berlin was adversely affected. As the blockade was in effect,

"one American general urged that an armoured column proceed down the East German access road and another advised the bombing of Soviet troops."<sup>57</sup> Truman chose a less provocative airlift, directed by General Lucius Clay.

With British, French and Canadian assistance, the Americans flew food, fuel, men and mail into Berlin for approximately a year and, in the process, assured the Germans of western support in a time of need. Truman reportedly threatened to use the atomic bomb in the face of the turmoil.<sup>58</sup> The blockade was eventually lifted and ultimately West Germany was created from the British, French and the U.S. zones. The whole Berlin affair heightened tension and demonstrated to all parties involved the U.S. resolve to resist all forms of Soviet threat and attested to the existing conflict of interests between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

In the wake of the Soviet-supported communist coup d'etat in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, leading to the Soviet-instigated use of the military to destroy the people's uprising, the U.S. began to encourage the establishment of alliances. This U.S. move was in line with its Truman's Doctrine. With the encouragement of the U.S., Britain, France and the three Benelux nations signed the Brussels pact in March 1948 for the purpose of collective defense.<sup>59</sup> The

Vandenberg resolution of June 1948 applauded the event and pledged the association of the United States, by constitutional process, with other nations and regions for individual or collective defence in case of an armed attack; the U.S. negotiated a treaty to expand the Western Union into a defensive military alliance, along the lines of the Rio Pact of 1947 -- to protect the North Atlantic area.<sup>60</sup>

The Soviet Union, seemingly provoked by the U.S. stance, launched a concerted effort to neutralize, if not counter-balance, the U.S. policies. In response to the Marshall Plan, the Soviet Union created the Council for Economic Mutual Assistance (the Molotov Plan) among its satellites in January 25, 1949. In response to the creation of West Germany (the Federal Republic of Germany), the Soviets established the German Democratic Republic.<sup>64</sup> By the end of September 1949, the Soviet Union had exploded its first atomic bomb and initiated the formation of the Warsaw pact embracing the countries of East/Central Europe. The prevailing rivalry was now, not only between the U.S. and the Soviet Union but also between the ideologically-divided world: the West and the East led by the U.S. and the Soviet Union respectively. Yet to be affected by the rivalry were the colonial and semi-autonomous areas in Asia and Africa, which both superpowers increasingly sought to absorb into their spheres.

The Soviet Union stepped up its pro-Arab propoganda campaign against the so called western imperialism in the wake of the creatic of the State of Israel in 1948. This strengthened the drive of nationalist agitations and undermined U.S. strategic calculations, as will be observed in the next chapter.

The U.S. government, on the other hand, was strengthening its anti-communist policies. President Truman, in his second inaugural address of January 20, 1949, endorsed the United Nations Organizations (U.N.O), applauded the Marshall Plan and announced that the U.S. was planning a North Atlantic Defense Pact. Referring to the Point Four Program, he declared: "We must embark on a solid new economic program of technical assistance for under-developed areas."<sup>65</sup> By April 1949, NATO had been established to embrace Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, the U.K. and the U.S.<sup>66</sup> On January 30, 1950, the President asked the State and Defence Departments to review America's defense policy.

The NSC Paper No. 68 of April 1949, was the product of the review of the U.S. defense policy. The document did foresee Soviet military expansion, relentless communist aggression and the consequent global tension. The document recommended a

huge military build up, necessary to limit the Soviet Union's military and ideological expansion. Like his predecessor, the new Secretary of State, Dean Archeson, endorsed NSC-68, and maintained that the only way to deal with the Soviet Union was to create situations of strength. It was necessary to conduct diplomacy requisite to the survival and sustenance of democratic capitalism.<sup>67</sup>

By the end of 1950, the U.S. had more than tripled its defense budget, it was openly aiding Chiang Kai-Chek in Taiwan and the French in Indo-China, and it was fighting North Korean and the communist troops in Korea in a bid to prevent communist expansion beyond the 38th. parallel; the U.S. had also committed itself, by this time, to the rearmament of West Germany, stationing more than four divisions of its own troops in Western Europe; it moved towards re-negotiation for new bases in Spain,<sup>68</sup> and began a massive campaign of countervailing alliance, in the containment of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union was preoccupied with the consolidation of its power and influence in Eastern Europe. Having aligned with China in 1949, it was supporting communist insurgents in Korea, in the 1950's, leading to the partition of Korea into North (communist-controlled) and South.

With the threat of communism so widespread in Asia in light of the ongoing upheavals, the principle of containment dictated the inclusion of the countries within close distance to the Soviet line of penetration into the western line of defence. Out of this impulse did Egypt assume enormous strategic importance, especially in the wake of the ravages of the Soviet pro-Arab propaganda which fed on nationalism vis-à-vis the Soviet ideological opposition to the British holdings in the Arab/Middle East world.

The general trend, which evolved after 1950, was the attempt on the part of the Soviet Union to establish itself as the dominant ideological force, and the determination, on the part of the U.S., to muster internal resources and the support of its friends and allies, against the dynamism of the Soviet Union and in defense of democratic capitalism. What bothered the U.S. and its NATO allies was not the disagreements per say; it was the fact that the Soviet Union at that time "considered itself the citadel of revolutionary ideology destined ultimately to dominate the world."<sup>70</sup> The dilemma of U.S. - Soviet conflict was played out in Egypt.

The superpowers perceived each other as enemies, rather than friends and each aggressively sought for strategic gains through alliances, arms build-ups, technological development,



propaganda, and through exploiting the weaknesses of the other. Remarkably, they maintained mutually exclusive positions short of direct and open military confrontation.<sup>71</sup>

Since 1960, The U.S. - Soviet rivalry has oscillated from bitter hostility (the U-2 incident and the Cuban missile crisis vs. Detente in the era of SALT) to peaceful co-operation, best described as competitive co-existence (the invasion of Afghanistan and the South Korean airliner incident vs. the Reagan-Gorbachev arms reduction agreement, Post Reagan reforms in Eastern Europe, and START; the countries that were once under communist control have embraced parliamentary democracy and free market; the elimination of the Berlin Wall has led to the re-unification of Germany). The rivalry remained until the last days of the presidency of Ronald Reagan.<sup>72</sup> While it seems evident that the days of superpower confrontations are gone (the Soviet leader was a guest at the July 1991, London conference of the seven-member western industrial nations, the G-7), both the U.S. and the Soviet Union continue to be involved in the Middle East, particularly in Egypt, where the confrontation proved to have been the longest, despite their increasing understandings in diplomatic, economic and non-military affairs.

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20. Wayne S. Cole. pp. 500 - 523.
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25. Germany and Poland were irreconcilable subjects of conflict between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The disagreements on reparations and the Soviet Union's 'incipient bid for a dominant role in the whole of Germany', leading to its division, suggested that Stalin was obsessed with the security of the Soviet Union, was resolved to prevent a future invasion of the Soviet Union either by Germany or German-allied forces, and made allowance for unprecedented struggle with the United States. (Stephen E. Ambrose, p. 110; Mastny Vojtech, 1979, p. 290; William E. Griffith, Cold War and Coexistence, Russia, China and the United States, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1971, p. 33.) The disagreements brought about a period of increasing rigidity in which each rival power stipulated conditions unacceptable to the other. The Potsdam Conference of 16 July - 2 August 1945 was not a success, and neither were subsequent U.S. - Soviet post-war talks. The Soviet Union rejected the Bretton Woods agreement in December 1945 as a result of "the general break down of relations between the emerging superpowers over the future of Eastern Europe." (Robert Pollard, Diplomatic History, Vol. 9, Summer 1985, p. 276.) and instead, announced a five-year plan to rebuild heavy industry to ensure the Soviet Union's economic and technical independence from the west. The proposal presented on March 6, 1946 by the Americans for the control of the atomic bomb, the Acheson-Lillienthal proposal and Baruch plan failed because, "America would not give up its monopoly of bombs as long as the Red Army was intact and the Russians would never demobilize as long as the Americans had the Atom bomb." (Stephen E. Ambrose, 1983, p. 120.) The walk-out, staged by the Soviet representative on the Allied Control Council in Autumn of 1947 following an argument over Western plans for Germany, marked an end to U.S. - Soviet cooperation and the beginning of confrontation. March 17, 1948 witnessed the existence of the Brussels pact and then the introduction of a West German currency reform; the Soviet Union initiated a partial blockade of Berlin on March 30, 1948, and completed the blockade on June 24, 1948. The Berlin blockade was met with a western air lift of materiel, personnel and mail to Berlin, as well as with joint Anglo-U.S. agreement on the use of atomic bombers and radar-warning network in the event of an attack from the Soviet Union. The blockade was lifted on 12 May, 1949. See also, Lloyd Gardner. The Creation of American Empire, Chicago, Rand McNally College Publishing Co., 1976, p. 462.
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## CHAPTER IV

### EGYPT'S ROLE IN THE RIVALRY

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Every nation plays a part in the dynamism of world politics. The strengths and weaknesses of great and small powers, to some extent, are enhanced or diminished by the degree to which they could exploit the constellation of forces surrounding them, particularly the positive roles played by these other nations.

In the past, as in the present, the superpower rivalry has been affected by the active participation of other nations, particularly, those which have featured prominently in the strategic, diplomatic and political calculations of the superpowers. In most cases, the result has tended to favour one superpower at the expense of the other. Egypt is one country that, for the past three decades, has played a vital role in the rivalry between the superpowers; the effect of Egypt's role has tended to be beneficial to one, and



considered a loss to the other. The Soviet Union for instance, in its bid to inculcate the Soviet style of government in the target areas, saw the potential of these states for serving as the strategic resources and as the avenue for satisfying the ideological needs of the Soviet Union. This is evident in the Soviet involvement in Egypt which began in the period of the Czech arms deal of 1954 and lasted up to the early 1970's. The Soviet ability to project influence and to establish its style of government tended to be undermined when Egypt's role favoured the U.S., as was the case in Egypt after 1970.

In this chapter, emphasis will be placed on specific events, in Egypt, the Middle East and elsewhere involving the position adopted by Egypt in so far as it affected the U.S. - Soviet rivalry. The pattern of response exhibited by Egypt as both the U.S. and the Soviet Union competed for predominance will be discussed. Egypt is thus exposed as an active participant in the superpower rivalry. The chapter emphasises the early Egyptian policy regarding those specific events (in the formative years of the superpower competition in Egypt) which favoured the Soviet Union and which hindered the strategic calculations of the United States. It dates back to the period between the post-revolutionary Egypt -- the early 1950's -- and early 1970, precisely the entire Nasser era in

Egypt. The subsequent period, (the period after 1971), reflected a favourable Egyptian disposition towards the U.S. and is dealt with briefly in the next chapter.

Significant are Egypt's policies adopted in response to the efforts made by the U.S. and Britain on the one hand and by the Soviet Union on the other in the superpowers' attempts to emerge dominant in the entire Arab/Middle East region, particularly in Egypt. These policies, which embodied Egypt's role, revolved around how Egypt handled major domestic and international affairs affecting the superpowers *vis-à-vis* the fulfilment of Egypt's national objectives.

From the failure of the attempted U.S. effort to establish a Middle Eastern Alliance to the formation of the Baghdad pact, from the eviction of British troops, the Egyptian - Czech arms deal, the Bandung-bred Egyptian non-alignment, to the Suez Canal crisis, from the Arab-Israeli wars to the expulsion of the Soviet Union and the eventual restoration of diplomatic ties between the U.S. and Egypt, a pattern of acceptance or disapproval of superpower policy by Egypt becomes evident. This Egyptian disposition, in turn, affected the extent to which the interests of either the U.S. or the Soviet Union were enhanced or diminished and jeopardized, and *vice versa*.

Out of the threat of Soviet expansionism and the seeming British impotence in the face of nationalism did the U.S. government contrive a vigorous policy in Egypt. Egypt's response to the superpowers affected the direction of the rivalry. This is illustrated in the U.S. effort to build alliances in the region.

Confronted with the Soviet adventurism in the Middle East, encouraged by the rebelliousness and anti western rhetoric adopted by the Wafd-controlled Egyptian parliament (which unanimously and unequivocally demanded the withdrawal of all British troops in Egypt),<sup>1</sup> western interests, particularly Britain's, seemed vulnerable to Soviet schemes. The U.S. government envisioned playing "a larger role in containing the Soviet Union along its southern frontier."<sup>2</sup> While in the company of his aide, George Eley, President Truman warned, on July 26, 1951, "if we stand up to them like we did in Greece three years ago, they won't take any steps. But if we just stand by, they'll move into Iran and they will take over the whole Middle East."<sup>3</sup>

The U.S. stance was hastened by Britain's insistence (particularly concerned with the possible abrogation of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty) that the U.S. become an active participant in maintaining the status quo; Britain insisted

that the U.S assist in an effort to replace older Anglo-Egyptian agreements regarding the Canal Zone. This was the early fifties and the revolution had not yet occurred but Britain and the U.S. feared that the increasing voice of nationalism would wrestle Egypt out of Britain's hands and possibly, allow the Soviet Union a voice in Egypt and in the entire Arab/Middle East. Because existing treaties which recognized Britain's presence in Egypt were about to lapse, Britain felt that a joint Anglo-U.S. effort was required to convince Egypt to replace older Anglo-Egyptian agreements with a broader security system in light of imminent Soviet encroachment in Egypt.

Both western nations envisaged a regional defense alliance system (comprising Britain, Turkey, Egypt, and some other Arab/Middle East states) which should be linked to NATO. This vision of establishing a regional alliance led to the plan for the Middle East Command (MEC). It was designed to safeguard western interest by protecting the Suez Canal Zone "while meeting Egyptian objections to the continued presence of British troops on its soil."<sup>4</sup>

The emotions of the time, specifically the Egyptian nationalism which spread into the entire Middle East/Arab region, combined with the Egyptian government's aspiration for

the leadership of the entire region, denied the U.S. an Egyptian commitment to a joint and collaborative defensive system, required to contain the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup> The joint Anglo-U.S. effort to establish MEC could hardly be described as a success.

The stalemate arising from the 1946 - 1950 negotiations over the withdrawal of British troops from Egypt involved the renegotiation of the 1899 Anglo-Egyptian Condominium Agreement on Sudan and the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty. Both the treaty and the agreement were the basis for Britain's hold on Egypt. The Egyptians, disenchanted with continued presence of Britain in Egypt and the surrounding area, were not pleased with such mechanism which allowed Britain a hold on Egypt. They failed to persuade Britain to relinquish its hold on the Suez Canal and on Sudan even after Egypt's appeal for arbitration from the United Nations produced nothing.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, the Egyptian Parliament became overly critical of the British presence and embraced the xenophobia of Egyptian nationalism, now common with the Egyptian masses.

