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**NAVAL
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MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**NASSER AND PAN-ARABISM:
EXPLAINING EGYPT'S RISE IN POWER**

by

Robert Eugene Danielson

June 2007

Thesis Co-Advisors:

Daniel J. Moran
James A. Russell

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NASSER AND PAN-ARABISM: EXPLAINING EGYPT'S RISE IN POWER

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Lieutenant, United States Navy
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

from the

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
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ABSTRACT

This thesis explains Egypt's rise to preeminence in the Arab Middle East from 1952 to 1967. It examines the implementation of President Nasser's domestic and foreign policies as prescribed by the ideology of pan-Arabism and how this ideology, coupled with Nasser's dynamic personal leadership, allowed Egypt to rise in power and influence within the region. This thesis also considers how, after Nasser's death, the new policies and personal leadership of his successor, President Sadat, led to Egypt's abandonment of the role Nasser had staked out for it. Sadat's refusal to allow the ideology of pan-Arabism to dominate his domestic and foreign policies opened the door for peace between Egypt and Israel, and marked the beginning of significant economic and strategic cooperation between Egypt and the United States.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE

This thesis seeks to examine how Egypt became a regional political power in the Arab Middle East and united the region under its leadership during the two decades following the Second World War. In this thesis, *power* is defined as Egypt's ability to exert political influence on the other countries in the Arab Middle East. *Leadership* is defined as Egypt's ability to unite the countries in the Arab Middle East behind them against Western influence in the region.

Historical research was conducted to explain the emergence of Egypt as a regional political power and leader of the Arab Middle East during the period from 1952 until 1967. This period coincided with the rise of Gamal Abdel Nasser as President of Egypt and the Arab defeat in the Six Day War with Israel. Egypt's preeminence was rooted in part in its geographic location, agricultural and industrial based economy, social structure, military power, and handling of international events; however, these material advantages, being of long standing, alone do not explain why Egypt rose to leadership during this period. Egypt currently possesses these material advantages, but does not enjoy the same regional political power and leadership role it once had.

While material advantages can not be discarded as contributors to Egypt's rise in power, the hypothesis for this thesis is that Nasser's personal leadership and particularly his embrace of pan-Arabism as a governing ideology were decisive factors that enabled Egypt's rise in power in the aftermath of the Second World War. Pan-Arabism, as practiced under Nasser's vigorous leadership, transformed Egypt's long-standing material advantages into a base from which regional leadership could be exercised. The other nations comprising the Arab Middle East had not followed Egypt's lead in the past, and generally do not do so now. However, from 1952 thru 1967 these Arab Middle East nations did follow Egypt's lead. The explanation for this shift lies in the skillful application of ideologically-grounded leadership.

B. IMPORTANCE

The answers to the question of how Egypt became a regional power and how it united the region under Egyptian leadership are important in a number of ways. Above all, the answer to the question will enhance the general knowledge of scholars interested in Arab Middle East history. In addition, the question itself leads to an appreciation of how regional ideology and personal leadership can shape a country's domestic and international policies in ways that may enhance its international role. This time period in Arab Middle Eastern history is unique, because it is the only time that the Arab Middle East was able to unite under a common ideology. It is important for policy advisors to understand the factors behind a unique international occurrence, so they can recognize similar factors in future events. By recognizing these factors, policy advisors will be able to shape future policies that could result in better relations between the United States and the Arab Middle East, and further progress in social, political, and economic reforms in Arab Middle East countries.

Egypt is the only country in the Arab Middle East that has been successful in uniting and leading its neighbors for any significant period of time. This success occurred during the Presidency of Nasser. Since Nasser's death in 1970, Egypt has fallen out of the leadership role and many different countries have tried to ascend to the leadership role with little to no success. There continues to be a power struggle between the countries in the Arab Middle East to fill the leadership role, which accounts for some of the tension in the region. The countries in the Arab Middle East are still striving to unite under a common idea or identity, which is part of the reason for the continued expansion of the Arab League.

Since losing its preeminence in the 1970s, Egypt still maintains some level of leadership in the Arab Middle East, although not to the extent it once did. Even today the international community, both Western powers and Arab countries, rely on Egypt to exert some of the influence it has in the Arab Middle East to further the long-term goals of the international community.

C. METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

This thesis seeks to explain how Egypt was able to emerge as a regional political power and leader of the Arab Middle East during the Presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser. To be able to accomplish this type of research a historical analysis of the connection of the ideology of pan-Arabism and Nasser's leadership to the following material advantages was conducted: geographic location, agricultural and industrial based economy, social structure, military power, and handling of international events. Specifically this thesis evaluates the rise of Egypt from 1952 to 1967, the fall of Egypt from 1967 to 1979, and the changes that occurred during those years. Looking at each one of these material advantages and their connection to pan-Arabism and Nasser's leadership during the 1950s and 1960s should provide insight into how a regional ideology coupled with personal leadership can help a country ascend to a leadership role.

It was necessary to use Egypt, for this historical analysis, because it was the only country in the Arab Middle East that was able to use the connection to emerge as the leader and regional political power. This specific time period was chosen because it was the only period in time in which the Arab Middle East was united under a common identity and the ideology of pan-Arabism was a very strong force in the region.

To accomplish research with respect to Nasser's handling of specific international events and Egypt's foreign policy, it was necessary to review Nasser's foreign policy speeches. These speeches occurred in the 1950s and 60s. The majority of this part of the research relied on history books about that time period. This research provided a good overview of the international conflicts in which Egypt participated during the specified period of time. To understand Egyptian military strength, it was necessary to rely on history books and educational research articles.

To understand the domestic policies, this research relied history and political economy books and journal articles for the primary research sources. This research material provided insight into how Nasser dealt with the economy, social, and political aspects of the country. The political economy and journal articles helped to relate Nasser's domestic policies with the ideology of pan-Arabism.

Finally, to gain a thorough understanding of pan-Arabism, research relied heavily on journal articles, which provided more recent information, and books related to pan-Arabism. These sources complimented each other and provided insight into the ideology of pan-Arabism.

D. CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter I has two major functions. The first is to explain the purpose and importance of the research behind this thesis. The second is to summarize the research methodology and sources that were used, which particular emphasis on the variety of scholarly opinions and different types of literature used to formulate the central argument and conclusion presented here.

Chapter II's primary function is to provide the necessary background information of the British occupation of Egypt and how that occupation influenced the rise of the Officer Corps within Egypt and Nasser's eventual rise to the Egyptian Presidency in 1952.

Chapter III provides an overview of pan-Arabist ideology and its spread throughout the Arab Middle East. It begins by defining what pan-Arabism was and concludes with an explanation of the emergence and importance of the ideology of pan-Arabism in Egypt.

Chapter IV considers the rise of Egyptian power and influence within the Arab Middle East under the Presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser from 1952 until 1967. This chapter begins with a look at how pan-Arabism and Nasser influenced the domestic policies of Egypt in order to make it a regional political power in the Arab Middle East. The specific domestic policies include geography, economic, social, political, and military policies. Chapter IV also discusses the foreign policies of Nasser through the 1967 War, with reference to the influence Pan-Arabism on Egyptian conduct.

Chapter V looks at the fall of Egyptian power and influence from the end of the 1967 Israeli-Arab War until the 1979 peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. This chapter begins by looking at the effects of the Egyptian/Arab loss of the 1967 war on

Egypt's foreign and domestic policies. It also looks at how the death of Nasser affected the ideology of pan-Arabism. Finally this chapter analyzes Egypt's normalization of relations between the United States and the signing of the 1979 peace treaty with Israel.

Chapter VI summarizes and evaluates the conditions that allowed Egypt to rise in power and influence in the Arab Middle East between 1952 and 1979, and those that led to its subsequent decline from preeminence. It also considers Egypt's current and future role in the Arab Middle East.

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II. EGYPT UNDER THE BRITISH

A. CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

The following background information provides a brief historical look at how Egypt emerged as an independent country and how foreign imperial powers influenced the country. The sections discuss how the British influenced the economic, political, and social aspects of Egypt and how that influence allowed Nasser and the Free Officer's Corps to emerge in 1952.

B. BRITISH OCCUPATION

The British occupation of Egypt had both positive and negative effects on the manner in which Egypt emerged as a strong and independent Middle Eastern country. Egypt became a protectorate of Britain in 1883 and remained part of the British Empire until its complete independence in 1952. During these sixty-seven years of imperial rule, Egypt went through major political and economic changes. During this imperial rule, Britain's only concern and goal for Egypt was keeping the cotton and other agricultural products flowing out of Egypt to Britain and keeping the Suez Canal open for trade. All economic policies implemented by the British, were geared towards this concern and goal. The British also sought to maintain total control over the political sector in order to accomplish this goal. This did not resonate well with the Egyptian population, as they viewed it as just another example of a European power keeping Egyptians from forming a free and independent country. The result of the British occupation was the formation of the first political and social groups within Egypt, which was vital to the eventual independence of Egypt.

Between 1883 and 1907, Egypt was administered by Lord Cromer, who was the first administrator of Egypt. Lord Cromer implemented economic policies that pushed for free trade of the products produced by Egypt; these policies ultimately led to the increased production of cotton.¹ With this push for free trade and the increase in cotton

¹ William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Colorado: Westview Press, 2004), 104.

production, Egypt experienced an expansion in its industrial sector, expansion necessary to support this increase cotton exportation. A result of this expansion of the industrial sector was the formation of the first unions within Egypt. The Egyptian population working within the factories organized to fight for better pay and working conditions. Ultimately the British government was successful in putting down the unions, but not before the idea of forming groups opposed to British occupation was firmly implanted into the minds of the Egyptian population minds. The fight against British occupation received more support after the Dinshaway incident of June 1906.

The Dinshaway incident of June 1906 can be described as the killing of a local religious leader by British soldiers.² Though it was an accident, it incited local outrage and violence. The violence resulted in the wounding of the British soldiers. The people of Egypt wanted justice for the death of their religious leader. The British wanted to make an example of the Egyptians who participated in the incident to show the rest of the population that it was not in their interest to stand up against the British occupation.³ Instead of disciplining the British soldiers, the government had a public trial and execution of some of the local villagers. This further outraged the population of Egypt and lead to more opposition to the occupation. The British underestimated the resolve of the Egyptian population and brought in new administrators to try and salvage the situation.

The first new administrator was Sir Eldon Gorst, who administered the country from 1907-1911 and the second administrator was Kitchener, who administered the country from 1911-1914. During both of these administrations, policies were implemented to try and address the political and social concerns felt within the country. “Gorst attempted to create a "moderate" nationalism which ultimately failed because the nationalists refused to make any compromises over independence and because Britain considered any concession to the nationalists a sign of weakness.”⁴Gorst was successful in opening selected high-ranking administration positions to Egyptians. This helped

² Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 108.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Federal Research Division. *Egypt: A Country Study*, edited by Helen Chapin, Federal Research Division. 5th ed. Washington, D.C.: 1991, [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstty:@field\(DOCID+eg0036\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstty:@field(DOCID+eg0036)) (accessed March 2, 2007).

satisfy some of the opposition's request of allowing Egyptians to govern Egyptians, but the ultimate goal of the opposition was independence. When Kitchener came to Egypt in 1911 he attempted to implement a new constitution in the country. This new constitution gave the country some representative institutions locally and nationally. Prior to this the country had what is known as The Assembly of Delegates which later was superseded by an assembly and legislative council that were consultative bodies.⁵ This council's job was to advise the government on policy, not to enact policy. By the time this new constitution was formally introduced in 1913 it was too late to try and satisfy the opposition. The opposition movement had grown too strong and many political parties were forming that wanted the British expelled from Egypt.

The two main political parties that were formed on a platform of opposition to the British occupation were the Watani Party and the Umma Party. The Watani party was seen more as an extremist organization and called for the immediate withdrawal of the British from Egypt.⁶ The party was headed by Kamil, who had more of an Islamic ideology. He believed that reform was needed in the country, but that the British were not needed to accomplish this reform. This mind set attracted many in Egyptian society, but Kamil's death in 1908 resulted in a loss of center for the party and by 1952 the party no longer played a role in Egyptian politics. The Umma Party enjoyed much greater success than the Watani Party. The Umma Party was founded by Mahmud Sulayman Pasha and Hasan Abd ar Raziq. This party was seen as a moderate party. Like the Watani Party, the Umma Party wanted independence from Great Britain, but they did not want to attack the British directly. Instead they sought to reform Egyptian laws and institutions and the participation of Egyptians in public life.⁷ Much of this was based on Islam as well, but a more modern form of the religion that allowed for the accommodation of the modern world. The Umma Party was able to reach out to more people in the society because many of their members were editors of Egyptian

⁵ Federal Research Division, *Egypt: A Country Study*, [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+eg0036\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+eg0036)) (accessed: March 30, 2007).

⁶ Federal Research Division, *Egypt: A Country Study*, [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+eg0037\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+eg0037)) (accessed: March 30, 2007).

⁷ Ibid.

newspapers. This allowed for the spreading of the party's ideology and calls for reform to a much more broad audience. Both of these parties set the stage for a push for Egyptian independence after World War I.

After World War I an Egyptian delegation, led by a man named Zaghlul, went to Britain and proposed that they be allowed to attend the Paris Peace Conference in the hopes of determining and influencing Egypt's future. The British turned down the request, which proved to be a mistake. When the delegation returned from Britain, Zaghlul and the rest of the delegation were able to mobilize the Egyptian society against the British in order to gain independence. Zaghlul formed what is now called the Wafd Party. For the next three to four years there were many strikes and protests throughout the country. Many of these strikes and protests affected the economy of the country and ultimately also had an affect on Britain and their economy. At this point in time, the British no longer wanted to deal with the day to day running of the country. By 1919, the British began sending envoys to Egypt to figure out how to give the country self governing institutions, but still protect the British interests in Egypt.⁸ By 1920, the British realized that they needed to compromise with Zaghlul to get what they wanted. The British Lord Milner met with Zaghlul in the summer of 1920. The result of this meeting was the Milner-Zaghlul Agreement. This agreement was announced in February 1921 and stated that Britain would accept the abolition of the protectorate as the basis for negotiation of a treaty with Egypt. The British had finally given in to Egyptian demands for independence; however, this independence was limited.

In order for the country to begin to govern itself, Britain elevated the Sultan of Egypt to King. Even though Egypt had gained independence from Britain, the European power still had a lot of influence and control in the country. The British maintained direct control of four major areas in Egyptian society. They included: "security of imperial communications of Egypt, the defense of Egypt against foreign aggression or interference, the protection of foreign interests and foreign minorities, and Sudan and its future status."⁹ In other words, the British kept control over all aspects of the country

⁸ Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 196.