While MEC was being formulated, the Egyptians mounted opposition against the existing treaties between Britain and Egypt, demanding the total and immediate withdrawal of British troops from Egypt. The growing rift between Egypt and

Britain was exacerbated when the United Nations' resolution, on September 1, 1951, censured Egypt and called on the country to lift its blockade on the Suez Canal directed at oil tankers bound for the British refinery in Haifa, Israel.<sup>7</sup>

The U.S. backed effort to establish the Middle East Command was to be affected by the movement for the abrogation of existing mechanisms that guaranteed Britain's stay in Egypt. The plan for MEC was, on October 13, 1951, presented to the Egyptian foreign minister Salaheddin by the American, British and Turkish Ambassadors. The proposal stipulated, "that Egypt's defense was vital to the defense of the 'free world' and could best be guaranteed by joint effort ... [of] founder members."<sup>8</sup>

Now the bastion of Egyptian nationalism, the Egyptian Parliament, guided by public outbursts against foreigners and nationalist sentiments, on October 15, 1951, passed legislation which repealed the existing treaties between Great Britain and Egypt; implicitly rejected was the endorsement of the plan for a Middle East Command.<sup>9</sup>

In light of the above, the British government, in the Winter of 1951, withheld arms shipments ordered by Egypt, supposedly needed by the British forces in the Korean war.<sup>10</sup> This was

in the face of Egypt's intransigence as the U.S. and Britain scuttled to replace MEC with an alternative defence mechanism. In Egypt, the embers of xenophobia were being fanned; hostility towards westerners intensified.

This led to an exchange of gunfire in late October 1951 between British troops and Egyptian forces in Ismalia and to a wave of anti-western uprising which induced a massive airlift of British troops to safeguard the Canal zone. The uprising reached its apogee in 1952. On January 25, 1952, a battle between British soldiers and the Egyptian auxiliary police caused the violent death of forty police officers; it gave way to 'a frenzied' mob action in Cairo which affected about five hundred business enterprises owned by foreigners and resulted in the death of twenty-six westerners; the imbalance caused by the civil strife and political upheaval created a conducive atmosphere for the revolutionary officers of the Egyptian military to execute a *coup d'etat*, in July 1952, which overthrew the Egyptian monarchy headed by King Farouk.<sup>11</sup> In light of the above, the attempt to replace MEC with an alternative defense initiative, the Middle East Defense Organizations (MEDO), was confronted with a *fait accompli*.

The new Egyptian government of the free officers had a

different national agenda which was nationalist in tone, pan-Arab in context, and trans-regional in scope. Implicitly, any western attempt to rejuvenate its defense plans without taking cognizance of the prevailing socio-political climate in Egypt could not but suffer a drastic challenge, if not outright rejection.

While the Egyptian public openly vented anger against westerners, the media mounted intense pressure on Britain's military presence in the Suez Canal zone. Agitation against imperialism and neo-colonialism was rife. The prevailing environment served to provide the Soviet Union with an avenue for the penetration of Egypt and the entire Arab/Middle East region, in view of the steady decline of Britain's influence. The failure of MEC, perhaps attributable to bad timing -- in view of the Egyptian disposition -- marked a major set back to the U.S. containment policy and denoted a significant failure of the U.S. cold-war strategy to effectively execute an alliance directed against the Soviet Union. It also marked an Egyptian conduct which affected U.S.-Soviet rivalry.

In essence, the U.S. inability to activate MEC and/or replace it with an alternative, MEDO, illustrates a key role played by Egypt in the superpower rivalry. Egypt was vehemently opposed to the combined effort of the U.S. and Britain to maintain the



western presence in Egypt. Egypt denounced the presence of military forces on its soil. In the ensuing revolutionary atmosphere which led to the 1952 revolution, Egypt rejected MEDO. Other Arab/Middle East states whose membership the west solicited (such as Syria, Lebanon and Iraq) followed suit.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, the Soviet Union perceived the opportunity to intensify its effort to become an active participant in Egypt. Egyptian nationalism was perceived by the Soviet Union as a breeding ground for a revolutionary environment and thus conducive to the growth of the Soviet style of government. A common bond was growing between the Soviet Union and Egypt; both maintained an anti-western, anti-imperialist disposition. Nevertheless, their separate national objectives remained dissimilar.

In light of the containment impulse, the U.S. government's desire for the establishment of alliances in the Middle East was unscathed by the initial Egyptian disposition, especially in the era of the 'New Look', which emphasized free and economically buoyant America.<sup>13</sup> The Eisenhower Administration attached great importance to creating a network of alliances to contain the Soviet Union. The success of NATO, demonstrated in united allied efforts in the Korean war, reinforced the containment strategy which called for defense alliances to limit the expansion of the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup>

The plan for the MEDO, set aside in the immediate period of the Egyptian revolution, was reviewed and adopted by the U.S. government as a viable Middle Eastern alternative to NATO. The government recognised that Egypt was the centre of the Arab world and without it, a regional alliance could not be feasible.<sup>15</sup> The time called for deterrence based on a joint and collective defense between the U.S. and friendly countries around the world. The strategy stressed use of the sea and land resources of the participants for the optimum logistical results in a possible confrontation involving the Soviet Union and/or its allies.<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, the U.S. endeavoured,

to win Arab friends ... and to persuade the Arabs to join western political and military alliances; [made] active endeavour to achieve agreed solutions of the conflicts disturbing the Middle East, such as the Anglo-Egyptian impasse and the Arab Israeli tension; and the supply of American aid for economic, social and military development of the area ... for direct political purposes.<sup>17</sup>

By the end of 1953, forming alliances had become a scale for measuring success in the building of centres of resistance towards Soviet expansion.<sup>18</sup> At this time the U.S. failed to secure Egypt's co-operation in the implementation of the refurbished Middle East Defence Organization (in spite of the U.S. Secretary of State Dulles' visit to the Middle East). Apparently, containment encirclement policy ran counter to the Arab nationalist fervour, spearheaded by Egypt.

When the first offer made in October 1954 to Arab Governments (and Egypt considered as the leader of the Arab world) failed, MEDO was subsequently implemented through the Baghdad pact.<sup>19</sup> "Since agreements of an earlier 'colonial' era, such as the Anglo-Egyptian and Anglo-Iraqi pacts had been abrogated or were expiring, it was clear that they would have to be replaced by new alliances if there was to be a legal basis for the presence of western personnel or installations."<sup>20</sup> Having explored all the 'various plans and projects for Middle East Defense Organization' the U.S. Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, concluded that even though "many of the Arab League countries ... pay little attention to the menace of Soviet Communism, ... a collective security system could not be imposed from without."<sup>21</sup>

Egypt was a critical opponent of all the U.S. attempts to establish a meaningful relationship with the people of the area. Not only did it play a major role leading to the failure of previous efforts to establish alliances, Egypt also led the movement against the attempted effort in progress in 1953 to put the Middle East defensive arrangement into place - - a typical Egyptian role in the superpower rivalry.

Between 1951 and 1954, Egypt's anti-western nationalism prevented the U.S. containment policy from taking off in the

Middle East. The Egyptian disposition favoured the Soviet Union which desired the liquidation of the western presence. Egypt's opposition to western defense plans, designed to deny the Soviet Union active participation in Egypt and in the entire Arab/Middle East, served to fulfil Soviet interest in the region.

There were other signs of Egyptian policies which favoured the Soviet Union and angered the U.S. Egypt's avowed neutrality to the Korean War had given way to the speculation that Egypt may have allied with the Soviet Union and implicitly endorsed Soviet penetration of the Suez Canal zone.<sup>22</sup> Egypt's affiliation with Afro-Asian and Arab nations revolved around neutrality to the cold war. Since Egyptian nationalism was averse to colonialism and imperialism, which were linked to the U.S. allies (France and Great Britain), Egypt's non-alignment policy at this time was partial to Soviet penetration of the Arab/Middle East.

Egypt's direct role in the superpower rivalry is further demonstrated in its open criticism of, and opposition to, the effort to put the Baghdad pact into place. In view of Egypt's opposition to the U.S. defense alliance efforts, i.e., MEC and MEDO, western defence objectives were met through alternative sources. When Nuri Said's cabinet announced that Iraq would

conclude a treaty of friendship with Turkey, Egypt's unequivocal rejection of the plan spread in the Arab world.<sup>23</sup> The treaty was linked to the west by the Egyptian leadership who resented the development as a slap in Egypt's face: "the slipping of Arab leadership from Egyptian hands."<sup>24</sup>

It is not unlikely that the treaty was masterminded in western strategic circles, the argument ran, in light of Egypt's campaign against western defence plans in the Middle East, coupled with the prevailing Egyptian nationalism and the attendant opposition to western presence in Egypt. The U.S. containment alliance initiative was influenced by the rivalry with the Soviet Union in the face of "rapid contraction of British prestige and authority in that area."<sup>25</sup> In the same fashion, Iraq's acquiescence was derived from the rivalry between Egypt and Iraq for the leadership of the Arab/Middle Eastern region, a rivalry which could be traced back to the formative years of the Arab League.<sup>26</sup>

It seemed that in those early years which followed the revolution, Egypt tended to look towards the U.S. for support in the nationalist attempt to rid the country of Britain's hold on Egypt. Egypt, however, failed to gain the requisite support from the U.S. whose strategic plans (in view of the threat posed by the Soviet Union) conflicted with Egypt's

aspirations. The difficulty in forming a consensus between the U.S. and the Egyptian government proved a stumbling block in the U.S. effort to establish, through Egypt, a trans-Arab/Middle East acquiescence to western strategic calculations.

Although by June 18, 1953, Egypt had become a republic, its administration (nationalist in orientation) was ran by the free officers dominated by the ambitious Colonel Abdul Nasser who succeeded Neguib as the president in November 1954. Nasser's government was fierce in seeking to shed all forms of colonial vestiges and aspired for the leadership of the Arab/Middle East world but received little cooperation from the U.S. The Egyptian government showed increasing hostility to the U.S. through direct opposition to the latter's containment policies in the Middle East. Reportedly, the Egyptian government "stated that Egypt would be neutral (in the cold war) in any possible conflict unless her national demands were first satisfied."<sup>27</sup>

Indications of a possible rapprochement between Egypt and the Soviet Union continued to loom. Both opposed the impending Turkish-Iraqi treaty; both collaborated to halt the progress made towards the completion of the treaty. Reacting to the impending pact, Moscow's New Times of January 8, 1955, which

conveyed the Kremlin's views, concluded:

Nuri es-Said is furthering American, not British policy ... he has established contact with American imperialism because American influence in Iraq has been growing very rapidly, especially since its government agreed to accept American military aid.<sup>28</sup>

Attempting to dismantle the Turkish - Iraqi treaty which then was in gestation, the Egyptian leader Nasser inflamed Egyptian and Arab nationalism in a bid to influence all Arab Middle Eastern nations towards rejecting the pact.<sup>29</sup> When that tactic failed, he feigned interest in cooperation with the west in an attempt to delay or halt the pact:

at the very end of January 1955, when Ankara and Bagdad were already preparing for the signature of their new security pact (which was being accompanied by seizable U.S. military shipments to Iraq), Egypt began to indicate some measure of interest in Ambassador Caffery's offer (as though) such a hint might raise Western hopes and consequently, induce Washington to delay the completion of the Turkish - Iraqi pact and delivery of American arms to Nuri a-Said.<sup>30</sup>

In the U.S. perspective, the Egyptian stand against the containment policy remained the same. Soon after the Egyptian overture, Nasser rebuffed the British Foreign Secretary's early February 1955 invitation for Egypt to participate in the pending treaty. Nasser reportedly told the British envoy that, "by its bad timing and unfortunate content, it had

seriously set back the development of effective collaboration with the west by Arab states."<sup>31</sup> Nasser's ploy was recognizable through his refusal to join the Middle East defence pact and his tendency towards promoting Soviet interests. Consequently, the western officials directly affected disregarded Nasser's antics and vigorously pursued the containment alliance policy.

The Turkish - Iraqi treaty was signed and ratified in the last week of February by Nuri Said, the Iraqi leader, and his Turkish counterpart<sup>32</sup> with Britain entering into the Iraqi - Turkish pact on March 30, 1955. The treaty ultimately was transformed into a tripartite defense alliance<sup>33</sup> with its headquarters located in Baghdad.

Soviet - Egyptian objectives seemingly merged in the wake of the Iraqi-Turkey pact. It seemed that both were collaborating on political matters affecting western presence in Egypt. Both the Soviet Union and Egypt objected to the Middle East alliance which was the only available option through which the U.S. could channel its containment alliance initiative. Both Egypt and the Soviet Union now shared a common foe and it seemed both sought to achieve their respective national objectives through their collaboration.



Reacting angrily to the establishment of the alliance, Nasser "felt that the west was trying to by pass him by shifting the focus of power from Cairo to Baghdad, using Iraqis as their stalking horse."<sup>34</sup> Iraq's participation in the western defense pact undermined Egypt's leadership position in the Arab/Middle East region since Iraq would benefit from the treaty. Iraq was receiving military and economic assistance from the west after the former gave consent to the defense arrangement. Indeed, the Iraqi monarch hoped that with western support -- military, economic, diplomatic, etc. -- Iraq could replace Egypt as the leading political entity in the Arab/Middle East region.<sup>35</sup>

Critical of the alliance, which he considered an affront in light of the Iraqi participation, Nasser condemned the defense pact as "an Anglo-American plot to promote the Hashim monarchy as a rival leader in the Arab world."<sup>36</sup> Reacting to the treaty, Nasser abrogated the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1954 which hitherto allowed Britain to send troops into the Canal Zone in an emergency situation.<sup>37</sup>

Evidence attests to a pro-Egyptian Soviet reaction after the formation of the Baghdad pact: "the creation of western alliance system, ... infuriated the Kremlin, which denounced the Pact as a poor disguise for building American military

bases at its back doorstep."<sup>38</sup> The Soviet Union's displeasure, shown through its criticism, reflected the proverbial stone that killed two birds; in attacking the U.S. involvement in Egypt, the Soviet Union projected itself as the defender of Egyptian interest, thus extending its area of interest to Egypt and the entire Arab region, the otherwise exclusive preserve of the west. Eventually comprising Britain, Iraq, Turkey and Iran, "the Arab/Middle East defence pact was regarded with suspicion and animosity by Syria, Jordan, and Egypt who feared the build up of their rivals in the northern tier as well as the intrusion of cold-war politics into the region."<sup>39</sup>

The increasing understanding between the Soviet Union and Egypt was strengthened after the establishment of the Baghdad pact. "Now ... the incentive to break up the incipient alliance, to upset the western arms monopoly, and to undermine western influence in the Middle East was shared in almost identical terms by the two."<sup>40</sup>

The U.S. inability to participate directly in the Baghdad pact, mindful of incurring the wrath of Arab nationalism, is significant. U.S. preclusion from direct participation showed the powerful influence Egypt had on the Arab/Middle East world. The whole affair denoted the difficult position in

which the U.S. found itself in the superpower rivalry; it showed that the sources of the U.S. malaise in the Arab/Middle East region emanated, at this time, from no other Arab nation but Egypt, to the benefit of the Soviet Union. "Nasser's attacks on the Baghdad Pact were viewed by the Soviet Union as a diplomatic breakthrough to further exploit the mistakes of the west."<sup>41</sup>

Egypt's vehement and vociferous opposition to the U.S. plans in the Middle East (which otherwise would have been centred in Egypt) exhibited its pattern of disapproval of Western plans in the Middle East. Revolutionary in style, Nasser's defiance afforded the Soviet Union the opportunity to become a direct participant in Egypt, and ultimately in the entire Arab/Middle East lands.

The Kremlin's attack on imperialism and on colonialism was welcome to the Egyptian leadership, whose power-base seemed to have been threatened by the existing western alliance system. The Iraqi involvement in the western defense alliance system seemed to have impelled Egypt to seek recourse in closer ties with the Soviet Union.

Egypt increasingly distanced itself from a rapprochement with the U.S. and opposed participation in the U.S. strategic

plans. Egypt's leaders also opted to encourage other Afro-Asian and the emerging nations in the region (where the superpower rivalry was being increasingly felt) to abstain from complicity with either of the superpowers, the U.S. in particular. At the same time, the common interests shared by Egypt and the Soviet Union -- namely their opposition to the Baghdad pact and the common threat which western presence seemingly posed to their aspirations -- tended to impel the Egyptian leadership to acquiesce in the Soviet encroachment in the affairs of the Arab/Middle East region. Having declared neutralism, first to the Korean war, then to the cold war, "Nasser's neutralism gained a wholly new dimension with the Bandung Conference in April 1955."<sup>42</sup> Egypt's active participation in the non-aligned movement underlay a facet of Egypt's role in the superpower rivalry.

After meeting with Tito of Yugoslavia in February 1955, Nasser sanctioned an Egyptian "policy that entailed avoidance of anti-Russian or pro-western pacts but did not debar them from receiving aid or purchasing arms from either side."<sup>43</sup> Leaving for the Bandung conference where he publicized his claim to Arab leadership, Nasser opted for the non-alignment. His decision was influenced by his association with leading neutralists, such as China's Chou En-Lai and Pandit Nehru of India. Both leaders gave Nasser encouragement and wide

approval for a neutralist course.<sup>44</sup> At this time, neither India nor communist China maintained close affinities with the U.S.

Nasser left the Bandung conference with his vision of a big role for Egypt, predicated on a free hand which "ought not to be tied by any pact with the west."<sup>45</sup> Henceforth, Egypt pursued an elusive policy which relied less on relations with western nations, particularly the U.S. and Great Britain. Egypt's non-alignment, or neutralism, posed a major threat to the U.S. strategic calculations. Neutralism, or non-alignment, for member nations meant that they could enter into special relationships with either or both superpowers. Nasser acquired a measure of reservation and discretion with regard to which superpower to offer support.

The Egyptian leadership began to pursue a deliberate policy to exploit the rivalry between the two superpowers. Imperatively, Egypt's leadership could "play on both sides of the fence without any commitment to either side and regardless of the ideological position espoused by either bloc."<sup>46</sup> Nasser's objective was to achieve maximum exploitation of the disposable military and financial resources from both superpowers. The whole Egyptian ploy was adverse to U.S. diplomatic and political practice. As Dulles noted in June

1956, "Search for allies was predicated on the assumption of a divided world in which no nation would chose neutralism. [The countries of the Bandung conference] rejected the concept of a divided world [and] refused to enter any military arrangement with the west at all."<sup>47</sup>

Notably the Soviet Union was favoured by Egyptian disposition as opposed to the U.S. The Soviet Union was eager to assist in the fulfilment of Egypt's aspirations, as a positive reinforcement to Egypt's anti-west disposition. Egypt in turn offered to co-operate with the Soviet Union and chose to rebuff U.S. when the overtures seemed riddled with obligations.

Nasser's policies fit into the Soviet Union's policy definition of countries to provide aid -- those emerging bourgeois nationalist regimes which could, unlike their colonial predecessors, bring about the growth of communism in their areas<sup>48</sup>. These were the nations (the non-communist but anti imperialist regimes) which, in the Soviet Union's view, were in transition to communism. For the U.S., aid was usually granted to allied, friendly nations, and not so-friendly nations which were likely to co-operate with the objective of safeguarding U.S. interest. In the period under review, Egypt had consistently opposed the containment

alliance plans, declared neutralism, recognized and associated with pro-Soviet political entities of the time, notably communist China, and had spearheaded the movement for recognition and the pursuit of nationalist aspirations and a partial avoidance of the superpower/east-west conflict, to the benefit of the Soviet Union. It is inconceivable, under the prevailing circumstance, for a rational U.S. policy to provide wholesale and unconditional consideration to Egypt's domestic and regional needs. Conversely, the Soviets adopted the position, "of co-operation and compromise with non-Socialist regimes and political groups to ensure friendly, if non-communist, partners for Soviet Union."<sup>49</sup> Implicitly, the Soviet Union placed its resources at Egypt's disposal since Egypt's nationalist, anti-west disposition satisfied Soviet policy objectives. The Czech arms deal points to this fact.

About the time that trading activity on military equipment was being completed by the Soviet Union and Egypt in 1955, Nasser "presented the U.S. with a shopping list of heavy armaments, valued originally at over \$40 million. Nasser could have no illusion about Washington's probable reaction if requested to give military aid ... to a country actively opposing the western security system."<sup>50</sup> The mere value of the purchase suggests that Egypt was window-dressing and as well suggests Nasser's lack of readiness to complete the transaction. The

Soviet Union was seriously negotiating for supply of arms to Egypt; consequently, Nasser was indifferent to the outcome of his exaggerated proposal to Washington. Not willing to accept any strings attached to western assistance (when such aid could be available unconditionally from the Soviet Union), Nasser had rejected offers of military assistance made by the U.S. in October 1954; the offer was conditional on the Egyptian co-operation with the Turkish - Iraqi Treaty and on abiding by the U.S. Mutual Security Act which called for support for U.S. strategic interest.<sup>51</sup> As deliveries of military equipment were made to Iraq, Nasser began to search for alternative sources of supplies and Moscow was willing to provide the military aid which the west would not provide unconditionally to Egypt.<sup>52</sup>

Reacting to signs of a possible Egyptian arms deal with the Soviet Union, Britain warned Nasser that should he accept "Russian weapons none would be forthcoming from Britain. He was incensed by this threat and determined never again to discuss arms with the British."<sup>53</sup> Reportedly, Nasser, in a bid to establish his leadership in the Arab world, continued to defy the U.S. and the British attempt to impress western principles upon his leadership.

On September 27, 1955, Nasser announced that he had acquired



arms from the Soviet bloc. The controversial Czech - Egyptian arms deal involved the sale of Soviet arms to Egypt through Czechoslovakia. Payment for the weapons was tied to sales of Egyptian cotton. Evidence shows that while the initial agreements between the Soviet Union and Egypt on arms deal had been reached earlier than 1954, major deliveries of weapons to Egypt began in the Summer of 1955, reaching Egypt in August 1955. The fact that Nasser later adumbrated: "In 1954 and 1955 ... we did not hesitate to break up the arms monopoly,"<sup>54</sup> could help to explain when the arms deal was reached. That statement also attested to Egypt's need for military supplies as emanating not from the Israeli raid on Gaza in February 28 to March 1, 1955,<sup>55</sup> but from the peculiar needs and aspirations of the Egyptian leader. Nasser perceived Egypt as the centre of the Arab world and himself, the rightful leader of the Arab/Middle East peoples.

It seems that, with the imposition of restrictions on arms sales to Egypt by Great Britain and by the U.S. in the immediate period of Egypt's declaration of neutrality to the Korean war and in the light of the western arms delivery of arms to Iraq in the wake of negotiations for the Turkish - Iraqi treaty, the Egyptian leadership was intent on acquiring weapons from any available source. Nasser, after the Bandung conference, seems to have been made aware that, given the

rivalry between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, he could circumvent direct military and economic/political relations with the west, as long as he kept the Soviet option open through consistent opposition to the west. By agreeing to accept cotton in return for arms "and by providing additional military strength desired by Egypt the USSR set the stage for closer (Soviet - Egyptian) economic and political ties."<sup>56</sup>

The growing commonality of interest between the Soviet Union and Egypt (evident in their hostility towards western-designed pact and Egypt's intransigence towards the west) gave way to the Soviet participation in Egypt. From Bandung to the Czech Arms deal, Egypt provided the Soviet Union a competitive advantage in the superpower rivalry and to the chagrin of the U.S. policy makers, the Soviet Union was participating in the affairs of Egypt. Through the 1955 arms for cotton deal, the Soviet Union was able to bypass the Northern tier to become involved in the area, "from Egypt to Syria and Iraq."<sup>57</sup> The Soviet Union was also beginning to achieve a "Post-Stalin leadership's campaign to develop ties with non-communist nationalist regimes that had adopted an anti-imperialist foreign policy."<sup>58</sup>

Significantly, Egypt's loose adherence to non-alignment, its opposition to western defense arrangements in the Arab/Middle

East, and its anti imperialist, anti-colonialist campaigns influenced the course of the superpower rivalry; Egypt's conduct delayed the enunciation of U.S. containment alliance and for a while denied the U.S. direct access to the country; it also affected the relative ease with which the Soviet Union gained inroads in Egypt and in the Arab world. Nasser's announcement of the arms purchase served to convey to the U.S. and to Egypt's foes an alternative sources of arms available to Egypt and the availability of a guarantor to Egypt's national integrity; the announcement perhaps was a means of compelling the west to relinquish its hold on Egypt and of promoting Egypt's quest for the leadership of the Middle East.<sup>59</sup>

By the end of 1955, Egypt, in the Soviet Union's view, was not a mere friendly, nationalist progressive state who could just assist in rendering "ineffectual the western attempt to construct an anti-Soviet military alliance."<sup>60</sup> It was, in the Kremlin's calculation, a state progressing towards communism; the Egyptian/Arab nationalism was perceived by the Soviet Union as a 'symbolic first step' to the evolution of a marxist state in Egypt and in the entire Arab/Middle East region.<sup>61</sup>

A great deal of importance was attached to wresting Egypt out of the hands of the west and, particularly from the reach of

the U.S. The Soviet Union's motivation in Egypt thus transcended political gains; the Kremlin hoped to use gentle and subtle help and persuasion to ultimately develop in Egypt "political and economic systems more attuned to Soviet ideological imperatives."<sup>62</sup> Meanwhile, "the demands of great power politics meant putting aside the claims of ideology, although the Russians could never forget them entirely."<sup>63</sup> For now, the Soviet Union found delight in Egypt's favourable disposition to Moscow, which seemed to have encumbered the U.S. bid to contain the Soviet Union's penetration of Egypt. The cog in the wheel of containment alliance in the Middle East turned out to be the source of enigma and disappointment for the U.S.

The announcement of the arms deal involving Egypt and the East bloc was disturbing in western capitals. Reportedly, Britain's Ambassador was instructed by the home Government to "remonstrate with Nasser. The U.S. sent an envoy with a threatening note. These moves increased [sic.] Nasser's defiance."<sup>64</sup> In May 1956, President Nasser recognized and encouraged extensive relations with Communist China, compounding the U.S. and Britain's frustration (over the loss of control over Egypt which apparently was pursuing an independent policy). There was evidence that Egypt had acquired "150 Russian - built planes, 300 tanks, ships, guns,

rocket launchers and miscellaneous equipment."<sup>65</sup>

Once again Egypt's conduct further advanced the Soviet Union's cause to establish influence in Egypt, as its conduct impelled the U.S. and Great Britain to withhold economic assistance for Egypt's domestic project, the construction of the Aswan High Dam. In the face of Soviet concern, especially "scuttling the Baghdad Pact and eliminating foreign military installations and personnel from the area,"<sup>66</sup> the Suez Canal crisis erupted. The crisis offered the Soviets the opportunity to directly address their concerns through active participation in Egypt. The nation, in Soviet calculations, was the source through which the U.S. alliance in the Middle East could be ruptured.<sup>67</sup>

The Suez Canal crisis is another event which illustrates Egypt's role in the U.S. - Soviet rivalry. Directly involved were Egypt *vis à vis* the U.S., Britain, France, Israel (on the one hand), and the Soviet Union (on the other hand). Egypt's unrelenting effort to fulfil its national aspirations at all cost gave impetus to its reactive policies, including its invitation to the Soviet Union and its effort to distance itself from an alternative, the west.

Of the Suez crisis, one account of the crisis stipulated:

nationalizing the Suez Canal on July 26, 1956, President  
Nasser's

action was touched off by a piece of rough diplomacy on the part of the American Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles. After an Egyptian arms deal with the Soviet bloc in September 1955, the United States had offered, with Britain and the world bank, to finance the Aswan High Dam, a project of great economic importance to Egypt. But following anti-Arab lobbying in Washington and Egypt's recognition of Communist China, Dulles changed his mind in the summer of 1956, and the nationalization of the Canal was Nasser's way of retaliating.<sup>68</sup>

The West-Egypt negotiation was supposedly intended to discourage Nasser's opposition and to stop the Soviet Union from penetrating into the Middle East. In December 1955, a tentative agreement was reached, whereby

the United States would supply \$56 million and the British \$14 million to pay for the initial engineering work, with the World Bank to underwrite an additional \$200 million for the actual construction of the dam ... Western relations with Egypt steadily deteriorated during the spring of 1956, Nasser resented some of the conditions placed on the Egyptian economy in the Aswan financial package; [members of the U.S. Congress with cotton interest and Israeli concerns showed apprehension]. Then in May, Nasser recognized communist China, an act that outraged John Foster Dulles who, (after consultation with President Eisenhower on July 13 met with the Egyptian Ambassador on July 19) to notify the Egyptians of the American withdrawal.<sup>69</sup>

While recognizing the view that the chief cause of the

withdrawal of the offer of American and British aid to finance the Aswan Dam was Egypt's acceptance of Russian arms<sup>70</sup>, it is apparent that the U.S. and the British refusal occurred in the context of Egypt's intransigence which the west hoped to curb through volunteering to finance Egypt's domestic project. Perhaps, had Egypt's intransigence softened, history may have been recorded differently; perhaps the U.S. and Great Britain would not have made the decision to renege on that preliminary financial agreement.

Despite domestic pressures in the U.S. -- emanating from the cotton lobby, the Jewish lobby, and the general fear of the red peril -- there were no visible signs of the limits of Egypt's defiance in the final days leading to the U.S. decision. Having established a hostile and unco-operative disposition towards the west, it is not illogical that the U.S. and Britain would be reluctant to render assistance to Egypt when Nasser requested it.