⁹ Ibid.

that was in their interest and not in the best interests of the Egyptian people. A constitution was signed and implemented in 1923, leading to future expansion of the Egyptian political system.

The period of 1923-1936 has been labeled as the Liberal Experiment in Egypt.¹⁰ During this time period there were many struggles to gain power and a national unity in the newly independent country. Under the new constitution, the first parliamentary elections were held in January 1924. The Wafd Party won a large portion of the seats, which led to Zaghlul's election as Prime Minister. This resulted in many political problems for the country. The constitution gave the King ultimate authority. He had the power to appoint the Prime Minister and dissolve parliament. The King wanted to preserve his royal rights and thus dissolved the parliament when he felt his powers were being decreased. Another political problem for the country was Zaghlul's and the Wafd Party's inability to compromise. He and his party did not agree with the four reserved areas the British kept as a result of independence, so there was a constant struggle between his party, the British, and the King to end all British association with Egyptian society. A third political problem for the new Egyptian political system was British interference. Because the British had large economic interests they interfered and undermined the parliament in order to keep hold on those interests. All of these problems continued until 1936.

From 1936 to 1952, there was a constant struggle between the British and the Egyptians surrounding how free and independent Egypt really was. New treaties and compromises were made on both sides to allow Egypt to become fully independent. One treaty in particular was the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936. Under this treaty, Britain recognized Egypt's sovereignty, allowed Britain to leave some forces in the Suez Canal Zone as part of a defense agreement, and Egypt was admitted in to the League of Nations.¹¹ Even with this new treaty full independence was not accomplished until 1952 and the Free Officer's Corps overthrow of the British backed King in July 1952.

¹⁰ Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 196-200.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 197 and 200.

C. RISE OF THE OFFICER'S CORPS

Gamal Abdel Nasser's leadership and charisma were essential to his rise within the Free Officer's Corps and the eventual overthrow of the British backed government in Egypt. This leadership and charisma can be traced back to Nasser's beginnings in Egyptian society and politics. Nasser did not seek to become a leader or icon within Egypt and eventually the Arab Middle East, but the way he connected with people allowed him to ascend to those roles.

Nasser was born in a suburb of Alexandria on January 15, 1918. He was born into a middle class family, which many scholars would suggest is what allowed him to connect with all classes of people. Nasser's family did belong were considered local notables within the suburb, because they did own a few acres of land which many citizens did not.¹² For much of his childhood Nasser moved around with his father from city to city within Egypt. The moving around the country allowed Nasser to attend many different schools and meet many different people. Nasser was able to get a better understanding about Egypt as a country and society. As scholar Aburish states, "Nasser was able to broaden his horizons."¹³

At age 19, Nasser applied to the Obassia Military College, which was Egypt's leading officer's cadet school. His application was turned down, but this did not stop Nasser from applying again with the sponsorship of the Secretary of State, after which was admitted. While attending the military college, Nasser's horizons were further expanded. The students who attend the college came from all different classes within society. He quickly made friends with Anwar Sadat and Abdel Hakim Amer, who later became his closest allies and confidants with the Free Officer's Corps. After graduating from the military college, Nasser received postings to many different regions throughout Egypt and Sudan. While at these different postings, Nasser began to hear the whisperings of unhappiness with the government from other military officers. Nasser's generation viewed the British occupation as the cause of all the problems of the country and the

¹² Said K. Aburish, *Nasser: The Last Arab* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 10.

government was a puppet of the British. While Nasser did not participate in these whisperings, this was going to change by 1942.

In 1942, the British Ambassador to Egypt ordered King Farouk to dismiss Prime Minister Maher and appoint Mustapha Naha, who was more pro-British. To make sure this order was followed the British Ambassador surrounded the palace with a battalion of British troops and threatened to arrest the king. This action by the British made Nasser even more skeptical and opposed to British presence in Egypt. Nasser viewed this action by the British as a violation and threat to Egyptian sovereignty. What made it worse was the fact that the Egyptian army did not try and protect the king. In a letter he wrote to a fellow officer Nasser stated, "I am ashamed that our army did not respond to this attack."¹⁴ Nasser was not the only Egyptian officer who felt this way. Many of his close friends from military college felt the same way. Here is when the beginnings of the Free Officer's Corps began.

From 1942 to 1948, Nasser attended the Egyptian Military Staff College and taught at the military college he had once attended. During this time period Nasser became more involved in political activism within Egypt and even made connections with the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamic Group established in Egypt in 1928. Through his political activism, Nasser became more vocal in his opposition to the British and need for full Egyptian independence. He also looked at recruiting other members of the Egyptian army officers to voice join his opposition to the British. By 1947, Nasser became involved in yet another military engagement which questioned his loyalty to the King.

In 1947, the United Nations decided to partition Palestine to allow for an Israeli State. Nasser offered his services to the Arab Higher Committee and mufti, which was recruiting volunteers to join the Liberation Army and fight against the partition.¹⁵ However, his services were turned down as the Egyptian government would not release him to join the Liberation Army as they viewed him as a promising officer. In May 1948, the Egyptian government decided to send in the army to help fight alongside the

¹⁴ Aburish, *Nasser: The Last Arab*, 18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

Palestinians. Here is when Nasser saw that the British trained and equipment Egyptian army was no match for the Western armies. Nasser blamed this lack of preparedness on King Farouk and his “cronies”, who only wanted to profit from the benefits they received from the British in return for their loyalty.¹⁶ This just furthered the Nasser distaste for King Farouk and the British. After the failure of the Egyptian army in the war, Nasser returned to Egypt.

In 1949, Nasser experienced three events which resulted in him formally forming the Free Officer’s Corps. The first of these events occurred when he was placed on a delegation to work out a cease-fire with the Israelis. This was a humiliating experience to Nasser, as he was adamantly opposed to dealing with the Israelis. Upon returning to Egypt, Nasser experienced the second event. He saw that the Syrian army had overthrown the government in Syria and had massive support from the Syrian population. This was very impressive to Nasser. The final event was his interrogation by the Egyptian Prime Minister, in front of the Army Chief of Staff, about his political activities. Immediately after the interrogation Nasser turned the loose group of officer friends into a formal association named the Association of Free Officers. Upon its creation the members of the association unanimously elected Nasser as the chairman.

The Free Officer’s Corps started off as a small organization, but membership quickly grew. Even though the exact number is not known, there is speculation that the number of members reached anywhere between 90-100 Egyptian officers.¹⁷ The Corps sponsored underground leaflets that addressed their two main concerns; the British presence in Egypt and corruption in the government.¹⁸ These concerns resonated with many on the Egyptian army and populations. In the beginning the Free Officer’s Corps was not looking to take over the government, but to end the corruption and British presence. This quickly changed in January 1952.

On January 25, 1952, British forces in the Suez Canal region ordered a police post in Ismailia to surrender, as the British thought the post were supporters of anti-British group and when the commander of the post refused to surrender the British killed 40 and

¹⁶ Aburish, *Nasser: The Last Arab*, 24.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

wounded 70 Egyptian policeman.¹⁹ The showing of British brutal force outraged the Egyptian population and led to Black Saturday, which was massive protests, looting, and burning of foreign businesses in Cairo by the Egyptian population. The Egyptian government did nothing to stop the protest nor did they attempt retribution against the British. This was the final straw to for Nasser and the Free Officer's Corps.

By July 22, 1952, army units moved into Cairo and occupied the strategic centers and buildings encountering no resistance.²⁰ Once the Free Officer's Corps had control of the city, the Revolutionary Command Council, led by Nasser and General Naquib, took control of the government. Nasser then sent Anwar Sadat and another member of the Corps to demand King Farouk abdicate his throne, which he did. The Free Officer's Corps had accomplished a bloodless coup that over the next few years led to complete British withdrawal from the country. Initially Nasser shared governmental power with General Naguib, but quickly gained complete power as he was more popular and had the support of the Egyptian army and population. This gaining of complete power ascended Nasser to the presidency of Egypt, a position he held until 1970.

D. CHAPTER SUMMARY

From 1883 to 1952, Egypt experienced many different events that helped shape its social and political sectors. The British goal of maintaining influence and presence within the country was countered by the policies that they implemented within Egypt. The more they oppressed the Egyptian population, the more the population fought against them, and by the time the British decided to ease up on the population it was too late to try and satisfy the population. The Egyptian population was ready for independence and willing to fight for it. Many different groups emerged in Egypt during this time period, but there can be no argument that the Free Officer's Corps was the most successful. Nasser and the Free Officer's Corps rise to power in a bloodless coup in 1952 set the stage for Nasser to take Egypt to new heights in the Arab world.

¹⁹ Aburish, *Nasser: The Last Arab*, 35.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

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III. PAN-ARABISM

A. CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the ideology of pan-Arabism during the beginning and mid-twentieth century. It provides a brief overview of the origins of pan-Arabism, outlining reasons why pan-Arabism was important to the countries in the Middle East, and considers the emergence of pan-Arabism in Egypt. The importance of focusing on Egypt and pan-Arabism is because, during the 1950s and 1960s, Egypt and its President Gamal Abdel Nasser embodied all aspects of pan-Arabism. During this time period, pan-Arabism flourished throughout the Arab world and it was Egypt and Nasser that carried the torch that allowed pan-Arabism to flourish.

B. DEFINING PAN-ARABISM

Pan-Arabism is also referred to as Arab Nationalism and Arabism. Depending on the source, different terminologies are used. None of the prominent scholars can come to a consensus as to what the correct term should be.²¹ The term pan-Arabism may lead people to believe that Arabism was spread out over a vast area or region, or it may be viewed as a derogatory, by analogy to with similar terms (e.g., “pan-Germanism”) whose connotations were explicitly fascist.²² Arab Nationalism and Arabism may lead people to believe that nationalism was only in a small region. The older articles by the prominent scholars use the word pan-Arabism throughout the articles, but more recent works have shifted to using Arab Nationalism instead.²³ There is no reason given for this change, but

²¹ Lisa Anderson, Rashid Khalidi, Elie Chalala, and Adeed Dawisha are the prominent scholars who have written many articles and books discussing the ideology of pan-Arabism / Arab Nationalism. These authors will be referred to frequently throughout this chapter and identified as prominent scholars.

²² Anne Marie Baylouny, “Politics and Security in the Levant,” Lecture, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, September 23, 2006.

²³ The prominent scholar Elie Chalala uses pan-Arabism throughout her article *Arab Nationalism: A Bibliographic Essay in Pan-Arabism and Arab Nationalism: The Continuing Debate*, ed. Tawfic E. Farah (Colorado: Westview Press, 1987), whereas prominent scholars Rashid Khalidi in his article, *The Origins of Arab Nationalism: Introduction in The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih, and Reeve S. Simon (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991., and Adeed Dawisha in his article, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), use Arab Nationalism.

I would argue this is due to the fact that the term Arab Nationalism became more politically correct and used by Arab leaders during the later half of the twentieth century. Throughout this thesis, the term pan-Arabism will be used except when using direct quotations.

Even more problematic than figuring out what word to use is the fact that there is no clear definition of pan-Arabism. Some have assumed that pan-Arabism refers to the creation of a single Arab state, an interpretation rejected by prominent scholar Rashid Khalidi.²⁴ After examining all the definitions provided by the prominent scholars, a kind of minimal consensus is apparent, which holds that pan-Arabism is “the idea that the Arabs are people linked by special bonds of language, history and religion, and that their political organization should in some way reflect this reality.”²⁵ To this extent pan-Arabism is an ideological form of nationalism that does have something in common with European Nationalism, but with a less intense focus on state-building as such, a view affirmed by Adeed Dawisha, whose outlook comes closest to capturing the mainstream consensus on this issue.²⁶

Dawisha states that “pan-Arabism is political unity between the Arab countries in the Middle East.”²⁷ This does not mean that the Arab countries should be one state; it means that there is a connection between all Middle Eastern Arabs, both culturally and politically. I would even go so far as to say that pan-Arabism requires Arab states to turn to one another for assistance, whether it be economic, social, or political aid rather than relying on support from Western governments. I base this assertion on the fact that rise of pan-Arabism was in response to Western influence within the region, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

²⁴ Rashid Khalidi, in his article “Arab Nationalism: Historical Problems in the Literature,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 96, No. 5 (December 1991), 1365-66, dispels the misconception that Arab Nationalism refers to the creation of a single Arab state, but rather Arab Nationalism refers to the cooperation between Arab countries.

²⁵ Rashid Khalidi, *The Origins of Arab Nationalism: Introduction in The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih, and Reeva S. Simon (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), vii.

²⁶ Rashid Khalidi, “Arab Nationalism: Historical Problems in the Literature,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 96, No. 5 (December 1991), 1364.

²⁷ Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 4.

Both the combination of Adeed Dawisha's definition and my view, as to the meaning of pan-Arabism, will be used to define pan-Arabism within this thesis.

Dawisha goes on to prove the connection between Arab states by using the works of two prominent scholars; Sato' al-Husri and Bernard Lewis. Dawisha points out that the prominent theoretician of Arab Nationalism, Sato' al-Husri, stated "people who speak a unitary language have a one heart and a common soul. As such they constitute one nation, and so they have to have a unified state."²⁸ This statement gives the impression that all Arabs are connected through their common culture and that connection should lead to cooperation in politics. Dawisha further goes on to show that even prominent scholar Bernard Lewis agrees with the statement put forth by al-Husri. As Lewis states, "a nation denotes a group of people held together by a common language, belief in descent, and in a shared history and destiny."²⁹

Pan-Arabism connects all Arabs regardless of where they are geographically. What makes pan-Arabism transnational is its ability to connect Arab culture to the political structure of the vast Arab countries. This can largely be seen in the origins of pan-Arabism and the specific countries that really had a grasp on the ideology.

C. ORIGINS OF PAN-ARABISM

As with the definition of pan-Arabism, there is no consensus as to the origins of this ideology. Two main factors are at the root of this lack of consensus, when and where the ideology of pan-Arabism began. There are three main schools of thought, which assign the origins of pan-Arabism respectively to the later years of the Ottoman Empire, to the Interwar period, and to the years following World War II. After examining the writings of all of various scholars in these different schools of thought, I would argue that

²⁸ Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 2, quoting Sati' Abu Khaldun al-Husri, *What is nationalism?: enquires and studies in light of events and theories* (Beruit: Dar al'Ilm li al-Malayeen, 1963), 57.