A provoked Nasser responded to the crumbled financial negotiation by nationalizing the Suez Canal and was supported by the Soviet Union.<sup>71</sup> By nationalizing the Suez Canal in July 1956, Nasser seemed to have denied the west control of an important sea lane; enhanced was the possibility of Soviet control of the once exclusive preserve of the west, and

consequently, western ability to exercise access to the area was undermined.

Contemplating the fate of their financial interests in the Suez Canal, France and Britain colluded with Israel to attack Egypt. Israel launched the attack on October 29; the next day Great Britain and France ordered Israel and Egypt to cease fire, to withdraw from the Canal Zone, and to accept temporary occupation of Anglo-French forces of Port Said, Ismalia, and Suez.<sup>72</sup> Egypt defied the ultimatum and on November 3, 1956, British and French air attacks began.<sup>73</sup> In the process, Israel occupied the Sinai Peninsula and opened the straits of Tiran; Egypt responded by sinking ships to block the Canal and on November 5, 1956, Anglo-French forces landed in Egypt.<sup>74</sup> The U.S. President Eisenhower was not supportive of invasion and intervened in the fracas. The U.S. called for a cease fire in the wake of the Soviet threats to despatch its militia into Egypt. Ultimately, the initiative of the Canadian Foreign Minister, Lester Pearson, which called for a United Nations peace keeping force in the midst of U.S. arbitration, led to the eventual withdrawal of all the Anglo-French and Israeli troops from the war-ravaged zone. The operation of the canal was normalized in April 1957.

Looking at the event in the context of the brewing Israeli-



Egyptian conflict since early 1956, this remark put it in these terms:

The Israeli invasion of Egypt on October 1956, ... afforded the Soviet Union a unique opportunity to ingratiate itself with the Arab world. Moscow called for immediate action against the aggressors and offered to send 'volunteers' to aid the Egyptians. Confronted with the prospect of an imminent Soviet military intervention and the open opposition of the United States, the invading countries acceded to the U.S. demands, effected a cease fire, and removed their troops from Egypt.<sup>75</sup>

The whole incident did not prevent Egypt and the Soviet Union from subsequently forging the major new relationship;<sup>76</sup> the Suez crisis legitimized Egypt's rapprochement with the Soviet Union. At the end of the crisis, the "Soviet-Egyptian relation was strengthened and in spite of the U.S. role of a mediator in the crisis, the U.S. failed to establish [a] meaningful relationship with the Arab nationalist movement, Egypt in particular."<sup>77</sup> Like Egypt, the Arab/Middle East nations began to re-orient their policies along anti-western, pro-Soviet lines. Indeed, Egypt ultimately became reliant on the Soviet Union for protection; the Soviet Union also agreed to finance the Aswan Dam project. Out of Egypt's defiance did the Soviet Union become a major participant, not just in Egypt but, ultimately in the Arab/Middle East world. The canal reopened April 1957 under Egyptian control. As a result of the disposition of the Egyptian leadership, the U.S. strategic policy was undermined and, for a moment, defeated in Egypt and in the Middle East.

At this time Egypt's leader, Nasser, was seen as 'the west's chief boggy-man' and a dangerous threat to Britain's interest in the Middle East; the U.S. held him responsible for the Soviet Union's penetration of the Middle East.<sup>78</sup> His pan-Arab ideology, which promoted anti-western sentiments and favoured the Soviet Union, were sources of displeasure to the U.S. and of encouragement to the Soviet Union which intensified its effort to gain influence in the Arab/Middle East region. Consequently, Nasser fell out of favour with the west and with him, Egypt. Just as Nasser was quickly looking for alternative assistance to the west, the Soviet Union readily offered to bolster the military and economic strength of Egypt's leadership, supplying more arms and aid to Egypt than was imagined. The Soviet Union seemingly neutralized the U.S. strategic plans, providing a 'political counterweight' to western influence, in the light of its active participation in Egypt.<sup>79</sup>

Mention should be made that part of the success of the Soviet Union in Egypt, so far, relates to the Kremlin's opportunistic, exploitative and revolutionary strategy. By portraying itself as non-imperialistic, its propaganda network was directed at the evils of imperialism and of colonialism. Reportedly, the Soviet Union exploited the colonial legacy of the west and "maximised its gains by backing and encouraging

anti-western nationalist leanings in the Arab-world."<sup>80</sup> It also exploited the rift between Britain and Egypt. The Soviet Union posed as a staunch ally of the Arabs against western imperialism and intensified its effort to alienate the west from the Middle East: "by the time of the 1956 Suez Canal crisis, the Soviet Union was clearly in the Arab corner. The Soviets claimed the credit for forcing the withdrawal of the joint Israeli - French invasion force."<sup>81</sup>

The Soviets may not have carried the entire brunt of penetration into Egypt; the aspirations of the Egyptian leadership (which seemed to have been boosted with subtle, guarantees by the Soviet Union in the light of its propaganda attacks directed at the western presence in Egypt and the rest of the Arab/Middle East) provided the Soviet Union the opportunity to exercise influence in the Arab world: The Nasser-led Egyptian government,

supported Arab liberation movements, opposed the Baghdad Pact, refused to recognize Israel, attended the Bandung conference, opened Egypt for Soviet arms, nationalized the Suez Canal company, attempted to create favourable revolutionary environment in other Arab states and achieved unity with Syria.<sup>82</sup>

Nasser's pan-Arab ideology (differently identified as Nasserism and Arab nationalism), his leaning towards the East

bloc particularly the Soviet Union, combined with his opposition to Israel and to all containment plans in the Arab/Middle East encouraged Soviet penetration of Egypt. His conduct gave impetus to the speculation that he was "going red and taking Egypt with him."<sup>83</sup> Apparently, Egypt was receptive to Soviet Union's policy of neutralizing and possibly eliminating western influence in the Arab world.

Indeed, Soviet policies were designed to achieve its broader goals. In the economic sphere, aid provided to Egypt, as in the finance of the Aswan Dam project, was designed to develop "the state sector, at the expense of the private sector and to encourage the introduction of long-term central planning."<sup>84</sup> Thus the direct supervision from experts which this arrangement called for, guaranteed the stationing of Soviet personnel in Egypt.

For the time-being, the U.S. policy suffered a fatal blow due to Egypt's policies. Through Egypt's disposition, the Soviet Union was able to exercise a level of influence hitherto unavailable to the Soviet Union in the Middle East. So strong were the Soviet Union's and Egypt's drives to eliminate the western presence in the Arab/Middle East region that the balance of power was altered (unfavourably to the U.S.); thus the otherwise exclusive (particularly British and French)

control of the Middle East was not only challenged but penetrated by the Soviets; through Egypt, the Soviet Union sought to forestall all U.S. containment efforts and it moved to place the whole area under its control. Syria, Iraq and Jordan, and the other Arab/Middle East countries, once under western influence in the immediate post-W.W. II period, were amenable to possible Soviet influence due to the ready accessibility of Egypt to the Soviet Union. Thus, the vital interests of the U.S. were threatened.

In light of containment policy, the U.S. mounted a vigorous opposition against the Soviet Union's quest in the Middle East/Arab region *vis-à-vis* the Egyptian collaboration with the Soviet Union. This was done through the Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957. It is notable that except where its application involved military intervention, as in Jordan, the effectiveness of the doctrine was diminished by the Egyptian opposition to west. This is evident in the prevailing Egyptian nationalism, and the anti-colonialist/anti-western campaigns in the region which influenced policies of most Arab/Middle East countries to detach their policies from the U.S. containment initiatives.<sup>85</sup>

Nasser contended that a U.S. design to isolate Egypt could be found in the Eisenhower Doctrine and thus considered the

doctrine hostile to Egypt.<sup>86</sup> In essence, the doctrine was proposed and approved by the U.S. Congress in March 1957, "to protect Middle Eastern nations from communist aggression."<sup>87</sup> Its objective was to fill the vacuum created by Britain and France (in the aftermath of the Egyptian-inspired and the Soviet-supported opposition) "before it [the vacuum] is filled by Russia."<sup>88</sup> Egypt, along with the Soviet Union, condemned the new U.S. initiative as opportunistic and imperialistic.<sup>89</sup>

The Soviet Union declared its support and its protection to all Arab/Middle East nations opposing western nations; Egypt (to the benefit of Soviet Union) set out to attack and to undermine those nations in the Arab/Middle East region which were supportive of the U.S. policies.<sup>90</sup> This was evident in the attempted overthrow of the Jordanian King in April 1958, after the pro-Nasser forces seized power in Syria in mid-1957 and joined the country with Egypt in the United Arab Republic in February 1958.<sup>91</sup> In Iraq, the pro-U.S. government of Camille Chamoun was overthrown by pro-Nasser forces on 14 July, 1958 and thus rendered the Baghdad Pact ineffective.<sup>92</sup> Despite the timely intervention of the U.S. through the despatch of its military force to Jordan -- which ensured the survival of the pro-U.S. government of King Hussein of Jordan<sup>93</sup> -- a disproportionate number of the Arab/Middle East states were lost to Nasser and thus, no longer favoured the

Eisenhower doctrine. Notably, all the pro-Nasser Arab nations began to receive arms and aid from the Soviet Union.

In Iraq, the new regime withdrew its membership from the Baghdad pact in March 1959 and forced the defence pact to be relocated and realigned.<sup>94</sup> Once again, the role of Egypt in the superpower rivalry becomes revealed through its active participation in eliminating western influence in Egypt and the entire Arab/Middle East region and its collaboration with the Soviet Union to establish a decisive influence in the Arab/Middle East region, to the detriment of the interests of the U.S.

Even though the U.S. was able to fulfil its containment alliance objective in the Middle East through the realignment of Baghdad pact into Central Treaty Organization (CENTO),<sup>95</sup> the U.S. interests were adversely affected by the consistent opposition of Egypt against all other major U.S. interests in the Middle East region, such as the preservation of the State of Israel<sup>96</sup>.

Here again, Egypt's avowed hostility to the existence of the state of Israel and its "mobilization" of Arab anger towards the dismemberment of the state of Israel, re-established the Arab-Israeli conflict; Egypt tended to disassociate itself

from the superpower most supportive of the state of Israel. By so doing, Egypt's bearing affected the rivalry between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The Kremlin was quick to 'emphasize and to strengthen' the notion that the Soviet Union was the chief advocate of the Arab interests. Consequently, the Soviet Union won the friendship of Arab states which favoured drastic actions against Israel and gained the loyalty of the organizations which pursued the Palestinian cause.

Egypt's leadership moved even closer to the Soviet Union as opposed to the U.S., in light of the seemingly favourable Soviet disposition to the Arab cause. The Soviet manipulation of Arab perception of the west enhanced Egypt's loyalty to the Soviet Union, despite U.S. effort to "show understanding for Egyptian and Arab concerns."<sup>97</sup> Succinctly put, the Soviet Union was successful at manipulating the 'general orientation' of Arab regimes and this was to determine the extent of Soviet involvement in the Arab/Middle East region.<sup>98</sup>

In the aftermath of the Suez Canal crisis, the U.S. policy sought to detach the Egyptian leadership from reliance on the Soviet Union by providing assistance to Egypt.<sup>99</sup> Mindful of this, the Soviet Union stepped up its provision of military support to the Egyptian government in a bid to maintain Soviet influence.<sup>100</sup> Egypt was, however, able to provide



conflicting signals to both Superpowers which served Egypt's interests and confused the strategic calculations of both superpowers. They intensified their competition for influence in Egypt.

It seems that Nasser was successful at making both superpowers play each other like pawns in a chess game. As was revealed:

the charismatic Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, often seemed adept at manipulating his [sic.] superpower benefactors. The U.S and USSR frequently found themselves apparently bargaining for Arab friendship by trying to outbid each other in offering aid to the Arabs ... the wide fluctuations from amity to enmity [in Egyptian-U.S., and Egyptian-Soviet relations was a deliberate] tactic to throw the two East-West antagonists off balance and to encourage them to compete against each other in offering aid to Egypt.<sup>101</sup>

Egypt's crackdown on local communists and Khrushchev's utterance in 1957 that "we support Nasser. We do not want to turn him into a communist and he does not want to turn us into nationalist,"<sup>102</sup> quelled U.S. fears about Egypt's ideological orientation. Nasser's statement on 30 March 1957 that "although Egypt wanted friendship with the U.S., the U.S. had refused to sell Egypt food while the USSR had sent 600,000 tons of wheat to Egypt in the past year,"<sup>103</sup> is significant. It enhanced the U.S. desire to alter Egypt's favourable

disposition towards the Soviet Union through provision of economic aid.

U.S. State Department officials by late November 1957 confirmed that the U.S. had released about \$10 million of the \$40 million in Egyptian funds frozen by the U.S. at the height of the Suez Canal Crisis; in addition, the U.S. also provided \$600,000 for Egypt's rural development projects.<sup>104</sup> On July 1, 1958, the U.S. Embassy in Cairo revealed that U.S. economic and technical aid for about \$8,418,000 to Egypt, suspended at the time of the Suez crisis, had been restored.<sup>105</sup>

The Egyptian leadership created an atmosphere conducive to the provision of assistance by the U.S. Nasser's policies were only initiated to the extent that they benefited Egypt's sovereignty and fulfilled his personal ambitions. His crackdown on local communists was to eliminate threats posed to his political future (and served as a positive signal for the U.S. to provide aid to Egypt); his opposition to Israel through Arab nationalism as well as his support of revolutionaries were designed to gain recognition and to achieve leadership in the Arab world and beyond (and at the same time, conveyed to the Soviet Union the impression of progressive revolutionary Egypt, clearing the path for the growth of socialism). Nasser's repression of communists in

Egypt and Syria to eliminate internal threats, and his public relations stunt which censured the U.S. for the growth of communism in Iraq impressed the Soviets. Thus, Nasser sought to garner more aid from both the U.S. and the Soviet Union through initiating policies that seemed beneficial to a particular superpower. Nasser's policies, in fact, were designed to satisfy his objectives.