²⁹ Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 6, quoting Bernard Lewis, *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East* (New York: Schocken Books, 1998), 81.

the initial stages of pan-Arabism began during the Ottoman Empire, but the ideology did not flourish in the region until after World War II.

Scholar George Antonius traces the origins of pan-Arabism to the Wahhabi movement and Muhammad Ali.³⁰ Both the movement and the rule of Muhammad Ali began during the Ottoman Empire. Because the Ottoman Empire was so diverse and vast there was no common cause with which to unite society. The rulers of this empire wanted a united society, so they implemented reforms that would allow people to gain a sense of who and what they were. These reforms occurred during the time period commonly referred to as the tanzimat. During the tanzimat, the rulers of the Ottoman Empire sought to create a Turkish identity through nationalism and force that identity onto the Arab populations of the empire.³¹ This was unsuccessful as the Arab populations, following their religious leaders, revolted against this forced identity and turned to their history and culture for their own Arab identity. This resulted in the initial stages of pan-Arabism. As scholar C. Ernest Dawn states, “Arab nationalism arose as an opposition movement in the Ottoman Empire.”³²

During this period in time, the Arab populations of the Ottoman Empire were able to unite behind the religion of Islam and further identified with one another as Arabs. There was heavy reliance on religion and Arab culture to stimulate an Arab identity. It can be concluded that this heavy reliance is connected to the Islamic modernization occurring during this period of time. Islamic modernization came about in response to a desire by Arab populations to curtail the increasing Western influence in the region. It was the Arab population’s way of re-defining their existence based on Islam and Arab culture rather than the ideas Western governments were trying to introduce to them. The lack of identity is further argued by Mahmoud Haddad, who states that “there was a cultural crisis of self-view in relation to the power of Western influence.”³³

³⁰ Elie Chalala, *Arab Nationalism: A Bibliographic Essay in Pan-Arabism and Arab Nationalism: The Continuing Debate*, ed. Tawfic E. Farah (Colorado: Westview Press, 1987), 22.

³¹ Khalidi, *The Origins of Arab Nationalism: Introduction in The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, x.

³² C. Ernest Dawn, *Origins of Arab Nationalism in The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih, and Reeva S. Simon (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 23.

³³ Mahmoud Haddad, “The Rise of Arab Nationalism Reconsidered,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 26, No 2 (May 1994), 202.

Understanding the cultural crisis, scholar George Antonius further argues that the Egyptian Pasha Muhammad Ali and his son Ibrahim Pasha, although, ironically, of Macedonian descent, had a clear view of an Arab identity.³⁴ They used this view during the cultural crisis to be able to define a common Arab identity, resulting in the furtherance of the ideology of pan-Arabism. They were able to use their positions as leaders of Arab territories (Egypt and Syria) under Turkish rule to influence the populations. As he states, “Ibrahim stated that he is not a Turk and the sun of Egypt changed his blood to Arab.”³⁵ While these individuals were instrumental in beginning the ideology of pan-Arabism, it was not until the mid-twentieth century that pan-Arabism really took off in the region.

There are two main regions of the Middle East where pan-Arabism is claimed to have begun, Egypt and Greater Syria. This makes sense since Muhammad Ali and Ibrahim Pasha were the rulers of Egypt and Greater Syria, respectively, and these countries were considered intellectual centers of the Arab Middle East. The pan-Arabism movement in these regions was vital to the spread of the ideology. Both countries used the pan-Arabism movement in a number of societal groups and associations to advance its cause.³⁶ In Greater Syria, Ibrahim Pasha used the ideology of pan-Arabism to unite the Christians and the Muslims against the Ottoman Empire. Rather than using religion as the pre-text for confrontation, he used the idea of the Arabs fighting against the rule of the Turks.³⁷ In order to gain independence from Britain Muhammad Ali used the ideology of pan-Arabism to unite the Egyptian population against British occupation.

D. IMPORTANCE OF PAN-ARABISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The importance of pan-Arabism to the countries in the Middle East can be seen by examining how it was viewed by the leaders of those countries and their respective

³⁴ Chalala, *Arab Nationalism: A Bibliographic Essay in Pan-Arabism and Arab Nationalism: The Continuing Debate*, 23.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Haddad, “The Rise of Arab Nationalism Reconsidered,” 202.

³⁷ Chalala, *Arab Nationalism: A Bibliographic Essay in Pan-Arabism and Arab Nationalism: The Continuing Debate*, 23.

populations. To the populations of the Middle East, pan-Arabism represented an expression of society. The ideology of pan-Arabism combined all aspects of the Arab culture. This included language, religion, art, and politics. It gave the Arab Middle East populations a sense that they were connected to one another. This concept was extremely important to the populations during the mid-twentieth century. During this time period, the region was beginning to be de-colonized by the European powers and the people of the region needed something to bring them together. They turned to pan-Arabism to be able to accomplish this. As Rashid Khalidi stated, “pan-Arabism has had a powerful impact on the intellectual and popular currents in the Arab world.”³⁸ He further goes on to argue that there was a vacuum created by the de-colonization of the region that resulted in a weakening of the population. He claims that much of this weakness was caused by the fragmentation of the Arab world by the European imperialist powers and their policies of portioning off countries in the region to serve their own interests.³⁹ The main goal of the European Imperial powers was to keep the population of the region from uniting and ultimately threatening European interests. These statements alone should give a sense of how the populations of the Arab countries felt and the need for them to be able to unite and connect with something to provide them a sense of being.

Khalidi goes on to explain that the cultural aspects of pan-Arabism made it so appealing to Arabs in the Middle East. As he writes, “Arab Nationalism represented both a revival of old traditions and loyalties and a creation of new myths based on them.”⁴⁰ This caused the literature and language of Arabs to take on a new and heightened importance, which resulted in a sense of pride for Arab populations.⁴¹ This sense of pride and importance of literature and language was something populations of the Arab world had not been able to experience during the Ottoman Empire or the colonial rule of the region. For the first time, they were able to understand what it meant to be Arab. This new found sense of pride and importance forced leaders of Arab countries to re-think how they would govern their countries.

³⁸ Khalidi, “Arab Nationalism: Historical Problems in the Literature,” 1366.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 1365.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Adeed Dawisha places this new way of governing in context. He argues that leaders in the Middle East must work, or at least appear to the population to be working, to achieve the goals of the new value system of pan-Arabism. If the leader is unable or unwilling to accomplish this task, then there is no guarantee that they will be able to survive in the political system in the Middle East.⁴² Furthermore Dawisha sees four main goals that a leader in the Arab world must meet in this new way of governing; proper observance of Islam, pursuit of Arab unity, expulsion of foreign influence, and progress and social justice.⁴³ The main leaders to be able to accomplish these goals were the leaders of the military coups and revolutions of the 1950s. As Barry Rubin states, “these military coups leaders argued that Arabs had to fight the West and made big promises for the efficacy of anti-imperialism, revolution, Arab socialism, and activist pan-Arabism.”⁴⁴ The main leader to champion these goals was Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt.

E. EMERGENCE OF PAN-ARABISM IN EGYPT

While it is true that Nasser championed the pan-Arabist cause both in Egypt and throughout the Middle East, it is important to note that pan-Arabism was already part of Egyptian society prior to Nasser coming to power. It is also essential to understand how and when the ideology of pan-Arabism first emerged in Egypt. Most of the prominent scholars that write on this subject agree that the emergence of pan-Arabism in Egypt began in the late 1920s and early 1930s. During the mid-twentieth century, Egypt embodied the ideals and culture that made up the ideology of pan-Arabism. Author Ralph Coury attributes this emergence to the ruling class in Egypt. In his article, *Who Invented Egyptian Arab Nationalism? Part 2*, he argues that there was growing interest in various forms of Arab unity and cooperation among the different branches of the

⁴² Barry Rubin, “Pan-Arab Nationalism: The Ideological Dream as Compelling Force,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 26, No ¾, The Impact of Western Nationalism: Essays Dedicated to Walter Z. Laquer on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday (Sept. 1991): 540, quoting Adeed Dawisha, “Comprehensive Peace in the Middle East and the Comprehension of Arab Politics,” *Middle East Journal*, (Winter 1983), 44-45.

⁴³ Barry Rubin, “Pan-Arab Nationalism: The Ideological Dream as Compelling Force,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 26, No ¾, The Impact of Western Nationalism: Essays Dedicated to Walter Z. Laquer on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday (September 1991), 540.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Egyptian ruling class and this was reflected in the political and socioeconomic developments within the country.⁴⁵ Much of the ruling class felt that Egypt was far ahead, in these aspects, of other Middle Eastern countries and could use this to their advantage to spread the ideals of pan-Arabism. In order to accomplish this, the press and leaders of various parties called for the strengthening of economic and cultural ties with other countries in the Middle East.⁴⁶

Within Egyptian society itself there was a transition occurring to make the country more self-consciously Arab. During this time period, along with the emergence of the pan-Arabist ideology, Egyptians were searching for a national identity. Many Egyptian scholars advocated that as Egyptians, there was a connection between their Arab brothers. They believed that as long as the people of the Arab world spoke the same language and shared the same cultural ties they were united as one.⁴⁷ By advocating this understanding, the scholars forced into the minds of the Egyptian population that they were Arab and they should take a sense of pride in the culture that makes them Arab. As Egyptians began to grasp the idea of being Arab, there was a rise in the thinking of the need for Arab unity and that Egypt was the natural leader of that unity.

Specifically, many politicians felt that Egypt was looked upon as a leader and savior by the Arab world because of its struggle against Western Imperialism.⁴⁸ Many leaders and people within the Arab Middle East felt that Egypt could lead and help them with their own struggle against Western Imperialism. Even the Egyptian Communist Party added a clause in its' program in 1931 "calling for struggle on behalf of all Arab peoples from imperialism, as well as the achievement of a complete Arab unity that included all free Arabs."⁴⁹ This is the first time that we begin to see the idea of Egypt leading the Arab world resonate from Egyptian politicians and society. This new idea was furthered during the presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser.

⁴⁵ Ralph M. Coury, "Who 'Invented' Egyptian Arab Nationalism? Part 2," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (November 1982), 459.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 461.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 464.

Nasser was the leader in the Arab Middle East who championed and “carried the torch” through the 1950s and 1960s of pan-Arabism.⁵⁰ As Elie Chalala stated, “he was the most important leader for popularizing the idea of Arab Nationalism.”⁵¹ Nasser understood and used Egypt’s size and strategic importance in the Arab world to spread his idea of pan-Arabism. This idea of strategic importance was further emphasized by the statement of scholar Israel Gershoni that “Egypt’s unique virtues, geopolitical features, cultural advantages, and spiritual and religious power destine Egypt to bear the crown of all Arab leadership and oblige it to fulfill its pan-Arab mission.”⁵² To Nasser being Arab was more than just a cultural identity; he viewed it as an ability to influence other countries in the Middle East.

Many of Nasser’s speeches and much of his public rhetoric took on the tone of pan-Arabism. During addresses he gave, he always referred to Egypt as an Arab country, Arab Egypt, or a member of the great Arab entity. Specifically in July 1954 during a radio address on the first anniversary of the launching of Voice of the Arabs, Nasser referred to Arabs as “one nation” and placed Egypt within that nation.⁵³ The idea of Egypt being part of the Arab entity was furthered by Nasser, in the national charter he authored in 1962, when he referred to the “Arab people of Egypt” and asserted that “there is no conflict whatsoever between Egyptian patriotism and Arab Nationalism.”⁵⁴

Throughout his presidency, Nasser’s speeches continued to evoke the pan-Arabist ideology and resonated with the Arab population in the Middle East. In his speeches he drilled into the minds of the Arab population of the region the idea that Arab cooperation and unity was needed for defense against the Western powers and for the benefit of other Arabs.⁵⁵ In a speech given in July 1957, Nasser stated that, “Arab nationalism is a

⁵⁰ P J Vatikiotis, *Nasser and His Generation* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1978), 232-233.

⁵¹ Chalala, *Arab Nationalism: A Bibliographic Essay in Pan-Arabism and Arab Nationalism: The Continuing Debate*, 42.

⁵² Israel Gershoni, *The Emergence of Pan-Arabism in Egypt* (Israel: Tel Aviv University, 1981), 74.

⁵³ James Jankowski, *Nasser’s Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 60.

⁵⁴ James Jankowski, *Arab Nationalism in “Nasserism” and Egyptian State Policy, 1952-1958 in Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, ed. James Jankowski and Israel Gershoni (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 151.

⁵⁵ Jankowski, *Arab Nationalism in “Nasserism” and Egyptian State Policy, 1952-1958 in Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, 154.

weapon for every Arab state. Arab nationalism is a weapon employed against aggression. It is necessary for the aggressor to know that, if he aggresses against any Arab country, he will endanger his interests.”⁵⁶ Nasser was able to use the support and popularity he received from these statements to further Egypt’s Arabist role in the Arab Middle East. This can be seen by examining Nasser’s domestic and foreign policies; which will be done in Chapter IV.

It should now be clear how Egypt, as a state, and Nasser, as a leader, were able to “shape and ride the wave” of pan-Arabism in order to spread the ideology throughout the Middle East and influence the other countries in the region.

F. CHAPTER SUMMARY

Throughout the history of the Middle East there has been a contention that the Arab Middle East countries have not been able to unite behind a common idea or cause. The purpose of this chapter was to dispel that contention. It is quite clear that during the late nineteenth century and for the majority of the twentieth century the countries and the populations were able to unite behind the ideology of pan-Arabism. While the unity did not last for a long period of time, it did have a profound effect on how leaders in this part of the world governed and related to their populations. The other purpose of this chapter was to give an understanding that there is no consensus on the definition and origin of pan-Arabism. It is difficult to explain this phenomenon when the prominent scholars can not come to a consensus. However, what should be clear is that the ideology of pan-Arabism did promote the cooperation and unity of all Arab people and that it was in response to the continued Western influence in the region. Pan-Arabism was the Arab population’s way of uniting against the West and ultimately forcing them out of the region.

⁵⁶ Jankowski, *Arab Nationalism in “Nasserism” and Egyptian State Policy, 1952-1958 in Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, 155.

IV. RISE OF EGYPT FROM 1952 TO 1967

A. CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

Egypt's rise in power and influence within the Arab Middle East came about during the Presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser. As discussed at the end of Chapter II, Nasser took the ideology of pan-Arabism to vault Egypt to the position of leadership within the region. Nasser used this ideology to enact certain domestic and foreign policies that would allow Egypt to fulfill its regional power role that both he and the population of Egypt believed was their inherent right. On the domestic side, Nasser concentrated on the social, political, and economic policies of the country to make Egypt strong domestically. On the foreign policy side, Nasser turned to a position of neutralism when it came to dealing with the West and the Soviet Union and increased Egypt's connection to the other countries with the Arab Middle East. The purpose of this chapter is to further discuss, in detail, the domestic and foreign policies of Nasser and their connection to pan-Arabism in order to better understand Egypt's rise in power and influence in the Arab Middle East.

B. GEOGRAPHY

Egypt's internal geography and geographic location has had a great importance to the country throughout its history. Egypt's internal geography has made it very attractive to external powers. This attractiveness is due to two reasons; firstly, Egypt's fertile soil along the Nile River and within the Nile Valley has allowed for many "cash crops" to be grown and exported throughout the world and secondly, the long coastline and Nile Delta ports along the Mediterranean Sea allows Egypt to be connected to the Mediterranean countries.⁵⁷ This can largely be seen by the French and British interests in the country within the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In regards to its geographic location, Egypt is strategically located between the continents of Africa and Asia with the Sinai Peninsula as the bridge between the two continents (see Figure 1).⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Derek Hopwood, *Egypt: Politics and Society 1945-1984* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1985), 1.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

The various leaders of Egypt have been able to use this location to allow Egypt to have connection with both the West and the Middle East. This connection includes both trade and political alignments. President Nasser understood the geographic importance of Egypt not only to West, but also its ability to strengthen Egypt's leadership role in the Arab Middle East. The ideology of pan-Arabism helped to strengthen the importance of Egypt's geographic location to the other countries of the Arab Middle East. Egypt's location provides it with the waterways that connect the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. The Suez Canal, which serves as a passage from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean, provides Egypt the opportunity to control the flow of traffic to and from these bodies of water. This makes Egypt strategically important to countries that use international trade routes. Egypt's geographic location also allowed it to take advantage of the European industrial revolution to harness Egyptian domestic power and then take that power to influence and ultimately lead the Arab Middle East. Much of this can be seen by examining Egypt's domestic and foreign policies under Nasser.



Figure 1. Map of Egypt (From: CRS Report for Congress – Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations)⁵⁹

C. DOMESTIC POLICIES

In 1952, when Nasser ascended to the Egyptian Presidency, he understood that in order for Egypt to fulfill its position as the leader of the Arab Middle East, as prescribed by the pan-Arabist ideology, it must first have a strong domestic society before he could turn his attention to establishing the country in intra-Arab politics and in the international

⁵⁹ Jeremy Sharp, “Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations,” *CRS Report for Congress*, January 10, 2007, 3.

arena. In order to bring about this internal strength Nasser implemented social and economic policies designed to unite the country behind his leadership and “to harness the resources of Egypt to mobilize the potential power of the country.”⁶⁰ As many leaders understand, a country united behind their leader is very strong and Nasser was no exception to this understanding. The social policies which Nasser introduced included the banning of political parties, the outlawing of radical social groups that did not support him or the government, the introduction of the social contract, and changes in the economic sector.

The banning of political parties was one of the first social policies Nasser undertook. When Nasser became president, he immediately implemented policies to centralize power within the presidency and outlaw any political parties which did not share the same views as he had. By 1962, Nasser established the first mass political party within Egypt, which was called the Arab Socialist Union or ASU. This party was viewed as an extension of the current ruling class since the party later became the National Democratic Party or NDP.⁶¹ The NDP is the current ruling political party in Egypt of which both President Sadat and President Mubarak are members. By outlawing all political parties and establishing his own, Nasser accomplished his goal of eliminating most political and social opposition to his policies thus resulting in the beginning of a united domestic society. To completely eliminate all political and social opposition, Nasser turned his attention to eliminating or outlawing the radical social groups within Egypt.

With regards to the outlawing of radical social groups within Egypt, the main group that was a threat to Nasser’s vision of a united Egyptian society was the Muslim Brotherhood. During the first three years of Nasser’s presidency there was a spirit of cooperation and tolerance between the government and the Brotherhood. This cooperation and tolerance began during the Egyptian struggle for independence. The Muslim Brotherhood’s and the Free Officer’s Corps shared a common goal during that struggle, which was Egyptian independence from the British.

⁶⁰ Malcolm H. Kerr, *Headline Series, Foreign Policy Association, Egypt Under Nasser* (Foreign Policy Association, University of California PhD, 1961), 18-22, 33-34.

⁶¹ Sharp, “Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations,” 4.

Once that independence had been achieved, however, the goals of the new Egyptian government, led by Nasser, and the Muslim Brotherhood diverged.

The main difference in goals was that the Muslim Brotherhood wanted Egypt to become an Islamic state and Nasser did not. By 1954, this difference led to the end of cooperation between the Muslim Brotherhood and the government and the attempted assassination of Nasser by a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. Nasser immediately disbanded the group and imprisoned its leaders and members.⁶² For the rest of Nasser's presidency, the members of Brotherhood who were not permanently imprisoned were the subject of brutal oppression by the government, to include police beatings, repeated arrest, harassment, and torture.⁶³ With the radical social groups disbanded Nasser was able to focus his attention on the social needs of Egyptian population, through his social contract.

Nasser's social contract entailed providing social services to the population in return for their political support.⁶⁴ Under the social contract the social services provided to the Egyptian population included health care services, food and clothing subsidies, education, rent control, and low cost housing. This social contract proved to be a huge success for Nasser and Egypt's ability to become domestically strong. This social contract was well received by the Egyptian population. They now had access to services previously unavailable to them during the British Occupation. Specifically the health care services in Egypt increased. The number of Egyptian citizens was overwhelming to the health care system established by the British and not all citizens had access or could afford these services. Nasser's goal was to provide, at a minimum, basic health care services to all Egyptian citizens. To accomplish this he increased funding of the health care system and the Ministry of Public Health. This increase in funds led to successful

⁶² Ziad Munson, "Islamic Mobilization: Social Movement Theory and the Muslim Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood," *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No 4 (2001), 489.

⁶³ Bjorn Olav Utvik, "Filling the vacant throne of Nasser: The economic discourse of Egypt's Islamist Opposition," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 17, Iss. 7 (Fall 1995), 7.

⁶⁴ Carrie Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 23.

results and between 1952 and 1956 the number of registered doctors increased from 4470 to 6420 and the number of medical facilities increased by 10 percent.⁶⁵

Nasser's education reform was also a great social policy achievement. There was considerable funding placed in the education system of the country. The British, during the occupation, helped to build primary schools for children, so Nasser's objective was to expand the number of primary schools and build secondary schools in the country. Between 1955 and 1964 approximately 4000 primary schools were constructed throughout Egypt; most of them in urban centers.⁶⁶ These new schools allowed for all children between the ages of 6 and 12 the ability to attend primary school. With this basic education, Nasser's hope was that the population would enter the work force and participate actively in the economic sector; thus making Egypt stronger.

With regards to secondary education, Nasser's hope was that providing secondary education to the Egyptian population would increase the number of people in professional fields; this would in turn make the domestic society and economy stronger. Nasser increased the funding to universities and secondary schools. With this increase in funding more people were allowed to attend these schools and at any point in time approximately 100,000 people attended the four universities around the country.⁶⁷ The ability to receive secondary education allowed the middle and lower class citizens the ability to expand into more lucrative jobs in the public sectors, which is exactly what Nasser had hoped. Most of these lucrative jobs were in the professional field, i.e., doctors, lawyers, and engineers.

While these new policies were successful in strengthening Egyptian society, it did place a heavy financial burden on the economy. When Nasser came to power in Egypt the country was already overpopulated, in a large amount of debt, due to British occupation policies, and these new social policies did nothing to correct this problem. The large population placed heavy demand on governmental services.⁶⁸ Nasser

⁶⁵ Keith Wheelock, *Nasser's New Egypt: A Critical Analysis* (New York: Frederick A Praeger Inc Publisher, 1960), 132.

⁶⁶ Wheelock, *Nasser's New Egypt: A Critical Analysis*, 112.

⁶⁷ Kerr, *Headline Series, Foreign Policy Association, Egypt Under Nasser*, 33-34.

⁶⁸ Ali M Yahya, *Egypt and the Soviet Union, 1952-1972: A study in the power of the small state* (University Microfilms International, Indiana University PhD, 1981), 34-35.

implemented domestic economic reforms in order to be able to afford the financial burden of his social contract and in keeping with the pan-Arabist ideology. Nasser turned to and relied more on Egypt's internal economic sectors to increase the country's revenue rather than relying only on external financial assistance, which is what the pan-Arabist ideology would require. Basically Nasser's economic policies were based on keeping the economy closed off from the free market and having state control over the economy.

One of the first economic reforms that Nasser implemented was the nationalization of all Egypt's privately owned banks and commercial businesses. This was in keeping with Nasser's policy of having state control over the Egyptian economy. The reforms were designed to be a source of domestic revenue for the country, rather than those revenues going to Britain or France. This nationalization of private business continued throughout Nasser's presidency and expanded to include insurance companies and industrial companies. This ultimately resulted in the expulsion of all British and French influence within the country, and was in accordance with the pan-Arabist ideology. This first step in reforming Egypt's economic sector was successful, but it did not create the necessary amount of revenue needed to afford the social contract and other domestic policies. To gain additional sources of domestic revenue, Nasser turned his attention to other reforms in agriculture and industry.

The second economic reform Nasser implemented was the Agrarian Reform Law of 1952. This new law limited the amount of land an individual could hold to 200 acres. The law required that if someone owned more land than that, the excess land had to be sold to the state at a certain tax assessment and then the state would sell it, at a low price, to individuals that did not own land.⁶⁹ By 1961, the number of acres an individual could own was lowered to 100, making more land available to be purchased by peasants. The law basically evened out the amount of arable land among the Egyptian population to allow them to set up a place to live and grow crops for income. By enabling more of the population to own land, Nasser allowed the state to not only collect more tax revenue, but

⁶⁹ Kerr, *Headline Series, Foreign Policy Association, Egypt Under Nasser*, 19.

it also allowed the population to increase the amount of money they could spend on goods. This increase in income from the harvesting and selling of crops allowed the population of Egypt to participate more in the economy.

Along the lines of the agricultural sector was the building of the Aswan High Dam and the nationalization of the Suez Canal. Both of these projects were meant to support and grow the economy. The Aswan High Dam was built to make irrigation more available to the farmers in Egypt; thus allowing more crops to be grown and harvested. To pay for the dam Nasser initially turned to the United States and the World Bank for assistance, but ultimately nationalized the Suez Canal. By nationalizing the Suez Canal Nasser created another source of tax revenue for the country. This new tax revenue was not only used for the building costs of the dam, but also in helping support the public spending of the government. The nationalization of the Suez Canal did have foreign policy consequences that are discussed later in this chapter.

Another economic reform that Nasser implemented was in the field of industry. Heavy industrialization of the country was a result of the Five-Year Development Plan implemented in 1960. Even before the plan was created, Egypt was the most industrialized country in the Arab Middle East. The country had a large textile industry, modern banking structure, commerce, transportation system, and communication system.⁷⁰ This industrialization can be attributed to some of the reforms and laws that were implemented during the British Occupation. Nasser took the already established industrial sector and expanded it. Between 1952 and 1959 the amount of industrial production increased by 47 percent.⁷¹

As a result of the Five-Year Development Plan, the Egyptian government increased the amount of public funding of new industries to 1.7 billion Egyptian Lire. While most of these industries had a connection to the agricultural sector of the Egyptian economy there were other sectors in which public funds were invested; these included transportation, communications, housing, and electricity.⁷² The hope was that the Five-Year Development Plan would raise the national income 40 percent by 1965 and another

⁷⁰ Kerr, *Headline Series, Foreign Policy Association, Egypt Under Nasser*, 23.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 28.

40 percent by 1970. While this was by no means unrealistic it took more time than anticipated for each of the sectors to begin showing a return. There was only modest growth, 15-20 percent, between 1960 and 1970. These new economic policies of Nasser did accomplish what he wanted of being able to support his new social policies. While these economic policies were successful, Egypt did receive external aid from the West and the Soviet Union.

Between 1952 and 1967, Egypt was receiving financial assistance from the United States in the form of development assistance, economic support fund, and the food for peace program (P.L. 480). Table 1 shows the amount of assistance Egypt received from the United States during this time period.

Year	Direct Assistance Loan	Direct Assistance Grant	Economic Support Fund	P.L. 480 Loan	P.L. 480 Grant	Total Aid
1952	0	0.4	0	0	0.8	1.2
1953	0	12.9	0	0		12.9
1954	0	3.3	0	0	0.7	4
1955	7.5	35.3	0	0	23.5	66.3
1956	0	2.6	0	13.2	17.5	33.3
1957	0	0.7	0	0	0.3	1
1958	0	0	0	0	0.6	0.6
1959	0	2	0	33.9	8.9	44.8
1960	15.4	5.7	0	36.6	8.2	65.9
1961	0	2.3	0	48.6	22.6	73.5
1962	20	2.2	20	114	44.3	200.5
1963	36.3	2.3	10	78.5	19.6	146.7
1964	0	1.4	0	85.2	8.9	95.5
1965	0	2.3	0	84.9	10.4	97.6
1966	0	1.5	0	16.4	9.7	27.6
1967	0	0.8	0	0	11.8	12.6

Table 1. U.S. aid to Egypt 1952-1967 [\$Mil] (From: CRS Report for Congress – Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations)⁷³

⁷³ Sharp, “Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations,” 31.

As shown in the Table 1, Egypt received large amounts of foreign assistance in the years leading up to the Suez Crisis in 1956 and the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. It can be argued that the United States was hoping this increase in foreign assistance would influence Nasser to change his policies towards the West. Even with this large amount of foreign assistance, Nasser did not allow it to influence decision making process with regards to domestic and foreign policies nor did he allow it to influence his relationship with the West or with the countries within the Arab Middle East, as will be discussed later in this chapter. This refusal to allow western influence was in keeping with the pan-Arabist ideology of not allowing foreign powers to control your policies. Nasser understood that he needed to use some of the newly acquired national revenue to fund a strong military to enforce his policies, keep the country stable, and project Egypt's powerful Arab position to the West.

Nasser's budget for the military increased drastically over his time as president. In 1958, Egypt spent \$211 million on defense and by 1968 that budget increased to \$506.9 million, much more than any other country in the region was spending.⁷⁴ For example, Iraqi defense spending was \$83.5 million in 1958 and \$253.9 million in 1968.⁷⁵ You can see the importance of the military based on the amount of money spent on the military by the government. To balance the foreign assistance Egypt was receiving from the West and to stay neutral, Nasser turned to the Soviet Bloc for military assistance. He signed numerous arms deals with the Soviet Union and the Czech Republic.