The Soviet Union, after the February 1958 union of Egypt with Syria and following the unsuccessful attempt to incorporate Iraq into the UAR, "no longer accorded Egypt special status among Afro-Asian nations."<sup>106</sup> Nasser was in conflict with local communists and had initiated a repressive policy against them. Egypt's leadership seemed to have feigned opposition to Soviet interests and leaned towards the U.S. for assistance. Under the prevailing environment, Nasser appealed for \$2.85 billion in aid to the Egyptian economy within the next five years and an additional \$855 million for the development of the Syrian economy. "He said, the USSR had supplied the UAR 60 million pounds in credit to buy factories, but it does not give us all we need; and the UAR was eager for trade and [for] aid from the U.S."<sup>107</sup>

Reportedly, Egypt accepted aid offered by the U.S. at the height of Egypt's quarrel with the Soviet Union<sup>108</sup> which

included a \$12 million loan for the modernization of Egypt's railways system, \$47 million development loans, sale of farm surplus valued at \$4.6 million and additional sales of agricultural produce between November 1961 and February 12, 1962, valued at over \$60.3 million, as well as the \$40 million granted to Egypt for the construction of grain storage silos.<sup>109</sup> Notable is the fact that the U.S. did not oppose the \$56 million in loans granted to Egypt in 1959 by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development; the U.S. had provided Egypt with aid valued at over \$1 billion between 1958 and 1964.<sup>110</sup>

Syria's separation from the union with Egypt in September 1961 and deterioration of Soviet relations with Iraq's Quasim seem to have provided a re-focused Soviet attention on Egypt, especially in view of persistent U.S. benevolent gestures to Egypt. But Egypt, in the first quarter of 1960, had led Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Libya to boycott Israel and to blacklist U.S. vessels trading with Israel.<sup>111</sup> Condemning the U.S. as "being dominated by Zionist Jewish Israeli imperialism," Nasser scoffed at the U.S. humanitarian overtures, asserting that "American wheat, grain and monies will never buy our freedom and nationalism."<sup>112</sup>

Just as Nasser's repression of local communists was a source

of irritation in Soviet Egyptian relations, Egypt's opposition to Israel was a stumbling block to better U.S. relations with Egypt. When it seemed that the U.S. assistance would detach Egypt from the Soviet Union, the Egyptian leader reverted to opposition to the U.S. The dissatisfaction emanating from Egypt's flip flop, coupled with renewed hostility against Israel impelled the U.S. to shift its policy from pacifying Egypt's leadership to strengthening and supporting potential regional powers who could be relied upon to safeguard U.S. interest. Subsequently, the U.S. "began to emphasize the military build up of regional actors as a deterrent to the geopolitical ambitions of Soviet states."<sup>113</sup>

Thus Israel emerged as a reliable surrogate power. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, continued to provide arms and aid to Egypt, having hinged its policy on supporting the Arab cause, in order to maintain influence in Egypt, while the U.S. moved to strengthen the State of Israel:

In response to Soviet supplies to Egypt of the latest model MIG 21 and TU-16s in the spring of 1962, the Kennedy Administration agreed, for the first time, to sell Israel short-range defensive Hawk anti-aircraft missiles as a partial defense against UAR jet fighters and bombers. During 1964, prompted by increased Soviet arms supplies to Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, the Johnson Administration agreed to provide Saudi Arabia with Hawk Missiles and Israel and Jordan with 'offensive' weapons such as Patton tanks.<sup>114</sup>

Egypt's support of revolutionaries reveals another dimension of Egypt's role in the superpower rivalry. In Algeria, Yemen and Congo, Egypt provided material support to the revolutionaries possessing marxist orientation. In adjoining states, Egypt's leadership eliminated the authority of pro-western officials in positions of authority such as the Jordanian Chief of Staff, Gen. Glubb. Notably, the 1964 Egyptian involvement in the Congolese affairs followed by intense anti-U.S. sentiments in Egypt to the extent that the Kennedy Memorial Library at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo was set ablaze by Congolese students with the instigation of Egyptian masses, followed the strain of the current Egyptian intransigence, radicalism and recalcitrancy.<sup>115</sup> Egypt was thus aiding revolutionaries to create a favourable environment for the establishment of socialist states. Visiting Egypt in May 1964 to mark the end of the first phase of the construction of the Aswan High Dam, the Soviet leader reached agreement with Egypt's leader on "combatting various forms of western colonialism in Africa and the Middle East."<sup>116</sup>

Both the Soviet Union and Egypt had, by late 1964, patched up their differences (arising out of Egypt's crackdown on local communists, while insisting on Soviet assistance), and jointly sought to eliminate western influence in the region. Following the visit, Soviet - Egyptian political and cultural

ties were intensified. This led to the Soviet Union's optimism about the building of Egyptian society on socialist principles, using Egypt's Arab Socialist Union led by Nasser.<sup>117</sup>

The Soviet policy in Egypt, after Khrushchev's fall from power in October 1964, centred on Arab confrontation with Israel because the unifying political factor in Arab/Middle East was destruction of Israel and the creation of a Palestinian state.<sup>118</sup> Moscow's subsequent commitment to the Arab cause brought about "enormous penetration of Soviet influence into all aspects of Egyptian life."<sup>119</sup>

Account should be taken of Khrushchev's statement, which to the delight of Egyptians, "referred to Israel as an imperialist base and [Khrushchev] expressed his support for Arab cause in Palestine and over the Jordan waters."<sup>120</sup> By this time, Arab nationalism was so much deeply entrenched in Arab consciousness that the Arab/Middle Eastern states embraced instigators of Arab nationalist sentiments, the Egyptian leadership and its cronies. Furthermore, the imposing power and influence of Egypt's Nasser and as well the lofty programs and benefits accruing from Egypt's closeness to the Soviet Union<sup>121</sup>, such as the Soviet finance of the Aswan High Dam and huge arms deliveries to Egypt by

the Soviet Union, reinforced the movement of these states in the Arab/Middle East towards joining Egypt's anti-Israeli, anti-western stance which best served Soviet and Egyptian objectives.

As Jon D. Glassman observed, "not only were the foreign policies of several states of the area becoming deadly anti-western, but domestic socio-economic changes were taking place (industries were being nationalized on a large scale). Formerly powerful foreign interests and 'landlords and bourgeois' elements were being increasingly dispossessed and politically weakened."<sup>122</sup> This trend was positively identified by Moscow as crucial to the Soviet Union's progress towards the establishment of socialist states in the Arab/Middle East region.

The Soviet Union redoubled its efforts to establish itself as the defender and protector of Arab interests,<sup>123</sup> and thus became a legitimate assertive superpower in the region, thanks to the initial contact with Egypt and the subsequent acquiescence by the Egyptian leadership in collaboration with the Soviet Union in eliminating western presence in the region. It also served to forestall U.S. containment plans which called for the limiting of Soviet power to the line of the 'iron curtain'.<sup>124</sup> Argument still abounds regarding



whether these Arab/Middle East states were clients or Soviet-style governments in light of extensive trade, military, and socio-political relations which they entered into with the Soviet Union.

As a result of the inroads made by the Soviet Union, there seemed to have been a change in the balance of power in the superpower rivalry, whereby a disproportionate number of Arab/Middle East States maintained a more favourable relationship with the Soviet Union, compared to the U.S.<sup>125</sup> In actual fact, the growing need for oil in the Soviet Union and the Soviet Union's need for foreign exchange gave way to a new Soviet policy which after 1965 focused less on the ideological imperatives of the Soviet policy and more on access to cheap and secure sources of oil and natural gas supply as well as maintenance of trade relations.<sup>126</sup>

For the Soviet Union, ideological pre-eminence was not so much important as the benefits of superpower-client relationship.

The Arab - Israeli conflict continued to be a factor influencing Egypt's role in the superpower rivalry. In the light of U.S. support of Israel (which strategic and moral imperatives called for), and in light of Soviet adeptness in exploiting the colonial legacy of the west and the Egyptian-led Arab nationalism by identifying itself with the defense of

Arab/Palestinian interests (in order to eliminate the western presence in the Arab/Middle East region), there seemed to be a division in the Arab middle east along Arab/Palestinian and Israeli lines which was reflected on the superpower rivalry.

The Egyptian government had consistently opposed the existence of the state of Israel since its creation. Nasser's hostility towards Israel exacerbated the Arab-Israeli hostility. The Egyptian opposition was so vociferous and trans-national, as expressed in the Arab nationalism, that the Soviet Union perceived positive results accruing from identifying with Egypt's anti-Israeli position. Israel was the creation of the west and was being offered support by the west to the distaste of Arabs. In the face of the superpower rivalry, the Soviet Union consistently portrayed itself as the champion of the Arab cause, while whipping up anti-American sentiments.<sup>127</sup> The Soviets hoped to gain the loyalty of Egypt and the other anti-Israeli states, while distancing them from the U.S. The Soviet Union became identified with the defense of the Arabs from the western and Israeli onslaught. By the time the June 1967 Arab - Israel war was joined, the Soviet Union had gained enormous influence, loyalty and respect from Egypt and from a great majority of Arab states who were supportive of Egypt's role in that war.

The Soviet Union was directly involved in the domestic activities of Egypt. The Soviet Union was supervising the purchase, the delivery and the operation of the Egyptian military hardware, such as sophisticated machine guns, anti-air crafts, jet fighters and bombers. The Soviet Union was injecting huge sums of money into Egypt's economy for development projects and supervising the disbursement of these funds. In the process, the Egyptian economy was patterned after the Soviet system of financial planning, i.e., the five year plan. Mention should be made that the Soviet direct presence was instrumental to the creation of a group of pro-Soviets within the Egyptian leadership, Nasser being at the top. In his attempt to assert a pro-U.S. policy after the death of Nasser, Sadat ultimately eliminated this group which included the Egyptian Vice President, Sidky. Expelling the Soviets when he did, as will be noticed in the next chapter, Sadat perceived Soviet Union's interference in Egyptian affairs cumbersome to the extent that the Egyptian head of state could hardly make an independent policy without opposition from the Soviet Union and its surrogates in Egypt. It seemed the ideological direction of Egypt had been determined by the Soviet presence.

After the Syrian - Egyptian defence pact was signed on November 3, 1966,<sup>128</sup> Arab plan to embark on a new war with

the State of Israel was executed.<sup>129</sup> Acting on intelligence reports from different Arab sources and co-ordinated by the Soviet Union about Israeli troop movements along the Syrian border, Nasser was instigated to order Egyptian troops into the Sinai peninsula in an attempt to quash a possible Israeli pre-emptive attack on Syria, leading to the six day war. The Soviet Union promoted rumours of possible Israeli attack from which the Syrian government needed protection.<sup>130</sup> Moscow reportedly promoted the rift and sought to exploit the conflict to demonstrate the Soviet Union's support for Arab interests.<sup>131</sup>

Through direct participation in the provision of military protection to Egypt, the Soviet Union moved to neutralize NATO bases in the Mediterranean, while at the same time seeking for the acquisition of bases at the opportune moment.<sup>132</sup> The Soviet Union was able to gain direct access to Egyptian ports and to establish a fleet in the Mediterranean which provided a challenge to the U.S. Sixth Fleet.<sup>133</sup>

Conversely, undercut by the Kremlin's aggressive anti-Israeli, pro-Arab stance which had garnered Arab loyalty and Arab approval for the Soviet Union, the U.S. sought support in the Middle East for the safeguard of western interests. The superpower rivalry, in the U.S. view, dictated the

strengthening of allies and friends in the region, justifying U.S. support to Israel, surrounded by hostile neighbours.

In the aftermath of the war, Israel drove the Egyptians back across the Suez, the Jordanians across the Jordan River and the Syrians away from the strategic Golan Heights; Israel seized also the old city of Jerusalem.<sup>134</sup> Egypt severed diplomatic relations with the U.S., expelled American citizens and caused other Middle East and Arab/Middle East oil-producing states, such as Libya, Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to halt the supply of oil to the U.S. and Britain.<sup>135</sup>

Notably, the U.S. support to Israel did not imply that the U.S. was anti-Arab.<sup>136</sup> Mention should be made that while consistently supporting Israel through the provision of military and financial/technical aid so that Israel could effectively defend itself "from all foreseeable combination of Arab military power,"<sup>137</sup> the U.S. was supportive of Arabs, particularly, the friendly Arab states sympathetic to U.S. national objectives. Considerate of Arab unity, the U.S. had abstained from participation in the Baghdad pact and remained committed to the principles of the Tripartite declaration of 25 May 1950, even after the 1955 Czech - Egyptian arms deal, when pressures from the Israeli lobby in the U.S. urged sales of arms to Israel "to match Egyptian acquisition."<sup>138</sup> The

U.S. was forced to review its policy in light of increasing Soviet activity *vis à vis* the Egyptian nationalism.

U.S. - Egyptian relations, after many years of strain,<sup>139</sup> received its final blow when relations were halted with the termination of the diplomatic relations between Washington and Cairo. By the end of 1969, the U.S. had no meaningful relations with Egypt. Indeed, "the U.S., [at this time] was deprived of diplomatic relations with Egypt, Syria, Iraq, relying increasingly on Israel in the Mediterranean, and [in] the Gulf [area,] on the Shah,"<sup>140</sup> for the safeguard of western interests.

Soviet relations with Egypt were the direct opposite to the U.S., and to Britain's. There was much greater harmony and agreement in Soviet - Egyptian relations and a reorientation of Egypt's policies towards the Soviet Union had taken place.<sup>141</sup> The war afforded the Soviet Union the opportunity to gain predominance in Egypt, in view of its direct involvement in the affairs of Egypt. Among the anti-Israeli Arab states, the bond of kinship seemed to have intensified after the war, in light of the devastating defeat they suffered and in light of their vulnerability; like Egypt, these Arab states moved closer to the Soviet Union for military support.

The Soviet Union, thus was able to make immense inroads in the Arab/Middle East region, to the detriment of the U.S.<sup>142</sup> The Soviet propaganda campaign exaggerated the facts pertaining to the June war to enormous proportions and minimized or completely omitted unfavourable data in a bid to turn Egypt's and the other Arab nations' military defeat into a victory. The Soviet Union also instigated the elimination of a number of key Egyptian military officers<sup>143</sup> (scapegoats of the war) as a means of asserting Soviet control over the Egyptian armed forces and increased its military and technical support to Egypt through direct presence.<sup>144</sup> Under the guise of Arab's 'faithful friend and crucial ally', Soviet pilots were training Egyptian pilots and were flying operational missions for Egypt.<sup>145</sup>

Although defeated in the Arab-Israeli wars, Egypt, with the support of the Soviet Union, claimed a political and moral victory, emerging as the citadel of opposition against the vestiges of western presence, and against Israel.<sup>146</sup> By "the early 70's thousands of Soviet military advisers had been despatched to Egypt ... to rebuild the army ... the Soviet navy obtained repair and re-supply facilities at the Egyptian ports of Alexandria, Port Said, Mersa Matrah and Sollum."<sup>147</sup>

By mid 1970, the superpower rivalry, extensively and

intensively waged in Egypt since the early 1950's, showed no signs of abatement. Its outcome, close to the end of the '60's, seemed to have favoured the Soviet Union and weakened U.S. containment policy in the Arab/Middle East region. Writing about Soviet success in Egypt on the eve of the new decade, Peter Manfield maintained:

it has handled its relations with Egypt tactfully (far more than the west) and there is good reason to believe that it has no advantage in trying to convert Egypt into an obedient satellite (especially at a time when it can no longer control several of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe).<sup>148</sup>

What followed was a shift in Soviet attitude towards Egypt. It seemed the Soviet Union, at the death of Nasser, no longer considered tactfulness important in dealing with Egypt. The Soviets chose to be blunt in their demands for complete communization of Egypt as a pre-condition to further and future assistance to Egypt. The new Soviet attitude emanated from the Egyptian demands for more arms and aid from the Soviet Union. The increasing pressure made the Soviets to lay down terms for Soviet provision of assistance. For the Soviets, further supplies of arms and economic assistance would be forthcoming if Egypt allowed the Soviets to control Egyptian affairs. That Soviet change of attitude foreshadowed the gradual decline of the Soviet Union's influence in Egypt.



It seemed that Soviet power and influence in Egypt had reached its apogee at the end of 1970. The death of Nasser marked a watershed in Egypt's pro-Soviet, anti-western, anti-Israeli policies. Henceforth, Egypt's role in the superpower rivalry began to favour western, particularly U.S. interests. This trend, leading to the eventual expulsion of thousands of Soviet personnel in Egypt and the restoration of U.S. - Egyptian relations, as well a brief look at the cost and the benefit of superpower involvement in Egypt, becomes the subject of the next chapter.

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90. The Anglo-French colonial legacy "rendered the Arab populations more susceptible to Egypt's 'anti-imperialist' and 'neutralist' campaigns. Later the Eisenhower Doctrine enabled Egypt to include the U.S. in 'imperialist' category. Consequently, those Arab leaders who rejected Egypt's 'positive neutralism,' preferring instead to remain with the western sphere of influence, were accused by Egypt of being 'tools of imperialism,' lackeys of colonialism, 'agents of the west and so on." Thus, Egypt prevented these Arab/Middle East states from maintaining a pro-U.S. policy. See A. I. Dawisha. Egypt in the Arab World: The Elements of Foreign Policy, 5th ed., London, McMillan Press Ltd., 1976, pp. 70 - 3.
91. Tarun Chandra Bose. The Superpowers and the Middle East, New York, Asia Publishing House, 1972, pp. 41 - 56.
92. Ibid. See also, John Donovan, ed. U.S. and Soviet Policy in the Middle East, pp. 96 - 128.
93. Reportedly, the doctrine, "advertised that any state in the Arab East desiring the U.S. economic and military aid in its own defense against 'international communism' need no longer enrol in a western security system." See Mark V. Kauppi and R. Craig Nation, eds. p. 30.
94. Terry L. Deibel and John Lewis Gaddis, ed. p. 204; See also, John Donovan, ed. The U.S. and Soviet Policy in the Middle East, p. 141.

95. Following the evacuation of the Baghdad headquarters from the Iraq Capital, to Ankara, Turkey on August 19, 1959, a CENTO Council communique issued in Washington on October 9, was based on an analysis of the prevailing environment. The communique maintained that the new economic and defense alliance in being involved countries situated between the NATO and SEATO region. Refer to, John Donovan, ed., p. 141. See also, Terry L. Deibel and John Lewis Gaddis, eds., p. 204.
96. In a March 17, 1957 interview in Cairo, Nasser insisted that "we cannot" recognize the legal existence of Israel. See also, John Donovan, ed. U.S. and Soviet Policy in the Middle East, 1974, P. 57.
97. Lillian Craig Harris. p. 89.
98. Gregory Treverton, ed., p. 89.
99. Tarun Chandra Bose. p. 59.
100. Jon D. Glassman. Arms for the Arabs: The Soviet Union and the War in the Middle East, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975, p. 179.
101. John Donovan, ed., pp. 1, 143.
102. New York Times. October 10, 1957, p. 11.
103. John Donovan, ed., p. 60.
104. Ibid. p. 144.
105. Loc. cit.
106. Charles B. McLane. Soviet Middle East Relations, London, Central Asian Research Centre, 1973, pp. 30 - 31.
107. John Donovan, ed., p. 145.
108. Derek Hopwood. p. 70.
109. John Donovan. The Tumultuous Years: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1949 - 1953, 1982, pp. 146 - 9.
110. Tarun Chandra Bose. pp. 58 - 9.
111. John Donovan, ed. U.S. and Soviet Policy in the Middle East, p. 148.
112. Loc. cit.
113. Janice Gross Stein and David Dewitt, eds., p. 130.



114. Janice Gross Stein and David Dewitt, eds., p. 124.
115. Peter Manfield. pp. 99 - 100.
116. Ibid. p. 110.
117. Charles B. McLane. p. 31.
118. Helen Kitchen, ed. Africa: From Mystery to Maze, Critical Choices for Americans, Toronto, Lexington Books, 1976, p. 277.
119. Charles B. McLane. pp. 31 - 2.
120. Peter Manfield. p. 10.
121. The Soviet Union reportedly cancelled about \$460 million of the Egyptian debt following Nasser's visit to Moscow in 1965. See also, Walter Laqueur. The Struggle for the Middle East, 1958 - 1970, 2nd ed., Middlesex, England, Penguin Books, 1972, p. 158.
122. Jon D. Glassman. p. 61.
123. Alvin Z. Rubinstein, ed., p. 392.
124. Visiting Egypt in May 17, 1965, the Soviet Premier N. Kosygin, along with Egypt's Nasser, adopted a strong anti-U.S. position.
125. E. Hinterhoff. "The Soviet Penetration into the Middle East," Contemporary Review, February 1968, p. 45.
126. Walter Laqueur. pp. 158 - 161.
127. David E. Albright. Communism in Africa, Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1980, p. 59.
128. Jon D. Glassman. p. 37.
129. Daniel Pipes. "East and West in the Middle East," Toronto, Middle East Focus, March 1985, p. 10.
130. Jon D. Glassman. pp. 37 - 40.
131. Tarun Chandra Bose. pp. 95 - 9.
132. Enver M. Koury. p. 9.
133. Derek Hopwood. p. 6.
134. Walter LaFeber. America, Russia and the Cold War, 1945 - 1984, New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1985, p. 275.

135. Peter Manfield. p. 102.
136. David E. Albright. p. 59.
137. Gregory Treverton, ed., p. 5.
138. Janice Gross Stein and David Dewitt, eds., p. 124.
139. Reacting to provocative statements made by Egyptian press in 1965, and Nasser's denunciation of U.S. arms sales to Israel, in February 1966, the U.S. suspended aid to Egypt, including shipments of surplus food provided by PL-480 agreement and subject to renewal. In spite of all efforts by Cairo to reinstate them, about \$300 million aid disbursed yearly were withheld. See Peter Manfield. p. 101. See also, John Donovan, ed. Soviet Policy in the Middle East, pp. 199 - 202.
140. Lillian Crag Harris. p. 89.
141. Peter Manfield. p. 106.
142. Ibid. p. 112.
143. Charles B. McLane. p. 32.
144. Ilana Kass. Soviet Involvement in the Middle East. Policy Formulation, 1966 - 1973, Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1978, pp. 38 - 46, 157.
145. Loc. cit.
146. Peter Manfield. pp. 107 - 110.
147. Adeed Dawisha and Karen Dawisha, eds., p. 14.
148. Peter Manfield. p. 112.

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## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

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The previous chapter dealt with how Egypt's active participation in the rivalry favoured the Soviet Union. This chapter explores the Soviet Union's diminishing influence in Egypt which was supplanted by U.S. influence. The period covered in this chapter includes the expulsion of the Soviets and the assassination of Anwar Sadat. At this time, Egypt had cast off the spectre of the Soviet presence and entrenched the pro-U.S. policy in its (Egypt's) domestic, regional and international fabric.

The chapter also looks at the gains and losses of the superpowers and, as well, Egypt's benefits, emanating from the U.S. - Soviet rivalry. Significantly, the chapter demonstrates that Egypt is an active participant in the U.S. - Soviet rivalry. Finally, attempt is made to draw a logical inference from the competition, to the extent that the future direction of the superpower rivalry is discerned.

By late 1970, Egypt's rapprochement with the Soviet Union was unquestionable, in light of the Soviet active participation in Egyptian affairs. Since 1969, the Soviet Union had been involved in prosecuting the War of Attrition<sup>1</sup> which Nasser had embarked on, after the losses incurred in the June war. Israel had ignored the U.N. Resolution No. 242 and refused to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula. Nasser, hoping to use Egypt's newly rebuilt army to force compliance on Israel, mounted the war of attrition in April 1969; the overpowering superiority of the Israelis in air power led to Egypt's defeat in which Israeli planes were "flying at will through eastern Egypt."<sup>2</sup> To Moscow, Nasser travelled in early 1970, and requested an air defense system manned by Soviet pilots and anti-aircraft forces, protected by Soviet troops. In exchange, the Soviet Union gained "exclusive control of a number of Egyptian airfields as well as operational control over a large portion of the Egyptian army."<sup>3</sup>

In retrospect, the Soviet Union, in the aftermath of the June 1967 War and in the face of the Canal wars, infused a great deal of military and economic resources into Egypt and seemed to have gained a certain level of free hand in the affairs of that country.<sup>4</sup> By mid 1970, the Soviet Union was systematically altering all facets of the Egyptian life, from the economic, political, and social fabric to the cultural

relations, to suit the demands of the Soviet Union and its socialist bloc of countries. Egypt's military was being restructured; the economy assumed the five-year phase typical of Soviet economic planning. Egypt was considered crucial to a strong position in the Arab world and of primary importance to the strategic, economic and foreign policies of the Soviet Union. Strengthening and consolidating its hold on Egypt was a Soviet objective.<sup>5</sup> In view of the Soviet Union's influence over Egypt, the Soviet Union was able to direct Egypt's domestic and foreign policies along Soviet lines.

The Soviet penetration of the Middle East, particularly its enormous influence in Egypt, was being described as a success of "singular triumph from the perspective of the past."<sup>6</sup> Yet, in view of the Arab - Israeli wars, Egypt's economy was drained. Nasser, in pursuing his aspirations, mortgaged Egypt's resources to his military and nationalist objectives. Facing economic stagnation and turmoil, Egypt was left precariously dependent on the Soviet Union and seemed to have lost the ability to exercise national free will. Its national integrity was questioned in light of Soviet presence and as a result of the Israeli control of a sizable portion of the Egyptian territory.

It seemed at this time that the very objective which Nasser

set out to accomplish, to rid Egypt of foreign control, was negated by his aspirations which offered the Soviet Union the opportunity to fully assert itself in Egypt. Nasser's persistence in pursuing the war with Israel brought about his country's defeat. Nasser's only consolation in this late hour was his emergence in the Arab world as a hero, having defied the west by refusing to acquiesce to anti-Soviet schemes. He had also espoused the eradication of western influence and had challenged the existence of Israel through military force.

Nasser's leadership achievements were intangible in light of the economic and financial hardships now facing his country. He was weakened at home and powerless in the hands of the Soviet Union, now directly influencing the military and foreign/domestic policies in Egypt.

Just as Nasser was succeeding at eradicating western presence, he unknowingly filled the vacuum with that of the Soviet Union, whose domination of Egypt was not a lesser 'evil' than the 'imperialism' of the west.

It soon became evident that Soviet policy had many of the characteristics of traditional Western imperialism. The Soviet quest for bases in the Arab world had begun within six years of the final British withdrawal from the Suez Canal base, and a decade later, in 1971, Egypt was described in Strategic Survey as being in many respects a Soviet forward base area.

Even though Egyptian - U.S. relations had come to a halt since 1967, the U.S. government actively sought to secure the friendship of Arab countries, in light of the containment policy, while remaining firm in its support and protection of Israel.<sup>8</sup> In spite of the low ebb in the Egyptian - U.S. relations at this time, Egypt remained a feature in Washington's strategic calculations. It was, therefore, not inconceivable that the U.S. Middle East policy allowed for restoration of relations with Egypt, in order to exert the U.S. influence and assert its interest in the entire Arab/Middle East region, especially when the Egyptian leadership seemed helpless in the face of enormous disadvantages which it had suffered from the Arab - Israeli conflict, and compounded by the overwhelming presence of the Soviet Union. At the same time, "despite the aid he was receiving from the USSR, Nasser tried to maintain some ties with the West...[he] relied on U.S. oil companies to prospect for oil."<sup>9</sup>

The Soviet Union had satisfied the post-Stalin objective which advocated an out-thrust, "a resolute political offensive, at least outside Europe ... to enable Russia to chalk up new gains even before catching up with the United States."<sup>10</sup> This is evident in Egypt, where the 'national liberation struggle doctrine'<sup>11</sup> was applied. Yet, the success of using

Egyptian nationalism as a transitional device to the emergence of communism in Egypt seemed unattainable. In light of the enormous resources expended by the Soviet Union, the development was discomfoting to the Kremlin.

Just as the Soviet Union was gaining a foothold in Egypt and in the entire Arab/Middle East<sup>12</sup>, the U.S. policy was moving fast to declare the existence of its vital interest in the areas susceptible to Soviet penetration and Sovietization. It seemed the environment favoured U.S. contact with Egypt following the death of Nasser in September 1970. The next Egyptian in the line of leadership, Anwar Sadat, was faced with the reality of his country: notably, the near stagnation of Egypt's economy, the Israeli occupation of Egyptian lands and its attendant discomfort. Other sources of discomfort included the whole stalemate created by the Arab-Israeli wars, and the consequent social, economic, political and national dislocation brought about by the pursuit of Nasser's objectives, including Soviet occupation of Egypt's strategic sites and the stationing of its fleet in the Mediterranean.

Disconcerting to Sadat was the overpowering, if not emasculating, presence of the Soviet Union, which seemed to place inhibitions on the conduct of Egyptian affairs by the new Egyptian leadership. The prospects of economic relief



from the U.S. combined with the hopes of a U.S.- backed Egyptian amity with Israel, gave impetus to a halt in Egypt's slide towards the Soviet orbit.

Here again the whole process leading to Egyptian re-orientation, away from the Soviet Union and towards the U.S. demonstrates another dimension of Egypt's role in the superpower rivalry. This process of reorientation is evident in the abrupt expulsion of a hoard of Soviet experts from Egypt by the Egyptian leader in 1972, and the eventual restoration of diplomatic ties with the U.S.

Although Anwar Sadat paid a price with his life in his bid to solve the problems facing Egypt at the height of the Egyptian nationalism, his legacy was carried forward by his successor, Hosni Mohamed Mubarak. Egypt remained in the pro-western orbit while the diplomatic skills of Nasser's successor has tended to ameliorate tensions in the Soviet - Egyptian relations.<sup>13</sup> Evidently, Egypt "had become a centre-piece of the anti-Soviet Middle Eastern block the United States was seeking to create and Soviet-Egyptian relations plummeted to a new low as a result."<sup>14</sup>

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Evidence attests to the direction of the superpower rivalry in Egypt in the 1970's. Evident was:

a vast increase in Soviet Union's capacity to influence and to direct world politics ... [Soviet] power in objective terms was steadily increasing, both absolutely and relatively in relation to the U.S.; at the same time, the cohesion of socialist camp was deteriorating and the payoff in external gains from Soviet foreign policy tactics seemed to be progressively declining.<sup>15</sup>

Implicitly, in spite of the obvious manifestations of the Soviet presence in Egypt (evident in Soviet direct assistance in Egypt's military operations and Soviet influence over Egypt's economic planning, control of ports and bases), Egypt was slipping away from the clutches of the Soviet Union. It seemed the Soviet Union would struggle with retaining its hold on Egypt as the U.S. embarked on a new initiative to assert itself in Egypt.