In 1957, Egypt received Soviet made tanks, MiG-17 jets, and other arms for the army worth approximately \$150 million.⁷⁶ This deal was small compared to the arms deal Egypt signed with the Soviet Union in 1963. The 1963 arms deal called for more military cooperation between the two countries and also provided Egypt top-of-the-line weaponry worth approximately \$220 million; specifically MiG-21 jets, T-54/55 tank, TU-16 bomber, surface-to-air missiles, and guided missiles patrol boats.⁷⁷ Between 1955

⁷⁴ Adeed Dawisha, *Egypt in the Arab World: The Elements of Foreign Policy* (New York: Halsted Press, 1976), 87.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Yahya, *Egypt and the Soviet Union, 1952-1972: A study in the power of the small state*, 140.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 142.

and 1966 Egyptian-Soviet arms deals totaled approximately \$1.19 Billion.⁷⁸ All of these arms deals gave Egypt access to new military technology that other countries in the Arab Middle East did not have. With this increase in military spending and arms deals, Egypt's military became the most advanced and powerful of all the Arab countries and helped to make Egypt a regional power as prescribed by the pan-Arabist ideology.

Nasser understood that changing Egyptian domestic policies was only a start to making Egypt a regional power and leader of the Arab Middle East. Nasser also understood that Egyptian foreign policy was extremely important to advancing those roles and making the country the leader in the Arab Middle East. He understood that there was a connection between Egypt's foreign and domestic policies. Nasser stated at an opening cabinet meeting that "our foreign policy is in service to our internal policy."⁷⁹ With this idea in mind, Nasser turned his attention to the increasing his relations with the other countries in the Arab Middle East.

D. FOREIGN POLICIES

At the beginning of his presidency, Nasser had two policies concerning foreign relations; the first being not getting too involved in intra-Arab problems or relations and the second being a position of neutralism between the West and the Soviet Union. He just believed that Egypt was the country that should unify and lead all of the Arab countries. His mindset changed as Western governments became more and more involved in intra-Arab relations. Nasser was skeptical of the West's intentions and viewed their continued influence in the region as a threat to Arab unity as prescribed by the pan-Arabism ideology. Nasser wanted to distance Egypt and the other Arab countries from the Western powers. To begin to accomplish this, in July 1954 the radio program "Voice of the Arabs" was established by Nasser.⁸⁰ This program, broadcasted to many of the Arab countries within the Middle East, discussed Arab issues and concerns about Western influence within the region.

⁷⁸ Yahya, *Egypt and the Soviet Union, 1952-1972: A study in the power of the small state*, 142.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁸⁰ Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic*, 55.

Nasser also increased the circulation of Egyptian newspapers to Arab countries, specifically Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Both the radio program and the increase in newspaper circulation allowed Egypt to inform the Arab Middle East population and in some ways influence their Arab issues of concern. Nasser furthered his interest in a unified Arab world by obtaining the concurrence of the members of the Arab League for a resolution calling for greater Arab cooperation in January 1954.⁸¹ All of these actions by Nasser were an attempt to limit Western influence within the region, but more concrete action was going to take place in 1955.

In 1955, Iraq signed a defense pact with Turkey and the West, referred to as the Baghdad Pact, which many Arab leaders viewed as a cementation of Western influence within the region. Nasser viewed the signing of this pact as a threat to his goal of Arab unity and cooperation with Egypt as the leader and the signing of the pact resulted in a shift in Egyptian foreign policy in favor of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was less interested than the West in exerting direct economic influence within the region, which appealed to the leaders of the Arab Middle East. Aaded Dawisha has gone so far as to claim that the signing of the Baghdad Pact “compelled Nasser and Egypt to fully enter, participate in, and then dominate the regional politics of the Arab Middle East.”⁸² Even before the signing of the pact, however, Nasser clearly viewed the negotiations behind it as a threat to Egypt’s position within the region.

Even before the Pact had been signed, Nasser pushed the members of the Arab league to strengthen the Arab Collective Security Pact in the hopes of countering Western influence. Nasser’s position on this Security Pact was “the Arab Collective Security Pact is the only vehicle which Egypt and the Arab countries consider effective for the defense of the Arab world.”⁸³ Nasser was able to convince the Arab countries to strengthen the Security Pact, even with the interference of the West. Officials from Western governments threatened to isolate Egypt, and the other Arab Middle East countries signing onto the Security Pact, from the international community unless non-Arab states were able to join the pact. In a press interview given in May 1954, Nasser stated that “the

⁸¹ Jankowski, *Nasser’s Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic*, 57.

⁸² Dawisha, *Egypt in the Arab World: The Elements of Foreign Policy*, 11.

⁸³ Jankowski, *Nasser’s Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic*, 59.

ties that bind the Arabs together will grow stronger and stronger no matter how hard our enemies attempt to break them.⁸⁴ This interference by the West further fueled Nasser's concern about Western influence with the region, but the final breaking point of Egypt's position of neutrality and tolerance of the West was over the financing of the Aswan High Dam and the Suez Crisis.

The Suez Crisis was centered on Nasser nationalizing the Suez Canal in order to pay for the construction of the Aswan High Dam. The Aswan High Dam project was essential to the agricultural industry in the country.⁸⁵ Nasser turned to the World Bank to help fund the construction of the new dam. The United States agreed to loan Egypt the funding with certain stipulations, but later withdrew the funding as a consequence of Egypt's adopting a series of anti-West positions, including its recognition of Communist China, its assistance of Algerian rebels against the French, and Nasser's general public scolding of the West "in the name of Arab Nationalism."⁸⁶ The Soviet Union then agreed to help Egypt build the dam with no stipulations, but requested to send military representatives to the country to start military dialogue between the two countries.⁸⁷ In order to offset the cost of building the dam, Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal.

Although the Canal was incontestably sovereign Egyptian territory, it was operated by private French and the British firms, who along with their governments had financed its construction in the nineteenth century. By nationalizing the canal, Nasser would be able to place a tax on the ships using the canal, which could then used to finance the construction of the Aswan High Dam and other projects. The nationalization of the dam led to Suez Crisis, an open conflict between the Egyptians, British, French, and Israeli's, from which the Egyptians emerged largely unscathed thanks to the intervention of the United States, which was deeply affronted by the unilateralism of its European allies, which had failed to consult Washington before undertaking the violent overthrow of Nasser's government

⁸⁴ Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic*, 60.

⁸⁵ Wheelock, *Nasser's New Egypt: A Critical Analysis*, 173.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 195.

⁸⁷ Hopwood, *Egypt: Politics and Society 1945-1984*, 46-47.

Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal and his apparent triumph in the Suez Crisis gave him instant credibility and earned support for Egypt throughout the Arab Middle East. When Nasser nationalized the canal, "many countries in the Arab Middle East sent letters of support and congratulations to Egypt. Even the Council of the League of Arab States declared the solidarity of Arab governments with Egypt."⁸⁸ This solidarity was seen in the type of support Egypt received from the Arab countries. Syria and Jordan offered military support to Egypt to fight against the British, French, and Israelis, and Saudi Arabia suspended oil shipments to Britain and France.⁸⁹ The Egyptian victory also lifted Egypt to the Arab Middle East leadership role. Egypt had accomplished something that no other country in the region had been able to do; it had openly defied a combination of Western powers and come out on top. The Egyptian victory also resulted in Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan signing a new Arab Solidarity Pact in January 1957, which reaffirmed their commitment to intra-Arab cooperation.⁹⁰ By the other Arab countries displaying support and solidarity for Egypt and each other they embodied the key concept of pan-Arabism; which is Arab unity.

Egypt's leadership role of the Arab Middle East was further solidified by the creation of the United Arab Republic or UAR. The UAR was an alliance formed between Egypt and Syria from 1958 to 1961. The formation of the UAR was another example of how Egypt embodied the concept of Arab unity and pan-Arabism. Syria approached Egypt to form this union after the Syrian government felt there would be a possible overthrow of the government by the Syrian military and Ba'ath party. The creation of the UAR helped Nasser spread his idea of a one Arab region under Egypt's leadership. Even as early as 1956, Nasser made public statements of unity between Egypt and Syria. Specifically during his Suez Canal Nationalization speech given on July 26, 1956, Nasser referred to Egypt and Syria as "one country".⁹¹

Upon the formation of this union, Syria was placed under Egyptian policies and law and Cairo was named the capital of the union. Although the union only lasted until

⁸⁸ Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic*, 83.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

1961 it further strengthened the emerging consensus that Egypt was the regional power and leader of the Arab Middle East. As author Kerr wrote, Nasser blamed the early breakup of the UAR on compromising with too many “reactionaries”. Afterwards he went on to state that Egypt would unify and collaborate with other countries in the Arab Middle East that held the same values as Egypt.⁹² From 1961 until 1967, Nasser used the newfound Arab leadership to attempt to destabilize pro-Western governments in Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan, and supported Palestinian actions against Israel.⁹³ Nasser also intervened in the Yemeni Civil War, which resulted in a short term union of Yemen and Egypt known as United Arab States or UAS. By 1967 Egyptian power and Arab leadership was going to be tested in the Arab-Israeli War of 1967.

The Israeli expansion into Arab territories forced the Arab countries within the region to on the defensive to protect their sovereign territory. In May 1967 Nasser ordered Egyptian forces into the Sinai Peninsula to protect Egypt, forced out the United Nation peacekeepers, and threatened to close the Straits of Tiran which would have resulted in the cutting off of shipments of goods to Israel.⁹⁴ It is unlikely that Nasser sought an open war or conflict with Israel, but the need to continue Egypt’s role as the leader of the Arab Middle East, and chose this confrontation as a means to accomplish that, by rallying surrounding states under Egypt’s military umbrella. Nasser was hoping that this new crisis would result in another political victory like the one he experienced after the Suez Crisis. He apparently believed that these actions would cause Israel to rethink its arrogant outlook toward its Arab neighbors, without the need actually to use force.

Prior to the war beginning in June 1967, Egypt worked with both Syria and Jordan to amass a large enough military force, led by Egypt, to defend the Arab countries from Israeli attack. Nasser believed that should Israel go to war with the Arabs, the Israeli military would be no match for an Egyptian-led force armed with military equipment received from the Soviet Union.⁹⁵ This belief turned out to be wrong. On

⁹² Kerr, *Headline Series, Foreign Policy Association, Egypt Under Nasser*, 42.

⁹³ Sharp, “Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations,” 4.

⁹⁴ Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Bedford/St. Martin’s, New York, 2004), 274.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 272-273.

June 5, 1967, the Israelis attacked the Egyptian airfields on the Sinai Peninsula and around Egypt with a surprise air attack, followed by ground attack. These attacks caught Nasser off-guard, even though he had been warned, by Jordan, about the impending Israeli attack in advance⁹⁶, and the result was the loss of the Sinai Peninsula to Israel and an overall loss of the war by June 10, 1967. This loss was the beginning of the fall of Egypt from leadership and influence with the Arab Middle East, which will be discussed in Chapter IV.

E. CHAPTER SUMMARY

Egypt's position within the Arab Middle East grew dramatically from 1952 to 1967. As discussed at length throughout this chapter, Nasser implemented many domestic and foreign policies that allowed Egypt to rise to a leadership role within the Arab Middle East. Many of his decisions and actions were in line with the ideology of pan-Arabism and that of Arab unity with Egypt at the head of that unity, which was discussed in Chapter II. Throughout his presidency Nasser maintained the idea that Egypt is and should be the leader of the Arab Middle East. At the height of its power and influence, Egypt was well respected and supported by the other Arab countries within the region. By 1967, however, this position of leadership and power began to fall. This fall in leadership and power will be discussed in Chapter IV.

⁹⁶ Baylouny, "Politics and Security in the Levant," Lecture, September 23, 2006.

V. FALL OF EGYPT FROM 1967 TO 1979

A. CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

Chapter IV examined the rise of Egypt as a regional power and leader of the Arab Middle East. This chapter will examine Egypt's fall from that hard-won position. Egypt's decline began after the 1967 War with the Israelis, and continued to through the signing of the Camp David Accord in 1979. The loss of the 1967 War and the death of Nasser in September 1970 forced the Egyptian government to re-examine its domestic and foreign policies. Linked to that re-examination was the ascendancy to the Egyptian presidency of Anwar Sadat. Both his domestic and foreign policies were instrumental in bringing about Egypt's retreat from leadership and power. Many of his new policies were in contradiction to those of Nasser and the ideology of pan-Arabism. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the domestic and foreign policies of Sadat and how they contributed to Egypt's fall from power and influence in the Arab Middle East.

B. POST-WAR YEARS UNDER NASSER

During the three years following the 1967 War, Nasser and Egypt progressively lost the confidence of the Egyptian population and other Arab Middle Eastern countries. The 1967 loss to Israel proved to be a personal blow to Nasser and his idea of a unified and strong Arab society, with Egypt as its leader. The loss showed the other Arab Middle Eastern countries that Egypt was unable to resist Israeli expansion into Arab lands, especially after Egypt lost the Suez Canal and Sinai Peninsula to the Israelis. Nasser's signing of the Rogers Plan in 1969, further proved the point that Egypt could not stand up to the Israelis and the West. Offered by the United States, the Roger's Plan was a diplomatic settlement to the 1967 War. The Roger's Plan called for Arab-Israeli talks to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 242.⁹⁷ It was viewed by Arab Middle Eastern countries as an accommodation to the West and a contradiction to the pan-Arabist ideology.

⁹⁷ Joseph P. Lorenz, *Egypt and the Arabs: foreign policy and the search for national identity* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1990), 34.

In the view of other Arab Middle Eastern countries, Egypt was unable to live up to its responsibilities as prescribed by the pan-Arabist ideology; which lead to a scale back of the ideology.

The 1967 War had placed a large financial burden on the Egyptian economy. The loss of the Suez Canal and the oil fields on the Sinai Peninsula meant a loss of revenue for the government. Much of the country's remaining revenue was diverted into rebuilding the Egyptian military and supporting those people who were displaced from their homes as a result of the war.⁹⁸ To make matters worse, Nasser's "social contract," intended to appease his populist based among Egypt's impoverished masses, continued to put pressure on the Egyptian economy, and the industrial sector began to stall. By 1970, the Egyptian economy was collapsing and could no longer rely only on internal sources of revenue. The economy needed foreign investment and revenue to survive, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

The 1967 loss caused the Egyptian population to question the costs of leading the way toward a pan-Arabist future.⁹⁹ Egyptian opinion wanted to maintain the country's hold on power and influence within the region, but not at the expense of losing Egyptian land. The loss had cost Nasser much of his political capital and there was a weakening of the popular support for the government. Even though Nasser's power base was declining, Nasser still maintained popular support as seen by the mass demonstrations supporting him after he put forth his resignation on June 9, 1967, which was later withdrawn.