The Soviet Union was apprehensive of the presence of the top American official, Elliot Richardson, at Nasser's funeral. Having deduced that his presence signified a serious U.S. desire to restore relations with Egypt, the Soviet Union allowed its delegation several days of meetings with the Egyptian government officials following the ceremony. To stem the imminent U.S. venture to win the new Egyptian leadership, the Soviet Union pledged co-operation with Egypt and

intensified its anti-western rhetoric,<sup>16</sup> which had been its traditional pattern of distancing Egypt from the west. But the new leadership in Egypt seemed dissatisfied with the reality of the Egyptian society and was not attuned to Moscow's position.

Assuming the position of president of Egypt in November 1970 after Nasser's death, Sadat made a bid for assistance from the U.S. through a peace overture to Israel. By his proposal of February 11, 1971, the Suez Canal was to open to ships of all countries, should Israel retreat from the eastern bank of the Suez.<sup>17</sup> In light of the developing U.S. - Egyptian understanding, the Soviet Union encouraged and approved the federation of Egypt, Syria, Libya and Sudan. The Soviet Union also made provision of \$415 million loan for Egypt's domestic and industrial projects; on April 17, 1971, the Soviet-inspired federation was declared<sup>18</sup>. Nevertheless, the new Egyptian leadership was intent on establishing a rapport with the U.S.

Three days before the U.S. Secretary of State's visit, Sadat, on May 2, 1971, removed a prominent pro-Soviet official in his cabinet, the vice president who was also a close associate and confidant of Nasser. Sadat subsequently proceeded to eliminate Nasser's legacy by ridding his administration of all

pro-Nasser and pro-Soviet officials.<sup>19</sup> Under the pressures of "the close ties with the Soviet Union ... [the] 'inane socialist slogans' which distorted social justice, and the Israeli occupation of Sinai ...[Sadat] announced ... the 'revolution of rectification' to correct the course of the 1952 revolution which had been distorted by numerous errors."<sup>20</sup>

A member of the Soviet Politburo, N.V. Podgorny, visiting Egypt between May 25 and 28, 1971, signed a treaty of friendship which was arranged between Egypt and the Soviet Union.<sup>21</sup> The treaty was supposed to 'demonstrate' that the U.S. had failed to drive a wedge between Egypt and the Soviet Union.<sup>22</sup> Apparently, Sadat was set on "a complete external and internal reorientation of Cairo's political line."<sup>23</sup> In light of the sensitivity of the problems at hand, he sought to placate the Soviet Union. He had tried to exploit the Soviets in the face of his increasing disposition to tow the U.S. line when he had offered logistical support to the Soviet Union -- a transit point for the Soviet equipment bound for India in the 1971 Indo-Pakistani war.

Sadat was on the one hand orienting Egypt towards the west and on the other providing landing facilities for the Soviet Union's long distance runs to India; but he failed to secure

assistance from the Soviet Union for the pending crusade against Israel.<sup>24</sup> Sadat became more indignant at the conduct of the Soviet Union than ever. To their astonishment, Sadat's speech of July 30, 1971, demonstrated support to Sudan's Numeiri who had been restored to power in a Soviet-backed putsch. (Apparently, the Soviets had run out of favour with Numeiri and subsequently encouraged the attempt by local communists to topple Numeiri's regime. Sadat seemingly was supporting Numeiri who was oppressing the local Sudanese communists who were of interest to the Soviet Union.) President Numeiri of Sudan, after being restored to power, was praised by Sadat and to the utter dismay of the Soviet Union, Sadat condemned the local communists in Sudan.<sup>25</sup> This open criticism was only the tip of the iceberg. Reportedly, "the first investment code to attract foreign capital had been issued in the fall of 1971. Scientific socialism was discredited, while ... political liberalism was stressed."<sup>26</sup>

Under the pressure of the Egyptian masses who clamoured for war against Israel in light of the occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and the stalemate arising from the War of Attrition mounted since 1969,<sup>27</sup> Sadat travelled to Moscow. Between February 2 and February 4, 1972, Sadat bewailed, as reported in a Pravda interview, the support which Israel 'enjoyed' from the U.S. He seemed to have

returned from Moscow empty handed although he had stressed his need for the Soviet Union to "continue to strengthen the defense capability of the Arab Republic of Egypt so that it can resist the Israeli aggressors."<sup>28</sup>

It seemed that by mid-1972, the Egyptian leadership was wary of such Soviet rhetoric full of willingness to assist Egypt and which was not backed by actual military assistance needed by Egypt to prosecute a war with Israel. Such Soviet expressions of 'firm conviction' that "Israeli aggressors, who 'enjoy' the support of the imperialist force of the other countries will be compelled to get out of the Arab territories illegally occupied in 1967,"<sup>29</sup> were not reassuring to Sadat.

There were a number of reasons which guided the cooling off of Soviet zeal in offering assistance to Egypt once it was requested. The summit meeting between Brezhnev and the U.S. President, Nixon, which centred on reducing superpower conflict, seemed to reduce the competitive motive for the Soviet support for Egypt. To Sadat's dissatisfaction, it seemed both superpowers were concentrating on enhancing their interests to the neglect of Egypt's needs.

Notable are the increasing Soviet - Iraqi relations following the treaty they jointly signed on April 9, 1973<sup>30</sup> coupled with

the Soviet visions of avoiding possible confrontation with the U.S. in an Arab war with Israel. Both factors tended to discourage the Soviet Union's tacit approval of the Egyptian requests for military assistance to wage a war against Israel. The Egyptian request to reschedule Egypt's military debts to the Soviet Union, estimated at \$3 billion, and its demands for additional military assistance<sup>31</sup> while refusing to stop its conciliatory gestures with the U.S. were other stumbling blocks to prompt Soviet refusal of Egypt's requests for assistance.

Here, there is a pattern in the Soviet - Egyptian relations not dissimilar with Egypt's relations with the west, particularly, with Great Britain and the U.S. in the 1950's; the Soviets now faced intransigence and defiance from the Egyptian leader whose policy was shifting towards the U.S. Moscow hoped that by withholding its support, Egypt could be punished for its contacts with the west, and possibly bring about a return of Egypt to the Soviet fold. But as in the fifties and sixties, the nature of the superpower rivalry provided alternative sources to Egypt's leaders who felt there was more to gain from contact with the U.S. than from the Soviets whose assistance was conditional on absolute commitment to socialism and to Egypt abstaining from contact with the west. Reportedly, Sadat's frustration "reached a

peak in July 1972 when promised weapons had not arrived."<sup>32</sup>

The July 14, 1972 trip made by the Egyptian Prime Minister, Aziz Sidky, to the Soviet Union was not meaningful to the Egyptian leader.<sup>33</sup> On July 23, the twentieth anniversary of the Egyptian revolution,<sup>34</sup> Sadat made his boldest thrust to the right and against the USSR by expelling Soviet military advisers who numbered between 15,000 and 20,000.<sup>35</sup> By that announcement, Sadat terminated the mission of the Soviet military advisers and experts. He withdrew control of his country's bases and the other facilities from the Soviets and placed the same in the hands of the Egyptians.

Implicitly, the Egyptian support for the Soviet presence evaporated once Soviet actions became contradictory to the interests of the Egyptian leadership.<sup>36</sup> The announcement acted as a harbinger of the Egyptian switch back to the west and did not augur well for the Soviets. It is not unlikely that the Soviet proclamation of 'the principles of equality of states and mutual respect and non interference in one another's internal affairs' was not being observed by the Soviet Union; the Soviets cited the Soviet - Egyptian treaty of Friendship and Co-operation as the 'political and legal foundations' of their conduct in Egypt.<sup>37</sup>



Indeed, the Soviet Union sensed Egypt's unease with the Soviet presence, especially after the death of Nasser. Its quick negotiation for a treaty with Egypt suggests an attempt to establish a legal and diplomatic basis for its presence in Egypt. The Soviet Union did not just suffer a setback; like the west in the 1950's and 1960's, the new Egyptian disposition set the course for a gradual Soviet loss of influence in Egypt.

Egypt increasingly moved towards the U.S., but it continued to seek the eviction of Israel from the Arab territories by military force. The U.S., however, was reluctant to be pressured by Egypt into changing its policy towards Israel. This was the era of détente and it seemed that the Soviet Union had, to a considerable degree, gained America's confidence through the agreement to show mutual restraint in superpower relations and 'to resist exploiting unilateral advantages'<sup>38</sup>. Sadat could not obtain support for his quest for a war against Israel when he needed it from the U.S.:

Sadat swallowed his pride and turned to the Russians, after first arranging with Syria for a co-ordinated attack on Israel, and with King Faisal of Saudi Arabia for a simultaneous imposition of an oil embargo, which would presumably have the effect of paralysing the United States ... the Russian leaders in turn decided to swallow their pride and supply the Egyptians and Syrians with enough hardware -- especially missiles and tanks -- to launch an attack.<sup>39</sup>

On October 6, 1973, in the period of a Jewish religious observance, the Yom Kippur, the Egyptian and the Syrian armies surprised the Israelis with an attack which swept across the Suez Canal on the Egyptian front, and the Golan Heights on the Syrian front.<sup>40</sup> The war lasted for eighteen days and resulted in an Israeli drive in which the initial Egyptian advance was ultimately driven back and in which more Egyptian territory was seized by Israel.<sup>41</sup> Yet Sadat's Egypt reaped great psychological advantage, and in the Soviet view, it "did not bring Israelis any military victory ... Apart from Tel Aviv's military failures, Washington at that time was highly concerned over the Arab countries oil embargo."<sup>42</sup> In the face of Soviet military support to the Arabs in the war, Israel secured U.S. assistance. The involvement of both rival superpowers in that war led to a close confrontation as the U.S. placed its strategic forces, including the nuclear striking force, under alert in the face of the Soviet threat to despatch its forces to the region,<sup>43</sup> should the U.S. fail to restrain the victorious Israel forces, en-route to Damascus.

Sadat emerged from that war as a hero. The achievement was short-lived in light of the Arab disappointment with his decision to settle the conflict with Israel by diplomatic, rather than military means. Nevertheless, Sadat's seemingly

long road towards a rapprochement with the U.S. proved to satisfy his objective.

With Egypt's credibility restored, his country's army having performed effectively in the October 1973 war, in the perception of U.S. officials, "Sadat felt able, in 1974 and 1975, with the U.S. participation, to negotiate two disengagement agreements with Israel by which Egypt regained the Suez Canal and parts of the Sinai."<sup>44</sup> Although Sadat lost credibility in the eyes of his Arab brethren who (insinuated by Soviet propaganda) considered his peace overtures with Israel an act of sabotage, the Egyptian leader had a clear vision of his domestic and foreign policy. He maintained a deliberate policy of defiance of the Soviet Union.

Sadat felt that it was necessary to tow the western line in order to meet Egypt's needs -- to solve Egypt's economic problems and to bring about a peaceful settlement of the conflict with Israel -- with western financial and diplomatic (and possibly, military) assistance. It is not unlikely that Sadat, acting when he did, was influenced by the abysmal failure of the Soviet-directed attempt to implement 'the principles of the struggle against imperialism';<sup>45</sup> Sadat followed up the U.S. objective,

to press out the Soviet Union from Egypt through a complete external and internal reorientation of Cairo's political line, notably, by ... [consenting] to liberalize [Egypt's] economy and open it up to private and foreign capital and to rebuild the country's internal structure according to the western model, by urging the biggest Arab country to hold talks with Israel.<sup>46</sup>

In retrospect, the U.S. initiative in the Egyptian-Israeli reprieve, the shuttle 'step-by-step' diplomacy, brought about 'concrete military disengagement agreements' (as well as the future peace process) to the benefit of Egypt and Israel. This in turn, for Sadat, led to the reactivation, on June 5, 1975, of the Suez Canal (closed since June 6, 1967) and was the benefit of the close association with the U.S.; henceforth, "Egypt's policy veered toward close economic and political relations with the United States."<sup>47</sup> Apparently, the exchange of visits between the U.S. and the Egyptian heads of state were made to Egypt in June 1974 and to the U.S. in October 1975, respectively. The visits produced economic co-operation and gave way to the incremental supply of U.S. aid to Egypt which had reached \$1 billion by 1976.<sup>48</sup>

From the period that the Soviets were expelled from Egypt in 1972, to the time "Sadat journeyed to Jerusalem to meet with Prime Minister Menachem Begin and to address the Israeli

Knesset [which] foreshadowed the Camp David accords of September 1978 and the Egyptian Israeli - Peace Treaty of 1979 ... , U.S. - Egyptian relations steadily improved."<sup>49</sup> But the high hopes and expectation which his leadership created could not satisfy the Egyptian public. Also disenchanted were the Soviets, who blamed him for wresting control of Egypt from their hands. Sadat "had [even] expelled seven diplomats, including the Soviet ambassador and about one thousand Soviet advisers, on grounds that they were fomenting sedition in Egypt,"<sup>50</sup> three weeks before his assassination by a group of radical fundamentalists on October 6, 1981. At this time, his administration was also ravaged by the simmering domestic turmoil and Arab disenchantment with Sadat's peace initiative with Israel.

Anwar Sadat's assassination occurred during the celebration of the 8th. anniversary of the October, Yom Kippur war. By this time his reforms were not only far-reaching, but also deeply entrenched. Hosni Mubarak assumed leadership<sup>51</sup> in the conduct of Egypt's affairs and continued to maintain Egypt's pro-U.S. orientation.

In geo-strategic parlance, the U.S. desire to oust the Soviet Union from Egypt to weaken Moscow's influence in the eastern Mediterranean became a reality:

Deprived of their air bases in Egypt and lacking air craft carriers to provide air cover for their fleet, the Russians were clearly put at a tactical disadvantage with respect to the American fleet in the Mediterranean ... Without the air fields, in southern Egypt near Aswan it [the Soviet Union] lost control over a major strategic foothold in northeast Africa.<sup>52</sup>

Thus, the Soviet Union's ability to back-up its foreign policy (usually executed under the threat of military force) was undermined by Egypt's re-orientation towards the west.<sup>53</sup> In economic and ideological terms, the socialist system was eliminated, and thus, the Soviet Union's capacity to influence the domestic affairs of Egypt; there was greater economic and political freedom, notably, the relaxation of government control over the economy, encouragement of private investment and the reinstating of due process of law<sup>54</sup> Thus the socio-economic transformation of Egypt towards the Soviet Union was reversed<sup>55</sup>, as a result of Sadat's decision to seek the fulfilment of his country's needs through the U.S. "He adopted any role that furthered Egyptian interests as he defined them. ... he decided that the advantages of the Soviet connection were exhausted. Future hopes ... would lie with the United States."<sup>56</sup>

Mention should be made that although the Soviet Union had at this time lost control of Egypt, its presence in the

Middle East continued to be felt. This is because "the very existence of the Arab - Israeli dispute and persisting enmity towards Israel on the part of the other confrontation states continued to facilitate a Soviet involvement."<sup>57</sup> The period leading to the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt created enormous uncertainty, particularly in the face of Sadat's peace initiative<sup>58</sup>, which saw Arab states as well as the major Arab organizations, such as the Arab League, excommunicate Egypt.<sup>59</sup> At this time, the Soviet Union seemed to have a measure of influence in most of the Arab capitals. Until the dividends of the Egyptian - Israeli truce matured, the Soviet Union seemed to assert itself in the affairs of the Arab states, conveying itself as a major broker in the Arab - Israel conflict; but in Egypt, the Soviet Union witnessed an eclipse with regard to its ability to exercise influence in that country.