Although showing support for Nasser, the population felt let down by the government and Nasser. They had placed their future in Nasser's hands and now that future was uncertain. The population now wanted a say in their future; as shown in the mass demonstrations in 1968.¹⁰⁰ Nasser's response was the "30 March Manifesto," which called for a new constitution that would reform the ASU¹⁰¹, give parliament

⁹⁸ Raymond A. Hinnebusch Jr., *Egyptian politics under Sadat: The post-populist development of an authoritarian-modernizing state* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 36.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 37.

¹⁰¹ The ASU was the Arab Socialist Union that was formed by Nasser as previously discussed in Chapter IV.

control of the government, and relax controls over political expression.¹⁰² However, the implementation of these new reforms was centered on Nasser maintaining control over the government. Nasser did not want to give up any of his power, and in November 1968 demonstrations broke out again, now calling for Nasser's resignation. From 1968 to 1970 Nasser's popular support began to fade away and there was a strong push by the Egyptian population for major changes in the government. By September 1970, these changes would begin to surface as Anwar Sadat, Nasser's vice president, was elected to the Egyptian presidency upon Nasser's death.

C. DOMESTIC POLICIES

When Sadat became president in 1970, the domestic situation in Egypt was in shambles. The economy was collapsing, there was massive civil unrest and serious political in-fighting due to Nasser's death. Sadat had inherited a demoralized and divided country.¹⁰³ Unlike Nasser, Sadat was not charismatic and did not have the leadership skills to rally the support of the population and place Egypt on top of the Arab world.¹⁰⁴ However, Sadat was not concerned about leading the Arab Middle East as was Nasser. His main concern was making Egypt stable and secure. Upon assuming the presidency, Sadat continued with Nasser's policies, but by 1971 he began to distance himself from the "Nasser-style" of governing and implemented new political, economic, and social reforms.

By 1971, Sadat came to the conclusion that the "Nasser-style" of governing would not aid in the process of getting out of the "hole" it was placed in by the Nasser regime. The problem was that many of the people around him were loyal to Nasser and his style of governing. Domestically they believed in heavy industrialization, state socialism, and government control over society.¹⁰⁵ Sadat wanted to take Egypt in a new

¹⁰² Federal Research Division, *Egypt: A Country Study*, [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+eg0047\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+eg0047)) (accessed: March 30, 2007).

¹⁰³ Hinnebusch, *Egyptian politics under Sadat: The post-populist development of an authoritarian-modernizing state*, 38.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁰⁵ Hinnebusch, *Egyptian politics under Sadat: The post-populist development of an authoritarian-modernizing state*, 42.

direction. In order to accomplish this he had to get rid of the people loyal to the Nasser regime. From May 1 to 13, 1970, Egypt experienced the “Corrective Revolution”. This revolution was Sadat’s way of correcting Nasser’s failed policies and ridding the government of the people who supported those policies. Sadat dismissed vice president Ali Sabri and imprisoned him along with his supporters on charges of attempting to overthrow Sadat.¹⁰⁶ Sadat then reorganized the ASU and announced new elections for parliament. The “Corrective Revolution” was successful in solidifying Sadat’s hold on the Egyptian presidency and power of the government. This revolution led the way for Sadat’s implementation of domestic policy changes.

Sadat began implementing changes in the political structure of the country. He introduced a new constitution in September 1971 that abolished the harsh and tyrannical governing laws Nasser had implemented during his presidency. This new constitution also gave the president the authority to rule by binding decrees rather than laws implemented by parliament. One of Sadat’s major changes in the political structure of Egypt was allowing a certain degree of political expression by the population. By 1975, Sadat had allowed political groups to form which voiced the opinions of the left, right, and center; these political parties were the National Progressive Unionist Organization, the Socialist Liberal Organization, and the Egyptian Arab Socialist Organization.¹⁰⁷ By allowing these new political parties, Sadat hoped that the population would abandon the country’s main political force, the Nasserites, and move Egypt in a new direction. By 1977, two more political parties were formed, the National Democratic Party and the Socialist Labor Party. This allowance of political expression was Sadat’s way of ridding Egypt of Nasser’s style of governing and proving that he had a new vision for Egypt.

Part of Sadat’s changes in the political structure also included dealing with the Muslim Brotherhood. Since Sadat sought to rid Egypt of Nasser’s mistakes, Sadat decided to tolerate the Muslim Brotherhood. In 1974, he let the imprisoned members of the Muslim Brotherhood out of jail and allowed the organization to operate freely within the country, but he did not allow them to become a legally recognized political party.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas W. Lippman, *Egypt after Nasser: Sadat, peace, and the mirage of prosperity* (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1989), 31.

¹⁰⁷ Federal Research Division, *Egypt: A Country Study*, [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+eg0052\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+eg0052)) (accessed: March 30, 2007).

Sadat had hoped that, by allowing the Muslim Brotherhood to operate, he would gain their support and be able to use them to counter any resistance he received from the liberal parties of the country. Initially Sadat's plan was successful. Members of the Muslim Brotherhood were grateful to Sadat and supported many of his domestic policies. However, a rift formed between them by the late 1970s, chiefly over foreign policy, and eventually a member of the Muslim Brotherhood would assassinate Sadat in 1979.

Sadat's main domestic policy change was focused on the Egyptian economy. He was not able to concentrate on expanding social services, i.e., education, housing, subsidies, and other services, as Nasser had done, because of the problems with the economy. Since he had inherited a collapsing and debt-ridden economy from Nasser, Sadat focused all of his attention on correcting that problem. The debt incurred from the 1967 War was not the only burden on the Egyptian economy. Since there were not enough government jobs available, there were a high number of unemployed but reasonably well-educated people within Egypt — Nasser's education policies having been more successful than those in other areas.¹⁰⁸ Supporting these unemployed people placed a large burden on the government. This coupled with the debt inherited from the Nasser regime forced Sadat to re-examine the Egyptian economic structure.

Sadat understood that Egypt could no longer rely solely on its internal sources of revenue and that an injection of foreign capital and investment was needed. In connection with this, Sadat viewed the Egyptian economy as over burdened with bureaucratic rules and over expansion into industrial sectors better handled by private businesses rather than public ones.¹⁰⁹ Sadat placed high priority on fixing the Egyptian economy by modernizing the industrial sector, increasing the value of the agricultural sector, developing a reliable energy sector to deal with the increasing population, and expanding tourism within the country. Basically, Sadat decided to base his economic policy on four basic principles: 1) shifting to a free market economy would attract foreign investment, 2) a reasonable balance was needed between industrial and agricultural development, 3) competition with the private sector would revitalize the public sector,

¹⁰⁸ P. J. Vatikotis, *The History of Egypt* ed. 3 (Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1985), 429.

¹⁰⁹ Davut Ates, "Economic Liberalization and Changes in Fundamentalism: The Case of Egypt," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 12, Iss. 4 (Winter 2005), 2.

and 4) an effort needed to be made to manage the social and economic problems of the future.¹¹⁰ To be able to accomplish this, Sadat set out to transform and liberalize the Egyptian economy according to the free-market model.¹¹¹

In April 1974, Sadat issued the “October Working Paper” which stated that “the Egyptian economy would have to be opened up to foreign investment and that Egypt would accept unconditional aid and loans from abroad to aid in development.”¹¹² Sadat maintained that the public sector would still be the cornerstone of the Egyptian economy, but the private sector was necessary to make the economy stronger. The hope was that the private sector would help alleviate the unemployment problem and that the private sector would pay greater attention to the agricultural sector of the economy thus allowing more of the population to stay in the countryside rather than moving to the city.¹¹³ The most important part of the “October Working Paper” was the new economic policy Sadat would implement, which is referred to as the *Infitah* or “Open Door Policy.” This new policy paved the way for the enactment of Law 43 in 1974 which allowed for the creation of private companies, encouraged foreign investment, abolished the states monopoly on the banking system, and allowed joint ventures between private and public sectors.¹¹⁴ In order to entice foreign investment in Egypt, the *Infitah* required the government to offer tax breaks, tariff incentives, and less governmental control over industry.¹¹⁵ The *Infitah* was a major liberalization of the Egyptian economy, and was a major reversal of Nasser’s economic policies.

The *Infitah* was initially viewed as a successful economic policy. By opening up the Egyptian economy to foreign investment, Sadat allowed the oil-rich Arab countries to invest more in Egypt, which coincided with the pan-Arabist idea of cooperation between Arab countries, and it reintegrated the Egyptian economy back into the world market. Prior to the *Infitah*, oil-rich Arab countries were investing approximately 350 million

¹¹⁰ Vatikiotis, *The History of Egypt* ed. 3, 428.

¹¹¹ Ates, “Economic Liberalization and Changes in Fundamentalism: The Case of Egypt,” 2.

¹¹² Lippman., *Egypt after Nasser: Sadat, peace, and the mirage of prosperity*, 99.

¹¹³ Vatikiotis, *The History of Egypt* ed. 3, 429.

¹¹⁴ Lippman, *Egypt after Nasser: Sadat, peace, and the mirage of prosperity*, 99.

¹¹⁵ Hinnebusch, *Egyptian politics under Sadat: The post-populist development of an authoritarian-modernizing state*, 257-258.

dollars annually and after the *Infitah* their investments increased to 3 billion dollars annually.¹¹⁶ The oil-rich Arab countries concentrated their investments in developing Egypt's oil industry and exploration of natural gas and more oil fields.¹¹⁷ Due to this "Open Door Policy" western companies were also able to invest within Egypt, however, which illustrated how far Sadat's policies had departed from the ideology of pan-Arabism. Some of these western investments focused on the automotive, electronics, and pharmaceutical industries.¹¹⁸ The *Infitah* was part of a series of policies enacted by Sadat, which caused the fall of Egyptian leadership with the Arab Middle East. Many of these other policies were within new foreign policies which will be discussed later in this chapter.

While the *Infitah* had been successful in putting the Egyptian economy on the right track to become stronger, it did create some problems. Initially, the GDP of Egypt rose an average of 9 percent a year and foreign investment rose an average of 35 percent a year after 1976; however, the result of the foreign investment caused foreign debt to rise. Between 1973 and 1978, Egypt's foreign debt rose from 31 percent to 66 percent of GNP.¹¹⁹ Instead of getting Egypt out of foreign debt, the *Infitah* had accomplished just the opposite. Egypt went further into debt, overwhelmingly to the United States. This increase in foreign debt can be attributed to the type of foreign investment and aid Egypt received from the United States as a result of the *Infitah*.

Since part of the "October Working Paper" allowed for Egypt to accept foreign aid from abroad, the United States began sending foreign aid to Egypt in the hopes that the aid would stabilize the economy and make Egypt an ally. As shown in Table 2 there was a substantial increase in the amount of foreign aid Egypt received from the United States between 1974 and 1979. The type of foreign aid Egypt was receiving, as shown in Table 2, it was in the form of loans and not grants, which meant that it had to be re-paid at some point in time. This further proves the point previously discussed that the *Infitah* placed more debt on the Egyptian economy. The receipt of Western foreign aid had

¹¹⁶ Lorenz, *Egypt and the Arabs: foreign policy and the search for national identity*, 57.

¹¹⁷ Ates, "Economic Liberalization and Changes in Fundamentalism: The Case of Egypt," 3.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

another consequence in that it was also viewed by many Arab Middle Eastern countries as Egypt turning its back on the Arab world. This further pushed Egypt way from the leadership role it held during the Nasser era.

Year	Military Loan	I.M.E.T Grant	Misc. Economic Grant (Narcotics)	Direct Assistance Loan	Direct Assistance Grant	Economic Support Fund Loan	Economic Support Fund Grant	P.L. 480 Loan	P.L. 480 Grant	Total Aid
1972	0	0	0	1.5	0	0	0	0	0	1.5
1973	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.8	0.8
1974	0	0	0	0	0	0	8.5	9.5	3.3	21.3
1975	0	0	0	0	0	194.3	58.5	104.5	12.8	370.1
1976	0	0	0	0	5.4	150	102.8	201.7	4.4	464.3
TQ	0	0	0	0	0	429	107.8	14.6	1.1	552.5
1977	0	0	0	0	0	600	99.2	196.8	11.7	907.8
1978	0	0.2	0.1	0	0	617.4	133.3	179.7	12.5	943.2
1979	1500	0.4	0	0	0	250	585	230.7	22.4	2588.5

Table 2. U.S. aid to Egypt 1972-1979 [\$Mil] (From: CRS Report for Congress – Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations)¹²⁰

Sadat also turned to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank for loans to strengthen the Egyptian economy, which also went against the ideology of pan-Arabism. In order to receive these loans, however, the banks required Sadat to implement new economic policies that would reduce the amount of public spending and remove certain subsidies.¹²¹ Under these new policies the government reduced the funding of public education and health care services, removed rent control and subsidies on food and clothing, and stopped the building of low cost housing.¹²² Basically the government got rid of the policies and attributes which made up Nasser’s social contract. Under normal conditions the reduction and removal of these services would be gradual to allow the population to adjust, but the IMF and World Bank wanted these policies implemented immediately; thus not allowing the population to adjust.

¹²⁰ Sharp, “Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations,” 31-32.

¹²¹ Utvik, “Filling the vacant throne of Nasser: The economic discourse of Egypt’s Islamist Opposition,” 4.

¹²² Hinnebusch, *Egyptian politics under Sadat: The post-populist development of an authoritarian-modernizing state*, 269-270.

The *Infitah* and Sadat's other economic policies created a large amount of social unrest and discontentment. These policies created a rift between the government and the population. One of Nasser's priorities in making Egypt the leader in the Arab Middle East was to have a united society, and Sadat's new domestic policies were splitting the society into pieces, if for no other reason than because it created new sets of winners and losers economically. Some of the population stayed loyal to the government; however, as the government was becoming economically reliant on the West and was decreasing funding for social services, the rest of the population was forced to give their support to someone else. Most of this support was given to the Muslim Brotherhood.

Sadat, as noted earlier, allowed the Muslim Brotherhood to operate within the country. The Muslim Brotherhood took advantage of this and economic policies of Sadat. Being an Islamist group, the Muslim Brotherhood believed that the state should provide social services to the population. Since the state was not providing these services, the Muslim Brotherhood began to. The *Infitah* allowed the Muslim Brotherhood to operate a parallel and hidden economy that provided social services to the Egyptian population; these social services included health care, education, and charities.¹²³ The charities provided food, water, clothing, and money to the population that was affected by the removal of subsidies.

Since public funding for education and health care decreased, the Muslim Brotherhood focused much of their attention to providing these social services. Since all of the schools built by the Muslim Brotherhood were Islamic schools, the students were only taught the teachings of the Quran and the need to have a just society based on Islamic teachings and fundamentals. With regards to health care services, the first Muslim Brotherhood hospital, established in 1947, treated over 51,000 patients in 1947. These patients were unable to afford the health care services at state run hospitals.¹²⁴ By 1975, the number of Egyptian citizens treated by Muslim Brotherhood hospitals increased to the hundreds of thousands.

¹²³ Ates, "Economic Liberalization and Changes in Fundamentalism: The Case of Egypt," 5.

¹²⁴ Janine Clark, *Islam, Charity, and Activism: Middle Class Networks and Social Welfare in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004), 16.

Sadat's *Infitah* policies also allowed the Muslim Brotherhood to open up Islamic banks and investment companies within Egypt.¹²⁵ The Muslim Brotherhood took full advantage of the opportunity to actively participate in the Egyptian economy. Through Islamic banks, the Egyptian population was able to get interest free loans and a greater rate of return on their investments. These loans and investments allowed the Egyptian population to open up their own businesses and participate more actively in the economy.

Providing these social services gave the Muslim Brotherhood the opportunity to gain the support of Egyptian population. That support resulted in a dramatic increase in membership of the Brotherhood within both the middle and lower class citizens. The membership occupations of the Brotherhood included students, teachers, civil servants, private business owners, military and police officers, merchants, and farmers.¹²⁶ There was not an occupation that did not have members of the Muslim Brotherhood. The increase in support for the Muslim Brotherhood further drove a wedge between the population and the government.

The support for the Muslim Brotherhood, vice the government, showed a shift of the population's support from the pan-Arabist ideology to the ideology of Islam. As more and more members of the population joined the Muslim Brotherhood their exposure to the ideology of Islam was dramatically increased. Instead of looking at themselves as Arabs, the population began to view themselves as Muslims and wanted the government to implement policies that were in line with Islam, rather than pan-Arabism. This rise in importance of Islam began to break down the support pan-Arabism once had in the region. The Egyptian population began to believe that both the domestic and foreign policies, influenced by pan-Arabism, had not provided the unity and strength that had been promised by the ideology. The population now turned to Islam as an alternative to pan-Arabism to provide that unity and strength.

However, this support for the Muslim Brotherhood was not the only cause of the rift forming between the government and the population. The implementation of the

¹²⁵ Utvik, "Filling the vacant throne of Nasser: The economic discourse of Egypt's Islamist Opposition," 10.

¹²⁶ Munson, "Islamic Mobilization: Social Movement Theory and the Muslim Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood," 492.

Infatih resulted in Sadat making certain foreign policy changes that were not viewed favorably by the Egyptian population or the other Arab Middle Eastern countries, and illustrated beyond doubt that the ideology of pan-Arabism, as well as Egypt's presumptive role as regional leader, was on the decline.

D. FOREIGN POLICIES

Sadat's foreign policy went through some major changes between 1970 and 1979. These changes in Egypt's foreign policies can be broken-down into two specific time periods; the first period being 1970 to 1973 and the second being 1973 to 1979. During each of these respective periods, Sadat implemented policies that would affect Egypt's position with respect to the Arab Middle East and the rest of the world. When Sadat initially came to power in 1970 he maintained the foreign policies Nasser had implemented. During the first three years of his presidency, Sadat's main goals for foreign policy was to maintain Egypt's position within the region, maintain the Arab unity obtained under Nasser, and regain the lost Egyptian land as a result of the 1967 War.¹²⁷ These three goals worked hand in hand with one another.

From 1970 to 1973, Sadat's main foreign policy pursuit was to re-take the lands Egypt had lost in the 1967 War. This foreign policy was focused on confronting Israel through diplomatic channels, and if necessary through military force, to compel them to return Egyptian land. To accomplish this, Sadat understood that he must have the support and cooperation of other Arab Middle Eastern countries. He centered Egypt's foreign policy on gathering this support and cooperation. In 1970 Sadat entered into talks with Libya and Sudan to form a federation of the three countries. This was something that Nasser had wanted toward the end of his life and Sadat picked up where Nasser had left off.¹²⁸ Sadat's hope was that this federation would help Egypt both politically and militarily. Politically, Sadat would be viewed by the other leaders in the Arab countries as continuing Nasser's pursuit of Arab unity. Militarily, Libya and Sudan could help in providing protection of Egyptian airfields from Israel should Egypt try and re-take the

¹²⁷ Lorenz, *Egypt and the Arabs: foreign policy and the search for national identity*, 41-42.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

lands captured by Israel. By November 1970, however, Sudan was forced, due to domestic issues, to withdrawal from the federation negotiations and was replaced by Syria. There had already been an alliance between Egypt and Syria before and Syria was eager to join a new federation with Egypt. On April 17, 1971, the three countries signed an agreement forming the Federation of Arab Republics.¹²⁹ With this alliance in hand, Sadat turned his attention to other Arab countries to gather further support and unity.

Between 1971 and 1973, Sadat worked furiously to gain the support of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the Palestinians. Sadat held many talks with King Feisal, King Hussein, and Yasar Arafat to bring them into the fold of Arab unity, of which Libya and Syria were already a part. Sadat understood that if it came to confronting Israel militarily the Arab armies would have to do it on multiple fronts in order to be successful. By 1973, Sadat's talks with these three individuals had been successful. The solid Arab alliance had been formed, with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria as the main powers within that alliance. Egypt and Syria provided the necessary military power needed to wage war with Israel, and Saudi Arabia provided the "oil weapon" and the connection to the United States.¹³⁰ The hope was that Saudi Arabia could pressure the United States to exert influence over Israel and that the Egyptian and Syrian military could push the Israeli's back and hold them in place until the United States could exert their influence.

While Sadat was gathering support from the Arab Middle Eastern countries, he was also trying to place Egypt in a more neutral position in the international scene. Under Nasser, Egypt had become politically, militarily, and economically aligned with the Soviet Union and isolated from the United States. Sadat understood that in order for Egypt to gain a victory over Israel he would not only have to rely on the Arab countries, but also the United States' influence over Israel.¹³¹ In order to become more neutral, Sadat expelled the 15,000 Soviet Union military advisors from Egypt in 1972. Sadat hoped that the United States would view this move as a softening on Egyptian foreign

¹²⁹ Lorenz, *Egypt and the Arabs: foreign policy and the search for national identity*, 43.

¹³⁰ Hinnebusch, *Egyptian politics under Sadat: The post-populist development of an authoritarian-modernizing state*, 48.

¹³¹ Lorenz, *Egypt and the Arabs: foreign policy and the search for national identity*, 45.

policy and show that Egypt did want peace with the West.¹³² Sadat also signed a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union that would allow the Soviets to avoid humiliation owing to Egypt's increasing openness to the West, and live up to the military commitments they had already made to Egypt. All of Sadat's actions were part of the preparation for the October War in 1973.

On October 6, 1973, Egypt along with Syria launched a surprise military offense against Israeli forces in the Sinai Peninsula and along the Syrian/Israeli border. Over the next three weeks, Israel was confronted on multiple fronts by the surrounding Arab countries. While Egypt and Syria maintained the largest military contingent, Iraq and Jordan also contributed by providing fighter squadrons and armored brigades.¹³³ This collaboration between Arab countries showed an unprecedented amount of solidarity among Arab countries, beyond what had been seen in the 1967 War. By the end of the three week period, Egypt had been successful in pushing Israeli forces off the East Bank of the Suez Canal, and the United States had pressured Israel to end the war. As military conditions along the Canal deteriorated, however, the pressure on Egypt to save what it could of its initial military successes mounted. On October 22, 1973, Egypt accepted a cease-fire proposed under United Nations Resolution 338, without consulting its Arab allies. Many of the Arab Middle Eastern countries viewed this as a slap in the face by Egypt, which was looked upon as bending to the will of the West. This was the first of many foreign policy decisions Sadat would make that would remove Egypt from its leadership position in the Arab Middle East.

Between 1973 and 1979, Sadat's foreign policies were again driven by his domestic economic policy, the *Infitah*. As previously discussed the *Infitah* was Sadat's way of opening up Egypt to foreign investment to stabilize the Egyptian economy and rid Egypt of its debt. Unlike Nasser, Sadat believed that Egypt could benefit from foreign investment and diplomatic relations with the United States. To accomplish this, however, Egypt would need to change its position concerning Israel and the United States. On February 28, 1974, Egypt resumed diplomatic relations with the United States. As part of

¹³² Hinnebusch, *Egyptian politics under Sadat: The post-populist development of an authoritarian-modernizing state*, 48.

¹³³ Lorenz, *Egypt and the Arabs: foreign policy and the search for national identity*, 48.

resuming diplomatic relations Sadat also agreed to end its military conflict with Israel. In 1974 and 1975 Egypt and Israel signed disengagement agreements, known as Sinai I and Sinai II, which called for the end of military conflict between the two countries. Sadat had again made these agreements without consulting his Arab allies, and this “go-it-alone policy was destroying Egypt’s traditional leadership of Arab nationalism.”¹³⁴

Sadat’s actions between 1977 and 1979 brought a decisive end to Egyptian regional leadership. Sadat’s foreign policy decisions prior to 1977 caused the other Arab Middle Eastern countries to scale back the amount of aid they were giving to Egypt. By 1977, Egypt needed to have peace with Israel in order to gain more foreign aid from the United States to make up for the loss of Arab aid.¹³⁵ In November 1977, Sadat made a two day “peace mission” to Jerusalem. This was the first visit to the Israel by an Arab leader. During this visit Sadat made a speech to the Knesset which basically offered permanent peace between the two countries and security for all the people in Israel.¹³⁶ This speech was well received by the population of Egypt, but not by Arabs elsewhere in the region. Once again Sadat had made a foreign policy change that would affect all Arab countries without consulting with the leaders of those countries.

1978 and 1979 saw the ultimate fall of Egypt from leadership and influence within the Arab Middle East. In September 1978, Sadat held nine days of peace talks, which were hosted by President Carter, with Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin at Camp David. By the end of those nine days Sadat and Begin agreed on a framework for a permanent peace settlement between Egypt and Israel. This framework was quickly denounced by the other Arab Middle Eastern countries since the settlement only dealt with Egypt’s concerns and not all of the Arab communities concerns. On March 26, 1979, Sadat and Begin signed the Camp David Accords in the Rose Garden at the White House. The signing of these accords was viewed by the Arab Middle Eastern countries as Egypt turning its back on them and siding with the West. Even the Egyptian population viewed these accords as Sadat becoming a puppet for the United States and

¹³⁴ Hinnebusch, *Egyptian politics under Sadat: The post-populist development of an authoritarian-modernizing state*, 54.

¹³⁵ Lorenz, *Egypt and the Arabs: foreign policy and the search for national identity*, 82-83.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 85.

Israel. Mass opinion swung towards the Muslim Brotherhood, who like the other Arab countries, denounced the accords. From this point on Egypt would not longer speak for the Arab population or be the leader of Arab unity.

E. CHAPTER SUMMARY

Egypt's position within the Arab Middle East fell dramatically from 1970 to 1979, owing chiefly to its inability, already apparent during Nasser's lifetime, to reconcile its desire for regional leadership with the requirements of a sound economic policy at home, which included a substantial, and politically necessary, commitment to far-reaching programs of social welfare. Sadat's implementation of the *Infitah* ultimately insured Egypt's fall from leadership within the Arab Middle East. Sadat's foreign policies, shaped overwhelmingly by national economic requirements, were in contradiction to the ideology of pan-Arabism, the promotion of which has proven to be too expensive, above all militarily, as the two great clashes with Israel in 1967 and 1973 had demonstrated. Unlike Nasser, Sadat was not concerned with Egypt being the leader of the Arab Middle East. Sadat's main concern was to achieve peace with Egypt's neighbors and keep Egypt domestically strong. Sadat's signature on the Camp David accords led to Egypt's expulsion from the Arab League, by any reckoning a definitive repudiation of Egypt's claim to be the natural leader of the Arab world.

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VI. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

A. CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

This thesis has sought to explain Egypt's rise and fall in regional leadership and influence within the Arab Middle East between 1952 and 1979. It has been argued that the key conditions that lead to the rise and fall of Egypt were personal leadership, the ideology of pan-Arabism, and the implementation of the *Infitah*. These three factors played a vital role in shaping both domestic and foreign policy. Among them, the most important was the ideology of pan-Arabism. During the 1950s and 1960s pan-Arabism affected all aspects of Egyptian society, governmental policy, and governmental leaders. This ideology was vitally linked to the personal leadership styles of Nasser and Sadat, which in turn affected the domestic and foreign policies of both of those leaders. This linkage ultimately influenced how Egypt would rise and fall in regional leadership. A clear view of the importance of this ideology can be seen by its diverging application under the presidencies of Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar el-Sadat.

B. PERSONAL LEADERSHIP

The leadership styles of President Nasser and President Sadat were complete opposites from one another. Nasser was a very strong leader and was willing to go out on a limb for what he believed in whereas Sadat was a more timid leader and took the path of least resistance in his leadership style. Nasser's willingness to take risks allowed him to grab hold of the ideology of pan-Arabism and champion its goals throughout the Arab Middle East. Sadat was the complete opposite. Sadat was not the type of leader to grab onto something new without there being a safety net beneath him, and this caused Sadat to turn away from the ideology of pan-Arabism and lean on different influences to support him. These different leadership styles were influenced by the personalities and past experiences of each of the respective leaders.

Nasser's experiences while in the Egyptian army decisively shaped his opinion as to what Egypt should be to the Arab Middle East and how the West was a negative

influence on Arab countries. The British occupation of Egypt allowed Nasser to view how badly Egypt was treated by the West and to imagine much better Egypt would be without any influence or connection to the West. Nasser was also able to see Egypt's potential in becoming the center of the Arab Middle East due to its domestic and military strength compared to the other countries within the region. During his time in the Egyptian army, Nasser quickly rose through the ranks and gained many supporters, including Anwar Sadat.