Thus the Soviet Union was virtually 'excluded from influence with the most important country in the Arab world and with its political position being supplanted' by the U.S.<sup>60</sup> With the tactical and differential application of aid to Egypt, the U.S. has successfully turned Cairo into a champion of the U.S. interest.<sup>61</sup> Ironically, this policy strategy was applied by the U.S. in the 1950's and 1960's and met with failure when the Soviets basked in the glory of predominance in Egypt.

The initial U.S. failure could be accounted for in part by the mismanagement of information regarding the U.S. aid policy and the other aid-related policy objectives. Egypt's government headed by Nasser, prided itself in the resentment of patronage and of alien rule. Unfortunately, through media disclosures of the nature of the U.S. - Egyptian relations, the Egyptian government of the time did not want to be exposed as complying with the very patronage and alien rule that it seemed to have publicly denounced. (All the western aid or attempted aid to Egypt was being made public. Nasser did not want to be accused of selling out to the west in exchange for such assistance.) This condition made it difficult for a smooth U.S. - Egypt relations.

The U.S. may have learned, in the case of Egypt, that aid, be it economic, military or financial does not automatically translate into U.S. influence, especially in the absence of an accurate perception of the policy objectives and aspirations of the leaders of the benefiting nation; Egypt may also have adapted its policy to avoid jeopardizing its chances of receiving aid,<sup>62</sup> given the special circumstances of its bleak economy.<sup>63</sup>

In the twists and turns of the superpower rivalry, the Soviets, in the later phase of the rivalry in Egypt, failed in



their bid to maintain control of Egypt through their own form of differential extension of aid to Egypt. The Soviet Union, adept at manipulating its targeted states, seems to have been treated in similar fashion and have confirmed its fears that its policy of attempting to gain leverage through arms supply to Egypt would produce limited results.<sup>64</sup> This reduced the Soviet Union to reacting rather than controlling events in the last days of its active participation in Egypt.

The superpower rivalry in Egypt is significant in light of the spectacular oscillation of Egypt from one ideological orientation to the other, and in view of its defiance of the U.S. to the support of the Soviet Union and then a reorientation towards the west, particularly, its pro-U.S. position.

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One is faced with the question of the value of Egypt to the U.S. and the Soviet Union, relative to the billions of dollars and roubles expended by both superpowers in Egypt. Seemingly, the superpower rivalry beggars logic in light of the zealotry associated with U.S. - Soviet involvement, relative to their respective commitments to the application of military assistance, monetary, and economic aid, to gain

leverage over Egypt. Puzzling was the disbursement of fabulous amounts of resources on Egypt by both nations in a period of diminishing value of the Suez Canal. The exercise in Egypt is thus reduced to the speculation that the competition in Egypt is symbolic of the rivalry. In fact, the competition in Egypt is symptomatic of the rivalry and indeed, illustrates a facet of the broader U.S. - Soviet rivalry.

One should not attempt to apply Egypt's scenario in the U.S. - Soviet rivalry to the stipulation that "a regional presence by one superpower almost inevitably provokes some reciprocal involvement by the other, exclusive of any specific set of interests that might draw the latter independently into the region."<sup>65</sup> Notably, the rivalry in Egypt was a key containment and post-Stalin impulse in the era of the superpower rivalry. Consequently, a great deal of emphasis was placed on the acquisition of the vital tools requisite to predominance by the rival superpowers.

Symbolic as the rivalry may be in such regions as Sub Sahara Africa, the importance of Egypt to the superpowers, relative to its geo-strategic location, provides cogent reasons for competition in that country. Egypt began to feature prominently in the geo-strategic calculations of the superpowers in the heyday of the cold war rivalry. Perhaps, by

looking at their perceptions of the respective national interests which had warranted their competitions in Egypt, the relevance of their involvement in Egypt could be inferred.

That the competition in Egypt had been strenuously waged could be understood not just in light of U.S. containment policy, or Soviet quest for warm water ports or the Soviet quest for secure frontiers, (which were rational explanations for early cold war rivalry in the 1950's). The competition in Egypt could also be understood in the context of the lucrative arms trade in the region, and Egypt's centrality to the oil producing fields of the Arab/North Africa, Middle East/Persian Gulf/Mediterranean region. Egypt's leadership resources to the region is also appealing to the superpowers.

The dominant theme in the policies of all the U.S. administrations of the post-W.W. II era -- from Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower to Ronald Reagan and George Bush-- is that there is a substantial U.S. interest in the Middle East and that it ought to be protected. Egypt has been recognized as the epitome of that interest, in light of the volatility of the region. Out of four conspicuous national interests which the U.S. government ascribes to the Middle East region, Egypt has the capacity to influence three of those specified interests, namely: 'reliable access, on reasonable terms, at

tolerable prices, to the oil of the region, especially, the Arabian peninsula; the survival and security of Israel; the prevention of the acquisition of territory by force, and the rights of peoples to self determination."<sup>66</sup> In light of the above, U.S. involvement in Egypt does not seem to be symbolic.

Similarly, the Soviet Union's post-Stalin thrust in the areas outside of Europe was ideologically motivated when policy was "dictated by practical considerations ... so that even right-wing states might be made use of by Moscow."<sup>67</sup> Confronted by U.S. containment policy, the Soviet Union sought to "break through the Western blockade of its back-door in the Middle East, moving southwards to geopolitical objectives in the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, [and] the Persian Gulf."<sup>68</sup>

Egypt is tied to the Arab/Middle East oil which is indispensable to national economic and industrial growth of any dynamic political entity. The continuous evolution of events in (if not the volatility of) this area provides appeal to Egypt. Its capacity to influence the affairs of the region is demonstrable through its ability to elicit emotions from its Arab brethren and its claim to Arab leadership in the light of its legacy of rising in defence of Arab interests against its foes. Egypt maintains ethno-political, cultural and geo-strategic affinities with the peoples of the

Arab/Middle East; the volatility of the region requires a stabilizing and moderating force, which Egypt has increasingly assumed.

For the superpowers, there are substantial reasons to justify the competition in Egypt. In the strategic parlance, Egypt's facilities, including landing strips, ports and bases, provide strategic benefits in the Middle East, serving as a transit point for special missions. In the political and diplomatic scene, Egypt possesses its peculiar brand of clout for moderating the affairs of the Arab/Middle East region. Egypt, therefore satisfies security, diplomatic and political needs of the predominant power. The above could explain the rationale for the disbursement of such resources by both rival powers in order to eliminate the influence of the rival superpower and to entrench their own influence. That Egypt is advancing the interests of one superpower, as opposed to the other, is envied by the deprived superpower.

Both superpowers have at one time or the other enjoyed exclusive influence in Egypt and there lies their benefit after spending billions of dollars and roubles in that country. It seems that the cost of competing in Egypt outweighs the benefits when the possibility of superpower confrontation is considered. This assertion is credible in

light of the Arab/Israeli wars vis-à-vis the direct involvement of both the U.S. and the Soviet Union, visible in the Yom Kippur war. Both superpowers are very conscious of this and have tended to intervene to prevent direct confrontation, evident in the Suez Canal Crisis, and the 1973 Arab Israeli war.

It is notable that each superpower recognizes who maintains control in Egypt and also the risks involved in posing a direct challenge to the other's vital interest, just as in the early days of the cold-war in Europe. Beginning with the Suez Canal crisis, when each superpower attempted to establish its authority in Egypt, the U.S. and the Soviet Union have recognized the presence of each other. During the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, they were able, for the first time, to establish a direct communication link through which issues pertaining to their interests were discussed, to reduce misjudgments and illusions pertaining to their participation. Thus the likelihood of a direct confrontation was drastically reduced. Nevertheless each superpower seeks to safeguard its interests. In that light, the competition for the control of Egypt would continue, though in subtle ways given the prevailing understanding that exists between the two superpowers. Otherwise, doubt would still persist with respect to the impossibility of a confrontation in light of their conflicting

ideologies.

Understandably, Egypt has, in the process of pursuing its domestic, national, and regional aspirations, experienced pressure from the superpowers while seeking to benefit from the rivalry in which the U.S. and the Soviet Union bid for the control of the country. Egypt, in the aftermath of seeking to satisfy the demands of U.S. benevolence, was isolated by its Arab/Middle East brethren owing to its decision to meet Israel beyond the crossroads of the deeply boiling Arab/Israeli conflict. Apparently, the results of the peace process with Israel and the Egyptian rapprochement with the U.S. has saved human and financial resources which, otherwise, would have resulted in a continued Egyptian war with Israel, complicating the financial and social dislocation prevalent in Egypt, while not accounting for a resolution of the Arab - Israeli hostility.

The cost of the rivalry in Egypt to the superpowers lies in the fact that loss of influence produces not only untold economic loss in light of the investments made but also a sense of national loss of security. The burden of strengthening such an ally as Egypt against internal and external foes is enormous. It seemed to be a major bone of contention which followed the Soviet - Egyptian rift.<sup>69</sup> This

is not withstanding the difficulty arising from the reassurance of superpower loyalty to Egypt. Like a bride, such an ally as Egypt might feel neglected when a friendly superpower is wrapped up with the other superpower in the attempt to seek redress to their mutually conflicting interests. This seems to be the underling reason for the fallout between Egypt and both superpowers.

While at one time or another Egypt had promoted the interests of the U.S. or the Soviet Union, each was also subjected to Egyptian intransigence and defiance. The promotion of one superpower interest was inversely related to the adverse treatment suffered at the hands of Egypt by the other -- despite spending enormous resources.

Egypt, the beneficiary of U.S. and Soviet financial aid and the recipient of military and economic aid from the rivals, seemed adept in manipulating the superpowers. Sadat, like Nasser, exploited the superpower rivalry, eliciting aid from both superpowers while showing different faces of Egypt to the U.S. and the Soviet Union: to the Soviets an image of Egypt as an anti-colonial, nationalist, progressive state<sup>70</sup> and to the U.S., a staunch opponent of communists in the Arab/Middle East region.<sup>71</sup> Reportedly, Egypt exploited "the leverage provided by Moscow's need to retain as much of its threatened position



in Cairo as possible ... supply of arms was the only way ... to retain her position in Egypt; yet even the arms failed to produce the political influence she wanted."<sup>72</sup> In another dimension of Egypt's manipulation of the U.S. - Soviet rivalry, "Sadat played the cards of peace with Israel and resolute anti-Sovietism ... [and in turn] obtained what he requested: Marshall-Type plan for Egypt, encompassing both the economy and the military."<sup>73</sup> The superpower bid for influence in Egypt gave impetus to Egypt's manipulation of the rivalry.

Egypt and the superpowers have incurred losses and have made gains in the superpower rivalry in Egypt although at different times and varying scales. In their separate search to meet their national objectives, a tripartite conduct of policy, involving the U.S. and the Soviet Union along with Egypt, takes place in an atmosphere of constructive dependence which is a far cry from the superpower rivalry in the hey day of the cold war.

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Inference could be drawn from the historic and overwhelming rivalry between the U.S. and the Soviet Union which has ranged back and forth from bitter hostility to almost peaceful cooperation best described as "coldwar, competitive coexistence,

détente, protracted conflict."<sup>74</sup> Both sought influence in Egypt and were subjected to the manipulations of the ambitious and aspiring Egyptian leaders; in spite of their disappointments, the superpowers seem resolved to continue their quest for influence, which was borne out of the post-war ideological conflict. The Soviet Union seems to be reassessing its stakes in Egypt, having abandoned the initial impulse of picking-up "allies on the basis of their hostility towards the West and their geographical proximity to the Soviet Union."<sup>75</sup>

The U.S. policy in Egypt remains intact in light of the U.S. government's decision to fill the gap created by Britain's absence in the Arab/Middle East region. The U.S. is resolute on playing the role of defender of western interest which encompasses economic, defensive, ideological and political interests to the need for peace and stability in the Arab-Middle East region.

In the fast changing world where aggression and hostility, borne out of ideological exigencies, are being masked through crafty diplomatic and political initiatives<sup>76</sup>, it behooves the agents of goodwill to discern the pivot of the current political and economic initiatives. This is necessary to avoid being confronted with a fait accompli, should

pragmatists interpret such initiatives and come up with policies which could ultimately end up as policy miscalculations.

The term "fait accompli" has been the dominant diplomatic jargon in this thesis. From the Yalta conference of 1945, the Hungarian and the Suez Canal Crisis of 1956<sup>77</sup> to the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the Korean Airliner incident in 1984, it seemed that policy makers have been confronted by enough of fait accompli. In this era of re-surgening liberalism, it is not inconceivable for policy makers to come up with decisions based on this trend without a critical evaluation of such decisions. Both the U.S. and the Soviet Union want peace and prosperity but on their own terms. It is therefore not unlikely that their policies reflect on these objectives, irrespective of who is conceding<sup>\*</sup> what to whom at this moment. In view of the nature of the two different systems, emphases on the swiftness of policy initiatives to establish national objectives is, to a considerable degree, affected by the incumbents in Washington and Moscow; (Egypt stands to gain). Implicitly, it is easier to reverse political currents in one capital than in the other. This is obvious to all students of U.S. History, the history of Russia and the USSR.

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3. Ibid. p. 26.
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8. An underlying policy of the U.S., this two-pronged approach to the pursuit of the U.S. interests were made clear by high-ranking U.S. officials: In 1975, U.S. Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, had alluded to the basis of commitment to Israel as being the safeguard of its existence, while not taking consideration of the lesser interest in using Israel as a barrier to Soviet Union's quest in the Middle East; "The best defense against the spread of communism in the Middle East," he said, "is to strengthen moderate Arab governments." Then on May 13, 1977, the U.S. President, Jimmy Carter, asserted: "It's absolutely crucial that no one in our country or around the world ever doubt that our Number One commitment in the Middle East is to protect the right of Israel to exist, to exist permanently, and to exist in peace." See also, Seth P. Tellman. The United States in the Middle East, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1982, pp. 52 - 53.
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