At no time prior to his rise to the Egyptian Presidency did Nasser ever back down from a challenge or take the easy way out. He was the type of person that would continue to fight for what he believed in no matter what the consequences may be; as was evident in the Free Officer's Coup in 1952. Nasser was also the type of person who would rather make decisions and take the lead in implementing new ideas. He was not the type of person who would sit back and allow others to take the credit or do the hard work. If something had to be done or changed, Nasser would be the one to take on the challenge and not pass it off to someone else.

All of these attributes of Nasser's leadership and personality allowed him to connect with and lead the way for the ideology of pan-Arabism. Nasser's distrust and dislike of the West was right in line with the ideology of pan-Arabism. As was discussed in Chapter III Nasser believed that the only way for the Arab countries within the region to be strong and successful was to rely on one another and not on the West for support, which was exactly what the ideology of pan-Arabism called for. Since Nasser was the type of person who believed in leading the way for a cause or new idea, he seized onto the ideology of pan-Arabism and began promoting it throughout the Arab Middle East regardless of what the consequences. This ideology proved to be very successful as Nasser and Egypt rose in popularity and leadership within the region.

Sadat's experiences were quite different from those of Nasser. Unlike Nasser, Sadat's family did not have many connections with the high class citizens in Egypt, consequently he grew up in meager conditions. It was by sheer luck that Sadat's father had a friend who was close to a pasha that helped Sadat get into the Obassia Military

College, where he met Nasser.¹³⁷ The growing up in meager conditions forced Sadat to take on a personality and leadership style of a follower and not a leader. Unlike Nasser, Sadat did not strive for leadership positions within the Egyptian Army nor did he have close relationships with high ranking military officials. During his time in the Egyptian army, Sadat was content with just being a mid-grade officer and did not strive for more. This type of mentality carried on through his tenure as the Egyptian Vice President under Nasser and ultimately during his time as Egyptian President.

Unlike Nasser, Sadat did not have a vision or idea of what his role and identity should be as an Egyptian citizen and eventually as the Egyptian President. Ironically he titled his autobiography *In Search of Identity*.¹³⁸ This provides a good sense as to what Sadat thought about himself. During a two-year period in jail in the mid-1940s, Sadat attempted to seek a better understanding of himself and determine the deeper meanings of his life.¹³⁹ What Sadat eventually turned to for identity was religion, specifically Islam. During his time in jail Sadat began to view Islam and Allah under a whole new light; he viewed them as the savior of the Egyptian population from the occupation and oppressors.¹⁴⁰ Unlike Nasser, Sadat was much more religious and relied on spiritual inspiration for guidance, at least in the beginning. In this instance, Sadat was much more like the rest of the Egyptian population and blended in with the masses; whereas Nasser took on the identity of being Arab and led the way for the Egyptian population to reassert themselves as Arabs instead of as Muslims.

While in the Free Officer's Corps, Sadat became Nasser's "go-to-boy" for policy and operations. What ever Nasser wanted done, Sadat made sure it happened. Even during the coup in 1952, Nasser sent Sadat to force King Farouk to abdicate his thrown. This just further proves the point that Nasser had a much more commanding presence and ability to direct people and that Sadat was just an "errand-boy." This continued when Sadat became Nasser's vice president.

¹³⁷ Joseph Finklestone, *Anwar Sadat: Visionary Who Dared* (London, England: Frank Cass, 1996), 9.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 68.

During his tenure as Egyptian Vice President, Sadat followed the directions of Nasser and did not question nor offer any suggestions as to what Egyptian domestic and foreign policy should be. Sadat was very timid in this regard. He had high respect for Nasser and his accomplishments, but did not stand up to Nasser if he thought certain policies were wrong. In fact many Egyptian politicians considered Sadat a light weight since he never showed any backbone.¹⁴¹ Sadat's experiences growing up never put him in a position that would force him to fight for what he wanted or stand up for himself. His experiences were those of being a follower and by doing that he was able to rise to different high ranking positions.

This contrast between being a leader and a follower is what shows the differences between Nasser and Sadat. Nasser's personality was one of a leader and Sadat's was one of a follower. Nasser always strove for more and Sadat always took the easy way out. This comparison can be seen even more in the different domestic and foreign policies of each of these leaders.

C. DOMESTIC POLICIES

The domestic policies during the two time periods discussed in this thesis changed dramatically from one period to the next. Nothing within the domestic system of Egypt remained the same. Both Nasser and Sadat had their own vision of what Egypt should be domestically and what was the best way to accomplish that vision. Nasser allowed the ideology of pan-Arabism to influence and drive his domestic policies while Sadat took the opposite stance and did not allow any specific ideology to influence him. He only did what he believed would be met with the least amount of resistance and easiest to implement.

When it came to Egyptian society, Nasser took the stance that the society should be united as one unit; whereas Sadat believed it was necessary to allow various political and religious groups to form within Egypt. Nasser believed that, in accordance with the ideology of pan-Arabism, a united society would result in a domestically strong Egypt

¹⁴¹Finklestone, *Anwar Sadat: Visionary Who Dared*, 25.

and through that unity and strength Egypt would be able to lead the Arab Middle East; thus the resulting outlawing of political and religious groups. Sadat on the other hand was not concerned with leading the Arab Middle East. He believed that a strong domestic society resulted from the Egyptian population being able to unite in various political and religious groups in order to voice their opinions and participate in all aspects of Egyptian society. This belief resulted in the formation of various political groups and the reorganization of the Muslim Brotherhood and other religious. What Sadat did not take into account was the fact that the formation of these groups allowed the population to challenge governmental policies and cause societal rifts to emerge, resulting in a weak domestic society.

Militarily, Nasser and Sadat both had different ideas on how strong the Egyptian military should be. In order to be the leader of the Arab Middle East, Nasser understood that Egypt needed to have a military strong enough to stand up to external aggression and protect the other Arab countries within the region. This understanding resulted in massive defense spending and a large build up of the military as discussed in Chapter IV. Sadat, on the other hand, believed Egypt only needed to have a military strong enough to defend Egyptian territory from external aggression. Since Sadat was not influenced by the ideology of pan-Arabism, he did not believe Egypt needed to be able to protect and defend the other Arab countries in the region. This idea was taken on by Sadat after the Arab loss to the Israelis in the 1967 War. Nasser's large military had not been able to defend the Arabs or Egyptian territory, so for Sadat there was no need to spend massive amounts on an ineffective military establishment.

The economic policies of these two Egyptian presidents were like night and day. Nasser wanted an internally strong economic system and Sadat wanted an externally strong economic system. In accordance with the ideology of pan-Arabism, Nasser relied on the internal agricultural and industrial sectors of the Egyptian economy to fund his social services and other domestic policies. Nasser did not allow external aid to enter into the Egyptian economic system due to the fact that it was in contradiction to the ideology of pan-Arabism. By allowing external aid to support the Egyptian economy, Nasser could have been influenced by the West and forced to bend to their will; which is what happened to Sadat.

Since Sadat was not concerned about what the other Arab Middle Eastern countries thought about him or Egypt, he turned to the West, IMF, and World Bank for aid in order to support the Egyptian economy; which went against the ideology of pan-Arabism. Sadat also implemented the *Infitah* that allowed foreign investment within Egypt. One of the main reasons why Sadat turned away from the ideology of pan-Arabism as an influence on economic policy was the fact that Sadat had witnessed that ideology place a large financial burden on the Egyptian economy that ultimately led to massive debt. Sadat did not want to continue down that road and instead wanted to get Egypt out of debt and economically strong. However, the *Infitah* resulted in placing Egypt in further debt as was discussed in Chapter V.

Sadat's implementation of the *Infitah* was the turning point for Egypt fall from leadership and influence. As was discussed in Chapter V the implementation of the *Infitah* was viewed by the other Arab countries as Egypt turning their back on them. The *Infitah* itself was not a bad idea, but the allowing of the West to invest within Egypt was the proverbial "nail in the coffin." The *Infitah* also forced foreign policy changes that will be discussed later in this chapter. Had Sadat implemented the *Infitah* and only allowed the other Arab countries to invest in and provide economic aid to Egypt, then things could have turned out differently for Egypt's leadership position. By implementing the *Infitah* in that way Sadat would have still opened up Egypt to foreign investment to stabilize the economy, however this foreign investment would have been from Arab countries which would have kept Egypt in line with the ideology of pan-Arabism.

These domestic policy differences between Nasser and Sadat were not the only influences leading to Egypt's rise and fall from leadership and influence within the Arab Middle East. The foreign policies of these two individuals also played a very important role in this rise and fall.

D. FOREIGN POLICIES

The major differences within foreign policy between Nasser and Sadat were their decisions on what nations to align Egypt with and what Nasser and Sadat wanted Egypt's position to be in the Arab Middle East. Nasser took the position of aligning Egypt with the Soviet Union, countries of the Soviet bloc, and other Arab countries within the Middle East. He wanted Egypt to be the leader of the Arab Middle East, prescribed by the ideology of pan-Arabism. Sadat, on the other hand, wanted the complete opposite. Sadat chose to first align Egypt with the Arab countries in the Middle East, but then changed his mind and aligned Egypt with the West and Israel, which was a slap in the face to the Arab countries within the region. He did not want Egypt to be the leader of the Arab Middle East. Instead he preferred to just make Egypt strong and on the same level as the other countries within the region. Sadat's mind set went completely against the ideology of pan-Arabism and was viewed by the other Arab countries within the region of Egypt turning its back on them.

All of Nasser's foreign policy decisions were in line with the ideology of pan-Arabism and helped Egypt rise in leadership and influence. As discussed in Chapter III Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal, the formation of the UAR¹⁴², and the signing of the Arab Solidarity Pact were all foreign policy decisions that allowed Egypt become and maintain its leadership in Arab Middle East. These decisions allowed Egypt to maintain its Arab identity and form close relationships with the other Arab countries within the region. The decisions also allowed Nasser to show the other Arab Middle Eastern countries that Egypt was willing to stand up for and protect them should the need arise.

Another one of Nasser's foreign policy decisions that was in keeping with the ideology of pan-Arabism and led to Egypt's rise in leadership was his decision to align Egypt with the Soviet Union and Soviet bloc. The countries in the Arab Middle East, especially Egypt, had many negative experiences under the Western occupation of the region. None of these countries trusted nor wanted to have close ties with the West again. By choosing to cut ties with the West and align Egypt with a country, who had no

¹⁴² See the definition of the UAR in Chapter III.

interest in occupying the region, Nasser showed the Arab Middle Eastern countries that Egypt was in the position to take on a leadership role and was open to the possibility of righting the wrongs the West had done to the Arab countries within the region. Nasser also showed the Arab countries within the region that neither they nor Egypt needed the West and that they only had to rely on one another for support and protect, which was a pillar of the ideology of pan-Arabism. Sadat, on the other hand, took the opposite stance when it came to foreign policy.

Sadat's foreign policy was largely influenced and driven by the *Infitah* and Sadat's decision for Egypt not to be the leader of the Arab Middle East. Since the *Infitah* allowed the West to invest within Egypt, Sadat had to change Egypt's position concerning the West. On top of that, since one of the West's conditions for investing within Egypt was for Egypt to sign a peace treaty with Israel, Sadat had to embark on a new foreign policy which would allow for peace even though this would ultimately lead to Egypt's fall from leadership and influence within the region.

As discussed in Chapter V, Sadat's new foreign policies included the signing of Sinai I and II, his peace mission to Jerusalem, and the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1979. All of these decisions were made without Sadat consulting with the other Arab countries within the Middle East. These foreign policy decisions ultimately affected the other countries within the region and Sadat decided not to get their input or fight for what they wanted. This was in complete contradiction to the ideology of pan-Arabism. Sadat had turned his back on the idea of Arab unity and sided with the West and Israel.

For Sadat it was much easier to succumb to the will of the West than it was to stand up to them and for the rights of the Arab Middle Eastern countries. This goes back to Sadat's personality and leadership style. Since Sadat was timid and a follower he did not have the back-bone or the will to continue the policies which Nasser had championed, those being Arab unity and leadership in the region. If Sadat would have had Nasser's leadership style he would have been able to stand up to the West, and Egypt would have maintained its position within the region. Instead, Egypt fell from leadership and influence.

E. CURRENT AND FUTURE STATUS

Even though Egypt fell from its leadership position and its large-scale influence decreased within the region, the country has still maintained a small amount of influence with the Arab Middle East. The leaders and populations of the region still remember the power and position Egypt once had and believe that Egypt has the potential to rise to that position once again. Even current events today show how Egypt is viewed, not only by the Arab Middle East countries, but by the international community as well.

Anytime there is a problem within the region, the international community turns to Egypt to take the lead in trying to solve the problem or offer advice. This is proven by Egypt's involvement in the Middle East peace process. Egypt has become very involved in the peace process between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Both the United States and the Arab Middle Eastern countries have turned to Egypt to hold peace conferences and negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians, which have had some success.

A more recent event was Egypt's announcement that they were restarting their civilian nuclear program for energy needs. While there is much debate around this announcement, the notion that Egypt is restarting its program as a response to the growing Iranian influence within the region and their nuclear program cannot be dismissed. Since Egypt already had a program in place, it is not going to take much for them to restart their program, and their decision to restart the program could be Egypt's way of re-establishing themselves as a leader and protector of the Arab Middle East from external aggression. This is an action welcomed by the other Arab countries in the region.

What is clear about the current and future state of the leadership position within the Arab Middle East is that it has not been filled since 1979. After Egypt fell from that position no other country has been able to rise to the position. This is not to say that other major countries within the region have not tried, but they have been unsuccessful. Saddam tried to vault Iraq to that leadership position during the 1980s and 1990s, but failed. Iran is trying to claim that position, but a Persian country will not be able to be the leader of Arab countries, not to mention that Iran's position within the international community is very tenuous. Saudi Arabia has never attempted to take over the leadership

of the region even though they would be in a good position to become a leader. There is no concrete reason as to why Saudi Arabia has not taken that step, but one could argue that they are content with the position they hold within the region and international community. Egypt is beginning to re-assert itself, but President Mubarak does not have the leadership style to put Egypt back into a position of leadership within the region. There is the possibility that his son, Gamal Mubarak, has the necessary personal qualities, but only time will tell.

I would venture to argue that no other countries have been able to fill that leadership position because they have not had or do not have the same type of charismatic and strong leader that Egypt had with Nasser. Nasser was a unique individual. He was able to rally the masses around his cause and be the leader the Arab countries wanted him to be. No other leader since him has had that ability. If a leader comes along who has the same attributes as Nasser, then they could possibly put their country in that vacant position of leadership. For right now, that position will remain vacant.

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